

## **Research Space**

PhD Thesis

**The ethics of the self and the social security discourse of the  
'jobseeker'**

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**THE ETHICS OF THE SELF AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY DISCOURSE  
OF THE 'JOBSEEKER'**

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### **Abstract**

One primary significance of the Jobseeker's Act and New Deal is that the invitation to seek out and where possible, obtain paid work is now all inclusive, extending to those individuals previously excluded from active participation in the labour market, such as lone parents, the disabled and long term unemployed. In addition to this, within New Labour discourse, individuals have a responsibility to be thoroughly self-governing and entrepreneurial in their jobseeking activities, and to engage with the discourse of 'communitarianism'. Moreover, it is argued that although individuals have to be active in their jobseeking activities, they do not necessarily have to be successful in securing paid employment. With this, New Labour discourse articulates a new foundation for social inclusion that is not so much conditional on economic participation within the labour market as it is on an ethical engagement with communitarianism and 'active citizenship'. This thesis argues that 'social inclusion' is now aligned to certain 'moral' and 'ethical' values as well as with economic activity, as jobseekers must now subscribe to the discourse of enterprise and marketability through continuously marketing themselves, and taking 'active' responsibility for their self management and the maintenance of their community. Consequently, this new discourse of social inclusion emphasises a value based notion of social inclusion at the expense of an economic or material notion, to which all members of society, regardless of class, material status and to some extent employment status, can (in theory) be included.

This thesis is concerned with identifying how 'jobseekers' have been made into subjects, how they are made thinkable and problematised within New Labour discourse. The implications of the Jobseekers Act and New Deal are related back to Foucaultian theories of late modern governmentality, whilst the methodological basis consists of a textually located discourse analytic approach, involving extensive reading and re-reading of official New Labour, Department for Education and Employment and Department for Social Security documentation.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **‘New Labour and the Jobseeker’**

#### **1.1. Problem Space - ‘The Jobseekers Allowance’ and the ‘New Deal’**

Since the emergence of Thatcherism as a major political force, the British welfare state has undergone a significant structural transformation, characterised by the announcement of the ‘Jobseekers Allowance’ (JSA) in October 1996 (by the Conservative Government) and the introduction of ‘New Deal’ in April 1998 by ‘New Labour’. The introduction of these policies, designed for both the reduction of unemployment and the closer monitoring and policing of the unemployed, has in effect constituted a shift away from the preconceived notions of the welfare state and represents New Labour’s concern with altering the way in which unemployment and the role of social security is perceived; from unemployment as a way of life and social security as an alternative to employment, towards unemployment as a transitory period, where benefit is provided only as the very final option and only for very brief periods between employment. These shifts have been extremely significant in altering the role of social security, in that it is now clear that the benefits system will no longer support those who have in the past been content to remain unemployed.

For the purposes of this research, the JSA and New Deal are seen to epitomise a central shift within British social security discourse; the redefinition of the terms of unemployment. This is not a shift in that unemployment is simply subject to new forms of government, it is more that the notion of unemployment, as a problem (be it economic or social) has been redefined, in that in many ways the concern of government now is not unemployment *per se*, but ‘employability’. The individualist notion of self-help has taken on new forms, in that the government’s chief concern is not about creating new jobs by improving the state of the market, but it is about increasing the employability of the workforce. Following this shift, the discourse of the Jobseeker now prescribes what a ‘jobseeker’ should be, how they should perform and conduct themselves.

## **1.2. Reasons for Analysis**

My decision to investigate the discourse of the ‘Jobseeker’ was prompted by my personal experience of unemployment (both direct and indirect). I was raised in a relatively working class environment in South Wales where long-term unemployment was often commonplace. The vast majority of my school colleagues left school at sixteen, most without good qualifications and many of them either immediately went into poorly paid, unskilled jobs; became unemployed; or became teenage parents. Consequently, I grew up in an environment where for many people, unemployment was seen as a ‘way of life’. I took a year out between my A Levels and going to University in 1994 and some of that time was also spent unemployed. However, I actually found my experience relatively easy. Being privileged enough to still live with my parents, I was obviously not suffering from the enormous financial burden suffered by many unemployed people, and my experience essentially consisted of signing on at the appropriate place once a fortnight, and two or three days later receiving a cheque for about seventy pounds through the post. This went on for about five or six months. It would not have been impossible for me to get a job, nor would it have been particularly difficult, as there were always countless positions available for catering staff, sales assistants, carers and cleaners. The most significant thing about this experience, (although this did not occur to me at the time) was how easy it was to continue to sign on each fortnight and not do anything in the intervening time to look for work. I was ‘unemployed’ and at least for me, this was a passive state and no real pressure was put on me to take the responsibility for this state and actually find employment.

About three and a half years later, immediately after completing my degree, I became unemployed again (this time in Buckinghamshire). However, it was no longer possible for me to be ‘unemployed’; instead, I had to be a ‘jobseeker’ and this experience was entirely different from the previous one. Not only did I have to state what I would do each week to look for work and what jobs I would be prepared to accept, but I had to provide proof each fortnight that I had fulfilled my part of this



deal. The thing that struck me most was that the entire ‘ethic’ of unemployment had changed; the walls had become covered in posters from the ‘Fraud Hotline’ campaign and at some point, I had stopped being a ‘claimant’ and had become a ‘customer’. The whole period was entirely transitory and it became clear I would not be able to remain in this position for long. In South Wales, people had sat around and talked to each other, they had stood in queues and talked to each other and for many it appeared to be a chance to catch up on the local gossip every fortnight; and had been for years. However, this new experience was much more like a conveyor belt, people did not sign on in groups, but individually, and only then after a short meeting with their Personal Advisor. I got the distinct impression that although they would help me out for a little while, it would not last for long, and I would either have to find a job soon, or they would find one for me. At this point, I became interested in trying to understand what this change could mean and how it might actually affect the unemployed themselves in terms of how they understand themselves and how they manage their own conduct.

Much previous and current research into this large scale shift in policy has been highly critical; Gray has referred to it as the ‘attack on the working class’ (Gray 1998:1); and Tonge has argued that ‘As a solution to the problem of unemployment, the novelty of the New Deal lies more in packaging than in substance’ (Tonge 1999:30). However, this research is concerned with trying to identify the ways in which individuals and ‘jobseekers’ have been made thinkable and understood, rather than with assessing the rights or wrongs of the unemployment policy. The motivation for conducting this piece of research is that the problem of unemployment has been rethought and that this, on a purely professional level, is ‘sociologically interesting’. It is also important to point out that this is not a rigorous social policy analysis, and although close reference is made to the Jobseekers Act and New Deal, this thesis is not overly concerned with dates, figures or detailed social policy implications concerning income levels, sanctions or the actual number of jobseekers moved into work, paid or otherwise. Instead, this research is concerned with identifying the ways in which jobseekers are ‘made into subjects’, how they

have been made thinkable and understood (Foucault 1988) and not with criticising, condemning or praising the actions taken by Government.

### **1.3. Outline of what Follows**

The following two chapters offer an explanation of the theoretical and methodological basis for this work, with chapter two providing an analysis of Foucaultian theories of governmentality and explaining the centrality of the techniques of the self and chapter three detailing the methodology and the type of discourse analysis employed. Chapter four explains the historical context of New Labour and attempts to place the social policy shifts into perspective with previous governments.

The premise of this research is that there has been a significant shift to the structure of the British welfare state and the management of unemployment. Given that the whole subject of this research is based on a 'shift', for comparative purposes, it follows that a considerable degree of analysis should also be offered of the discourse of unemployment *prior* to the JSA and New Deal. Consequently, the fifth chapter comes in two sections, the first being devoted to a general analysis of the various political, economic and social developments that were current in the political climate of the 1980s and early 1990s and the various ways the unemployed individual had been articulated throughout. The second section concentrates in more detail on the discourse of the Labour and Conservative Party by a discourse analysis of one specific text by each party. This analysis is of both the Labour and Conservative Party from the 1980s to the mid 1990s, as it is considered that analysis of the Conservative Party will facilitate the identification of much of the themes and ideals behind Labour and New Labour, and the extent to which the Conservatives may or may not have influenced them. By the 1992 election, the Conservatives had been in government (including coalition periods) for over two thirds of a century and the achievement of the Conservative Party in relation to their ability to win support is extraordinary when one considers that the Party has been historically associated with

property and privilege and that the British electorate for most of this century, has been dominated by working class property-less electors (Garner and Kelly 1993:68). Their significance in affecting much of the structure of British politics and decision making both in the 1980s and 1990s was substantial and is consequently of direct relevance to this level of analysis.

Chapter six discusses the articulation of ‘community’ within New Labour discourse, arguing that instead of focusing on economic participation in the labour market as the route to social inclusion, New Labour demand that jobseekers fully subscribe to what is identified as the ‘Value-based Community’ and the ‘New Cultural Community’. These two notions of community are discussed through an analysis of various forms of official documentation, ranging from New Labour publications, such as party speeches; official statements; reports; Department for Education and Employment, and Department for Social Security literature (DfEE and DSS, respectively); and other primary sources, such as the various pamphlets and booklets readily available to jobseekers. Chapter seven is concerned with an analysis of the ethical techniques of the self in terms of how the discourse of the ‘jobseeker’ prescribes what a ‘jobseeker’ should be, how they should perform and conduct themselves. This offers a much closer analysis of the codes of conduct discussed in the previous chapter and identifies the more specific ethical technologies of self the jobseeker is required to perform in order to be categorised as a ‘good jobseeker’. This chapter is specifically concerned with the ways in which technologies of power and technologies of the self articulate the conduct of the jobseeker (Foucault 1988; Dean 1995:560).

Chapter eight focuses on three organised resistance groups, mobilised in response to the compulsory elements and sanctions of the JSA and New Deal. This is concerned with the ‘informal’ governmental agendas of the resistance groups, as resistance is considered a mode of informal governance in its own right. Here, discussion will be devoted to how the ‘jobseeker’ is articulated in the various resistance organisations,

how the individuals are being made ‘thinkable’ and what sorts of ethical, self reflective regimes the groups are fostering. These organisations are intended to be readily accessible to claimants and offer a wide range of services, from practical advice on how to cope with the unemployment system, to more general moves towards claimant solidarity.

Finally, the conclusion (chapter nine) summarises the new forms of social inclusion articulated by New Labour and argues that New Labour’s discourse prioritises ‘ethical’ social inclusion over material or economic social inclusion in that social inclusion is not conditional on one’s material, class or employment status, but on one’s contribution to the community and one’s approach to jobseeking. This is related to Weber’s notion of ‘status’ and ‘status honour’ (Weber 1982) in that within New Labour discourse, social inclusion is conditional on jobseekers adopting an ethical engagement with the discourse, rather than with social class or material wealth. Moreover, it is argued that provided jobseekers are ‘active’ in their jobseeking, they do not necessarily have to be successful in securing paid employment, as the condition of ‘activity’ takes precedence over the condition of ‘paid work’. This chapter also acknowledges the absences within the research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Theory**

#### **2.1. Outline**

This research has two primary objectives. Firstly, to identify the extent to which there has been a shift in the governance of the unemployed, whereby governance is focused on the employability of the workforce and on managing the conduct of the 'jobseeker' with regards their appearance, behaviour and attitude; and secondly, to identify the implications this has for the construction of the ethical self. The theoretical basis behind this research owes much to Foucaultian theory and is primarily concerned with Foucault's conception of governance and surveillance. Working from this premise, it is argued that the act of subjecting the 'jobseeker' to repetitively write up his weekly activities and consequently, by the collation of vast numbers of reports about people, the individual is rendered a 'case' and becomes objectified as an object of power and knowledge (Foucault 1982:220). Through this method of 'examination', the 'jobseeker' is rendered a 'describable, analysable object' (Foucault 1977:187-92). It is this method of surveillance that allows the unemployed individual to become properly categorised as a 'jobseeker' and a governable object.

#### **2.2. Late Modern Governmentality**

The implications of the Jobseeker's Act and New Deal are analysed throughout this work in relation to Foucaultian theories of late governmentality. Foucault defined 'government' as being the 'conduct of conduct', that is 'a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons' (Gordon 1991:2). The term 'government' and consequently 'governmentality' does not designate a form of political institution in the traditional sense. Instead, for Foucaultian theorists, 'governmentality' involves a specific way of acting that seeks to affect (in some shape or form) the way in which individuals conduct themselves on behalf of collectivities, making populations at the individual and the collective level, thinkable and measurable for the purposes of government. This is linked to Foucault's theory of 'bio-power', which is where populations are routinely controlled and

‘scientifically categorised’ in terms of surveillance of the human body as an object of control and manipulation (Foucault 1977; May 1996). Bio-power is exercised from within society rather than from above it, and punishment is focused on the ‘soul’ of the subject (Silverman 1985). One of the features of this is the method of ‘examination’, which involves anything from the medical or educational examination, and a whole variety of interviews, as well as being strongly associated with the production of records about people (Fairclough 1992). The consequence of these procedures is that the individual becomes an analysable, describable object, with each individual constituting a ‘case’ and an object of knowledge.

For Foucault, government can be defined as the point where ‘techniques of domination’ and ‘techniques of the self’ interact. In other words; where technologies of domination are involved with processes by which the individual acts upon himself, and where techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion. Technologies of domination are said to determine the conduct of individuals through the use of various methods of coercion and objectification. Conversely, technologies of the self:

‘...permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality’ (Foucault 1988:18).

This is of direct relevance to this research, which focuses not only on the ethical techniques of the self, but also on the various technologies of domination. Foucault states that there are four different types of technologies that human beings use to understand themselves, these are: technologies of production; technologies of sign systems; technologies of power and technologies of the self (Smart 1985, Sheridan

1980). The two technologies that are referred to in this work are technologies of domination and technologies of the self. Foucault goes on to say that each of these technologies ‘implies certain modes of training and the certain modification of individuals’ and that this is not only in the sense of acquiring certain practical skills, but also in the acquiring of certain ‘attitudes’ (Foucault 1988:18).

In terms of a Foucaultian theory of governmentality, there are three principle stages in what can be termed the ‘techniques of regulation’. The first level is that of the disciplinary techniques of objectification. This is where the discourse is represented by the experts/professionals, who ‘gaze’ upon the population, the population, in turn remain passive and become ‘*objects*’ of the discourse. Level two is concerned with the disciplinary/ethical techniques of subjectification. This is very similar to the above, but taken further in that the experts/professionals within the discourse possess a certain knowledge of the individuals, which is developed through the confessional process. It is here, when the individuals begin to adopt the discourse, and use it to inform their own technology of self, that they become, not passive objects, but active ‘*subjects*’ of the discourse. The third level of this is the ethical techniques of the self, whereby the individual, having made himself an active subject of the discourse can chose to do so without the use of the expert/professional, in that he can adopt or reject certain elements of the discourse and administer his own governance, without the aid of an external power.

### **2.3. ‘Ethics of the self’**

This theoretical framework developed by Foucault is of direct relevance and sociological interest in relation to the discourse of the ‘jobseeker’. The governmental practices and techniques that articulate the ‘jobseeker’ and consequently define the ethical possibilities of being, contain ethical, coercive and enabling elements. These forms of governance with regards to social security practices can be described as ‘governmental-ethical’ in that they are concerned with both practices of government and practices of self-formation. Following Foucault, Dean argues that in terms of the

social security discourse of Australia, the ‘governmental-ethical’ practices serve to describe the ways in which practices of government come to depend upon practices of the self (Dean 1995).

For Dean, ‘governmental self-formation’ is concerned with how the ‘state seeks to shape and mould the conduct of individuals in order to encourage them to seek clearly defined goals and achieve previously determined aims’ (Dean 1995:567). Conversely ‘ethical self-formation’ is concerned with the regulation of self on self, whereby although individuals still seek certain goals, they are governed more by their own desires to act upon themselves. Thus, ‘ethical self-formation’ is similar to ‘governmental self-formation, but instead of the act being instigated and administered by a governmental agency, the act is administered entirely by the subject’s own desire to govern his/her own conduct. However, this distinction can be not absolute, as the two practices remain intertwined and even if an act appears to be governed by the personal regulation of any given individual, one still cannot ‘exclude the possibility that the practice is authorised by a particular agency, and transmitted and learnt within particular cultural norms’ (Dean 1995:563). It needs to be emphasised, however, that both ‘ethical self-formation’ and ‘governmental self-formation’ can be both governmental and non-governmental simultaneously. In that although the ethical techniques of the self in many ways involves the administering of one’s own governance, the existence of an external governing body will remain.

The new social security practices of the JSA and New Deal can be seen as a governmental-ethical practice, in that it involves both ‘practices of government’ and ‘practices of self-formation’; the former through coercion and administration, and the latter through the desire to shape the attributes, character and employability of the individual. Dean argues that these social security practices not only provide on a financial level for those claiming, but that they also shape the ‘desires, needs, aspirations, capacities and attitudes of the individuals who come within their ken’ (Dean 1995:567). Moreover, the jobseeker’s are tightly engaged with their own



government, and are given what appears to be almost total control over much of their activities, as emphasis is placed on equipping the jobseeker with the skills and potential to reach their own ‘personal’ targets as opposed to targets set specifically by the benefit officer.

Intrinsic to the governance of the self is the existence of liberal political rationality, whereby individuals are not only self governing, but also empowered and responsible. Dean discusses how analysis of government within liberal political rationality has a tendency to neglect the ‘more coercive, binding, or obligatory dimensions of liberal governmental programmes and practices’ and that the liberal rationality of government does not have to conduct itself according to the rules of individual liberty, but can force obligations on individuals through processes of coercion (Dean 2000). As such, it is argued here that the adoption of both moral and ethical obligations is not necessarily conditional on techniques of the self but instead, can be exercised from an authoritarian governmental position, whereby the rules and obligations of citizenship can be imposed upon those individuals who refuse to manage their own government effectively.

#### **2.4. Morals and Ethics**

Much of this research is based on the centrality of ethics and ethical values. Consequently, some explanation needs to be offered concerning what is meant by the term ‘ethics’ and its relationship to ‘morals’. For the purposes of this research, ‘morals’ are understood as being concerned with how one acts in relation to others, whereas ‘ethics’ are concerned with how one acts in relation to oneself (Watts 1997). With this, it is argued that the demands placed on jobseekers to reconstruct their own identities based around notions of entrepreneurialism, employability and communitarianism are intrinsically ‘ethical’ as they prescribe not only how one must behave but also what sorts of personal value systems one must hold in order to be considered a full citizen and member of the community.

Firstly, regarding the ‘enterprise community’, *all* those capable of work are now obliged to reconstruct themselves in terms of the discourse of enterprise and marketability. This invitation extends to those previously excluded from the labour market and since the New Deal was introduced in twelve areas across the country in January 1998, it now includes other groups of people through the ‘New Deal for Disabled People’; ‘New Deal for Lone Parents’; ‘New Deal for Partners’; ‘New Deal for 25 Plus’ and the ‘New Deal for People over 55’. With this, the discourse entirely reconstructs the terms of unemployment, in that the focus of government is no longer ‘unemployment’, but ‘employability’. Consequently, there is a move away from the old categories of unemployment whereby certain individuals were excused from the work requirement and considered legitimately dependent on the state; in that now *all* individuals capable of work are invited and encouraged to reconstruct themselves into ‘enterprising individuals’ (Fairclough 1995:17; Heelas and Morris 1992). This notion of ‘enterprise’ (or the activity of being ‘enterprising’), encompasses an ‘array of rules for the conduct of one’s everyday existence’ such as ‘energy, initiative, ambition, calculation and personal responsibility’ (Rose 1992:146). It has been said of ‘enterprise’ that ‘An enterprising self will plot its future, and project itself into that future, transforming itself into the ‘self’ it wishes to be’ and that ‘The enterprising self is thus a calculating self, a self that calculates about itself and that works upon itself in order to better itself’ (ibid). Thus the notion of ‘enterprise’ as identified in New Labour discourse on communitarianism is also intrinsically ‘ethical’, placing heavy pressure on individuals, both jobseekers and those currently employed, to consistently market themselves and take active responsibility for their own conduct. Similarly, failure to take adequate steps to enhance one’s employability, insure oneself against unemployment, or seek and secure paid work is deemed a failure to both oneself and to the wider community.

Similarly, social inclusion is also conditional on jobseekers internalising the codes of behaviour articulated through the ‘value-based community’. With this, jobseekers are obliged to reconstruct themselves in terms of their relationship to the

‘community’ and to adopt values based on: ‘...tolerance, openness and adaptability, work and self-improvement, strong communities and families and fair play, rights and responsibilities’ (Blair 2000b). Of these values, Blair has argued ‘Strong communities depend on shared values and recognition of the rights and duties of citizenship - not just the duty to pay taxes and obey the law, but the obligation to bring up children as competent, responsible citizens’ (Blair 1998a:12). With this, it is argued that social inclusion is largely conditional on individuals not only taking active responsibility for their employability and the education of their children, but also taking active involvement in the ongoing maintenance of the community. These activities range from involvement in the local church, school, play group or neighbourhood watch, to the adoption of certain moral values (Labour Party 2000b:146). With this, individuals are encouraged to ‘demonstrate that they are capable of rational choice and to conduct their lives according to a moral code of community obligation and individual responsibility’ (Rose 1996:348; cf. Dean 1995; Walters 1994). Consequently, this presentation of community holds clear ‘moral’ obligations, as one has a ‘moral’ obligation to conduct oneself in a way that is seen to enhance the stability and promote the interests of the community. One effect of this is that if one is to abide by these codes and maintain one’s own social inclusion, then one must also adopt an ‘ethical’ obligation to ‘oneself’ to fulfil the demands set out by the discourse of the ‘moral community’. Thus before one can adopt a certain ‘morality’, one must first rethink one’s ‘ethical’ position. This is essentially the primary focus of this research, how the discourse of unemployment invites the ‘jobseeker’ to rethink their ethical position in relation to the community, the market, and to themselves.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1. Methods - An Outline**

The methodological basis for this research borrows from both a Foucaultian and an individual analysis, focused on specific texts. Whereas discourse analysts such as Woolgar, Potter, Wetherell, and Fairclough would be concerned with breaking down each line and each phrase of the text in order to identify the ‘effects’ the text has on the reader (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Potter 1996a, 1996b; Wetherell 1998; Woolgar 1988; Woolgar and Pawluch 1985; Fairclough 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995), a Foucaultian analysis is concerned with the identification of the various themes of a discourse. Thus whilst this research relates the implications of the JSA and New Deal back to Foucaultian theories of late modern governmentality and discourse, it also incorporates a more qualitative discourse analytic approach. This latter approach involves the reading and re-reading of various forms of official documentation, ranging from published information by the major political parties; party speeches; official statements; DSS and DfEE literature; documents from the Social Research Branch; and primary sources, such as the Jobseekers Charter, copies of the Jobseekers Agreement, various pamphlets and booklets as well as material from resistance websites. The aim is to conduct a discourse analysis of these sources, employing the more textually located forms of discourse analysis proposed by writers such as Fairclough, Potter and Wetherell, and Woolgar (*ibid.*).

#### **3.2. Why Not Interviews or Participant Observation?**

At the initial stages of this thesis, there were a number of alternative data collection possibilities considered. Firstly, there was the possibility of attempting to gain access into official institutions such as the Benefits Agency or Employment Service in order to conduct either interviews, overt participant observation, or both. However, gaining access to these proved impossible in the very early stages of the PhD. Another alternative was to attempt to conduct interviews with jobseekers on a self selection basis, but there are obvious scientific problems with such a method concerning how representative the sample would be, in that there may have been a

problem with only being able to interview those who were actively hostile to the unemployment system and wanting to use the interview as an opportunity to vent frustration. There were also a number of other reasons why it was decided to abandon the idea of interviews. Firstly, it was considered that in order to conduct a representative sample that was worthy to be included in a PhD thesis, it would have to represent different genders, different social classes, those from ethnic minority groups, those who had been unemployed for different lengths of time, and also different regions of the UK. This would have proved an enormous task. Consequently, in order to conduct a task of this kind, sizeable amounts of analysis included in this thesis would have to have been omitted which would have risked leaving the thesis lacking in theoretical groundwork.

Secondly, although this thesis is concerned with how the dominant discourses actually affect individual's subject positions and identities, it is argued that interviews would not have been the way to discover this. It is argued that interviews are fraught with methodological difficulties and although it would have been interesting to uncover the extent to which individuals had taken up the dominant discourse, there is absolutely no guarantee that the information gathered from interviews would have revealed how individuals actually felt *before* they were interviewed. For example, it is argued that interviews of this kind would have invited individuals to reflect on areas that they may not have considered previously, and as such their response may have been a response to the interview *questions* as much as the dominant discourse. The problem of how interviewers affect the answers of their respondents is widely acknowledged. However, the use of textual documentation is now a well established methodological option for discourse analysts (Potter and Wetherell 1987:162).

### **3.1. Definition of 'Discourse'**

The term 'discourse analysis' has many meanings, and it is important to outline exactly what method of discourse analysis is intended here. In order to do this, it is

also necessary to outline what is meant by the term ‘discourse’. Cousins and Hussain note that the term ‘discourse’ has become heavily overloaded. It is used in many disciplines; from sociolinguistics in the analysis of speech and conversation in an attempt to uncover the rules governing particular social situations; to Marxist theorists in relation to the theory of ideology (Cousins and Hussain 1984:78). Similarly, Dijk, in his work on critical discourse analysis argues that ‘discourse’ should be understood as ‘action’, whilst Potter and Wetherell use the term ‘discourse’ to cover ‘all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kind’ (Potter and Wetherell 1987:7). Similarly, Parker argued that when a discourse analyst conducts their research, what they find, is not a ‘discourse’ as such, but a ‘piece’ of discourse (Parker 1992).

The understanding of the term ‘discourse’ for the purpose of this analysis is heavily, although not exclusively borrowed from Foucault. Foucault was concerned with specific forms of discourses; such as medicine or psychiatry, and in Foucaultian terms, a discourse (or a ‘discursive formation’) is defined as the totality of interactions from a certain domain (Wodak:1996). Also for Foucault, discourse analysis was not to be equated with linguistic analysis. Instead Foucault conceived of discourses as being composed of signs, which, according to Barrett, ‘do more than designated things, for they are the practices that form the objects of which they speak’ (Barrett 1996:130). This work adopts the Foucaultian interpretation of a ‘discourse’ as a type of genre that depicts whole events, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours and as being responsible for how people think, live and speak. With this, it is argued that the texts subject to analysis are ‘pieces’ or ‘statements’ of the unemployment discourse.

Some of the methodological basis in this research is also taken from Chalaby. Chalaby argues that the term ‘discourse’ is in need of a sociological definition independent from linguistic connections; as discourse is too often used either synonymously with language or text and embedded in the linguistic realm (Chalaby

1996:685). Chalaby also argues that social determinants create discursive practices, and it is these discursive practices that contribute to the explanation and meaning of a text. Consequently, Chalaby argues that in discourse analysis, before one can understand the discursive practices which have produced a text, it is also necessary to know the possible meanings of a text. He calls this the ‘sociological version of the hermeneutic circle, where one pole is discursive, the other social’ (ibid:687). The premise behind this is that it is the interaction that occurs between the text and the reader that makes a text meaningful. Similarly to Chalaby, it is not the contention here that the meaning of a text is internal to the text, or that it can be identified within texts independent of externally positioned social circumstances or influences. Instead, the meaning of a text is determined by the interaction that occurs between the reader and the text (Chalaby 1996:687), as ‘from a sociological perspective, the meaning of texts cannot be given by their linguistic structure’ (ibid.). Thus it is argued that the text is given meaning only when the reader interacts with it and it is the job of the discourse analyst to discuss the possible effects that the text has on the reader as well as to actually explore how the texts construct and address their readers (either implicitly or explicitly).

### **3.4. Disclaimer**

Although this approach is in part borrowed from Chalaby, this research does not subscribe to Chalaby’s opinion that one needs to have a thorough understanding of the social determinants surrounding a text before one can appreciate its effects. If this were the case, then one would require an understanding of the social determinants surrounding the production of the text, as well as the social determinants that were in play every time the text was read (and consequently interpreted) by a reader. Not only that, but Chalaby’s point also conveniently overlooks the idea that the social determinants surrounding the production of texts are themselves largely ‘discursive’ in both oral and textual terms. Thus it must be made clear that although, for example, the first section of the fifth chapter is concerned with the identification of themes, these themes can not be used to help explain what the effects of the party political documents were. The effects of these

documents can only be identified by a reading of the actual text. The only advantage from identifying the themes is that they offer the research some historical background, a stronger foundation, and some guidance for deciding which documents to choose for the discourse analysis of the second section.

### **3.5. Combining Ethnomethodological and Foucaultian Approaches to Discourse Analysis**

A recurring criticism of post-structuralist discourse analysis is that in terms of its accounts of social change, it operates on too abstract and general a level (Stenson and Watt 1999; Fairclough 1992; Wetherell 1998; Potter 1996a; 1996b). One such example is in the work by Nik Rose on 'The Death of the Social' where he argued that during the sorts of neoliberalism experienced under the Thatcher administrations of the 1980s, the issue of the 'social' had ceased to be a key strategy for government (Rose 1996). Rose claimed that in the past there had been a contract between individuals and the state, which served to both form the foundations for citizenship and the belief in the reciprocal welfare state. However, during the neoliberalism of the 1980s, the predominance of this mode of governance had been questioned, as individuals became less governed by their obligations to the 'state' and 'society', and more towards their obligations to their immediate family, community members and to themselves. In other words, the responsibility of the individual became no longer one between individual and state (citizen and society), but instead a relationship of responsibility emerged between the individual and those the individual cared about (Rose 1996). This relationship manifested itself in a new found notion of community. These types of communities referred to by Rose are diverse, incorporating moral communities (religious, ecological, feminist), lifestyle communities (taste, dress, style), communities of commitment (disability, health problems, local activism). They are often localised, overlapping, and diasporic: existing only to the extent that their members are linked together through identities that are not constructed in geographic spaces (ibid.).



However, Nik Rose's post-structuralist account of change could have benefited from the inclusion of a more textually located form of discourse analysis in order to allow it to relate the general discussions surrounding social change to concrete social and political instances of practice. Consequently, there are limits to the extent to which theories of late modern governmentality. Consequently, it was considered useful to analyse actual textual documentation and to borrow from the more textually located forms of discourse analysis proposed by writers such as Potter and Wetherell, Woolgar and Fairclough (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Potter 1996a, 1996b; Wetherell 1998; Woolgar 1988; Woolgar and Pawluch 1985; Fairclough 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995).

Fairclough argues that detailed textual analysis (or 'textually orientated discourse analysis': TODA) will always strengthen a piece of discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995). For example, in Foucault's work on techniques of governance, it is argued that one gains the impression one is changing oneself, through the act of confession, whilst in fact, it is this very practice that results in one conforming even further. Fairclough has added to this work by including concrete textual analysis, and it was through this textual analysis that Fairclough discovered other discursive practices, from advertising and counselling for example, which he claimed serve to conceal traditional discourses and 'mystify power relationships' (Fairclough 1995; Wodak 1996:27). Fairclough argues that a more systematic and detailed textual analysis can add to the research by offering further grounding to the conclusions that have been already arrived at without it, and sometimes suggestions as to how these conclusions may be modified or that they have been misguided (Fairclough 1995:188).

### **3.6. Foucaultian Governmentality vs. Neo-Marxist theories of the State**

There are, however profound theoretical difficulties that occur when attempting to combine the Foucaultian conceptions of discourse with the more micrological, textually orientated discourse analysis of Fairclough, owing to their contrasting views on relations of power and social structure. Foucault did not conceive of power

as something that can be practised; and for him, power is not wielded over individuals; whereas Fairclough employs a theory of power that is very much borrowed from Gramsci's conception of hegemony (Fairclough 1995:133). It is important to remember that Fairclough's conception of domination and regulation is based on a neo-Marxist, political economy theory of the state. Conversely, Foucault is not interested in defining power in terms of its origins, his conception of power is that it is omnipresent and human interaction cannot occur without it. Foucault's conception of discourse is embedded in a theoretical system that has involved explicit rejection of the categories of classical Marxism. He believed the concept of ideology was 'irretrievably contaminated by the unilinear economic determinism characteristic of Marxism' (Barrett 1996:130).

Foucault's conception of discourse is that it is productive, it produces the object about which it speaks. This is not to say that nothing exists before the particular discourse to which the object belongs comes into being, but it is to say that no object can completely exist in the non-discursive realm. To further this point, it is argued that although the word 'body' is not a discourse, the body *is* a discursive production. Moving on from Bruno Latour, Kendall and Wickham argue that even the natural world is not free from the discursive realm. They argue that discourse does not follow the 'facts' of natural phenomenon - but that these 'facts' follow the discourse. To demonstrate their point, they use the example of rain. In our time, rain is a 'precipitation derived from the clouds', whereas in ancient times, it could have been seen as the urine of the Gods (Kendall and Wickham 2000:41). The point they make is that the object of 'rain' as derived from the clouds is only guaranteed through scientific theory and '...the problem is that science is a discourse like any other and we have no way of measuring productions of one discourse (science) against another (religion)'. Latour is not claiming that nothing exists in nature unless it is part of a human discourse; rather he is seeking to 'demonstrate the logical possibility of demonstrating nature as a priori' (ibid.). Although nothing can exist in the non-discursive realm, this does not mean that all objects and subjects that are incorporated in the discourse are also being exclusively controlled by it. In practice,

discourses may limit what can be said, but they also simultaneously provide the 'spaces - the concepts, metaphors, analogies for making new statements within any specific discourse' (Henriques et al.1984:105). In other words, power, for Foucault, as emanating from discourse, is not invariably negative or coercive, but it is productive in that it produces substance and meaning.

In 'Discipline and Punish', Foucault deals with incarceration and the technologies of power of discipline and confession (Foucault 1977). In terms of disciplinary power, the architecture of prisons, schools and factories are such that each inmate is allocated a separate and isolated cell, desk or space, indicative of a discipline that directs itself towards the body. Moving on from disciplinary power he developed a theory of 'bio-power', which is premised on the view that whole populations are routinely controlled and 'scientifically categorised' via the act of surveillance. The similarity between disciplinary and bio-power is that they are both exercised from within society rather than from above it and power is invisible (Layder 1994:101). According to Foucault, power is now concentrated on the 'soul' of individuals rather than the body, through examination and confession, the consequences being that an individual becomes a describable, analysable object, or a 'case'. Similarly, the act of confession involves the individual being increasingly drawn into the domain of power. Confession includes not only religious confession, but also the therapeutic discourses, such as marriage and family relationship counselling. The compulsion to openly and actively discuss oneself and reflect on one's personage in an increasingly large set of social circumstances (religion, the family, group therapy, self help groups) involves the individuals being further objectified and incorporated into the domain of power.

Foucault opposed the conception of social structure that is so explicit within Marxism. According to Barrett, Foucault developed a concept of power 'that did not locate it in agencies (whether the state, individuals, economic forces, etc.) but saw it in terms of 'micro' operations of power and by means of strategies and technologies

of power' (Barrett 1996:134). In fact, Foucault's conception of power is not only completely incompatible with Marxism, but also with most social science that views power as being determined from social structure. Foucault argued that the Marxist insistence on the dominance of economic considerations tended to systematically exclude other considerations of power. He claimed:

'To put it very simply, psychiatric internment, the mental normalisation of individuals, and penal institutions have no doubt a fairly limited importance if one is only looking for their economic significance. On the other hand, they are undoubtedly essential to the general functioning of the wheels of power. So long as the posing of the question of power was kept subordinate to the economic instance and the system of interests which this served, there was a tendency to regard these problems as of small importance' (Foucault 1980, cited in Barrett 1996).

Foucault's conception of power has been used as a critique of Marxism's conception, that focuses on class dominance, originating from economic interest. Foucault saw power as something that is exercised rather than possessed. Power is not invariably negative, but is enabling as well as restrictive in that it has the ability to produce meaning as well as being coercive.

Thus Fairclough's conception of power is the absolute antithesis of the Foucaultian approach. This methodology, however, despite taking advantage of some of the techniques employed by Fairclough, does not subscribe to Fairclough's view of the state and relations of power. Instead, this work merely borrows from Fairclough a collection of useful analytic tools in relation to the analysis of literal texts. Similarly, in terms of the Foucaultian approach, Foucault never prescribed a methodology as such, and for the purpose of this analysis Foucault provides a useful analytic approach with regards governmentality and discourse, rather than a methodology. It

should be made clear; to use the words of Potter and Wetherell that: ‘there is no analytic method...Rather, there is a broad theoretical framework’ (Potter and Wetherell 1987:169). It is far more appropriate to consider this analysis as one that has sought direction from theories developed from both Foucaultian writers and those from the more micrological, textually orientated discourse analysis. This analysis holds a view of relations of power that has been heavily inspired by Foucaultian writers, and a methodological view concerning the act of discourse analysis that has had elements borrowed from a variety of sources; such as Fairclough, Woolgar, Parker, and Potter and Wetherell; as well as Foucault.

### **3.7. Detailing of Selected Texts**

Throughout this work, research will be made via a discourse analysis of party political literature (manifestos, speeches, pamphlets); DSS and DfEE literature (application forms, leaflets, advertisements, Jobseeker’s Charter, Jobseeker’s Agreement, and a wide variety of pamphlets designed to offer jobseeking advice); press releases, complemented with an interview conducted with an individual involved in various JSA resistance organisations. The listing of the selected texts is as follows:

Party political documents are considered applicable to this form of analysis in that they provide discursive information at a concentrated and digested level and afford the analyst an insight into the theories and early thinking behind many policy objectives (that is assuming that the overt forms of discussions represented within the texts clearly represents the political thinking behind them). Consequently, these texts constitute a vital area of discourse. Included in the analysis are Conservative Party Texts from ‘Politics Today’: ‘The Budget’ (1982); ‘Jobs: An Encouraging Trend’ (1987); ‘Reshaping Our Social Security System’ (1995a); ‘Attack Answered’ (1995b); ‘New Labour meets Real Labour’ (1995c); ‘The 1995 Budget’ (1995d), and speech extracts from Nigel Lawson (Hansard, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1987). Also the ‘Campaign Guide’ 1994 and 1997; the 1989 Conservative Party Manifesto a paper by Peter

Lilley (1995) and speeches and interviews from Margaret Thatcher (Thatcher 1987) and William Hague (Hague 2000).

The Labour Party documents are considerably more substantial given that they are the focus of the research: 'Labour Party Draft Manifesto' (1980); 'Preventing Poverty: Why we Need Social Security: A Labour Party Discussion Document' (1981); 'Report to the 1982 TUC Congress and Labour Party Conference' (Labour Party Liaison Committee 1982a); 'Preventing Poverty: Why We Need Social Security' (1982); '16-19: Learning for Life' (1982b); 'Britain on the Dole: Unemployment and the Socialist Alternative' (1982c); 'New Hope for Britain: Think Positive Think Labour' (1983); 'Britain's Failure to Train' (1984a); 'Statements to Blackpool Conference' (1984b); 'Labour's Charter for Young People' (1985); 'Low Pay: Policies and Priorities' (1986a); 'Statements to Conference September 1986' (Blackpool Conference: 1986b); 'New Skills for New Britain: Labour's Programme for national Renewal' (1987a); 'New Jobs for Britain' (1987b); 'Work to Win' (Labour TUC Trade Union Congress:1987c); 'Social Justice and Economic Efficiency' (First report of Labour's Policy Review' 1988a); 'Democratic Socialist Aims and Values' (1988b); 'Meet the Challenge. Make the Change' (1989); 'Made in Britain - New Markets - New Technology - New Government' (1992a); 'Opportunities for All' (1992b); 'Still Not Working: Tories Fail to Deliver in the Jobs Market - Again' (Report by Henry McKish MP Shadow Employment Minister: 1992c); 'Social Justice: Strategies for National Renewal' (Commission on Social Justice 1994); 'Lifelong Learning' (1996a); 'Equipping Young People for the Future: From Welfare to Education' (Report from Labour's Review of the Financing of Post-16 Education 1996b); 'Getting Welfare to Work - Opportunities for Lone Mothers' (Report by Harriet Harman MP Shadow Social Secretary:1996c); 'Vision for growth: A New industrial Strategy for Britain' (1996d); 'A New Deal for Britain: Labour's Proposals to Tackle Youth and Long-Term Unemployment' (1997a); 'Building the Future Together: Labour's Policies for partnership Between Government and the Voluntary Sector' (1997b); 'Unemployment: The Skills Challenge' (1997c); 'Labour Party Policy Briefing' (1997d); 'Because Britain

Deserves Better' (Labour Party Manifesto 1997e); 'Labour Into Power: A Framework for Partnership' (1997f); 'Leading Britain into the Future' (1997g); 'New Ambitions for Britain' (Financial Statement and Budget Report 1998a); 'State benefits' (1998b); 'The Government's Annual Report 98/9' (1999a). '21<sup>st</sup> Century Party' (1999b); 'Improving Employability' (2000a); 'Education and Employment' (2000b); 'Democracy and Citizenship' (2000c); 'Step by Step, We're Making Britain Better' (2000d); 'National Policy Forum' (2000e); 'The Civic Society' (2000f); 'The Inside Track' (2000g); 'A Community for All' (2000h); 'Inside Labour Magazine' (2001a); 'TV Benefit Fraud Campaign' (2001b); 'Inside Labour Magazine' (2001c); 'Ambitions for Britain' (2001d); 'The Choices for Britain' (2001e). Also; 'Preparing People for Adult Life' (National Advisory Group 1999) and The National Policy Forum Reports; 'Crime and Justice' (1999a) and 'Economy and Social Security' (1999b).

In addition to this, reference was also made to speeches and interviews with leading Labour Party MPs. For example, with Tony Blair: 'Forging a New Agenda' (1991); 'On the Record' (1995a); 'The Rights We Enjoy Reflect the Duties We Owe' (1995b); 'Battle for Britain' (1996a); 'Faith in the City: Ten Years On' (1996b); 'Why I am a Christian' (1996c); 'Speech given at the launch of Social Exclusion Unit' (1997); 'The Third Way: New Politics For A New Century' (1998a); Interview with David Frost (1998b); Speech on New Deal (1999a); 'Third Sector: Third Way' (1999b); 'Active Community Convention and Awards' (2000a); 'Speech on Britishness' (2000b); 'Speech at Knowledge 2000 Conference' (2000c); 'Blair Embraces Tradition' (2000d); 'Focusing on the Long-Term' (2000e); 'The civic society: opportunities and responsibilities' (2000f); 'Community For All' (2000g). With David Blunkett: 'Blunkett Pledges High Profile For Citizenship In Re-Shaped Curriculum' (1998); 'Foster Grandparents Have A Big Role To Play In Communities' (1999a); 'Need for Citizenship Underlined by Survey' (1999b); 'Empowering People and Communities for a Better Future' (1999c). Also, with John Prescott; 'Centenary Speech' (2000a); 'BBC On the Record Interview' (2000b); Jack Straw; 'Straw Sets Out New Vision of Society' (1999a); 'On The Record Interview'

(1999b); and On The Record Interview (2000); Paul Boateng ‘Get Active! - Local Projects To Take Up The Prime Minister's Millennium Challenge’ (1999); Alistair Darling; ‘Welfare Reform Bill Heralds Radical Change To Benefits Culture’ (1999a); ‘Opportunity for All’ (1999b); Roy Hattersley ‘Speech at Labour party Conference’(1984); Tessa Jowell ‘Jowell Launches High Tech Jobcentres’ (2001) and Peter Mandelson ‘On The Record Peter Mandelson Interview’ (1996).

The Department for Social Security documents are as follows: ‘Income Support for the Unemployed’ (1995); ‘Appealing Against a Decision’ (1997a); ‘Research Yearbook 1996/7’ (1997b); ‘Don’t Leave your Pension to Chance’ (1998a); ‘I’m a Lone Parent: Will I really be better off in a Job’ (1998b); ‘Beating Fraud is Everyone’s Business’ (1999a); ‘A New Contract For Welfare’ (1999b); ‘More About BA’ (1999c); ‘Customer Charter’ (1999d); ‘Borough of Broxbourne Report’ (1999e); ‘Financial Help if you are Looking for Work’ (1999f); ‘Good News if you are thinking of starting work’ (1999g); ‘Financial Help if you Work or are Looking for Work’ (1999h); ‘Looking for Work’ (1999i); ‘How Much you Could Get’ (1999j); ‘Claim Form: and notes about how to claim’ (1999k); ‘Disability Benefits Directorate’ (1999l).

Department for Education and Employment documents: ‘Looking for Work’ (1993); ‘Helping You Back to Work’ (1995a); ‘The Job Kit’ (1995b); ‘Be Better Off Working’ (1996a); ‘More Help When You Attend each Fortnight’ (1996b); ‘Statement of Earnings Form’ (1996c); ‘Learning and Working together for the future’ (1997a); ‘Just the Job’ (1997b); ‘Home School Agreements’ (1998a); ‘A New Contract for Welfare’ (1998b); ‘The Job Kit’ (1998c); ‘Helping You Back to Work’ (1998d); ‘Jobseeker’s Charter’ (1998e); ‘Jobseeker’s Charter’ (1998f); ‘Jobseeker’s Charter: Five Star Service from your Jobcentre’ (1998g); ‘Jobseekers Allowance’ (1998h); ‘Job Hunting’ (1998i); ‘Jobseeker’s Allowance: Helping You Back to Work’ (1998j); ‘Jobseeker’s Allowance: Claim Form and Notes about How to Claim’ (1998k); ‘Raising Standards: Opening Doors’ (1999a); ‘Empowering



Communities for a Better Future' (1999b); 'Looking for a Job?' (1999c); 'Jobseeker's Allowance: Helping You Back to Work' (1999d); 'Jobcentre Services: Advice, Training, Learning and Work' (2000a); 'Aims and Objectives' (2000b); 'Solo: Supporting Lone Parents Magazine' (undated). Also, the Prince's Trust 'Helping Young People Work For Themselves (Prince's Trust 2000); and the Scampion Report 'Organised Benefit Fraud' (Scampion Report 2000).

## **Chapter Four**

### **Political Context - An Overview**

#### **4.1. Significance of the JSA and New Deal**

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide readers with a brief overview of some of the key policy and discursive changes to the official discourse of unemployment and to explain the rationale behind the research. This is offered in preparation for the following chapters, which focus in far greater detail on the discursive shifts. In other words, it is the intention of this chapter to explain precisely why the changes made to the Labour Party under the leadership of Tony Blair are considered to be any more significant than those previously made by Neil Kinnock; or why the distinction has been drawn between the actual ‘Jobseekers Act’ and New Deal, and the large number of similar and earlier government policies introduced on social security and employment.

‘The Jobseekers Act’ was initially implemented under the Conservative Government in October 1996, and had consequently been running at a national level for some eight months before Labour had even been elected into power. Also, dating from the nineteen eighties, there were a wide range of Conservative driven policies aimed at transforming the basic properties behind the social security system and limiting the supply and eligibility for social security benefits. As early as 1980 the Conservatives introduced the two 1980 social security acts, which imposed a five percent cut in the level of benefit for three consecutive years and ended the automatic linking of unemployment benefits to the level of rising income levels. Also, in 1986 additional benefits for dependent children were abolished, and the three quarter and half rates of benefit for those who partially met the requirement were abolished. In 1988, the government lengthened the period of contribution required for benefit; resulting in the number of people failing to meet the requirement on this ground alone increasing from thirty four to sixty two per cent. Thus the general trend towards tightening up social security fraud and limiting eligibility had been in process for decades and consequently the JSA and New Deal could simply be described as an extension of this. Also, following the announcement of the JSA, the Labour Party continued by

making steps to not only reduce eligibility for benefit but also to alter in one way or another, the ‘ethic’ of the unemployment system. For example, they replaced family credit with a tax credit in November 1997; the following month, they proposed to cut four million pounds from lone parent child benefit; in March 1998, they announced that anyone claiming Jobseekers Allowance for six months whose partner was working more than 24 hours a week would lose their entitlement to benefit; April 1998 it was announced that all lone parents would have the choice of entering the New Deal; and in May 1999 the Benefit Fraud Hotline was launched Edinburgh together with the new DSS Benefit fraud Website.

Thus there are two primary concerns that need to be addressed in this section, a) why the focus of this research is on New Labour in particular and why the discourse of the ‘jobseeker’ as articulated by New Labour is different from that articulated by the Conservatives; and b) why the JSA and New Deal are considered to be significantly different from policies that have either preceded or followed them and consequently, why they have been isolated for analysis.<sup>1</sup>

#### **4.2. Role of Kinnock Leadership**

It is important not to disregard the major structural changes that Kinnock made to the Labour Party throughout the 1980s (Jones 1996b:129). In his efforts to make Labour more electable, he had attempted to lead the Party into becoming more favourable to the idea of a mixed economy and more socially-democratic and pro-European (ibid). Jones argues that ‘Kinnock’s achievement in ideological terms was to ensure for Labour a gradual transition from traditional state socialism to a variant of European Social Democracy’ (ibid). However, it is argued that it was not until the emergence of the JSA and the policy changes that accompanied it in the mid 1990s that the

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<sup>1</sup> The argument here is not that the shift in the management of employment policy can in any way be isolated to specific dates such as November 1993 when the JSA was announced for the first time, October 1996 when it was introduced at the national level, or in May 1997 when New Labour came into power. Instead it is argued that there has been a comparatively gradual shift in the management of unemployment policy dating very approximately from around the mid nineteen nineties.

social policy of the Labour Party in the late twentieth century began its most significant transformation. The initiatory role that the Kinnock leadership may or may not have played in these structural changes will be discussed in detail later in this work, but is of interest only in terms of the influence it had for the changes under New Labour, and not as an example of a major structural transformation in its own right.

#### **4.3. Role of New Labour**

Given that social security policy aimed at reducing benefit dependency and increasing individual responsibility has been an ongoing Tory policy for some years, the JSA could be interpreted as being simply a continuation of those policies. However, what distinguishes this policy from that that has gone before is that not only are the new coercive powers afforded to benefit advisors quite unprecedented, but that this approach has also been wholeheartedly adopted by the Labour Party. Although initiated under the Conservative Government, the JSA has undergone spirited development under the government of New Labour, and it was New Labour that announced the New Deal in 1998. The Labour Party (under the leaderships of Foot, Kinnock and Smith) had hitherto tended far more towards notions of social democracy and placed less emphasis on benefit sanctions and crackdowns on benefit fraud. Thus the JSA and New Deal is seen as all the more interesting given the enormous Labour Party involvement.

#### **4.4. Conflicting Conservative and Labour Discourses of the 'Jobseeker'**

In order to explain why the focus of this research is on 'New Labour' in particular, some explanation needs to be offered of the different ways in which the Conservative and Labour Party had problematised the issue of unemployment. The first point regarding this is that there is a substantial difference in the various discourses of unemployment and the ways in which the unemployed subject, or 'jobseeker' has been articulated and understood. For example, under the

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Conservatives, the JSA had two primary objectives, a) the reduction of unemployment via the offer of advice and training on how to increase general employability; and b) a deterrent, the reduction of social security fraud, and the imposing of the need for unemployed claimants to actively seek work. It is this latter objective that, at least in terms of rhetoric has been prioritised differently under the New Labour Government.

For the Conservative Party, great emphasis is placed on the importance of enhancing individual responsibility, and on the duties the jobseeker had to the taxpayer. Despite the fact that the Labour Party also stress the importance of individuals being responsible for their own employability, instead of describing the JSA and New Deal in terms of its role as a deterrent, they are much keener to stress its role for making individuals 'employable' and consequently, their key words are: 'empowering', 'enabling', and 'realising full opportunity'. This is not to say that the Labour Party do not also outline the importance of individual responsibility and the duties the jobseeker has to the taxpayer and the community as a whole, but that the emphasis is different. This issue is discussed in far more detail in the body of the thesis.

#### **4.5. The Limits of Government**

Another area for concern is the extent to which this shift in policy can be described as being unique to the UK or as indicative of a more global trend. New Labour have become obliged to rethink the role of the economy in order to operate effectively within the globalized world, whereby capital is seen as being mobile and 'demand is affected by factors beyond national boundaries' (Driver and Martell 1998:42). It is argued now that individual nation states focus primarily on supply side economics as they now have little control over demand management. This is seen in the emphasis New Labour place on the importance of maintaining a competitive, highly skilled and efficient workforce. There is also great pressure placed on governments to effectively balance taxation, spending and inflation so they remain comparable with competitor countries. This demand for enhanced employment flexibility is essential

for economic survival in the global economy and as such, the emphasis New Labour place on the skills challenge and enterprise community can be understood largely as a necessary response to the changing global market. Hirst and Thompson argue that there is much debate concerning the effect of globalization over the nation state and some theorists argue that ‘The nation-state has ceased to be an effective economic manager. It can only provide those social and public services deemed essential by international capital at the lowest possible overhead cost’ (Hirst and Thompson 1999:261).

#### **4.6. Transatlantic Relationship**

There are also strong links to be drawn between the management of unemployment in the UK and the US. Firstly, the patterns of unemployment within Britain and the United States are very similar, as both countries suffer from a disproportionately large amount of part-time and short term employment. For example, in the UK, only thirty per cent of the population ‘capable of gainful employment are fully employed in the classical sense of the term’ (compared with sixty per cent in Germany) (Beck 2000:58). Attempts to cure the hybrid unemployment that characterises the unemployment situation in both the UK and the US have involved the ‘flexibilisation of paid employment’, the effect being that the unemployment problem has to some extent been ‘concealed’ rather than cured by the creation of large grey areas of temporary and part time work (ibid). Within these countries, the problem has been a question of redistributing unemployment as well as redistributing work, as the majority of the population hold jobs in the ‘grey’ area, consisting of part-time work, short-term contracts and the so-called ‘junk jobs’ (ibid).

However, comparisons between Britain and the US extend beyond the fact that they suffer from similar forms of unemployment, in that they have also adopted similar approaches to dealing with their respective unemployment problems. Dating from the Reagan and Thatcher administrations, there has been a notable similarity in terms of their unemployment and economic policy in that both administrations drew on

‘radical’ economic doctrines (King 1987:136). Despite this, much of these similarities are centred around the strong New Right influence that occupied the Reagan administrations in relation to his social policy, and can only be stressed in fairly broad, general terms (also, the term ‘New Right’ differed in meaning, as the US, saw it as being far more closely associated with moral rather than economic arguments).

More recently, a stronger link has been drawn between the policies developed by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton. Notwithstanding this, one should always proceed with a degree of caution when drawing comparisons in social policy between these two nations, given their huge social differences. For example, welfare coverage is markedly different between the UK and the US, and ethnic minorities generally suffer more disproportionately under the US system than the UK.

Giddens describes the policy objectives adopted by the Blair and Clinton administration as ‘Third Way Politics’ (Giddens 1998). For him, third way politics looks for a new relationship between the individual and the community, a redefinition of rights and obligations’, suggesting an appropriate motto for this political group would be ‘no rights without responsibilities’ (ibid:65). The more recent adoption of the ‘third way’ by Clinton and Blair is said to have received a relatively lukewarm reception from both the social democrats, and the old left critics in both the US and the UK respectively. In the US, (a nation which despite having a highly dynamic economy, remains a society with the most extreme levels of inequality in the developed world) the third way is interpreted as simply being ‘warmed over neoliberalism’ (ibid:25). Similarly, some of Blair’s critics claim that New Labour have simply pursued the economic policies of Margaret Thatcher (ibid).

Despite some negative responses, there remains an interesting connection between the policies of Blair and Clinton. The term now used in New Labour social security

literature, ‘welfare to work’ is itself borrowed from the US. In the US, on August 22 1996, ‘The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996’ was made law, the implications being that ‘work’ was now required in exchange for benefit or ‘time-limited assistance’. Since then, the Clinton administration took numerous steps to ensure that the act was successful, resulting in the welfare caseload falling by 3.4 million recipients, from 14.1 million in January 1993 to 10.7 million in May 1997. When the Act became law, Bill Clinton stated:

‘... this legislation provides an historic opportunity to end welfare as we know it and transform our broken welfare system by promoting the fundamental values of work, responsibility, and family’ (Cited in HHS Press Office 1997).

Similarly, also in 1997, the Labour Party published a document stating:

‘The basis of a modern civic society is an ethic of mutual responsibility or duty; a society where you only take out what you put in. In concrete terms, that means reforming the welfare state so that government help people to help themselves...’ (Labour Party Policy Briefing 1997d:3).

There remains a relatively strong link between the social policies developed by the Clinton and Blair governments and consequently it is important to remember that the current social policy developments that are the subject of this work are very much *not* isolated to the UK. However, owing to obvious time and space constraints, this work remains concerned principally with the shift in unemployment policy in relation to the British ‘Jobseeker’, and with the exception of occasional references to either the American and European experience, the focus will be first and foremost on the British experience.



#### **4.7. New Labour and the New 'Community'**

One of the key areas of interest in New Labour is the use of 'community' as a technique of governance and it is argued that their notion of 'communitarianism' signifies the fundamental shift away from an economic interpretation of social inclusion towards an 'ethical' or value based notion of social inclusion. Arguably, the meaning of 'community' has undergone a shift from social rights and a paternalist state, towards a relationship of 'community' that is strictly conditional on self-help and individual responsibility. For example, Maor argues that 'New Labour is now more concerned with a moralistic community - society held together by strongly shared values' (Maor 1997:163). In terms of crime, parenting and social welfare, these values are seen as less progressive and more conservative than they have been in the past. In relation to parenting for example, there are clear rules concerning the expected responsibilities of parents. This can be identified in the announcement in 1999 by Jack Straw that fathers are to make more of a financial contribution to their children's upbringing, which includes those fathers who are unemployed, where it was announced that £5 a week would be taken from their benefit in order to go towards the upbringing of their child. Also, a report by the National Advisory Group on Personal, Social and Health Education outlines how schools can prepare young people to meet the challenges of adult life (National Advisory Group 1999). On the report, Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett said: 'It is important that young people learn about the value of family life, including marriage, good parenting and stable relationships. It is also important for them to have the opportunities to play a positive part in the life of their school, neighbourhood and communities' (ibid). Also in June 1998, speaking at a consultative conference of the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools, Mr Blunkett argued that citizenship should be included in the National Curriculum and that:

‘An understanding of our democracy is a pre-requisite for its continued health. Linking the personal development, the moral, the spiritual, the cultural and the physical, to the development of active citizenship, is crucial if we are to maintain the lifeblood of our democratic system. Active participation and involvement in civil society, together with an understanding of and willingness to contribute to representative democracy, will be vital if we are to stem the tide of apathy’ (Blunkett 1998).

Driver and Martell argue that ‘there has been a shift in Labour’s communitarianism to a revised meaning: increasingly conditional on duties, morally prescriptive, conservative and focused on the individual’. They go on to argue that this has been at the expense of the previous redistributive, rights-based and collectivist notions of community (Driver and Martell 1998:163). In this sense, the articulation of community affords it the authority to become the police of social control and morality.

The notion of ‘community’ is employed as a technique of governance and is applicable to Foucault’s notion of bio-power, whereby whole populations are routinely controlled and categorised via the act of surveillance. Significantly, bio-power is exercised from within society rather than from above it (Layder 1994:101). According to Foucault, power is now concentrated on the ‘soul’ of individuals, through examination and confession, the consequences being that an individual becomes a describable, analysable object, or a ‘case’. This is identified in the various techniques employed that label individuals no longer as simply ‘individuals’, but instead they are objectified as parents, citizens, neighbours, and ‘members’ of the community - with each title having a specific function, and obligation to perform in a specific way, and being further incorporated into the domain of power.

#### **4.8. Role of Coercion**

Notwithstanding the clear communitarianism inherent within the discourse of unemployment, there is also a strong level of coercion. The government of the unemployed has always involved some degree of coercion, and countless analyses of unemployment have drawn comparisons to contemporary forms of government and the nineteenth century Poor Laws, with the distinctions between deserving and undeserving poor. More recent analyses have outlined the moral agendas clearly identified in Conservative attempts to reduce the supply and eligibility for benefit and to emphasise the individual rather than the economic reasons for unemployment. However, as well as the techniques of the self, the discourse also adopts disciplinary techniques and there is a profound coercive element to the JSA that clearly distinguishes it from other recent policy changes made to the social security system. Benefit can now be withheld if officers believe that jobseeker's are not making themselves 'presentable' for work and the power that claimant advisers are equipped with (reinforced by the 'Jobseeker's Agreement' and the 'Jobseeker's Direction') enables them to direct in many ways the behaviour and even appearance of the jobseeker.

Under the JSA, all claimants are required to sign a detailed 'Jobseeker's Agreement', where they specify precisely what they will be doing to look for work, what jobs they will be looking for, what level of pay they are prepared to accept, the number of employers they will write to each week, what telephone calls they will make, what newspapers they will read, when they will attend the Job Centre, and so on. The Jobseeker's Direction enables advisors to force those not adhering to their Jobseeker's Agreement into a plethora of training and motivation schemes as jobseeker's are also required to improve their employability through attending courses designed to improve job seeking skills and motivation. Also significant is the 'Restart Interview', a 'compulsory re-motivation programme' that aims to rebuild the confidence of the jobseeker and offer extensive training and advice on jobseeking skills. This programme has received an increasingly cold reception as it is criticised for being ineffectual and failure to attend (without good reason) results

in benefit sanctions (Murray 1995:20). It is argued throughout this thesis that the coercive nature of this policy shift is significant enough to separate it from any previous employment policies passed by government within the last few decades.

The Jobseeker's Act and New Deal do not only have the effect of inviting the individual to undergo some form of 'character improvement' or to conform to some predetermined response, it also places strong emphasis on the specific, practical obligation to actively seek out and secure employment (Blair 1996b). Paid work is a highly significant element to New Labour's entire welfare reform project and since coming to power they have been heavily engaged in a number of policies designed to prevent 'worklessness'. Significantly, after the JSA was introduced, unemployment has fallen from 2,254,000 in July 1995 to 1,406,000 in March 1998. These results cannot be claimed to simply represent an increase in employment opportunities, as for the same period the vacancy rate increased from 181,000 (July 1995) to 284,000 (March 1998) (Steele 1999:12). A significant element to the New Deal and JSA is the emphasis on compulsion, the consequent increase in benefit sanctions and the targeting of fraud. Sanctions are imposed on jobseekers for a number of reasons such as: leaving employment voluntarily without 'just cause'; losing employment through misconduct; refusing employment without just cause; failure to carry out a Jobseeker's Direction without just cause; failure to sign on; or refusing or failing to attend a prescribed training scheme or employment programmes. The targeting of fraud is also a major element to New Labour's policy, and official reports estimate that fraud in the benefits system amounts to around two billion pounds a year, which the government intends to reduce by fifty per cent by 2006 (Labour Party 2001b). The monitoring and investigation of fraud within the Benefits Agency is conducted by the 'Benefits Agency Security Investigation Service', officially formed in April 1998 it has a staff of about four hundred, about fifty per cent of which are 'investigators'. Significantly, the performance indicators of these staff are 'outcome related', according to the number of sanctions they achieve (Scampton Report 2000:8).

It is argued that the central objective behind unemployment policy is to enhance the employability of those not engaged in paid employment in order to reintegrate them into the labour market and that the primary targets of this approach are the youth and long-term unemployed (Campbell 2000:28). However, there is also extensive 'assistance' offered to those jobseekers considered to be more at risk, such as those with literacy or numeracy problems, people with a disability and lone parents. Welfare benefits are conditional on jobseekers demonstrating they are available for and actively seeking work. As soon as an individual registers for jobseekers allowance they have to attend an interview where they must state what sorts of work they are prepared to take and what specific measures they will take in order to obtain it. After this there are shorter interviews conducted every fortnight in order to review the jobsearch activity, and another in-depth interview after thirteen weeks and six months. After six months, there are a wider range of options available such as 'work trials', 'programme centre participation' (help with writing a CV and performance at interview) and the 'job interview guarantee scheme' (Campbell 2000:29). It is argued that there is an underlying shift in the way unemployment is governed and the 'unemployed' are categorised and managed. With this, there are greater demands placed on jobseekers to be in control of their own governance and a far greater emphasis on communitarianism; as jobseekers are now required to become responsible in order to satisfy the demands of the 'community'. Given that so much of this thesis rests upon the claim that there has been a dramatic shift in the way unemployment is managed, it follows that some considerable attention needs to be devoted to the 'problem' of unemployment, as articulated under previous Governments and administrations during the nineteen eighties and nineteen nineties. Sections one and two of the following chapter attempt to provide a explanation of the government of unemployment before the introduction of the JSA and New Deal.

## **Chapter Five: Section One**

### **Analysis of the Problem of Unemployment**

There have been many theories and ideas that have attempted to explain the changes that have occurred to the structure of the British welfare state within the past couple of decades. The fundamental rationale behind this work is that there has been an underlying transformation made to the way in which the issue of unemployment has been addressed since the introduction of the Jobseeker's Act in 1996. Given this rationale, there is an unquestionable necessity for a sizeable amount of effort to be devoted to attempting to understand the discourse behind the social policy acts and the ways in which the basic principles developed in the years immediately running up to the advent of the Jobseekers Act.

#### **5.1. Methods**

This chapter falls into two sections, the first section identifies the primary themes and various political, economic and social developments that were current in the political climate of the 1980s and early 1990s and the second attempts to construct a more thorough discourse analysis of a smaller selection of political documents in order to identify the specific techniques and textual manoeuvres employed within the text. In other words, the intention is firstly to identify the themes that were relevant to the various political parties and, with these themes in mind, to construct a more specifically located discourse analysis of two particular party political documents in an attempt to identify how these themes were incorporated into specific texts, and how the text is able to manage itself. This approach borrows from both a Foucaultian and a more textually located discourse analysis in that it is concerned with both identifying the various themes of a discourse, whilst also identifying the various rhetorical manoeuvres in order to identify the possible 'effects' the text has on the reader. Without the initial identification of these various themes, it is difficult to know which texts to choose for examination. The advantage of incorporating both of these approaches is that they add weight to each other in a mutually supportive role in that the Foucaultian approach should add insight and theoretical grounding to the

textual analysis, and the textual analysis will add weight and validation to the Foucaultian approach (Stenson and Watt 1999).

The initial themes are identified through the reading and re-reading of the relevant official documentation. The papers subject to this method of analysis are a selection of party political documents from both the Conservative and the Labour Party, ranging from approximately the earlier part of the nineteen eighties, up to the middle of the nineteen nineties. Analysis of texts earlier than nineteen eighty has not been conducted in any great depth. This decision is defended by the fact that within most analysis it is necessary to draw a dividing line between what is strictly relevant and what is to be excluded from the analysis, and it is considered that texts pre-dating 1980, in terms of available time, although not *irrelevant* would be more usefully used in a general discussion of employment policy rather than in the more specifically located discourse analysis such as that proposed here. Conversely, the second section of this chapter consists of a more extensive analysis of two carefully selected party political documents, one from the Labour Party and one from the Conservative Party. The intention behind this is to examine how the themes discussed are actually incorporated into the specific texts, and also to identify the discursive effects of the text<sup>1</sup>.

### **5.1.1. Historical Background**

This chapter discusses the discourse of the Labour and the Conservative Party in relation to unemployment during the 1980s and early 1990s through a discourse analysis of relevant Party Manifestos and official publications. In order to undertake

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<sup>1</sup> As already outlined, this research is concerned with the shift in the discourse of the unemployed that has been witnessed principally (although not exclusively) under the government of 'New Labour'. With this in mind, it may appear irrelevant to conduct an analysis of Conservative Party documents in what is essentially an analysis of the Labour Party. The decision to include the Conservative Party in this analysis was taken in the belief that it would help identify the extent to which the Conservatives influenced the themes and ideals behind Labour and New Labour. The significance of Thatcherism in affecting much of the structure of British politics and decision making both in the 1980s and 1990s was substantial and is consequently of direct relevance to this level of analysis.

this, there will be a section detailing ‘themes’ identified from the documentation. This section can be loosely compared to, in Foucaultian terms, an ‘Archaeology’. The term ‘archaeology’ has previously been used to distinguish Foucault’s analysis from more conventional approaches to historical research and focuses on the conditions of possibility and the rules of formation (Foucault 1972). For example, in the ‘Archaeology of Knowledge’, Foucault discussed discursive formations and the creation of areas of knowledge, as he was keen to uncover the basic conditions that make a specific discourse possible (Foucault 1972; Sheridan 1980).

‘The archaeological analysis of the conditions of possibility of the human sciences was meant to reveal the rules of formation, the regularities, and modes of organisation of thought which lay beneath particular formations of knowledge’ (Smart 1985:37).

An archaeology signifies a different level of analysis, one which does not only focus on the historical formation of ideas, but on the conditions in which a subject (eg. the mad, sick, delinquent, unemployed) is constituted as a possible object of knowledge (Smart 1985). These studies are directed towards an understanding of the present, a history of the present through an analysis of the ‘conditions of possibility’. The ‘archaeology’ consists of ‘a set of rules of formation that determine the conditions of possibility of all that can be said within the particular discourse at any given time’ (Foucault 1972, Sheridan 1980:48). These rules of formation do not ‘define’ an object, but instead they enable it to exist. Thus the events that were occurring under the leaderships of Thatcher, Major and Kinnock during the 1980s and early 1990s and the ways in which they served to construct the unemployed as an ‘object’ of knowledge essentially formed the conditions of possibility for the later construction of the ‘Jobseeker’. Something emerges as knowledge and therefore truth because the relations of power exist such that a particular way of thinking things is able to be dominant. In relation to this, it is important to remember that ‘truth’ is contingent, it is not outside relations of power.



‘Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of true: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements...’ (Foucault 1980:131).

Within this research the object of the ‘Jobseeker’ is to be regarded as an object of discourse, contingent, and based upon relations of power (Watts 1997:13). In this sense the archaeological analysis is designed to trace back the emergence of the jobseeker by analysing the surfaces of emergence that precipitates and provides a context for its appearance (Foucault 1972).

### **5.1.2. Statements**

In relation to the archaeology, Foucault spoke of what he termed ‘statements’ (Foucault 1972). Using the familiar analogy of the French typewriter, Foucault claimed that the letter sequence ‘AZERT’ as it appears on the typewriter is in itself, not a statement, but the presentation of this layout in a typing manual as, ‘the alphabetical order adopted by French typewriters’ is (Foucault 1972, Barrett 1991, Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). For Foucault, a ‘statement’ is not simply an utterance or an ‘everyday’ speech act, such as ‘please shut the door’, or ‘the cat is on the mat’. What constitutes a statement is the context in which it is articulated. Dreyfus and Rabinow argue that Foucault was not interested in all statements (known to philosophers Austin and Searle as ‘everyday speech acts’), (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), but only in a subset of statements which have some autonomy and contain truth claims (Barrett 1991:129; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). This form of speech act was said to have flourished in Greece in 300 BC when Plato displayed interest in ‘the rules that enabled speakers to be taken seriously’ (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982:48). Within these speech acts ‘...an authorised subject asserts (writes, paints, says) what - on the basis of an accepted method - is a serious truth claim’ (Dreyfus

and Rabinow 1982:48). Dreyfus and Rabinow refers to these ‘special’ speech acts (or ‘statements’) as ‘serious speech acts’. For them, the comments ‘it is going to rain’ is of ordinary significance within the context of everyday speech, but when uttered in the context of the National Weather Service, it becomes a ‘serious speech act’. It is the unity or regularity of these ‘statements’ or ‘groups of statements’ that creates the discourse, or a ‘discursive formation’. Foucaultian analysis of speech acts are concerned with the relationships and regularities that these ‘serious speech acts’ exhibit with each other (known as ‘discursive formations’) and an archaeological analysis focuses on ‘what is actually said or written and how it fits into the discursive formation’ (ibid:49).

### **5.1.3. Practicalities**

Invariably, within all analysis, a variety of difficulties must be anticipated. One such difficulty concerns the question of how much influence the various texts subject to examination here could be said to have had over the general populace and one could argue that the comments and objectives identified within any political party manifesto may actually have limited significance over the value systems of any given society. This issue is taken up by Phillips, who claims to be able to draw a link between what she terms the ‘macro-processes of social and cultural change’ with the ‘micro-processes of everyday language use’ (Phillips 1996:209). She argues that the rhetoric used within a given genre is invariably taken up by the mass media and the public, which results in the discourse of the genre penetrating into the language usage of individuals. Similarly the contention here is that party political documents constitute what is essentially an important area of discourse in that the intention behind these papers is to aid the political party’s prospects in terms of electoral success or continued support. Consequently the promises and opinions expressed in these papers could well be said to be indicative of the contemporary political climate, if not have a role to play (even if not directly) in the ways in which individuals conduct themselves.

Another problem anticipated within this piece of research is concerning the expected consistency between party political texts when in and out of office. For example, a text produced by a party who was not in power is unlikely to be as significant as one produced by the Government given that the party has not been democratically elected and consequently can not be said to be operating with the support or backing of the electorate. The main sample of texts used in this analysis that were actually produced by a party in opposition are those from the Labour Party from 1979 to 1995, and in defence it is argued that although the Conservative Party were in government, they were not necessarily ever fully endorsed by the 'majority' of the population. For example, in 1981, Mrs Thatcher was receiving the lowest opinion poll ratings ever recorded for a Prime Minister and in 1982 only thirty six per cent were satisfied with her as prime minister, rising to forty seven percent after the Falklands war (King 1987). Moreover, in Glasgow in 1987, only twelve per cent of the population voted for Conservative, compared with sixty two per cent voting Labour (Magee 1988).

There are also problems concerning the consistency between texts produced by a party when in and out of office, in that a party in office is under greater pressure to present new policies for dealing with problems and defend its position. Conversely, a party out of office is under less pressure in terms of providing solutions for the country's problems and is far more at liberty to criticise the failures of the Government. Despite this being a valid concern of this research, it is believed that to simply ignore the wide supply of documentation produced by the Labour Party during its long period out of office, would, in practical terms, do nothing but dramatically restrict the scope and validity of this research. Working with the assumption made earlier, that political texts produced by leading parties are in some way indicative of a contemporary political climate, it is considered that the advantages to be gained from subjecting Labour Party documentation to the analysis proposed here will far outweigh any disadvantages concerning inconsistency. It is for this reason that the texts produced by the Labour Party whilst out of office are also analysed in this section.

#### **5.1.4. Objectivity**

Another area of concern for this research is the extent to which it can remain objective. The intention is to refrain from temptations to interpret the data in terms that have already been decided due to existing preconceptions concerning the nature of the political genres about the various ways of approaching, theorising, and dealing with unemployment. In other words, the intention is to allow the ‘text’ to dictate what themes are to be included as much as possible, rather than to decide on prominent themes beforehand and to look for them within the text. There are obvious problems with this approach, in that all researchers have certain preconceptions, regardless of efforts to remain objective. Potter and Wetherell note that:

‘It is now taken for granted that any observation of the physical or social world is imbued with theoretical interpretation’ (Potter and Wetherell 1987:158).

According to Silverman, a researcher’s ‘prior definition of concepts and hypotheses may impose meaning on social relations which fails to pay proper attention to participant’s meanings’ (Silverman 1985:3). Silverman goes on to say that, according to Popper (Popper 1972), when conducting research, one way of being critical is to seek to refute assumed relations between phenomena, which means overcoming the temptation to ‘jump to easy conclusions just because there is some evidence that leads in an interesting direction’ (Silverman 1985:20). This is an area of concern for this research and it is not the intention of this work to claim to have conducted a thoroughly objective analysis, free from preconceptions and expectation; it is more that this work has attempted to minimise the risk of preconceptions as far as possible. One way of minimising this event, has included the searching for ‘deviant cases’, which involves coding the data collected and continually modifying the coding scheme until all of the data fits easily into the

scheme (Silverman 1985). Potter and Wetherell say of coding that its goal ‘is not to find results, but to squeeze an unwieldy body of discourse into manageable chunks’ (Potter and Wetherell 1987:167). They go on to say that in terms of coding, there will be occasions when the exact area of interest will not become immediately clear until a considerable amount of coding has already taken place. Conversely, if the subject area is a fairly straightforward one (they use the example of community), then the coding should select all references to community, and that this should be done as inclusively as possible (ibid).

#### **5.1.5. Identifying ‘Themes’**

The coding scheme was adopted here, in that the research was conducted by the reading, re-reading and also grouping of official governmental documentation (ie. Manifesto’s; Governmental Reports). All references made to the issue of unemployment that were found were copied and placed into a separate file. The chosen themes were not decided prior to conducting the research, but after reading and re-reading the documents it was concluded that the information would be more than adequately covered by the following categories. The issues/categories were: a) full employment; b) building the economy; c) the monitoring of wage levels and the removal of employment barriers; d) and the emphasis on private responsibilities/self-help. After analysis began of these categories, it was decided that some were in many ways either not large enough to warrant a ‘theme’, or were slightly tautologous and were consequently removed. These included: programmes offering a financial incentive to find employment; emphasis on preventing benefit fraud, and imposing benefit restrictions; and the emphasis on, or emphasis away from compulsion.

In constructing these categories, there were a variety of considerations to be made in terms of how large a collection of ideas would need to be before it can be seen as a ‘category’. There are no clearly defining rules in answer to this question and it is the opinion here that rules of this sort would in any case be inappropriate. Fortunately, upon reading the texts it became almost immediately clear as to roughly what the

categories should be and the categories were created when it was considered that a specific area had been referred to enough times for it to easily constitute a ‘theme’ (Billig and Condor 1988, cited in Fairclough 1995).

It was decided that in the interests of clarity and a systematic approach these categories should be approached in order of the sections outlined earlier, firstly; statements concerning the possible solutions to unemployment, for example: the institutional and structural factors, such as re-establishing full employment, building the economic wealth of the country, the monitoring of wage levels and the removal of regulatory barriers and the individual and cultural factors such as: re-establishing private responsibilities to find employment.

## **5.2. The Management of ‘Unemployment’: Key Themes**

### **5.2.1. Full Employment**

One of the principal categories identified within the texts was that of full employment. References to full employment were only found in Labour Party texts as the Conservatives preferred to believe unemployment levels could be reduced not by pursuing full employment policies, but by creating ‘the conditions in which business can prosper and create new jobs’ (Conservative Party Manifesto 1989). Before the Labour references can be discussed in detail, some attention must be paid to the somewhat ambiguous meaning of ‘full employment’, as it is not considered to be a term ‘which can be very precisely defined’ (Stewart 1969:301). The Keynesian economic policies that dominated during the war disagreed with the more orthodox nineteenth century belief that full employment was the normal state of affairs and would naturally return. Instead, Keynes had argued that it was the responsibility of governments to bring about full employment. During the war, Beveridge defined full employment as ‘a rate of unemployment of no more than 3 per cent’ and Stewart describes full employment as being present when ‘virtually everybody who wants a job either has one or can get one without much difficulty’ (Stewart 1969:301). Consequently, it is important to remember that ‘full employment’ has never been

granted a universally accepted definition and is contingent, according to the current political and economic climate.

There were a variety of references to full employment found in the Labour Party documents, ranging between 1980 and as late as 1994. For example the 1980 the Labour Party Manifesto read:

‘Our priorities may thus be simply stated: to restore and maintain full employment’ (Labour Party 1980:5).

and:

‘The highest priority for the next Labour Government will be the restoration and maintenance of full employment’ (Labour 1980:6).

After reading the collection of Labour Party documents, it became clear that for the Labour Party, full employment was a significant policy objective and considered to be in the best interests of the nation. However, some variations were found in the way in which the issue of full employment had been addressed. In 1982, the link is made between full employment, economic prosperity and democracy:

‘Centred on the goal of full employment, it links together policies to expand the economy, measures to get jobs for those who need them most, planning of our trade and international capital movements, price controls to check inflation and an industrial strategy for planned recovery and greater democracy’ (Labour Party 1982c:12).

Here the implied relationship is one of expert and client, with the subject position being less one of 'unemployed person', but 'entrepreneur', 'businessman', or 'commercial player'. Full employment was also frequently referred to in more social and less economic terms. For example the 1980 the Labour Party Manifesto read:

'Britain needs a new Government...A Government able to build our industry and create the jobs we need to restore full employment. Above all, Britain needs a Government committed to the principles of social justice and equality, to co-operation and democracy in industry, to putting the needs of the poor and the sick before the demands of the healthy rich' (Labour Party 1980:3).

This quotation is in many ways a more representative example of the way in which full employment was referred to from the selected texts in the beginning of the 1980s. Within this quotation, the use of emotive and persuasive language is interesting in that it offers some indication as to what exact position the issue of full employment held in terms of Labour Party policy. The use of such emotive language and phrases such as 'restore full employment', placed alongside 'social justice', 'equality', 'co-operation', 'democracy', 'needs of the poor', is important in that these issues concerning social justice, equality and democracy are all constituents of citizenship. Thus, by placing the concept of full employment alongside these issues, the indication is that Labour considered full employment to be of equal importance to one's civil liberty and that the creation of full employment was in many ways a necessary constituent of social justice, democracy and equality. With this approach, the issue of full employment is removed from the more economically driven expert and client relationship, and instead is presented as a social issue. This carries implicit subject positions of government and citizen, with the unemployed person being



‘citizen’, ‘community member’ and the state policy makers as being ‘guardians’. Similarly, speaking of ending mass unemployment, it was also written:

‘...we believe that the British people, working together with a Labour Government, can face the future with confidence and hope - that we can, together, create the conditions for full employment, prosperity and peace’ (Labour Party 1980:4).

Also,

‘...it will also reduce the **human** costs of unemployment - the poverty, the broken homes, the increase in illness and suicides’ (Labour Party 1983:8) (emphasis in original).

There are other examples identified within the documents where there is a pronounced connection between issues of full employment and social justice. In 1982, the link is more between full employment and improved social factors:

‘What we do want is the opportunity for all who wish to work to have employment available, combined with greater leisure, greater security and improved living standards’ (Labour Party 1982a:4).

This link between full employment and improved social factors is surrounded by terms such as ‘opportunity’, ‘greater leisure’, ‘greater security’, and ‘improved living standards’. It is worth note that the text also states that it requests full employment for those ‘who wish to work’, which avoids any bearing on issues of

compulsion, in that full employment is seen as an issue that is desirable for the nation as opposed to one that is surrounded with fears of compulsion and benefit sanctions for those who do not take up work offered. This issue of compulsion in relation to full employment is identified yet again in another document. For example:

‘Our objective is simply that work should be available *for those who wish to take it*. This is what we mean by full employment - not a zero level of unemployment but a level which is no greater than the level of vacancies’  
(The Labour Party 1982c:12) (emphasis added).

At the start of the 1980’s, the issue of full employment appeared to be comparable with social justice, democracy, and improved conditions (both economic and social). Full employment is presented as a fundamental right of citizenship. However, from the texts selected, after the mid 1980s with the election of Neil Kinnock as Labour Party Leader the issue of full employment is afforded much less prominence than it was earlier, to the point that one could argue it is conspicuous by its absence. However, although not referring to the ‘phrase’ full employment, in the 1987 Labour Party Manifesto, Labour did promise to reduce unemployment by one million in the first two years. This would have been done by increasing public sector expenditure and the creation of three hundred thousand extra jobs in the health and education services. These promises despite failing to make much of an impact, indicated a return to the policies of the pre-Thatcherite period. It is important to remember, that although the policy of full employment was not being emphasised or broadcast, there were still efforts made by Labour after the 1983 election defeat to convince the electorate that they remained committed to the reduction of unemployment at a national level. Only one other reference to full employment was identified during Neil Kinnock’s leadership, although it took on a different form from those references already discussed:

‘Labour is determined to achieve *the fullest level of employment possible*’  
(Labour Party 1992a:17) (emphasis added).

In isolation, the extract indicates a reluctance on behalf of the Labour Party to continue to pursue the policy of full employment. Although this reluctance was not articulated in many other documents or speeches, given the distinct absence of assurances from Labour that they were committed to full employment following this period, one could suggest they were beginning to believe full employment may not be a viable policy objective. Also, given the apparent importance full employment appeared to hold for the Labour Party during the 1980s, one could argue there is fair evidence to suggest that (in so far as the official Labour Party line was concerned), the issue had ceased to be considered a viable solution for unemployment. Arguably, one possible explanation for this is the fact that almost immediately after the 1983 election defeat, Michael Foot announced his intention to retire and was replaced by Neil Kinnock, who appeared to be welcomed by the Labour members, hoping he would bring a fresh start and an end to the feuding within the Labour Party. However, this explanation is questionable, as there remains some doubt over the extent of the changes that were enacted under Kinnock’s leadership (Pelling and Reid 1996).

There is also an element of discrepancy in that years later, on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1994 as a contender for the Labour Party leadership, John Prescott (described as one of the ‘leading traditionalists in the mid 1990s’) (Pelling and Reid 1996:187) proposed a commission for full employment as the centre-piece of his Labour Party Manifesto (The Economist 1994:27). Also in 1994 after John Smith had been elected as the Labour Party leader and shortly before his death, he issued a ‘Commission on Social Justice’ which argued for the need to pursue the policy of full employment (Labour Party 1994). Explanation for this is varied. Owing to John Smith’s short period as leader of the Labour Party and the fact that he never managed to become leader of

the party whilst in government, one could argue that he had been unable to have long enough to have had an impact on the Labour Party comparable to that of either Neil Kinnock or Tony Blair. Despite this, there is every indication that there was some degree of tension within the party regarding the role of full employment.

Also significant is the fact that the 2001 Labour Party Election Manifesto has made clear references to the issue of full employment. However, under New Labour, references to full employment are tightly coupled with the rights / responsibilities exchange contract, stating: 'Our ambition of full employment is part of a deal: if you put in a fair day's work, the government will ensure you are able to support yourself and your family' (Labour 2001d:26). Similarly, under the subheading 'Full Employment: Labour's Goal' the Manifesto reads: 'With Labour, the welfare state helps people into work, makes work pay, supports them at work, and demands responsibilities in return' (Labour 2001d:26). Thus although full employment is articulated as being a right of full citizenship, it is heavily encased in the right and responsibilities exchange contract and these citizenship rights are not unconditional, but dependent upon the individual becoming 'active' rather than 'passive' citizens.

### **5.2.2. Economic Growth**

Another issue that was presented as holding the key to solving unemployment was the emphasis on economic growth and the expansion of the economy; this was an important area of the discourse for both the Conservative and Labour Party. Mr Lawson was quoted as saying in 1987:

'The best hope of all for the unemployed is the continued vigour of the economy' (Hansard 1987: Col. 816).

Similarly, the Labour Party Manifesto in 1983 claimed:

‘Economic expansion will make it possible to end the waste of mass unemployment’ (Labour Party 1983:8).

Despite this similarity, there remained differences in opinion in terms of precisely how this economic growth would best be achieved; the Conservative Party placing emphasis on the lowering of taxes and inflation, and the Labour Party emphasising increased public spending as a more viable option. Moreover, for both Parties, the very definition of the ‘economy’ differed. The Labour Party were operating far more along the philosophy of Keynesian economic policies which argued that Government action was necessary to maintain employment levels. In relation to economic development, they saw the welfare state as a stimulus to the economy and hence an investment in the country’s economic prosperity. Employing theories developed by Keynes, they believed social security expenditure was not simply a means to alleviate poverty, but also a way of putting money back into the hands of the population, who in turn spend it and consequently stimulate consumption, demand and production (George and Wilding 1994).

Conversely, the Conservative Party understood the ‘economy’ in Neo-Liberal terms, primarily in relation to private sector commercial production and trading. When they spoke of enhancing the ‘economy’, they would generally be referring to the importance of increasing competitiveness and efficiency within private industries, rather than increasing public spending or public services (they were, however, keen to maintain high level expenditure on law and order and defence). For the Neo-Liberals the public sector was more heavily equated with ‘welfare’ rather than wealth production, arguing that ‘social democracy is economically and socially ruinous’ and they saw public services and welfare provision as being removed from the realm of the ‘economy’ (O’Brien and Penna 1998:79). This neoliberal strategy constitutes a restructuring away from the Keynesian welfare state, to the

Schumpeterian workfare state. In contrast to the Keynesian welfare state, based on the principles of mass consumption and full employment within a national economy, Jessop argues that the Schumpeterian workfare state is geared towards enhancing competitiveness within the context of an economic framework that subordinates social policy to the demands of the market and supports labour flexibility rather than stability and security (Jessop 1994). According to Jessop, with regard to social policy, the state is not concerned with meeting need or ameliorating hardship, but with creating the conditions for the promotion of economic competitiveness (Jessop 1994, O'Brien and Penna 1998). In 1993, Peter Lilley was quoted as having said:

‘A vibrant economy - generating jobs, opportunities, skills and the means to save for future needs - can do far more to achieve the objectives of social security policy than could any feasible enhancements of our welfare system’ (Peter Lilley 1993, cited in Conservative Party 1995a:5).

This quotation not only emphasises the obvious need for a strong economy, but also serves to marginalise the significance within the party concerning the expansion or updating of social security provision. The Conservative line claims that the ‘objectives’ of the social security budget can be realised by creating ‘a vibrant economy, jobs, opportunities, skills and financial independence’, in other words, by creating a self-sufficient workforce and not by putting more money into welfare provision. This quotation is concerned with the importance of self-reliance and self-help, in that it suggests that what is needed is a society that consists largely of financially independent and self-reliant individuals and that the best way to achieve this end is to create a ‘vibrant economy’ rather than increasing any level of welfare provision. Significantly, unemployment is articulated as an entirely ‘economic’ concern, and the discourse seriously downplays both the social costs and solutions.

There is also much evidence of the Conservative Party's belief in lowering taxes and inflation as the best method to produce economic growth. In 1986 it was proudly stated that inflation was at its lowest level for nearly twenty years and that the importance of low inflation is that it increases consumer spending by 'encouraging higher investment by companies as interest rates fall and profitability increases' (Conservative Party 1987:170). Similarly, in terms of low taxation, it was explained by Mr Lawson that:

'Lower rates of taxes sharpen up incentives and stimulate enterprise, which in turn is the only route to better economic performance. And it is only by improving our economic performance...that we will be able to create jobs on the scale that we all want to see' (Hansard 1987: Col. 827).

Under Thatcher, the Conservatives believed the government needed to maintain a constant level of demand in the market, arguing that provided there was effective demand management, the free market economy would control the supply side. Thatcher believed that if there was a shortage of skilled labour, not only would firms take the incentive to train more skilled labour, but also the consequent rise in wages that would occur would ensure there were plenty of recruits to accept the training. Again, these extracts indicate that for the Conservative Party, the management of unemployment was conducted from the level of economics, in that it was seen as an economic concern to which economic solutions should be applied.

These were just a small selection of a wide supply of comments emphasising the importance of low taxation and inflation. The Labour Party's expected methods of increasing the economic wealth of the country were quite different.

‘Our first years of office, indeed, are likely to be dominated by our efforts to rebuild British industry: and this will involve a huge injection of state finance, the creation of a tough new planning framework and a significant extension of public enterprise’ (Labour Party 1980:5).

Also, it was said: ‘Our first step will be to reflate the economy, by increased public spending’ (Labour Party 1980:6) and; ‘We will expand the economy, by providing a strong and measured increase in spending. Spending money creates jobs’ (Labour Party 1983:8). By 1988 it was clear Labour had abandoned any major plans to overturn the Conservative Government’s privatisation measures and was instead becoming increasingly aware of the need to work with the market. Although Labour opposed the privatisation of water in 1989 and electricity in 1990, it was notable that they no longer regarded re-nationalisation as a priority, instead realising the need for greater regulation, competition and accountability within the privatised industries. In the 1989 statement ‘Meet the Challenge. Make the Change’ it was stated that a future Labour government would work with a successful market economy and state intervention should be limited to areas where the market was failing (ie: investment and training) (Labour Party 1989). Reinforcing the acceptance of market forces, the document also claimed: ‘The economic role of modern government is to help make the market system work properly where it can, will and should - and to replace or strengthen it where it can’t, won’t or shouldn’t’ (ibid).

From this it is apparent that both major political parties held the policy of increasing economic expansion highly on the agenda, but had different intentions in terms of how this end would be reached. The Conservative Party maintained their belief in the market, whilst the Labour Party varied somewhat in their policy for nationalisation and their belief in the market. To illustrate this point, in 1988 the Labour Party study groups produced a number of papers on the productive and competitive economy, all of which received a negative response from the hard left of the party, accusing Kinnock of abandoning clause four and embracing the market



economy (Jones et al. 1991). It is argued that for both parties, unemployment was largely understood as an 'economic' problem. The Conservative Party, although extremely keen to stress the importance of self responsibility at the individual level, managed the general problem of 'unemployment' in quite strict economic terms in that it was seen as a problem that could be solved through economic policies. Similarly, although the Labour Party were more concerned with the social costs of unemployment for specific 'unemployed' people, they too understood the general problem of 'unemployment' in economic terms in that they believed the role of government was to create the economic conditions that would enable individuals to obtain paid employment.

### **5.2.3. The Regulation of Wages**

Another structural/institutional factor aimed at minimising unemployment was the regulation of wages. This theme was heavily identified within the Conservative documents and distinctly absent from the Labour Party. Amongst many Conservative Party documents, references to the regulation of wages focused on the young members of the workforce, as the Conservatives were concerned that young people were pricing themselves out of employment. The solution to this is for the wages of the youth to reflect 'their relative inexperience' and consequently be at a lower level than their older work colleagues (Conservative Party 1987:173).

The emphasis on restricting regulation of youth wages is consistent with the Conservative's belief in the free market and flexibility. From the texts, the Conservative Party stressed great importance on finding employment for the young and believed lower wages for the youth was legitimate, reasonable and the best way to ensure they obtained paid employment. For example, the Conservative Party claimed that in 1983 after a reduction in pay of approximately one third for first year electrical apprentices, recruitment consequently rose from 850 in 1982 to 3,210 in 1984 (Conservative Party 1987:171). Similarly, with the Wages Act of 1986 the Conservative Party removed young people under the age of twenty one from the

scope of the Wages Councils, restricting them to bring only able to set a minimum hourly rate and a single overtime rate (Conservative Party 1987:171). This was justified by the comments that ‘Wages Councils deny young people job opportunities at wages employers can afford’ (ibid:171). The Conservative Party also stated:

‘A vital step in creating conditions leading to a fall in unemployment is the encouragement of a climate in which wages are set in the light of market conditions’ (Conservative Party 1982: 107).

And later:

‘There is clear evidence that more flexible youth wages will result in more job opportunities for the young’ (Conservative Party 1987:171).

This is an important point, in that it means some of the responsibility for reducing unemployment is actually handed over to employees and is dependent upon how flexible they are in the amount of wage they are prepared to accept. This is another example of how the Conservative’s belief in self-help and independence has come into play in that the public are being expected to take some responsibility for the employment market.

Conversely, the Labour Party argued it was of vital importance for the elimination of *poverty* that wage levels were kept at a reasonable rate. In 1986 the TUC and Labour Party report argued that:

‘...the struggle for improving wages cannot be slackened on the grounds that the state will provide’ (Labour Party 1986a).

In the same paper, Labour also claimed ‘there can be no substitute for the principle that workers should be able to earn a living wage and receive a fair wage for the job’ (Labour 1986a:20). This argument remained consistent throughout the Labour Party, who have continued to argue for the importance of a national minimum wage.

#### **5.2.4. Private Responsibility and Self-help**

The following category identified was private responsibility and self-help which, coupled with the issue of re-motivational programmes was very much a central theme throughout much of the documentation found from the Conservative Party. In 1987, the Conservative Party published a brochure with the DfEE entitled ‘Action for Jobs: Helping You to Help Yourself’ (Conservative Party 1987) which emphasised the importance of self-reliance and self-help. Also, in 1994 The Conservative Campaign Guide read:

‘Rightly, society assists unemployed people whilst they look for work. But taxpayers do not expect to assist, unconditionally, able-bodied adults, without family responsibilities, who are capable of work but who are unwilling to look for it’ (Conservative Party 1994).

The Conservatives also initiated a number of programmes designed to motivate individuals into taking an active role in deciding their own employment future. The existence of these programmes demonstrates a belief that unemployment cannot be solved by economic and structural successes alone, but that the actions of unemployed individuals and their efforts to find employment are just as significant. In 1987, the Jobclubs were claimed to help people back into employment by

providing ‘coaching in job-hunting techniques and motivation, free stationary, postage and telephones’ (Conservative Party 1987:173). Also, Restart was introduced nationwide on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1986 aimed at offering direct help to the long-term unemployed, the intention being that everyone unemployed for over a year would be invited for an interview at their local Jobcentre in order to assess their ‘personal employment needs’ and match them against current available job opportunities. In April 1987, this was extended to cover all those unemployed for six months or longer and to offer regular six monthly interviews for those who were still unemployed after the first interview. It was said that at a typical interview:

‘...an unemployed person might be advised of a job vacancy or a place on the Community Programme; or encouraged to apply for the Enterprise Allowance Scheme, the Voluntary Projects Programme, or a place in a Jobclub or on one of the many training courses, including the Restart course’ (Conservative Party 1987: 172).

In terms of the Labour Party, there was very little identified that emphasised this level of responsibility. Instead the Labour Party, in terms of finding solutions to the employment problem, were far more concerned with structural and institutional factors; such as the economy and the lack of suitable employment opportunities. This situation did however alter towards the middle of the nineties, (after the JSA had been announced in the 1993 budget), where the importance of private responsibilities began to be addressed at a far greater level. Only two references to individual responsibility were identified before the announcement of the JSA. The first of these was a reference made to the issue of re-skilling the workforce:

‘It will chart the way to developing an education and training system that genuinely meets the needs of *individuals*, and helps them, build the ‘three

Cs': their **confidence, capabilities and competences**' (Labour Party 1987a:6).

Also, later in 1992:

'We will also reform the Employment Service so that everyone who is unemployed has a personal placement officer working to find training and job offers before they have been unemployed for twelve months' (Labour Party 1992a:17).

These extracts, although indicating Labour Party interest in the governance and conduct of individuals, are by no means on a similar level to that of those previously listed by the Conservative Party. However, one could argue that the reference in the first quotation to the 'three Cs', (particularly individual 'confidence') demonstrates the importance of the individual in Labour Party unemployment policy. Despite this, two of the three Cs' listed (capabilities and competences) are far more concerned with establishing a highly skilled workforce than with emphasising the issue of individual responsibility. Consequently, this reference does not indicate the Labour Party were particularly concerned with underlining the importance of individual/private responsibility in their employment policies.

The second reference directs concern towards the more individual reasons for unemployment by suggesting (albeit indirectly) that there are employment opportunities available, but that it is the job seeking actions of private individuals that are often preventing these opportunities from being realised and it is for this reason that they need a 'personal placement officer'. This may well go some way closer towards addressing the issue of individual causes of unemployment, but does

by no means suggest that Labour were beginning to address the issue of whether individuals were making adequate and responsible efforts to find employment.

The Labour Party did however make a number of references to individual responsibility, but their concern was with the responsibilities that individuals should have in the workplace. They certainly acknowledged that individuals should have responsibilities outside their family life, but they did not take the same Conservative line that emphasised that individuals should be more responsible for their own employment status. For example, in 1986 Labour claimed that:

‘All workers should...be given the chance to play a constructive and responsible role in the decisions that effect them’ (Labour Party 1986b:45).

Labour’s argument was that there should be more freedom for workers, they should have more say in the determining of their pay and conditions and they should have far more involvement in managing the way their work time is organised. They acknowledge that this level of freedom will bring with it additional responsibilities and that this ‘is a prospect that can only be welcomed’ (Labour Party 1986b).

There were a variety of other policy issues that were taken up by both the Labour and Conservative Parties during the 1980s and 1990s. Both Parties placed a strong emphasis on the importance of skills and training for all individuals (those employed and unemployed). Also, both Parties devoted a considerable amount of time to discussing the problem of the long term unemployed and the youth. These issues remained consistent throughout the allocated period for both Parties.

### 5.3. Discussion

There have been many theories concerning the nature and definition of 'Thatcherism'. Willetts argues that Thatcherism consisted of a traditional Conservative philosophy, embracing concepts and ideals developed in Disraeli's One-Nation Toryism; Bulpitt argues that Thatcherism was 'statecraft', a party committed to 'winning elections and governing competence rather than grand ideological purposes' (Willetts 1992, Bulpitt 1986, cited in Evans and Taylor 1996); whilst Stuart Hall and Jacques argued that Thatcherism was a hegemonic project (Hall 1988). The period of Conservative rule that has been discussed was one that was founded upon firm ideological principles based on individual liberty and a distrust of statism and collectivism (Bulpitt 1986; Garner and Kelly 1993:86). The Conservatives not only initiated drastic programmes of deflation in 1980 and 1981 but also had a strident attitude to the reform of the trade unions. The Thatcher governments were committed to economic growth, which they believed would best be achieved through a process of low taxation and low inflation and they instigated a privatisation programme in an attempt to alter the balance of the mixed economy, inspired by their firm belief in the efficacy of market forces and private enterprise (Garner and Kelly 1993:88).

Both the Conservative and the Labour Party understood unemployment to a lesser or greater extent in economic terms, with the Conservative Party in particular believing there was little government could do to ease unemployment other than strive towards establishing a strong economic base. They tended to hold little faith in social security, believing it encouraged welfare dependency and stifled growth and they were keen to stress the individual causes of unemployment, placing strong emphasis on individual responsibilities (identified through the many re-motivational programmes initiated for the unemployed). For the Conservatives, workers were to some extent held responsible for unemployment levels, in that they had the responsibility to be prepared to accept low wages in order to raise manufacturing outputs. Similarly, employers had the responsibility to take their own initiative and

train the workforce and the unemployed were expected to find work and take responsibility for their own employment condition.

The policies and actions of the Labour Party during the 1980s and early 1990s despite undergoing changes during this period, were far removed from both the Conservative Party and 'New Labour'. Up until about 1984, the Party was more committed to full employment and nationalisation and had a more cynical approach to the market. After the disastrous 1983 election defeat, when Michael Foot stepped down as Labour leader he was immediately replaced by the so called 'dream ticket' of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley (Garner and Kelly 1993:153). Garner and Kelly argue that 'From this point on, the influence of the left substantially declined' and that 'Perhaps the most significant feature of Kinnock's socialism and his period as Labour Leader was his explicit acceptance of the market' (Garner and Kelly 1993:154). Kinnock's moderation of Labour's aims was largely accepted by the Party. Whilst the 1987 Manifesto made left-wing demands for the withdrawal from the EC and major extension of public ownership, the 1992 Manifesto stated that Labour should be a party of economic efficiency as much as social justice and that the market was to be accepted as an 'essential instrument of wealth creation'. It was also stated that the public utilities privatised by the Conservatives were only to be returned to public ownership if 'circumstances allowed' (Labour Party 1989:15).

Notwithstanding this, although the Labour Party understood the problem of unemployment in fairly economic terms, they also understood the social costs of unemployment and the under the leadership of both Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock they were openly committed to civil liberties and social justice and consistently emphasised the importance of maintaining a 'healthy' rate of employment. For example, at the 1984 Labour conference Roy Hattersley argued that 'It is the moral duty of the next Labour government to put Britain back to work...We have a duty to the unemployed first to win the election and then to put them back to work. If, through self-interest or self-indulgence, timidity or factionalism, we fail to achieve



this objective, we will not be forgiven. Nor will we deserve to be forgiven' (Roy Hattersley Labour Party 1984b). Not only did the party stress their commitment to a substantial reduction in unemployment, but they also emphasised they were concerned to monitor the *quality* as well as the quantity of work made available as well as continuing their argument for a national minimum wage. In terms of employment, they appeared to believe that workers should work fewer hours a week and have more holidays. They argued that the economic problems of the nation could be solved by reflating the economy and increasing public spending.

Significantly, under the Conservative Governments it is argued that the problem of *unemployment* was largely understood in economic terms, whilst the problem of the *unemployed* at the individual level was understood more in moral terms, emphasising the need for individual responsibility and self help. Similarly, Labour understood the problem of general unemployment in economic terms, emphasising the responsibility the state has to provide a healthy economy and employment opportunities for its citizens. For both parties, the costs of unemployment were presented as being economic, ranging from the negative effects on the market to the negative effects for individual families suffering from economic social inclusion. This can be linked back to the work of Walters who discusses how twentieth century politics began to understand unemployment in economic terms (Walters 1994). With this, he argues that Governments directed their attention not at the activities of the unemployed themselves, but at the specific economic circumstances, such as wage levels, balancing supply and demand and populations and industry.

Significantly, there is a clear distinction between the Conservative and Labour Party understanding of unemployment and that of 'New Labour' in that one of the central points of interest in the analysis of New Labour is the way in which focus is placed on 'employability' rather than unemployment. It is argued that under New Labour, although there is a strong emphasis on the need to work within the market, unemployment is understood neither as a strictly economic or social problem.

Instead, attention is directed towards managing the *employability* of the workforce, including not just their education, skills or training, but also their attitudes, identities and enthusiasm. With this, unemployment is understood much more in terms of the specific values and skills of those unemployed rather than the market. The following section is designed to develop the themes identified in this section by providing an analysis of two specific documents issued by both the Labour and Conservative Party. This section will offer a closer, textually orientated discourse analysis in order to assess the extent to which the themes identified here were incorporated into the texts and the ways in which the problem of unemployment was managed and understood.

## **Chapter Five: Section Two**

### **5.4. Discourse Analysis**

#### **5.4.1. Methods**

A selection was made of two documents from those already discussed, one from the Labour Party and one from the Conservative Party. The intention behind this was to identify the various ways in which the themes have been incorporated into the body of the text, and through an analysis of the textual manoeuvres, to identify the ways in which ‘unemployment’ was problematised. Given that this research has identified what it considers to have been some of the underlying themes pertinent to Labour and Conservative policy making during the 1980s, it is considered important to concentrate on a smaller number of documents in order to examine the extent to which these themes are included and the ways in which the unemployed are constructed. Also, given the discourse analytic basis for this research as discussed in the methodology, it is considered that the inclusion of a more textually orientated discourse analysis will offer a degree of validation to those conclusions already discussed and offer a more concrete understanding of the possible ‘effects’ the texts had on the readers.

This chapter is concerned with identifying how the problem of unemployment is addressed and managed and how the characters of the unemployed are constructed. This can be conducted through an analysis of the implied reader and the textual reader subject positions that function within the text. Of this, Iser has written:

‘The concept of the implied reader is therefore a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without actually defining him: this concept prestructures the role to be assumed by each recipient...[and thus]...designates a network of response inviting structures, which impel the reader to grasp the text’ (Iser 1974:34, cited in Watts 1997:29).

It is argued that the texts articulate an implied reader with whom the actual reader is invited to identify, and which to some extent predetermines how they respond to the text (Watts 1997). Iser notes that within any given text it is possible to identify the narrator, the characters, the plot and the implied reader, although for the purposes of this analysis, the interest is more with the identification of the main characters of the text, and the construction of the various subject positions. The significance of the implied reader, and the construction of subject-positions is such that it would arguably be possible to identify the effects that the texts have on the actual reader, without having to actually interview the 'actual' readers of the texts (Watts 1997). For example, by the identification of various subject positions constructed within the text, such as the 'unemployed person', the 'citizen', 'state policy makers', 'commercial players', or the 'economic interests', as well as establishing the possible effects on the reader, one can also begin to lay the foundations for a greater understanding of how the text emerged and the possible philosophies established within the text.

The intention is to identify the specific 'effects' the text has on the reader and on the problematisation of unemployment, and consequently it is considered relevant to include details on the specific textual manoeuvres operating within the text. This is because it is precisely these manoeuvres that give the text its structure and it is in many ways, these textual manoeuvres that the reader interacts with. As Potter and Wetherell claim: 'the discourse analyst is concerned with the detail of passages of discourse, however fragmented and contradictory, and with what is actually said or written, not some general idea that seems to be intended' (Potter and Wetherell 1987:168). Consequently, it is argued that the various textual manoeuvres and rhetorical devices constitute essential elements of the text.

The decision concerning which documents to select was taken after careful consideration of the identified themes and the particular term of office. For example, the principal themes identified from the Labour Party documentation concerned full

employment, and the importance of ‘reflating’ the economy. The Labour Party throughout the larger part of their texts also demonstrated a firm belief in the rights of workers, equality and the elimination of poverty. They were more likely to consider the structural and institutional reasons for unemployment and rather than the individual or cultural reasons and their concern was with building the economy through taxation and increased public spending in order to finance the dramatic reduction of poverty and unemployment. Conversely, the themes identified within the Conservative Party were, first and foremost their strong and unwavering emphasis on the importance of individual responsibility. They were heavily driven by the desire to enhance competitiveness and accountability within the privatised industries and they had a profound distrust of statism and collectivism. They believed that wages should be regulated in order to prevent them rising too quickly and that the most efficient and effective way to reduce unemployment figures was through establishing a strong healthy economic base. Given these themes it is considered that the selected papers are representative of both the Labour and Conservative Parties for the larger part of the selected period<sup>1</sup>.

This section will, after Fairclough, detail the ‘texture’ and formal dimensions of the selected documents. According to Fairclough, any analysis of the content of textual documents should be coupled with an analysis of its formal and rhetorical characteristics, known as ‘form’ or more frequently; ‘texture’ (Fairclough 1995:5; Stenson and Watt 1999:192). He quotes a paper by Ian Hacker where he offers commentary on the various content of textual examples but not on their form; and Fairclough gives examples of where consideration of the form would have enhanced the analysis (Hacker et al. 1991, cited in Fairclough 1995). Fairclough contends that textual analysis must invariably involve some analysis of the ‘form or organisation of texts - of what one might call, after Halliday and Hasan their ‘texture’” (Halliday and Hasan 1976, cited in Fairclough 1995). He goes on to argue that ‘one cannot

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<sup>1</sup> The selected texts have been matched as tightly as possible to the themes already identified. However, in order to offer a comprehensive discourse analysis of the entire selected period, it would be necessary to conduct a thorough discourse analysis of countless

properly analyse content without simultaneously analysing form, because contents are always necessarily realised in forms and different contents entail different forms and visa versa' (Fairclough 1995:188). To summarise then, for Fairclough, textual analysis should mean analysis of the form and organisation of texts as well as their content. He refers to this process as the analysis of the 'texture' of texts.

#### **5.4.2. Texture - Formal Dimension of Selected Documents**

##### **i. Labour Party Document**

The Labour Party document was published in 1982 entitled: 'Britain on the Dole: Unemployment and the Socialist Alternative' (Labour Party 1982c). This document has a strong socialist theme, and contains a wide variety of illustrations. It carries an informative role and has a fairly personal authorship which appears to target groups from the working to the lower middle class section of society. The pamphlet consists of four principal sections. The first section presents the contemporary economic and employment situation as being one of desperation and despair, describing the degree of unemployment and the areas and types of people that are affected by it. The second section emphasises the appalling conditions suffered by those living on benefit, in what appears to be an attempt to discredit the view that life on benefit could be relatively comfortable and that a large number of those registered as unemployed may not actually wish to work. The third section is based entirely around the criticism of Tory economic policy, and is concerned with attributing blame for the unemployment crisis onto the Conservatives and consequently minimising the possibility that it could be attributed to alternative factors. The final section is concerned with presenting its views and agenda for the future, and outlining the changes that are required if the unemployment crisis is to improve.

One of the principle differences between this paper, and the one selected to represent the Conservative Party, is its reliance on 'blame attribution'. Throughout the document the negative construction of unemployment and the living conditions for

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texts. Given the time and space constraints, what this section offers is a 'snippet' of the

the unemployed is striking. This negativity is afforded more weight by the document's claim that the Conservative Party is entirely to blame for the condition. The result being that the Conservative Party is constructed as calculating aggressors, whereas the Labour Party are constructed as a group that not only have the solutions for the future, but owing to the fact that they have drawn the reader's attention to the cold calculating character of the Conservatives, they are the speakers of 'truth' and honesty. In relation to the construction of 'truth' Foucault speaks of the role of 'specific' and 'universal' intellectuals (Foucault 1980:126-33). The universal intellectual was in many ways the consciousness of individuals, who had the right to speak and was considered to be the 'master of truth and justice' (Foucault 1980:126). More recently, the intellectual has taken on the role of 'specific intellectual', who emerges from the figure of expert or scientist and speaks and articulates 'truth' not in the 'universal', but in his own specific sectors, such as housing, medicine, or economics. The specific intellectual is related to the 'extension of technico-scientific structures in the economic and strategic domain', and to the growth of scientific rationality and legitimacy (Foucault 1980).

Another technique within the text is the focus on individual victims of unemployment. The document consistently locates the national and broad issues of unemployment directly with 'real' individuals, towns, families and communities with which the reader is invited to identify. For example, it refers to individual towns such as Durham, Northamptonshire, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol, Coventry and Cardiff. The effect of this is that the document encourages a far more localised reading, creating a form of unity between the author and its readership in so much as the text encourages the reader to connect with it through its ability to identify with sub-sections of the population and to empathise with the 'victims'.

## **ii. Conservative Party Document**

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discourse of unemployment by the Labour and Conservative Party.

The second paper analysed was published by the Conservative Research Department in August 1987 in 'Politics Today' entitled: 'Jobs: An Encouraging Trend'. The paper appears to be far more aimed at the more professional individual and is considerably more formal in presentation. For example, the illustrative pictures that were threaded throughout the Labour Party document are distinctly absent, and instead in terms of illustrative devices, the paper relies heavily on the use of statistical data, graphs, and charts. The paper has three basic sections, with each section containing about five to six clearly labelled sub-headings. The first section is entitled 'Introduction: Our Changing Jobs Market' and is concerned with the demographic and structural changes that are occurring and the effect that they are having on the job market and the various industries. The second section is called: 'The Conservative Achievement' and discusses the state of the British economy in a positive light, comparing unemployment rates to other countries and listing the areas where employment is rising. The final section: 'The Conservative Strategy', lists a number of issues, such as inflation, taxation, public borrowing and wage councils and outlines what its position is regarding them.

Unlike the Labour Party document, this paper relies heavily on the use of statistical information. The use of figures acts as a visual aid and adds support and verification to the claims made within the text, as well as affording the document a more professional and official appearance. The paper also differs in that it is not individually focused and constructs unemployment as a rationally calculated economic concern, discussing it in relation to economic performance, increased productivity, emphasis on flexibility, encouraging enterprise, manufacturing output, and as a statistical figure that can be compared with other European countries. In terms of allocating blame for unemployment (as was done in the Labour Party document) unemployment is constructed as a national economic problem caused by the natural decline in the manufacturing industries and the demographic changes in society.



### 5.4.3. Textual Reader Subject Positions

The Labour Party document articulates a subject-position based around the sympathetic lay citizen, rather than the professional-expert. This subject position is an ideal type, of an individual who either has direct experience of the poverty and destitution caused by Tory economic policy, or who is capable of empathising with the devastation suffered by the ‘victims’ of the text (the youth, old, single parents, ethnic minorities, long-term unemployed). The lay-person is identified through the use of familiar images in the text in order to present data, such as the method of outlining specifically the areas hit by unemployment such as textiles, steel and cars, and regions such as South Wales, West Midlands and the North West and cities such as Consett in Durham and Corby in Northamptonshire. Also, rather than offering figures and statistics, the text describes the level of unemployment as being enough to fill specific towns and cities.

‘If all the people registered as unemployed in Britain came together they would populate a city the size of Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester put together’ (Labour Party 1982c:2).

This explicit use of metaphorical language is often very influential in structuring reality in a specific way (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Fairclough 1992; Chilton 1988) and the movement away from the more traditional and professional style of presenting statistical data indicates the intended readership, is most comfortable with relating to ‘real life’ events, and ‘real life’ people, rather than numbers. The document states:

‘We don’t have to live with the tragic waste of the dole queues. We don’t have to face a future of economic decline and growing social tension. There *is* an alternative, which can offer rising employment, a growing economy, better public services and a more equal, just and democratic

society. Only Labour can put Britain back to work' (Labour Party 1982c:2)  
(emphasis in original).

The constructed subject position is an individual, not necessarily unemployed, who agrees with the belief that under the Tories the future will be invariably bleak, involving 'economic decline' and 'social tension', and who has been led to believe there is no alternative. With the comments concerning a more equal, just and democratic society, the implication is also that to some extent, under the Conservatives, society is not sufficiently just, equal or democratic. Thus the articulated reader subject position is desperate with the economic situation, does not believe the economy will recover under the Conservatives, and believes the Conservative Party are not pursuing policies aimed at making Britain more equal, just or democratic. Moreover, the implied subject position is centred around notions of community and collectivism as opposed to individualism. The use of phrases such as 'a more equal, just and democratic society' appeals as much to the interests of society and the wider community as it does to notions of individualism and private need.

The principle difference between the subject position in the Labour and Conservative Party text is in relation to the point at which they interact with the text, in that in the Labour document the text relates to the reader from the same real life, grass roots, working-class orientated level. The reader is invited to believe and agree with the text owing to the text's presentation as having emerged from the same social circumstances and experienced the same social problems.

Conversely, the Conservative Party document articulates a reader-subject position of (although still a lay-person) an individual who believes in the notion of political-economic science. It constructs an individual concerned with issues such as low taxation, low inflation, profit related pay and the importance of self-employment and

entrepreneurialism. The presentation of statistical data in the more traditional, graphical form, enables the text to develop a more professional identity than the Labour document. This professional identity also affords the document more strength, when it attempts to convince the reader that the economic situation in the UK is steadily improving.

‘Indeed, we now have the fastest rate of economic growth of all the major economies of the world’ (Conservative Party 1987:165).

The reader of this document is invited to believe the information told, owing to the professional discourse in which it is presented, and to relate unemployment to issues such as profit, manufacturing output, European comparisons, booms in small business, low inflation, and low taxation.

## **5.5. Document One: ‘Britain on the Dole: Unemployment and the Socialist Alternative’**

There are four principal sections identified in the first paper; ‘Britain on the Dole: Unemployment and the Socialist Alternative’ (Labour Party 1982c), the socio-economic background; the presentation of the unemployed as financially destitute; the ‘fact/fiction’ distinctions; and the ‘future agenda’.

### **Part One**

#### **5.5.1. Socio-economic Background**

The pamphlet begins with an illustration on the front cover of a line graph with the dates 1979, 1980 and 1981 along the bottom and along the left hand side, the numbers of one, two and three million (representing the level of unemployment). This line stays at a fairly consistent one and a half million during 1979, and rapidly and continuously rises after 1980 past the three million mark. The significance of

this illustration is that it immediately establishes not only the key topic of the paper, but also its general tone, in that it is concerned with what it presents as being a dismal state of affairs concerning the level of unemployment. This tone is reiterated on the first page where there is a photograph of a long queue of people in a Benefits Agency; together with the opening paragraph:

‘The number one problem in Britain today is jobs. This Conservative government under Mrs Thatcher has sent unemployment soaring to the highest level we’ve ever suffered. And they are doing nothing to stop it going up even further’ (Labour Party 1982c:2).

There are a number of points to be made concerning this quotation. This opening sentence, together with the illustrations already mentioned serves to give an impression of a country in relative economic turmoil. Moreover, within this presentation, the Conservatives are constructed as not simply being the party in government when unemployment had risen, but to have been the instigators and to have played an active role in enabling unemployment to rise.

From a Derridian perspective, drawing attention to the methods employed by the text to close off alternative explanations is to ‘draw out the margins of the text’ (Derrida 1991). According to Derrida, the ‘margins of a text do not constitute a blank, virgin, empty margin, but another text’. All texts contain margins, and it is in these margins that the inconsistencies of their arguments are placed. When a reader draws attention to these margins, he is not doing so in order to criticise the text, but to identify the way in which the text manages itself (Potter 1996b). For example, the words ‘has *sent* unemployment soaring’ and ‘doing nothing to stop it’ presents the Conservatives as not only being ineffective in their attempts to reduce unemployment, but to be wilfully permitting it which serves to ‘close’ off alternative explanations.

### **5.5.2. Invocation of Community / Abnormalisation**

Another issue of importance is in the phrase ‘highest level we’ve ever suffered’. Firstly, the use of the terms ‘we’ is an example of an alignment strategy, or what Woolgar refers to as an ‘externalising device’. The effect of this is that it invites the reader to become ‘part of the existing state of knowledge’ (Woolgar 1988:75). The term ‘we’ also helps to establish a sort of ‘them and us’ relationship between the Conservatives and everybody else; exemplified by the phrase ‘*they* [the Conservatives] are doing nothing’. It has already been explained that the Conservatives are responsible for the high levels of unemployment, now it is implied that this unemployment is affecting both the Labour Party and members of society in the same way, in that Labour is not distinct from society in the same way as the Conservatives, but that they constitute one unit.

Another issue at play here is what Dorothy Smith refers to as ‘normalisation and abnormalisation’ (Smith 1990). This is where the text, through its choice of terminology, demonstrates that the events or actions it is describing are not normal. The phrase ‘unemployment soaring to the highest level we’ve ever suffered’ has far more discursive significance in terms of its effect on the reader than if it were to read: ‘we are currently witnessing high unemployment’. This is an example of abnormalisation, whereby the text has made efforts to demonstrate that the current rate of unemployment is not ‘normal’. This is also, however linked to the Keynesian economic policy debates, whereby the levels of (normal) unemployment experienced under Labour governments were quite separate from the (abnormal) levels of unemployment experienced under Tory economic policy.

### **5.5.3. Locating the Text with the Individual**

The next significant rhetorical device identified within the text is in its efforts to argue its case by continuous references to specific groups of people and various regions throughout the country.

‘If all the people registered as unemployed in Britain came together they would populate a city the size of Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester put together. Add those not registered but keen to work and you would fill Bristol, Coventry and Cardiff as well’ (Labour Party 1982c).

This device is interesting in that it offers some clue as to the possible intended readership of the document. Instead of using more traditional numerical methods for quantifying unemployment, it uses what could be described as ‘laymen’s terms’, and constructs the reader not as a professional-expert, but as a lay-citizen. Consequently, one could argue that this is evidence to suggest that the intended readership is from the less professional section of society.

This unusual method for quantifying unemployment is an interesting rhetorical device in that it refers to the degree of unemployment in what is arguably visually quantifiable terms. The mentioning of the names of large, well known cities that are thought to be familiar to the reader has the effect of the text becoming particular to an extremely diverse group of people as the problem of unemployment is portrayed as not just a problem for a distinct group of people, but as a problem that affects the UK as a whole. This device encourages the reader to acknowledge that unemployment is a local problem as much as a national one; and that it has the potential to affect all individuals, regardless of geographical location. This technique is also employed elsewhere. Later in the pamphlet it is argued that high levels of unemployment are not only hitting areas that usually suffer from high joblessness, but also those areas that were previously ‘prosperous and protected’ ((Labour Party

1982c:3). The paper goes on to note that industries such as ‘textiles, steel and cars’ have been hit, as well as regions such as ‘South Wales, the West Midlands and North West’ (Labour Party 1982c:4).

‘Steel towns hit by closures like Consett in Durham and Corby in Northamptonshire, both have nearly a quarter of their workforce on the dole. Inner City areas of Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham have pockets of very high unemployment. Even in our ‘well-heeled’ capital it turns out that *every* inner London borough has an employment rate above the national average’ (Labour Party 1982c:4).

These quotations do more than just present the facts, they are examples of a rhetorical device, employed to persuade the reader that unemployment is a national concern, that can affect literally every member of society, regardless of social class, region of residence, or occupation.

#### **5.5.4. Construction of Predominant Subject Categories of the Unemployed**

The pamphlet goes on to offer a breakdown of the types of people that are ‘worst hit’ from unemployment, these being: women, young people, and black people. These groups of people are constructed as the ‘victims’ of unemployment, they are the disadvantaged and the dispossessed, victims of the economic environment that has been imposed upon them. The picture presented here is very much in keeping with that already mentioned, in that the economic and employment situation under the Conservative Government is portrayed in an extremely negative light, as being desperate and with little hope for the future.

##### **i. Women**

In relation to women, it is noted that the discrepancy between male and female earnings is continuing to widen, that women tend to be chosen for redundancies before their male counterparts and that the unemployment register fails to account for the many women who are not eligible for either supplementary or contributory benefit. Significantly, this information concerning the disadvantages faced by women is juxtaposed against a quotation from Patrick Jenkin from October 1979.

‘If the good Lord had intended us all having equal rights to go out to work and to behave equally, you know he really wouldn’t have created man and woman. These are the biological facts of life’ (Patrick Jenkin speaking on ‘Man Alive’ 30 October 1979, cited in Labour Party 1982c:4).

This quotation is placed immediately after information concerning the discrepancy between male and female earnings and is introduced with the words: ‘The Tories clearly see women as subordinate and secondary. Their sexist attitudes are summed up in the appalling remark by Patrick Jenkin’ (ibid). This introductory sentence is significant as it removes any doubt as to what was precisely meant by Jenkin’s remark. The words ‘the Tories *clearly* see women as subordinate and secondary’ introduces Jenkin’s comments as being self-evidently sexist and is routed in the biological gender discourse favoured by the Tories, as well as minimising the possibility of alternative interpretation: The Tories view of women as being second class, (compounded by the more classic, familiar Tory discourse concerning the welfare burden of single mothers) is presented as being undeniable.

## **ii. Youth**

The second group the pamphlet mentions is young people, where the subject position is constructed as young, desperate, innocent and unemployed victims. It begins by noting that over 440,000 young people have been out of work for more than six months and that they ‘face little prospect of getting a job’. Also:



*'Each year a new wave* of school leavers is added to the pool of people looking for work, and *each year* the chances of getting a job grow smaller...*By 1983* it is estimated that only one in three school leavers will be able to find work' (Labour Party 1982c:4) (emphasis added).

Significantly, this extract employs the same rhetorical device on four separate occasions. The use of these three phrases ('each year' (used twice); 'a new wave'; and 'by 1983') has the effect of portraying the current employment problem to be one that is on a perpetual spiral of decline. The use of the term 'a new wave' is useful for this in that it indicates a group of people from one of a large number of successive advancing groups. The importance of this is that unemployment is not just portrayed as something that may gradually worsen with time, but through the phrase 'each year' in two separate occasions, together with the phrase 'by 1983', this decline is presented as something that can be expected to intensify unless action is taken immediately.

### **iii. Ethnic Minorities**

The last group of people discussed are black people. Again, the subject position is centred around notions of the 'innocent' and 'victims'. It is claimed that black people are particularly vulnerable owing to deeply rooted racist attitudes, and owing to the fact that whilst the overall rate of unemployment has suffered a 70% increase between 1979 and 1981, black people have actually suffered from a 103% increase. Similarly, a survey of the young unemployed in inner cities was said to have revealed an average of 30% unemployment rate among blacks aged 16-20, with a quarter 'not bothering to register' (Labour Party 1982c:4). Importantly, the emphasis on them 'not bothering to register' is not presented as being due to any wilful indolence on their part, but through their position of being thoroughly dispossessed.

This section concludes what is considered to have been the introductory component of the pamphlet. The document has up to this point been interested with portraying the then economic and employment situation to be one engulfed with fairly negative concerns over its uncompromising and desperate nature. The text has presented the ‘facts’ of unemployment by a compelling and continual reference to the dangers it poses, the numbers it affects, and the devastating effects it has. For example, the document, up until this point has been full of phrases such as: ‘the tragic waste of dole queues’; ‘economic decline’; ‘growing social tension’; ‘our dilapidated buses and trains, overcrowded classrooms and poor housing’; ‘tragedy [of] wasting the education, training and talents of millions’; ‘economics of fear’ (Labour Party 1982c:2); ‘jargon of monetarism’ (1982c:3); ‘victims of unemployment’; ‘fewer job opportunities’; ‘redundancies’; ‘little prospect’; ‘racialist attitudes’; ‘increasingly alienated’ (1982c:4).

## **Part Two**

### **5.5.5. The Unemployed as Financially Destitute**

The next manoeuvre identified within the text is in its attempt to demolish the ‘myth’ that life on unemployment benefit is relatively comfortable, and that a large percentage of unemployed people do not want to work. This manoeuvre is necessary to the internal logic of the text. The pamphlet has already discussed the level of poverty and the individuals that it affects, but in order to assign the blame for this unemployment onto the Conservatives, the possibility that some degree of unemployment can be attributed to individual’s irresponsibility needs to be marginalised. The section begins with the heading: ‘Unemployment and Poverty’, building on the association between unemployment and poverty, whereby to be unemployed is also to be poor. The paper claims that despite widespread belief that ‘unemployed people and their families are cushioned against poverty by generous state benefits’, the reality is that for the great majority out of work, ‘unemployment means real hardship’ (Labour Party 1982c:7). The section then goes on to list exactly how much income is awarded to the unemployed.

‘Under the Tories it [unemployment benefit] has been *cut* in real terms - for the first time since the early 1930s. Since 1979 they have twice failed to increase benefits fully in line with prices. In doing so they have cut the benefit for an unemployed man with a wife and two children by £4.80 a week and cut the value of unemployment benefit to the lowest level since 1966’ (Labour Party 1982c:7) (emphasis in original).

This extract employs the rhetorical device identified by Dorothy Smith as ‘abnormalisation’ (Smith 1990). The effect of the phrases ‘for the first time since the early 1930s’, and ‘the lowest level since 1966’ is that the text portrays the rate of unemployment benefit is not simply being low, but as actually being significantly lower than one could normally expect it to be. The reference to the periods of the sixties and thirties is also an example of a ‘pathing device’, which, by referring to a past state of affairs ‘provides the reader with a framework for making sense of new observations and so on’ (Woolgar 1988:76). Also, by reference to these *specific* periods; the ‘abnormalising’ effects are increased. For example, the 1930s is famous for the deep depression and the 1929 crash. Also although the 1960s were economically more stable than that of the 1930s, there was still growing dissatisfaction with the country’s economic performance and there was increasing frustration cast over the ‘stop-go’ effects of Keynesian economics (Keegan 1984:23). Thus the effects of employing this pathing device in reference to periods of relative economic decline, are that the actions of the Conservatives are presented as being responsible for recreating poverty that is comparable to these decades.

Another device used in this extract is in the emphasis placed on the word ‘cut’. Firstly, by placing the word in italics, attention is instantly drawn towards it, enabling it to stand out as being particularly significant. This, (especially when considered alongside the preceding comments concerning the ‘considerable financial

hardship' of the unemployed) emphasises the significance of the word 'cut'. Similarly, in the following paragraph when describing that the earnings related supplement is to be abolished in 1982, the word 'abolished' is placed in italics (Labour Party 1982c:7), later, on the same page, when explaining how supplementary benefits need to be increased in order to meet the minimum costs of a child, the word 'minimum' is also placed in italics and later in the pamphlet it is explained that 'The Tories plan to cut spending on housing by *half* in four years' (Labour Party 1982c: 9).

Another rhetorical device contained within the word 'cut' is what Potter refers to as an example of 'maximising and minimising' (Potter 1996a:188-94). This is where the choice of terminology is used to the advantage of the text in order to either maximise or minimise the descriptive impact of the event or action. The word 'cut' for example has a variety of connotations, such as: 'to cause sharp physical or mental pain', and to 'penetrate or wound with a sharp edged instrument' (Oxford Concise Dictionary 1991). It is not the argument here that the effect of this word is that the reader is compelled to think of associations of pain. It is, however argued that the use of the word 'cut' is a rhetorical device that maximises what it describes in that it has far more of an emotive effect than if the text had used a more passive term such as 'reduce'.

### **Part Three**

#### **5.5.6. Fact/Fiction**

The next section identified within the pamphlet is in its efforts to undermine the economic policies of the Conservative Party. This section begins with a heading that is larger than those used previously, reading: 'Understanding Unemployment'. Beneath this is the paragraph:

‘The truth is that mass unemployment can be traced directly to government policies. Guided by the fashionable dogmas of monetarism the government has dragged the economy into a New Depression’ (Labour Party 1982c:8).

The effect of the large heading, together with the fact that the information supplied by Labour has been described as ‘the truth’, is that the advice and information previously supplied by the Conservatives is effectively presented as being a lie, in that it is only now that the reader can ‘understand unemployment’ and be issued with the ‘truth’. On the construction of ‘facts’, Dorothy Smith claims that when a text either describes something as a fact or treats it as a fact the implication is that ‘the events themselves - what happened - entitle or authorise the teller of the tale to treat that categorisation as ineluctable’. To illustrate this, she writes; ‘Whether I wish it or nor, it is a fact, whether I will admit it or not, it is a fact’ (Smith 1990:27). This construction of a ‘fact’ involves explicitly presenting it as being universal, and the same for everyone, as well as implying that the comments have been made as a result of direct and objective observation (ibid).

This presentation of ‘truth’ is linked explicitly to Foucaultian notions of truth construction and the role of the expert/intellectual as the articulator of truth (Foucault 1980). The text articulates a subject position of authority, who is not only ‘state policy maker’ but also a ‘specific’ intellectual playing the role of political/economic expert. This intellectual is said to articulate ‘truth’ in specific sectors, such as the economy or politics and through his role as expert or professional affords the text more authority (Foucault 1980).

This method of ‘fact’ construction is reiterated by the structure of the following two pages, which are based on a quotation from a leading member of the Conservatives. The text offers the quotation, and then immediately provides ‘evidence’ to not only contradict the quotation, but to refer to it as if it were a nonsense. This is done by

presenting the quotation under the subheading ‘Fiction’, and the evidence put forward by Labour under the subheading ‘Fact’. This importance of winning support for the Labour Party and portraying it as being the party of ‘truth’ is of fundamental significance if the following paragraph is to be successful.

‘When we cut through the jargon and the fallacies we find at the heart of the government’s strategy a simple political purpose. Unemployment is not a ‘side effect’ but a central weapon, deliberately used to undermine the organisation of workers and strengthen the hand of employers. It is not ‘temporary’ but will continue undiminished as long as that strategy remains unchanged’ (Labour Party 1982c: 8).

This paragraph is important owing to its relatively shocking content. It claims that the Conservatives have *deliberately* allowed unemployment to rise so that they can weaken the workforce, restrict their rights, reduce their bargaining power, and consequently give more control to employers. This is a long term strategy for the Tories, it is not ‘temporary’. It is here that we can make steps to uncover one of the key rhetorical devices within the text. A key objective behind the text up until this point has been to present the unemployment situation as being thoroughly grim, and as affecting a wide variety of desperate individuals. This has served more purpose than just presenting the facts; it has served to establish a relationship between the reader and the text, to evoke a specific emotion from the reader, and to prepare him/her for paragraphs similar to the above. If, in the early stage of the pamphlet, it had been announced that the Tories had deliberately allowed unemployment to rise so that they could reduce the bargaining power of the workers, the argument would possibly have received little support from some. Yet at this stage in the text, it is more permissible.

There are also a variety of textual manoeuvres in operation within this paragraph. Firstly, the sentence ‘when we cut through the jargon and fallacies we find at the heart of the Government’s strategy a simple political purpose’ is significant for a number of reasons. The use of war metaphors in the word strategy (used twice) and central weapon indicates not simply a superficial matter of wording, but a ‘militarisation of thought and social practice’ (Chilton 1988, cited in Fairclough 1992; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). The indication is also that the Conservative Party instigated the ‘war’ against the workers that are implicit in the extract. The juxtaposition of the terms ‘jargon’ and ‘fallacies’ against ‘*simple* political purpose’ indicates that the Conservative Party are in fact deliberately obfuscating reality. Also the mimicking of some of the phrases from Tory rhetoric such as ‘side-effect’ and ‘temporary’, has an ironising effect for the text in that the text is seen to satirise the opinions of the Conservative Party.

The inclusion of the somewhat controversial quotations, equips the ‘Fiction/Fact’ section with yet another technique that enables it to win support.

‘I grew up in the 1930s with an unemployed father. He did not riot - he got on his bike and looked for work and he kept looking until he had found it’  
(Norman Tebbit, Oct 81, cited in Labour Party 1982c:9).

Given the nature of the pamphlet’s previous description of the degree of unemployment, and the hopelessness of the unemployed, this statement could appear as being dismissive of the conditions and lack of opportunities suffered by the unemployed. The reference constructs the unemployed person as being in charge (or at least capable of being in charge) of his/her own employment status, and as being fully responsible and accountable for his/her own actions. The text employs the phrase ‘got on his bike’ owing to it being somewhat of a cliché and its consequent dismissive nature. Moreover, the quotation is described in the main body of the text

as being ‘typical of the callous insensitivity of the Tory leaders to the problem of the unemployed’ (Labour Party 1982c). The effect being that further weight is added to the paper’s arguments against Tory policy. Similarly, a quotation included from the Conservative Ian Sproat argues that a lot of people who are unemployed would ‘run ten miles if someone offered them a job that involved real hard work’ (Labour Party 1982c:9).

This concludes the third section of the pamphlet. The text has articulated a condition of severe unemployment, economic and social crisis, a subject position of the unemployed as helpless and suffering and the Conservative Party as callous and fully accountable for their condition. The final stage for the text is to outline the possibilities for the future, and the Labour Agenda for employment policy.

## **Part Four**

### **5.5.7. ‘The Future Agenda’ - Blame Attribution Versus Causal Accounts**

One significant element in this final section is in the shift in the definition of the causes of unemployment. Throughout the text so far, the causes of unemployment have been unequivocally attributed to Conservative economic policy. The Conservatives have been seen to have: (a) ‘sent unemployment soaring’(Labour Party 1982c:2); (b) ‘*deliberately created* mass unemployment’ (1982c:2); (c) ‘*dragged* the economy into a new slump’ (1982c:3); (d) that unemployment ‘can be traced *directly* to government policies’ (1982c:8); (e) used unemployment ‘as a central weapon, *deliberately* used to undermine the organisation of workers’ (1982c:8); (f) that there is ‘no doubt that the Government came to power *planning to put people out of work*’ (1982c:11); (g) that ‘the slump has been *caused* by Tory policies’ (1982c:12) and that (h) the ‘main reason for the jobs crisis is that the government has *deliberately* sucked spending power out of the economy’ (1982c:12) (emphasis added). However, in the final section in the text, the explanation for unemployment moves onto more passive causal account in the detailing of the technological and demographic changes occurring in society.



‘The labour force will be growing as young people join at a faster rate than old people leave, and more women look for work. Changing patterns of technology mean that job opportunities will be shrinking in many traditional areas of unemployment. *To get back to full employment we will need a million new jobs a year for five years*’ (Labour Party 1982c:12) (emphasis in original).

This shift is interesting in terms of its position in the text. When discussing the current and past unemployment problem, the blame is attributed to the Conservatives. But now that the text discusses unemployment in terms of the *future*, part of the blame is attributed to the changing demographic, technological and social factors. At no stage has the text attributed blame to these other factors during its description of the unemployment problem in relation to Conservative government. This of central importance to the function of the text. If the text were to have previously discussed the demographic, social and technological factors influencing unemployment, then it would to some extent be seen to have been excusing the Conservative Party. It is essential to the internal functioning of the text that it attributes the blame for mass unemployment onto the actions of the opposition party. However, when discussing unemployment in terms of the future, the discussion of the alternative factors has the reverse effect of inviting the reader to sympathise with the extremely difficult task that the Labour Party is faced with if elected.

### **5.5.8. Construction of Economic Policies as Self-evident ‘Solutions’**

#### **i. Increased Public Spending**

The pamphlet then discusses what methods must be employed to create more jobs. It claims that the best way to do this is to ‘increase spending power’ and that there are many ways to increase this power:

‘But the most effective way is for the Government to act by spending more itself, providing the finance for others to spend, and taking less income from people in taxation. Economists call this process of increasing the spending power to expand the economy ‘reflation’’ (Labour Party 1982c:13).

The two sentences of this paragraph are both simple, factual sentences. The claim that ‘the most effective way’ to solve mass unemployment is presented as indisputable and is afforded validity through the political / economic discourse in which it is presented. This effect is given more weight by the reference to ‘economists’ in that it allows the text to secure professional validation for the claims it makes in relation to Keynesian demand management. Also, the repeated use of the word ‘spending’ is significant, in that it emphasises its importance. This can also be identified in another document published by the Labour Party; ‘We will expand the economy by providing a strong and measured increase in spending. Spending money creates jobs’ (Labour Party 1983:8).

## **ii. Positive Construction of the National Debt**

The pamphlet explains that in order to increase public spending, it will need to borrow money. It also makes sizeable efforts to downplay any possible risks that may be involved with borrowing money.

‘In fact every sensible company will borrow to pay for investment and most families borrow to finance major purposes. Every sensible country overseas borrows to keep resources in the economy in use. Government borrowing in Britain is way below the level in more successful economies like Germany, Japan and Italy. Moreover our national debt is now smaller

in relation to our annual income than at any time for sixty years' (Labour Party 1982c:13).

There are a large number of interesting devices employed within this paragraph. Firstly, the repeated use of the word 'sensible' is significant in that it is used to describe a group of people, or a collectivity that are involved in the very exchange that the text is trying to encourage. In other words, the text is trying to demonstrate the usefulness of borrowing money, and refers to those who already borrow money as 'sensible', by default, the act of borrowing money is also presented as being 'sensible'.

Another interesting choice of words in the use of 'every' and 'most'. The reference to events or actions by 'extreme case formulations' is according to Pomerantz, a rhetorical technique known as 'extrematisation and minimisation' (Pomerantz 1986). Potter suggests that when a text argues its conclusions, a common descriptive practice is to draw on extreme cases or use the extreme points of description in a bid to strengthen the case. The use of the word 'borrow' is also significant in that 'borrow' is not considered as hardened as the terms 'loan', or 'debt'. Potter refers to this as 'maximising or minimising' where the choice of words are used to maximise or minimise a quality of an action (Potter 1996a: 188-94). In this instance, the word 'borrow' is used to describe the act of increasing the national debt and is consequently appropriate given that the text is aiming to encourage this action.

Finally, the last sentence: 'our national debt is now smaller in relation to our annual income than at any time for sixty years' employs 'externalising' and 'pathing devices' as well as 'normalisation and abnormalisation' (Woolgar 1988:76) and (Smith 1990). The use of the word 'our' is an example of an externalising device in that it employs the notion of community and consequently invites the reader to 'become part of an existing state of knowledge' (Woolgar 1988). Also, the reference

to the national debt as being smaller than it has been for sixty years is an example of a pathing device, whereby the establishing of a pastness (sixty years ago) ‘provides the reader with a framework for making sense of new observations’ (Woolgar 1988:76). This reference to sixty years prior is important in that it explains the current national debt as being not simply low, but as being lower than it has been for sixty years. The effect of this is that the situation is depicted as being ‘abnormal’ (Smith 1990).

The themes identified within the first section of this research have also appeared within the discourse analysis. The pamphlet has exhibited a concern with the reduction of unemployment, reflation of the economy, and sympathy for the condition of the unemployed. The basic structure and various textual manoeuvres that were employed in the text have afforded these themes a stronger platform.

### **5.6. Document Two: ‘Jobs: An Encouraging Trend’**

The second paper for analysis is a report published in ‘Politics Today’ on August 1987 (‘Jobs: An Encouraging Trend’ Politics Today, No 10 6/8/87). On the middle of the front cover of the document is a small picture of the House of Parliament. Overleaf, the document outlines the purpose of the paper, which is to ‘underline the extent of the Conservative achievement in bringing down unemployment throughout Great Britain, North *and* South, East *and* West’. Consequently, the tone of the document is considerably brighter and more optimistic than the selected Labour document (Labour Party 1982c) ‘Unemployment today stands at its lowest level for three and a half years’ (Conservative Party 1987). There are a number of significant differences between this paper and the Labour Party paper, in that the Conservative paper relies far more heavily on the use of audit and has far more headings and sub-headings, all of which are individually numbered. The text displays a managerial tone, embedded within neo-liberal political rationality, and concerned with economic monitoring and evaluation. This emphasis on economic monitoring demonstrates the significance of the use of audit as a technology of governance during neo-liberal

administration (Power 1994, cited in Stenson and Watt 1999). The first section of the paper is an introduction to what it describes as ‘Our Changing Jobs Market’.

## **Part One: ‘Introduction: Our Changing Jobs Market’.**

### **5.6.1. Causal Accounts of Unemployment**

Starting off on a positive note, the paper claims that unemployment has recently fallen for the twelfth month in succession and that total employment has been growing for sixteen successive quarters (Conservative Party 1987:163). It goes on to say that:

‘It took a little time for unemployment to fall because the number of people looking for work continued to rise quite fast. In 1984, for example, over half a million more people became available for work, and in 1985 another 260,000’ (Conservative Party 1987:163).

The paper does not continue with this line of argument for long and is keen to stress that this state of affairs is not expected to continue:

‘More recently, however, the total labour force has been growing more slowly - and its rate of growth is expected to slow even further in the next few years... Britain has now emerged from the period when large numbers of new jobs were needed simply to prevent unemployment getting any worse. In the well-worn phrase, we are no longer ‘running hard merely to stand still’’ (Conservative Party 1987:163).

The sentence structure used here is comparatively simplistic, offering encouragement and reassurance to the reader that the situation is improving. The use

of the phrase ‘we are no longer running hard merely to stand still’ is significant in that it enables the text to demonstrate a personal almost friendly connection with the reader, amplified by the use of the word ‘we’ as an externalising device (Woolgar 1988:76).

### 5.6.2. Illustrative Devices

The document includes a variety of illustrations, and relies heavily on the use of statistical information in support of its case.

**‘Far-Reaching Change.** The pattern of unemployment in the United Kingdom has undergone profound change. New industries, particularly in the service sector, have grown rapidly whilst manufacturing has been shedding labour - not just in the last few years, but during the entire period since the 1960s. More people than ever before (nearly 14.4 million) now work in the service sector, which accounts for almost 68 per cent of employees - compared with 45 per cent in 1955. The growth of new jobs has been particularly marked in the following areas:

	1980-7
Financial Services	+ 1,056,000
Distribution	+ 577,000
Hotels and Catering	+ 162,100

(Source: *Employment Gazette*)

(Conservative Party 1987:163)’.

There are a number of issues to examine in this extract. Firstly, the use of subheadings gives the paper a more structured and uniform identity, enhancing the

presentation of the data as tightly ordered and organised as well as professional. The information offered regarding the fall in manufacturing employment is very importantly offset against the increase in the service sector. The paragraph also significantly offers more information regarding the increase in service sector employment than it does in the manufacturing decline, the effect of which is that the issues concerning manufacturing are in some way minimised. There are six pieces of information regarding the service sector increase, compared with two for manufacturing. Also significant is the ‘normalising’ device employed in relation to comments regarding the fact that manufacturing has been declining since the 1960s. This enables the decline to be presented as one that was expected and not under the control of the Conservative Party.

The second point of interest in the extract is regarding the use of statistical information. The text claims that *nearly* 14.4 million people work in the service sector, which accounts for *almost* 65 per cent of employers, a rise from 45 per cent since 1955. The text then offers a further breakdown of which specific areas within the service industry that have benefited from this increase in employment. This use of figures acts as a visual aid and consequently, as well as adding support and verification of the claims, also affords the document a more professional and official appearance. Another element of interest regarding the use of figures is the obvious lack of information in the table regarding the loss of employment in manufacturing. The paragraph that immediately precedes and to some extent introduces the table is concerned with the changing employment structure to *both* the service industry and the manufacturing industry, yet the table omits any information regarding manufacturing. Malcolm Ashmore refers to this process as an example of ‘maximising and minimising’, whereby a numerical table produces a maximised or minimised version of the data (Ashmore 1995, cited in Potter 1996a). Similarly, the terms ‘*nearly* 14.4 million now work in the service sector’ and ‘accounts for *almost* 68 percent of employees’ has the effect of minimising and maximising the data to strengthen the argument of the text (Pomerantz 1986). The following quotation is an extreme example of this specific technique:

‘But the days of rapid contraction are now over: in the three months to May this year, an average of 5,000 jobs in manufacturing were lost per month; in the 1960s and 1970s, the monthly figure reached 10,000 (Conservative Party 1987:163).

The document claims that the average loss of employment in manufacturing between February to May was calculated at being 5,000 a month. This figure is compared with the 10,000 figure that is quoted to have been reached during the 1960s and 70s. This is an example of a significant textual manoeuvre in that the figures, although being directly compared with one another, are not presented with the same terminology. The fact that the period between February and May is quoted and that no reason is given as to why this specific period has been chosen over any other, indicates that the period was very probably one that experienced a comparatively low drop in employment in manufacturing. Also, the fact that the reader is only informed of the ‘average’ loss suggests that some losses experienced during at least one of the months listed may well have been significantly higher than 5,000. Another issue in relation to the 1960 and 1970 figures is that the reader is only told that the ‘monthly figure reached 10,000’ but not how frequently the level was reached, or what the average figure was. Thus the figures that the reader is invited to remember for the contemporary period are 5,000, whereas for the 1960s and 1970s, the only figures available are the much higher 10,000. The effect of this is that the reader is invited to associate a 5,000 loss of jobs with the then current period, and 10,000 with the 1960s and 1970s. This device is an example of the text maximising and minimising certain elements of an event in order to enhance the strength of a case.

### **5.6.3. Minimisation of Losses**



Another issue with regard to the loss of manufacturing jobs is exhibited in the following quotation:

‘Manufacturing industry - plagued for years by overmanning and industrial problems - has shed its excess labour in order to restore its competitive position in British (and, increasingly, world markets). The British Steel Corporation, for example, has reduced its workforce by 72 per cent since 1978-9, productivity has improved by a massive 113 per cent over the period’ (Conservative Party 1987:163).

This quotation makes steps towards minimising the significance of the loss of manufacturing positions by referring to the jobs as ‘excess labour’ and is an example of negative value being placed on ‘full employment’. The use of the phrase ‘*plagued* by years of overmanning and industrial problems’ is significant in that not only does it limit the possibility that the reader could view the loss of jobs as fortunate, but actually presents the situation as being thoroughly productive. Also, the use of the emotive word ‘plagued’ as well as ‘excess labour’, ‘overmanning’, and ‘industrial problems’ when juxtaposed against the more positive and upbeat phrase ‘restore its competitive position’ and ‘improved productivity’ enhances this presentation of the decline in manufacturing as being positive. Again, the use of numerical data serves to validate and add more authority to the claims.

#### **5.6.4. Maximising Free Enterprise and Responsibility**

Later on in the document, the importance of competition for the economy is emphasised again through the inclusion of a quotation by Lord Young:

‘Since 1979, we have seen the return to enterprise. The overriding change is a movement away from state intervention, putting responsibility and

initiative back on individuals, not the state. The forgotten lesson that we had to earn our living has been gradually rediscovered along with the sense of entrepreneurship...’ (Lord Young, in Conservative Party 1987:164).

This is an example of where the previously identified themes of low state intervention, competition and individual responsibility are incorporated into the text. This can also be identified in the following quotation, beginning with the subheading **‘Pay’**:

‘In some parts of the Country those in work are in effect pricing the unemployed out of a job - with the encouragement of the Trade Unions in some instances. A slower rise in average earnings now running at 8.7 per cent, 4.6 points above inflation - would mean improved competitiveness and increased profits, leading firms to expand output. Increased output, coupled with a greater incentive to use men rather than machines, will sustain demand and raise total employment’ (Conservative Party 1987:165).

The significance here is that by attributing some of the responsibility for the high levels of unemployment onto demands for high wages and the influence of the Trade Unions, the text manages to minimise the responsibility the Government also has for unemployment. The last two sentences are significant in that they are relatively simplistic and instructive, explaining precisely what could happen, and why it is beneficial. This technique is identified as having the effect of offering reassurance to the reader (Fairclough 1992:173). These comments are immediately supported with the use of more statistical backing in the next paragraph of the document, claiming that a: ‘1 per cent increase in real pay destroys between 110,000 and 200,000 new jobs’ (Conservative Party 1987:163).

## **Part Two: 'The Conservative Achievement'**

### **5.6.5. Positive Construction of National Economic Growth**

The second section opens with a paragraph under the subheading 'Bringing unemployment down' and a plethora of figures in support of the argument that unemployment is on the decrease, it claims that: 'Unemployment stands at its lowest level for three and a half years'; that 'Unemployment...is almost 290,000 lower than a year ago'; that 'Long-term unemployment...fell by more than 60,000...the largest drop on record'; and that youth unemployment fell 'by 158,000'. Under the second subheading 'Doing better than Other Countries' the document reads:

'Unemployment has fallen faster in Britain than any other major industrialised country during the last twelve months as a result of the sound economic policies pursued by the Conservative government which have stimulated steady growth and encouraged enterprise. Unemployment is now higher in France (11 per cent), Belgium (10.7 per cent), Spain (21 per cent) and the republic of Ireland (19 per cent) compared with the United Kingdom's 10.5 per cent...' (Conservative Party 1987:167).

This is an obvious example of abnormalisation in that the text presents the drop in unemployment as not simply being good, but as also being significantly better than some neighbouring countries. It is also interesting in that the text unequivocally claims that this drop in unemployment is a result of 'sound economic' Conservative policies. The document has previously argued that it was the profound demographic changes experienced by the UK, that were responsible for much of the high levels of unemployment, but that these changes were now slowing down, and consequently, the demands placed on employment were being reduced. For example, on page 163, it argued that 'projections by the Department of Employment indicate that until 1991 the labour force should increase on average by 100,000 per annum - a much slower rate than in the earlier part of the decade' (Conservative Party 1987:163). Yet this

information is not drawn upon in this section. Instead the text indicates that the drop in unemployment is directly and solely a result of the Government's 'sound economic policies'. This discrepancy constitutes what is essentially a very important structural device in the text. Earlier on in the document the comments made with regard to the fewer demands that the demographic changes were making on employment, it was important that the text was able to offer immediate reassurance to the reader that the situation was going to improve and that in effect the 'worst was over'. However, at this stage in the text, and given the nature of this section (the section is titled 'The Conservative Achievement'), it is of vital importance that the text encourages and persuades the reader to feel confident in the Conservative achievement and not to believe that the drop in unemployment may be coincidental and not resultant of a deliberate and calculated Conservative strategy.

#### **5.6.6. The Selective Cataloguing of Statistical Data**

There is another discrepancy in terms of the figures and calculation included in the text. The 'Doing Better than Other Countries' section includes a cross tabulation with seven rows and two columns. There are seven countries in the rows, and two columns that correspond to each row; one column listing the rate at which unemployment has risen or fallen for that particular country within the last three months, and the other listing the rate at which it has risen or fallen for the same country within the last year. For example, it lists the US as having had a 0.4 per cent drop in unemployment within the last three months, and a 1.2 per cent drop within the last year, and Japan as having a 0.1 per cent increase in the last three months and a 0.5 per cent increase within the last year. Despite the informative nature of this table, most of the countries listed do not correspond with the information earlier supplied regarding the actual level of employment in relation to the percentage of the population that are unemployed. For example, the document has previously listed the percentage of people unemployed for France, Belgium, Spain and the Republic of Ireland; yet here the table only includes information for France, UK, West Germany, Italy, Canada US and Japan. Consequently, the reader has no way of knowing how the final statistics for the 1 per cent drop in unemployment for the US within the last

year actually compares with the 1.2 per cent drop in the UK, because the information about the actual level of unemployment at the start and end of the year is omitted. Although it is arguable that the data in the paragraph and the table are essentially offering different information and that there is consequently no real reason why the countries listed should exactly correspond with each other; the indication is that the document has initially only listed the countries where the overall level of unemployment is lower than the UK, and then in the table, only listed those countries where the proportional fall in unemployment is lower than the UK in a bid to strengthen the claims made.

Throughout the document there is a heavy reliance on the use of statistics and under the next subheading **‘Employment’**, the document again offers a wide range of selective statistical information to strengthen its argument that unemployment is on the decrease. For example, it states that: ‘724,000 part time jobs have been created’ and ‘500,000’ full time; employment in the service industry has grown ‘by 1.35 million since March 1983 - to stand at almost 14.4 million now’; manufacturing output was ‘up by 7 per cent during the last year’; ‘more than 750,000’ people have become self employed since June 1979; that ‘since 1980 there has been an average net increase of some 500 new firms every week’; that ‘In 1975, small businesses employed fewer than 15 per cent of the total workforce; today the figure is almost 25 per cent’; and finally, that ‘Between 1982-4 some one million jobs were generated by self-employment and small firms’ (Conservative Party 1987:168). This heavy reliance on statistics involves a range of rhetorical devices that have the effect of offering support and verification (selectively) to the claims made in the text. Hacking talks of the significance of official statistics over agriculture, education, trade, births and crime as beginning in the nineteenth century (Hacking 1986). He argues that within the census, new categories are created annually for new groups of people and that although social change brings with it new categories of people, the counting of them ‘elaborately, often philanthropically, creates new ways for people to be’ (Hacking 1986:223).

### **Part Three ‘The Conservative Strategy’**

#### **5.6.7. The Future Agenda**

It is in this third section that the document outlines its policies for the future with regard to inflation, public borrowing, taxation and removing obstacles to employment (ie: wage level restrictions, industrial relations). This section contains a large number of subheadings, such as: ‘policies for growth’, ‘Inflation’, ‘Public Borrowing’, ‘Taxation’, ‘Corporation tax for Small Companies’, ‘Removing Obstacles to Employment’, ‘Responsible Pay Settlements’, ‘Removing Controls’, and ‘Industrial Relations’ (ibid:170-1). Under each heading is a small paragraph outlining what the Conservative strategy is in relation to each issue. An effect of this tight structure is to aid the document’s presentation as being organised, concise and efficient. Under the heading taxation, the document includes a quotation from Nigel Lawson:

‘Lower rates of taxes sharpen up incentives and stimulate enterprise, which in turn is the only route to better economic performance. And it is only by improving our economic performance...that we will be able to create jobs on the scale that we all want to see’ (Hansard 17<sup>th</sup> March 1987, Col. 827).

The first sentence of this paragraph has two clauses. It is very simple sentence presenting the information as factual and unequivocal. As a device, it suppresses alternative accounts and limits grounds for an acceptable debate over policy alternatives. The short and concise nature of the sentence enhances its presentation as being indisputable and is afforded even more validity through the political/economic discourse in which it appears. The final sentence is also interesting: ‘...it is only by improving our economic performance... that we will be able to create the jobs on the scale that *we all* want to see’. The repeated use of the term ‘economic performance’ both at the end of the first sentence and in the early

part of the second is significant in that it allows the argument to appear stronger and more forceful. For example, in the first sentence the reader is told that economic performance can only be improved by lowering taxes, and then in the second sentence it is explained that it is this economic performance that will create the jobs that *everybody* wants. Consequently, it is concluded that in fact what everybody wants is lower taxes. This is a very important rhetorical device in that in two short sentences, the reader is informed that the Government is promising to lower taxes, and that this is precisely what he/she wants.

### 5.7. Discussion

For the Conservative party, ‘unemployment’ was understood in economic terms and largely managed through encouraging competitiveness, accountability and individual responsibility. References to unemployment focused on entrepreneurs, ‘economic realists’, the self-employed, and the managers, and unemployment were defined in terms of manufacturing output, productivity and competitiveness between countries. It was understood in terms of competitiveness within the economic market rather than as a social problem. This mode of thought is closely related to the theory of the enterprise culture. One of the principal features of this is the way in which notions of competitiveness and cost-effectiveness are encouraged within neo-liberalism (Burchell 1993; Fairclough 1992; 1995). Using the example of education, Burchell discusses the ways in which schools operate under a competitive ‘market’ logic, and that although they operate under the framework set by central government, they are simultaneously encouraged to function as ‘independently managed quasi-enterprises in competition with other schools’ (Burchell 1993:275).

However, it is argued that there was a profound difference in the way ‘unemployment’ and the ‘unemployed’ were managed. Significantly, although the general problem of ‘unemployment’ was understood in economic terms, the problem of the ‘unemployed’ was understood more in ‘moral’ terms, and when focusing on specific unemployed individuals, the discourse gave them considerable

responsibility for managing their own status. This again is related to the promotion of the enterprise culture and the ‘contractual implication’ in that the individuals involved are encouraged to take a very ‘active’ role in their own government, the consequence being that any results of these activities are also very much the responsibility of the individuals (Donzelot 1991, cited in Burchell 1993). Similarly, although the Labour Party placed much more emphasis on the social costs of unemployment, they also emphasised the economic reasons for unemployment and although they did not define ‘economics’ in the same way as the Conservatives, they largely understood unemployment to be an economic problem.

It is argued that New Labour is quite distinct from this, partly because it does not have the same emphasis on the economic definition of unemployment. Instead, for New Labour, unemployment cannot be solved by concentrating solely on improving the state of the market, but by concentrating on the *employability* of the workforce. Similar to the Conservative Party, New Labour place great emphasis on the importance of individual responsibility, but the notion of responsibility has been restructured, whereas instead of looking at the responsibilities individuals have to themselves and taxpayers, New Labour concentrate on the responsibility individuals have to their community. This discussion is taken up in the following chapter, which focuses on the centrality of ‘community’ and communitarianism in the governance of the conduct of jobseekers. With this, all jobseekers are invited and encouraged to take active responsibility for their conduct in order to enhance the ‘community’ as much as improve their economic status.



## **Chapter Six**

### **Images of ‘Community’ in New Labour Social Security Discourse**

One of the major significance’s of New Labour’s discourse on unemployment is the extent to which the jobseeker is governed through the ‘community’. This chapter is specifically concerned with identifying the ways in which the jobseeker is articulated through the conception of ‘community’ and with the relationship between New Labour’s notion of ‘community’ and the JSA and New Deal. It is argued that the meaning of ‘community’ has in recent years undergone a shift away from concerns with social rights and a paternalist state, towards issues concerning self-help and individual responsibility. The tacking on of concepts such as duties and obligations to community is heavily discussed by theorists as one of the significant elements behind New Labour policy (Levitas 1998; Maor 1997; Driver and Martell 1998, 2000; Kenny and Smith 1997; Giddens 1994). It is argued that for the vast majority of individuals capable of obtaining meaningful, paid employment, social inclusion is dependent not only them making every effort to secure paid employment, but also subscribing to the notion of ‘community’ and abiding by the articulated codes of conduct. With this, New Labour’s concept of community prescribes specific codes of conduct and articulates the values and objectives of the jobseeker. It is this ‘prescriptive’ authority that makes the notion of ‘community’ directly relevant to this analysis.

The discourse on unemployment is closely related to the discourse on social inclusion and New Labour’s concept of social inclusion is largely conditional on individuals adopting and internalising the discourse of communitarianism. As such, it is argued that this concept of social inclusion is as much value based as it is material. Consequently, paid work does not guarantee social inclusion. This chapter comes in two parts. The first part begins by outlining what ‘community’ largely consists of in New Labour discourse, covering the role of the Third Way; the ‘active’ community; the centrality of the family; the importance of moral values; and ‘one-nationism’. The second part focuses on the ‘community’ as a technique of dominance and looks at the ways in which the ‘community’ is used as a means for

managing the conduct of jobseekers. It is argued that the official discourse articulates two specific forms of community; the ‘Value-based Community’ (6.3.) and the ‘New Cultural Community’ (6.4.), which are discussed in turn.

## **Part One: ‘Community’ an Outline**

### **6.1.1. Images of Community and the Techniques of the Self**

Analysis in this chapter is concerned with how various New Labour discourses of ‘community’ invite the jobseeker to perform a technique of the self. After offering a more comprehensive definition of ‘community’, this chapter identifies two primary levels from which ‘community’ is articulated, both of which operate from within a clear ethical discourse. The first of these is described as the ‘value-based community’ (6.3.). Within this discourse, individuals are invited to take active responsibility for their employment status out of a ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ obligation to each other and society. This extends to the obligations individuals have to their immediate family members, neighbours (identified in geographical and non-geographical terms) and to themselves. With this, failure to take active responsibility for one’s employment status is not only a failure to oneself, but a failure to one’s family and community. Here, jobseekers are encouraged to market themselves and enhance their employability, not simply to better the financial lives of themselves or their families, but to contribute to the ongoing maintenance of the community and enhance ‘social cohesion’. In this sense, the ‘community’ is articulated as being one of the key benefactors of enhanced employability and responsibility, and a failure to take active responsibility in securing employment is translated as a failure to take responsibility for the community. Consequently, New Labour’s articulation of community has the possible effect of shaping in many ways not only the specific ‘conduct’ of individuals, but also on a more individual level, their specific value systems and identities. For example, jobseekers are obliged to take full responsibility for their own conduct and self management as well as subscribing to New Labour’s articulation of the ‘communitarian ethic’, incorporating such values as decency, courtesy and neighbourliness. The significance being that securing paid employment does not guarantee an individual either membership to the moral/ethical community

or identification as a 'good jobseeker'. Instead, these privileges are strictly conditional on individuals performing a whole range of ethical reconstructions as well as adopting a thoroughly enterprising approach to their own self management. Thus the discourse of unemployment places an obligation on jobseekers to rethink their ethical identities in terms of their approach to the new community; their own position and status within that new community; their attitude towards employment, unpaid work, voluntary work and parenting and their own personal conduct as a 'jobseeker'.

The second area looks at the 'new cultural community' (6.4.) and the ways in which notions of the 'enterprise culture' and 'skills challenge' invite individuals to perform a technology of the self. With this, individuals are obliged to adopt an 'enterprising' approach to their self-management, whereby they must consistently market themselves, take active responsibility for their employability and be both capable and willing to obtain paid employment if they are to achieve full membership into the 'new cultural community'. It has been said of 'enterprise' that 'An enterprising self will plot it's future, and project itself into that future, transforming itself into the 'self' it wishes to be' and that 'The enterprising self is thus a calculating self, a self that calculates about itself and that works upon itself in order to better itself' (Rose 1992:146). Thus the notion of 'enterprise' as identified in New Labour discourse on communitarianism is also intrinsically 'ethical', placing heavy pressure on individuals, both jobseekers *and* those currently employed, to consistently market themselves, enhance their employability and take active responsibility for their own conduct. With this, individuals become objectified in terms of their skill levels and marketability. Similarly, failure to take adequate steps to enhance one's employability, insure oneself against unemployment, or seek and secure paid work is deemed a failure to both oneself and to the wider community. Significantly, the obligation for jobseekers to adapt to the pressures of modern working life and take active control over their self management through engaging in a process of continuous learning is extended to those who have previously been excluded from the labour market, and since the New Deal was introduced in twelve areas across the

country in January 1998, it has been extended to include other groups of people through: the New Deal for Disabled People; New Deal for Lone Parents; New Deal for Partners; New Deal for 25 Plus and the New Deal for People over 55. This is highly significant to the ethics of the jobseekers who are now obliged to reconstruct themselves under the new terms of enterprise, marketability, self-governance and the new cultural community. This invitation is all inclusive, as all individuals capable of work are now invited and encouraged to take active responsibility for their employment status and adopt a thoroughly enterprising and professional approach to both employment and jobseeking. With this, membership to the 'new cultural community' is extended to those who may have spent large periods out of employment and who may even have relatively little chance of successfully re-entering the employment market. In these cases, membership is conditional on the jobseeker adopting the same market ethos and internalising the same cultural ethic which emphasises continuous learning and the entrepreneurial state.

Consequently, both the 'value-based' and the 'enterprise' community articulate a moral discourse which translates into specific ethical obligations, the first moral discourse incorporating the more traditional, Christian inspired conceptions of the community, whereby the individual is located through a responsibility to the community (Macmurray 1932; 1935) and the second being routed in notions of entrepreneurialism. These specific moral discourses have been welded into a coherent set of ethical obligations for the jobseeker, which in turn comprises a unified ethical regulatory mechanism.

### **6.1.2. Theoretical Background**

As already outlined, this thesis focuses on the different ways in which human beings are made into subjects (Dean 1995:560; Foucault 1988; Gordon 1991; Rose 1993) and with this, is concerned with the ways in which technologies of power and technologies of the self prescribe the conduct of the jobseeker. This chapter is specifically concerned with the ways in which the jobseeker is articulated by the

discourse of the ‘community’ and the ways in which the ‘jobseekers’ are understood and managed.

Foucault identified four different types of technologies that human beings use to understand themselves; technologies of production, technologies of sign systems, technologies of power and technologies of the self (Foucault 1988:18). Throughout this thesis, the discourse of the JSA and New Deal is analysed with regards these last two technologies. Whereas technologies of power are said to determine the conduct of individuals by subjecting them to various methods of coercion and objectification; technologies of the self are more concerned with the regulation *of self on self*, whereby individuals are governed more by their own desires to act upon themselves and to govern their own conduct (Foucault 1988). Foucault goes on to say that each of these technologies ‘implies certain modes of training and the certain modification of individuals’ and that this is not only in the sense of acquiring certain practical skills, but also in acquiring certain ‘attitudes’ (ibid).

### **6.1.3. Methods - Identifying New Labour's Vision of ‘Community’**

This analysis is concerned with the ways in which the ‘community’ is employed as a mechanism for governing the jobseeker and with the consequent technologies of self the jobseekers are invited to perform. However, before this analysis can begin, some attempt needs to be made to define New Labour’s discourse of ‘community’. In terms of methodology, attempts to identify New Labour's concept of community were achieved through the reading and re-reading of Party Political documents and texts issued by the Labour Party since 1996 and by highlighting all references to community and community related issues<sup>1</sup>. These official documentation, consisted of New Labour publications, such as party speeches, official statements, reports and also DfEE literature, DSS literature, and various other pamphlets and booklets readily available to jobseekers. From this initial reading, the basis for an explanation of the notion of community was formed. This understanding saw community as

being largely conditional on individuals being both responsible and accountable (and to some extent ‘employable’); holding similar value systems and moral identities based on notions of communitarianism; and is increasingly defined in national terms. Following this, the documentary texts were re-read in order to discover if these theories could withstand scrutiny and to elaborate upon them further.

#### **6.1.4. Individual Targets of Communities**

One important element to this form of governance is that although the ‘community’ is presented as being the chief beneficiary of active citizenship and responsible jobseeking, the targets of governance are still ‘individuals’ and the development of the community is entirely dependant on the actions and conduct of the ‘individual’. With this, the jobseeker is obliged to manage his/her own conduct and take active responsibility for his/her employability in order to satisfy the needs of the ‘community’ (be it the ‘value-based community’ or the ‘enterprise community’). Moreover, the conduct of the individual/jobseeker does not simply entail active jobseeking or responsible parenting, but also requires individuals to adopt an ‘entrepreneurial’ approach to communitarianism. To illustrate this, Tony Blair argued:

‘Because a fully employed society isn’t just one where everyone who wants a job has a job. It is one where everyone contributes all their talents – through the things they do, paid or unpaid, in the service of others. A society in which when people ask you: ‘what do you do’, its not just your job that you mention’ (Blair 1999b).

New Labour place great emphasis on the voluntary sector (or the ‘third sector’) and the role of ‘social entrepreneurs’, indicating a merge between the activity of voluntary or community work, and the ethic of the ‘enterprise culture’. With this,

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<sup>1</sup> These also included publications issued by the Department of Social Security and

individuals are invited not only to take responsibility for their community and become actively involved in its maintenance, but also to become ‘enterprising’ in their approach to voluntary and community work. To illustrate further, under the Thatcher Governments, it was argued that the term ‘enterprise’ had been elevated to ‘cultural’ status and could no longer be reduced simply to the economic realm as it was also considered responsible for encouraging individuals to exercise initiative and think of themselves as ‘producers’, not just so they could prosper, but so they could retain their jobs (Heelas 1998:5). This movement can also be identified in the ‘enterprising’ elements now associated with the ‘third sector’ and the discourse of the community; whereby successful communities are those who ‘harness the energies of voluntary action’ and give recognition to the significance of the voluntary and community organisations. Thus, although the ‘communities’ are identified as being the primary beneficiaries from such things as active jobseeking; responsible parenting; active citizenship; and the adoption of ‘communitarian values’, it must not be forgotten that it is the specific individuals that are the ‘targets’ of this form of governance. With this, citizenship and communitarianism is dependant on individuals being active, independent and ‘entrepreneurial’ rather than passive or dependant (Rose 1992:159). Consequently, this analysis is concerned with the governance of specific ‘individuals’ through the discourse of the community.

#### **6.1.5. New Labour and the New ‘Community’ - An Outline**

The first part of this chapter offers a discussion of New Labour’s definition of community by identifying five basic elements: i) the role of the ‘third way’ (why it is different from neo-liberalism); ii) the role of active governance and the ‘active community’; iii) the role of the family; iv) the emphasis on moral values; and v) the significance of the ‘national’ community. The second part analyses how these conceptions of community encourage technologies of the self. This is conducted by identifying the ways in which the discourse of community elicits certain responses or actions from its affected subjects. With this, there are two principal analytic points to be made regarding the relationship between unemployment discourse and

community. The first of these focuses on the role that ‘community’ has in prescribing a ‘moral’ and consequently ‘ethical’ order (6.2.). This notion of community not only invites jobseekers to take active responsibility for their employment status, but also to adopt certain articulated codes of practice. These codes of practice are said to emerge from ‘good’ families, as families are considered to be where community begins and where moral values and societal norms are founded. Individual failings, such as underage pregnancies, juvenile delinquency and irresponsible parenting and jobseeking are seen as being a result of a failing in the ‘community’. Consequently, jobseekers are invited to seek out paid employment in order to enhance the stability of the ‘community’. The second point focuses on ‘community’ as a mechanism for targeting previously excluded individuals (6.3.). ‘Community’ in this sense embodies empowering and enabling qualities and is presented as being inclusive and cutting across pre-existing class boundaries. Significantly, it also identifies ‘paid’ work as being one of the keys to increased inclusion and integration, leading towards a flexible ‘working community’, fully equipped to compete in the competitive market ethos and meet the challenges of the ‘new millennium’ (Labour 1997e; Levitas 1998; Driver and Martell 2000). This approach requires individuals to be thoroughly ‘enterprising’ in their approach to work, employability, and active communitarianism. These areas of analysis are relevant to this research because they articulate the conduct of individuals in their roles as citizens, parents, and community members, as well as the conduct of the ‘jobseeker’ in terms of his/her position in the wider community.

## **6.2. Definitions of ‘Community’**

There are five elements to New Labour’s conception of community that will be discussed: the ‘Third Way’; the role of active governance and the ‘active community’; the family; moral values; and the role of the ‘national community’.

### **6.2.1. The ‘Third Way’**



Before this analysis can begin, some explanation needs to be offered as to why the New Labour emphasis on community values and moral responsibilities is different from the moral authoritarianism that was so frequently charged to Thatcherism (Hall 1988). New Labour are extremely keen to portray their political philosophy as being distinct from Thatcherism and neo-liberal politics, arguing that their belief in communitarianism, inclusion and famously ‘government for the many not just the few’ represents an entirely new political philosophy. Emphasising this, Blair argues that ‘New Labour is a party of ideas but not of outdated ideology. What counts is what works. The objectives are radical. The means will be modern’ (Blair 1997, quoted in the Labour Party Manifesto 1997e). It has also been claimed that this emphasis on communitarianism ‘provides a framework for policies which in intent, aim to bring about greater social inclusion’ (Driver and Martell 1998:167), and that New Labour has found a place for itself that has involved rejecting the New Right dependence on the market and is founded in recreating ‘communities, stressing duties and obligations’ (Giddens 1994). This distinction has been emphasised through discussions of the ‘Third Way’ (Blair 1998a; Giddens 1998; Levitas 1998; Etzioni 2000). Speaking of the ‘Third Way’, Blair claims: ‘ideas need to be labels if they are to become popular and widely understood. The “Third Way” is to my mind the best label for the new politics which the progressive centre-left is forging in Britain and beyond’ (Blair 1998a; cited in Fairclough 2000:4). Theorists, however have yet to agree on a clear definition of the Third Way, so much so that the Third Way debate has been described as a failure, as it remains undecided whether it should be seen as an abstract philosophy, a leadership or management approach, or a distinctive set of policies (Bentley; foreword in Etzioni 2000:7).

Notwithstanding this, the concept of the Third Way is now frequently used to describe the discourse of New Labour and its distinction from Thatcherism and neo-liberal politics. Briefly, the ‘Third Way’ is explained as being ‘*New Labour’s* response to *old Labour’s* response to Thatcherism’. In other words, whilst in opposition, the Labour Party responded to Thatcher’s emphasis on the free market by reaffirming their old left ideologies. However, this response was not electorally

successful, and consequently, New Labour became obliged to re-establish themselves (Giddens 1998:ix). To illustrate the point, it is argued that classic social democracy (or ‘the old left’) believed in ‘pervasive state involvement in social and economic life’, ‘collectivism’, ‘full employment’, ‘strong egalitarianism’, ‘a comprehensive welfare state designed to protect citizens from “cradle to grave”’. Conversely, the new right held the values of ‘minimal government’, ‘moral authoritarianism, plus strong individualism’, ‘acceptance of inequality’, and the ‘welfare state as a safety net’ (Giddens 1998:7-8). However, it is now argued that New Labour (or the ‘Third Way’) has adopted the values of ‘equality’, ‘protection of the vulnerable’, ‘no rights without responsibilities’ (Giddens 1998:66), ‘active civil society’, ‘the democratic family’, ‘the new mixed economy’, ‘positive welfare’ (1998:70), and ‘the socially integrated family’ (1998:95).

To reiterate the points discussed in Chapter Four (4.6.), this emphasis on the ‘Third Way’ can be traced back to the Democrats in the US, as much of New Labour’s policies concerning welfare has been developed from Clinton’s 1992 Presidential election success (King and Wickham-Jones 1999:264). Highly significant is the fact that both the Democrats and New Labour refuse to be placed on either the Left or the Right of the political spectrum; preferring, instead to be described simply as ‘new’. For example, of New Labour, Blair argues:

‘This is a Government of conviction but its convictions are New Labour not old left or Tory right. It’s where I stand. It’s what I believe’ (Blair 2000e).

Similarly, as Senator, Al Gore argued in 1992:

‘Our policies are neither liberal nor conservative, neither Democratic or Republican. They are new. They are different. We are confident they will work’ (Clinton and Gore 1992:viii).

Thus there is a strong link between the beliefs expressed by the Clinton and Blair governments concerning the origins and substance of their political ideas. The two parties also have strong links in terms of their approaches to social policy and their specific emphasis on communitarianism, as they both stress the importance on the family; the community; active citizenship; responsibility; opportunity; employability; and lifelong learning.

### **6.2.2. Role of Active Governance and the ‘Active Community’**

One primary feature of the discourse of community is that as a mode of governance and power it emanates from ‘below’ and governance of individuals is conducted *through* the community rather than from above it (Rose 1999:479). Within this mode of governance, it is essential that governed individuals are not thoroughly passive, but actively involved as governance is conducted through ‘everyday, voluntary interactions’ (Burchell 1991; O’Malley 1996). This process can be identified in projects such as ‘community crime prevention’, ‘community enterprises’ or the role of ‘social entrepreneurs’ all of which are highly significant to the success of governmentality as they are directed less from the formal, more politically centralised forms of governance, towards governance that (at least appears) to be directed from within the local community itself (O’Malley 1996:313). O’Malley argues that almost the defining property of Foucault’s conception of disciplinary power is that it works through and upon the individual, and constitutes the individual as an object of knowledge (O’Malley 1992:232). However, a central technique behind this mode of governance is the creation of individuals who are essentially self-governing, extending far beyond the need to produce individuals who are simply either docile or obedient, but is concerned with producing individuals who are ethically reflective and self-regulating (Burchell 1991; O’Malley 1996; Stenson

1993). This importance on individuals being fully 'active' and self-governing is central to New Labour's conception of community, as individuals are constantly required to manage their own conduct (both in terms of their 'moral/ethical' and economic performance) and to take active responsibility for their employment status. Moreover, they are required to take adequate insurance protection for themselves whilst both in and out of employment whilst also demonstrating they are capable of rational action and self management.

With this, there is also an obligation on individuals to take an active role in enhancing the community base, involving a range of activities from participation in voluntary community based activities, through to participation in parliamentary elections. This particular discourse focuses on the duty to vote in elections, attend parent and teacher meetings, take part in local clubs and groups, and also to take active responsibility for the education of one's children and one's employment. In June 1998, Blunkett argued that 'Active participation and involvement in civil society is vital if we are to stem the tide of apathy' (Blunkett 1998). Also in 1999 Blunkett underlined what he saw as the valuable role volunteers make into welding a community together, arguing that volunteering and community development is central to the concept of citizenship and the restoration of 'communities' (Blunkett 1999c). Similarly, in November 1999, leading on from Labour's commitment to create more 'active' communities, the government launched a new scheme called 'Get Active!', which involved setting up five local projects which tested various ways of encouraging people to get more involved in community life. Of this, Paul Boateng claimed that 'Strong and active communities are at the heart of the Government's vision of a more inclusive society' and that 'By encouraging active community life, better communities can be built' (Boateng 1999). He went on to argue that there are many ways in which individuals can help each other in the name of the community, from 'helping a neighbour with their shopping, or lending an ear to someone, like a carer, who needs to talk, to being a local magistrate or becoming a school governor. Giving time to the community benefits the giver, the people they help and the community as a whole'. He concluded by saying that 'The more people

get involved, the closer we are to a “‘We Britain” not a “Me Britain”” (Boateng 1999). Thus citizenship and membership to the community is also conditional on jobseekers becoming active and ‘individualistic’ rather than ‘passive and dependant’ and adopting an ‘entrepreneurial’ approach to both their jobseeking and their participation in community driven activities (Rose 1992:159).

The New Deal for Communities also indicates New Labour’s belief in the role of ‘active governance’ and in 1999 it was announced that over eight hundred million pounds would be spent on some of the UK’s ‘worst off’ local communities through this ‘New Deal’. This initiative (originally developed under the Conservatives) attempts to tackle the problems of deprived areas through improving the economic and social benefits for the neighbourhood. The project involves providing funds to ‘develop and implement local community based plans, covering everything from jobs and crime, to health and housing’ (National Policy Forum 1999a:49). The project also requires central and local government to work in partnership with private and voluntary organisations and with this, is an attempt to decentralise power and responsibility. It was said of the project that ‘Experience shows that success depends on communities themselves having the power and taking responsibility to make things better. Partnerships between councils, local residents and businesses have a vital role to play. Our aim is to develop a national strategy setting out a ten to twenty year plan to turn round poor neighbourhoods, to reduce dependency and empower local communities to shape a better future for themselves’ (National Policy Forum 1999b:109).

### **6.2.3. The Family**

The concept of ‘community’ as adopted by New Labour is closely derived from Etzioni, who argued that communities are essentially centred around the family and that they emerge from collections of ‘successful’ families<sup>1</sup>. For Etzioni, the family is

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<sup>1</sup> This understanding of the role of the family highlights direct links with the New Democrats and Al Gore describes the ‘family’ as ‘the hope and soul of America’ (Gore 1999).

the centre point for communities, as the two go hand in hand. For example, Etzioni talks of the 'parenting deficit', claiming that 'making a child is a moral act because as well as obligating the parents to the child it also obligates the parents to the community (Etzioni 1995:54). This conception of community is identified in the opinions expressed by Peter Mandelson, who is also keen to stress the importance of the family in establishing strong communities; claiming that the primary function of the family is as 'an institution of social control and social welfare'. He argues that successful families are where 'partners show long term commitment to each other, children learn discipline and mutual respect' and that it is in the family environment that 'the difference between right and wrong is learned and [where] a sense of mutual obligation is founded and practised' (Mandelson and Liddle 1996:20).

Mandelson also argues that 'communities' are established through a sense of mutual responsibility between individuals, families and the local community (Mandelson and Liddle 1996). In this sense, 'community' is based around local networks and established within geographic spaces. New Labour philosophy also argues that community is the place where crime and social disorder begins, and that an increase in criminal activity is a result of the breakdown of a fully inclusive and cohesive community. This breakdown of community not only allows the crime to occur, but it also becomes the victim of crime as it is this crime that threatens the future stability of communities. This emphasis on the importance of the family is identified throughout social security discourse as the family is presented as being one of the chief beneficiaries of paid employment, and jobseekers are encouraged to enhance their employability and actively seek out paid employment in order to improve the lives their 'families'.

#### **6.2.4. Community based on Moral Values**

For Tony Blair, individuals are only created through their attachments to *other* people in families and communities, arguing that 'our fulfilment as individuals lies in a decent society of others' (Blair 2000g) and that it is only by seeking to further

the interests of the community, that individuals can make society a better place (Driver and Martell 1998:27).

‘For myself, I start from a simple belief that people are not separate economic actors competing in the market place of life. They are citizens of a community. We are social beings, nurtured in families and communities and human only because we develop the moral power of personal responsibility for ourselves and each other. Britain is stronger as a team than as a collection of selfish players’ (Blair 1996b).

This conception of community is influenced by Macmurray and shares the belief that individuals exist only through their relationship to others and through communities (Macmurray 1932:96; Driver and Martell 1998; Fairclough 2000; Rentoul 1997)<sup>1</sup>. These communities are bound by a web of duties, obligations, rights and responsibilities which place demands on individuals in their role as jobseekers, as well as citizens, parents, neighbours, and teachers. With this, mutual obligation is enabled through institutions such as the family and schools, and demands that members of the community accept their responsibilities and fulfil their obligations. This interpretation of community is reiterated by Fairclough, who argues that ‘community has come to be understood in moral terms which emphasise that responsibilities are the other side of rights’ (Fairclough 2000:38). This communitarian view of the relationship between the individual and society also has the added advantage for the Labour Party in that it rests on mutual obligation and attempts to cut across class boundaries: as Blair puts it, we are all part of ‘one nation, one community’ (Blair 1996b, cited in Driver and Martell 1998:28). This emphasis on values can be identified throughout New Labour discourse as well as the Democrat discourse in the USA. For example, Clinton argued in the 1992 election:

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<sup>1</sup> Links can also be drawn here with Durkheim’s theory of the conscience collective and the transcendence of the collectivity over the individual (Durkheim 1965).

‘We offer people a new choice based on old values. We offer opportunity. We demand responsibility. We will build an American community again...It will work because it’s rooted in the vision and the values of the American people. Of all the things George Bush has ever said that I disagree with, perhaps the thing that bothers me the most is how he derides and degrades the American tradition of seeing - and seeking - a better future. He mocks it as “the vision thing”. But remember what the Scripture says; “Where there is no vision the people perish”’ (Clinton 1992).

Similarly, Blair argues that ‘The vision is one of national renewal, a country with drive, purpose and energy’, incorporating ‘fairness and justice within strong communities’ (Labour Party 1997e:3) and that the goal for New Labour is to create ‘A society of shared values’ (Blair 2000f); stressing the need to respect the old, respect others, the importance of honour, self-discipline, duty, obligation and ‘the essential decency of the British character’ (Blair 2000g). In the same speech, Blair stressed the importance on ‘courtesy, giving up your seat for the elderly, saying please and thank you’, citing the example of his mother who ‘...doing meals on wheels, saw it quite simply as her duty as well as her pleasure to help in the local community. Caring for and helping others was part of her being. Again, without such acts of kindness, however small, humanity for me has no meaning’. Finally, Blair claims that ‘The truth is we can rebuild these core values of community; but only by renewing them for the modern world; the old and new together’ (ibid).

There are also links here with notions of ‘Christian Democracy’, strongly influenced from Macmurray (Macmurray 1932; 1935) and New Labour has been described as ‘the nearest thing to Christian Democracy that modern British politics have known’ (Marquand 1998, cited in Dean 1999:221). However, although their approach does appear to reflect certain elements of Christian Democracy, Driver and Martell point out that there are also clear distinctions between the two (Driver and Martell



1997:27-44). For example, they claim that New Labour is conservative rather than progressive; and prescriptive rather than voluntaristic in as much as it is prepared to countenance compulsion in the interests of the community and solidarity (ibid). It is also argued that New Labour's communitarianism is unlike that of conventional Christian Democracy as it does not countenance unconditional rights of citizenship; arguing instead that full social rights and complete community membership (to some extent) have to be 'earned' (Dean 1999:222)<sup>1</sup>. However, there are still obvious links between New Labour's understanding of communitarianism and Christian Democracy as Blair famously claimed in his interview in the Sunday Telegraph on Easter Sunday 1996, that it was his Christianity that had driven him to join the Labour Party and oppose the 'Self-interest' of Conservatism (Blair 1996c)<sup>2</sup>.

#### **6.2.5. One Nationism and the 'National Community'?**

New Labour's communitarian discourse also has links with more traditional 'one nationism' as it tends to focus less on the localised, family based communities such as those previously referred to in the death of the social argument and more on the notion of a wider, 'national community' (Rose 1996). Thus one of the significant features that separates New Labour philosophy from that of the Thatcher or Major administrations is that their notion of community depicts, not simply diverse communities or subcultures, such as communities based on lifestyle, taste, or status. Instead New Labour references to community also refer to a broader notion of community, a 'national community', incorporating the UK into one whole, working together for the same ends; to repeat Blair's phrase: 'one nation, one community' (Blair 1996b).

The adoption of 'one-nation' politics by New Labour has to some extent, served to validate the moral codes and values of communitarianism and provided an

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<sup>1</sup> In 1996 Blair was quoted as having said 'the most meaningful stake anyone can have in society is the ability to earn a living and support a family' (Blair 1996b).

<sup>2</sup> Blair also claimed in an interview with David Frost 'There is obviously a link between the values that I have as a Christian and my political beliefs' (Blair 1998b).

authoritative platform from which they can be articulated. Throughout the official Labour Party line, there is an explicit commitment to ‘one-nation politics’, ‘to a politics orientated towards ‘the needs of the whole nation’, and specific measures designed to strengthen the national community’ (Blair 1998a, cited in Fairclough 2000:34). This policy was initially developed under the Tory governments of Peel and Disraeli in the nineteenth century, but it had been downgraded under Thatcher governments and replaced with Thatcher’s own personal style of politics<sup>1</sup>. One-nationism stressed the importance of appealing to and protecting the interests of the entire nation regardless of social class or status and in this sense is very much the politics of the people. The adoption of the politics of ‘one-nationism’ can be identified in many of the recent policy objectives of New Labour.

#### ‘A One Nation Britain

We cannot have a country that is at ease with itself if our society is fractured and some sections of the population are permanently excluded from the social and economic opportunities enjoyed by others. Labour believes that Britain can only become a One Nation society if there are opportunities for all to share fairly in rising prosperity’ (Labour 1996c).

Also, Tony Blair argued in a speech at the launch of the Social Exclusion unit in December 1997:

‘At the heart of all our work is one central theme: national renewal. Britain built as one nation, in which every citizen is valued and has a

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<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding this, many leading Conservative members continued to advocate the partial retention of ‘One Nation Toryism’ (John Major, Douglas Hurd, Kenneth Clarke and Geoffrey Howe). Also, more recently William Hague hinted has towards One-Nation Toryism, claiming in the 2000 Conservative Party Conference: ‘We will govern for hard working families. We will govern for people of every community and background. We will govern for the mainstream that New Labour has ignored. We will govern for all the people’ (Hague 2000).

stake; in which no one is excluded from opportunity and the chance to develop their potential...' (Blair 1997).

In the 1997 Manifesto:

'I want a Britain that is one nation, with shared values and purpose...'  
(Labour Party 1997e:1)

Also, later in the 1998/9 annual report it read:

'One nation Britain

I hope this document conveys this government's determination and passion to improve the lives of the British people...To provide jobs for those without work and a higher standard of living for those in work. And through better education in our schools and more compassion and decency in our communities, to build a Britain that on the eve of the Millennium can truly call itself one nation - united in fulfilling the ambitions of all our people' (Labour Party 1999:4).

There are also many other references to one-nationism: in a BBC interview in 1996, Peter Mandelson stressed: '...if we're really going to transform our society and create the sort of one-nation society that we want...we are not only looking at a programme for the long term, but a programme that in itself the Labour Party... must have strong backing and consensus of support across the country behind it' (Mandelson 1996). Later, in the 1999 manifesto it was stated: '...we are beginning to look like one nation again - a society coming together not torn apart' (Labour 1999:7); and in various interviews: 'But we are also driving up standards and ensuring that public

services provide for everybody because we are a one nation party' (Straw 2000); and 'My vision of Britain is simple: it is one Britain, a nation brought together, bridging the divisions of region, race, religion, class...' (Blair 2000a). Similarly, this emphasis on 'One Nationism' has been identified in the policies of the New Democrats in the US. In the 1992 Presidential election campaign, Al Gore gave a speech, claiming:

'But the New Covenant is about more than opportunities and responsibilities for you and your families. Its also about our 'common community'... And so we must say to every American; look beyond the stereotypes that blind us. We need each other. All of us, we need each other. We don't have a person to waste. And yet, for too long, politicians have told the most of us that are doing alright that what's really wrong with America is the rest of us, *them*. Them the minorities. Them the Liberals. Them the poor. Them the homeless. Them the people with disabilities. Them the gays. We've gotten to where we've them'd ourselves to death. Them, and them, and them. But this is America. There is no them; there is only us. One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice, for all' (Gore 1992).

There are essentially two effects of New Labour's adoption of 'one-nationism' and the 'national community'. Firstly, there is the foundation for an alternative notion of 'community'; based on the duties of citizens, a strict value system and clear moral and ethical codes of conduct. These values and codes are simultaneously presented as being in the best interests of the nation and the community, whereby to break them is to fail one's community. Secondly, New Labour are presented as being the most natural defenders of these codes, and consequently, the natural guardians of the greater 'community'. To illustrate this point further, it was argued in the 1997 Manifesto:

‘We are a national party, supported today by people from all walks of life, from the successful businessman or woman to the pensioner on a council estate’ (Labour Party 1997e:3).

And earlier, Blair had argued in an interview:

‘I mean, look at Britain, look at Britain, you have a divided country, you have massive social injustice, you have a few people at the very top that have taken all the benefits of the Tory rule and you've got the vast majority of people who have been betrayed by the Conservative Party so when we campaign on social justice, when we campaign on believing that partnership and co-operation are the way to get our industry and economy moving again, then these are things that have enormous resonance there amongst the British public and so it's...you know this is far more than simply changing an internal wording within the Labour Party constitution, it's actually about reaching out to the people of this country and making the Labour Party what it is today - the mainstream majority party, *the people's party*’ (Blair 1995a). (emphasis added).

Also, Blair later claimed that New Labour governs for ‘all the people, young and old, black and white, poor and affluent’:

‘We were elected to serve the whole country, those who voted for us and those who didn't. That is what we will continue to do’ (Blair 1999a).

Similarly, Prescott argued of New Labour in his centenary speech:

‘...we are more than a Party - we are a Labour movement...We are not just an organisation. *We are a family*’ (Prescott 2000a). (emphasis added).

With this, New Labour is constructed as being the champion of community values, whereby failure to share in these values is construed as a failure to commit to one’s community. New Labour’s positioning as the ‘People’s Party’ and as a ‘family’ is essential to the authority of the text and its articulation of moral values and the discourses of ‘community’, ‘society’ and ‘citizenship’ are of primary significance to the governance of individuals and the maintenance of a stable ‘moral’ order. This has profound implications for notions of communitarianism and social inclusion, in that within this discourse, individuals have to take active responsibility for their own social inclusion and communitarianism. With this, non-membership to the ‘national community’ can be largely attributed to individuals’ reluctance to adhere to the values and norms articulated by the dominant discourse. This emphasis on social inclusion based on ‘values’ and codes of conduct is taken up in the next section, which argues that New Labour discourse articulates a notion of social inclusion based on strong moral and ethical values, whereby all members of society can, in theory, be included, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or material wealth and social class; and that this is largely at the expense of a materialist or class based notion of social inclusion.

## **Part Two - Application**

### **6.3. Community as a Technique of Dominance**

Given the notion of community as defined by New Labour, the argument here is that there are two basic levels from which it is articulated. Firstly, much of the governance of the unemployed is operated from a 'moral/ethical level'. This emphasises the role of paid work, and not only prescribes the actions of individuals but more importantly, prescribes a specific code of conduct and governs their individual values and identities. Secondly, the 'community' relates closely to the 'enterprise culture' (or 'new cultural community') in that membership is largely conditional on individuals subscribing to the competitive market ethos and inclusion is strongly equated with economic achievement and employability.

#### **6.3.1. Inclusion on Moral/Ethical Terms**

This notion of community is broadly analysed in terms of the technologies of the self and is concerned with the various ways in which the 'moral/ethical' discourse of the community invites jobseekers to govern their own conduct. To repeat Foucault, these technologies are significant in that they imply 'certain modes of training and the certain modification of individuals' and that this is not only in the sense of acquiring certain practical skills, but also in acquiring certain 'attitudes' (Foucault 1988:18). Thus the focus of this chapter is to identify how the discourse of unemployment, and specifically, 'communitarianism' invites the jobseeker to rethink their ethical position in relation to the community, the market, and to themselves.

This emphasis on the need to adopt 'certain attitudes' is identified in the 'value-based community', whereby membership to the national community is largely conditional on individuals contributing in some way to the notion of 'community', and being actively involved in its maintenance, not only through conducting themselves in a law-abiding way, but as being hard-working, responsible citizens. For example, Blair has claimed that the government's goal of 'opportunity for all' can only be delivered if the 'eroded value' of 'responsibility from all' can be

rediscovered (Blair 2000d). Methods for attaining this enhanced citizenship or community membership range from seeking and acquiring paid employment, to raising one's children as 'competent, responsible citizens and involving oneself in community driven activities (Blair 1998a:12). In relation to the government of unemployment, jobseeker's are invited to take active responsibility for their future and their employment opportunities, and to 'demonstrate that they are capable of rational choice and to conduct their lives according to a moral code of community obligation and individual responsibility' (Rose 1996:348; cf. Dean 1995; Walters 1994).

### **6.3.2. Morals and Ethics**

Although this section is entitled 'moral/ethical' it is important to reiterate that there remains a very clear distinction between the two and they have been grouped together in this instance only to refer to specific prescriptive codes of conduct articulated from within the communitarian discourse. For example, it is argued that New Labour discourse prescribes how one must behave and what sorts of value systems one must hold in order to be granted membership to the community. This prescription holds both moral and ethical implications in that for the purposes of this research, morals are understood as being concerned with how one acts in relation to others, whereas ethics are concerned with how one acts in relation to oneself (Watts 1997). However, despite the distinctions between morals and ethics, they are also very closely related and cannot be identified independently. Consequently, although these distinctions are clearly emphasised, they will be frequently discussed together and referred to in terms of 'morals/ethics' (see section 2.4.).

The reason for categorising 'morals' and 'ethics' together is because, in terms of this research, they cannot be identified in isolation and are considered to function in existence with each other. For example, regarding the communitarian discourse of New Labour, it is argued that membership to the fully enhanced community is largely conditional on individuals not only taking active responsibility for their



employability and the education of their children, but also taking active involvement in the ongoing maintenance of the community, from involvement in the local church, school, playgroup or neighbourhood watch, to the adoption of certain moral values (Labour Party 2000g). Consequently, this presentation of community holds clear ‘moral’ obligations, as one has a ‘moral’ obligation to conduct oneself in a way that is considered to promote the interests of the community. One effect of this is that if one is to avoid becoming socially excluded, then one must also adopt an ‘ethical’ obligation to ‘oneself’ to fulfil the demands set out by the discourse of the ‘moral community’. Thus before one can adopt a certain ‘morality’, one must first rethink their ‘ethical’ position.

It is argued that the demands placed on jobseekers to internalise the values of communitarianism and adopt a certain ‘morality’ are also intrinsically ‘ethical’ in that jobseekers are encouraged to reconstruct their own identities based around notions of entrepreneurialism, employability and communitarianism and that this prescribes not only how they must behave, but what sorts of personal value systems they must hold and how they must construct and understand themselves. Similarly, New Labour discourse emphasises that the ‘community’ is one of the chief beneficiaries of paid employment. This demonstrates a clear attempt to move away from the individualist discourse that predominated under the Thatcher administrations, and invites individuals to rethink their ‘moral’ identity by taking adequate insurance against unemployment and becoming actively engaged in their own governance (concerning both their economic and moral conduct); for the ‘good of the community’ as much as for their own selves. This has a very important ‘ethical’ consequence, in that individuals can no longer construct themselves in terms of previous individualist discourses but instead have to reconstruct their identities in terms of their position in the wider community. This reconstruction cannot be underestimated; moving from a government that claimed ‘there is no such thing as society’ (Thatcher 1987), towards one that argues that ‘We are social beings, nurtured in families and communities and human only because we develop the moral power of personal responsibility for ourselves and each other’ (Blair

1996b). Thus when New Labour invite people to recognise their ‘moral’ obligations and duties by enhancing their employability in order to benefit the greater community, the effects are very much ‘ethical’ as much as they are ‘moral’, as they are simultaneously inviting people to reconstruct their own identities.

It is argued that this invitation for individuals to rethink their ethical identities has tended to be overlooked by recent theorists. For example, Fairclough has argued that New Labour’s community is founded on strictly contractual obligations, the exchange of rights and responsibilities and that it constitutes a form of business partnership or ‘deal’. He has also argued that it represents the abandonment by New Labour of ‘even a residual orientation to collectivism and social class’ (Fairclough 2000:40). However, it is argued here that ‘community’ is not simply conditional on members abiding by the clearly defined contracts, as Fairclough appears to indicate, and it certainly does not represent any abandonment by New Labour of collectivism (Fairclough 2000:38-40). As well as incorporating these strict notions of responsibilities in exchange for rights, New Labour’s notion of community is also representative of a ‘genuine’ concern for national consensus in terms of ethical values and behavioural codes and consequently is far more complex than theories based simply on the exchange of rights and responsibilities.

### **6.3.3. ‘Ethical’ Dimensions of the Value-based Community**

One significant element to the articulation of community is its emphasis on ‘values’ and New Labour’s notion of ‘community’ is very much dependent on the existence of a national value system. Consequently, the ‘value’ basis behind much of New Labour’s communitarian discourse has strong ‘ethical’ and ‘moral’ elements in that it requires individuals to conduct themselves in a manner that is in some way considered ‘becoming’ to oneself and accommodating to one’s neighbours. With this, is important to remember that any value-based community depends on individuals *internalising* the articulated codes of behaviour rather than simply blindly adhering to them. For example, Blair claims:

‘A society is a community of people, who share common values and purpose, where everyone thinks of ‘we’ as well as ‘me’, about what they can put in as well as what they can take out’ (Blair 2000a).

One primary feature of this notion of a value-based community is that it is very much based on shared ethical and moral values at the national level, as opposed to parochial based links or connections between separate interest groups. For example, Blair is keen to emphasise the importance of a unified value system, arguing that British identity ‘lies in our shared values not in unchanging institutions’, and that:

‘What makes Britain and Britishness important, valid, as necessary today as ever is a powerful combination of shared values and mutual self-interest’ (Blair 2000b).

In the same speech he argues that Britain needs an identity ‘not shaped by institutional rigidity, but by values and common purpose...That is a constant recurrent theme in all the Government does: modernisation based on values’. He also argued that the qualities that go towards British identity are ‘qualities of creativity built on tolerance, openness and adaptability, work and self-improvement, strong communities and families and fair play, rights and responsibilities’ (Blair 2000b), and that ‘Strong communities depend on shared values and recognition of the rights and duties of citizenship - not just the duty to pay taxes and obey the law, but the obligation to bring up children as competent, responsible citizens’ (Blair 1998a:12). In a speech entitled ‘Community For All’, Blair claimed that ‘At the heart of my beliefs is the idea of community. I don’t just mean the local villages, towns and cities in which we live. I mean that our fulfilment as individuals lies in a decent society of others’. He went on to argue that ‘The idea of community is as old as time. What

makes it tick are the values of responsibility to, and respect for, others'; and that 'These are traditional values, good old British values' (Blair 2000h). Finally, a Labour document read 'We aspire to a civic society which encompasses: a community of citizens with common needs, mutual interests, shared objectives, related goals and linked destinies' (Labour 2000f). Thus New Labour's vision of 'community' is where British society is very much united in terms of objectives and values. It is founded on the notion of rights and responsibilities but also by the desire to do well by others and, perhaps more importantly, by oneself.

The contention here is that this 'ethical' element to New Labour's communitarianism tends to get overlooked and is too closely equated with notions of 'morality'. For example, when discussing social exclusion, Levitas identified three discourses which have since been employed in a variety of analyses of social inclusion and New Labour's notion of communitarianism (Levitas 1998; Watt & Jacobs 2000; Fairclough 2000:57; Bowring 2000). These include a 'redistributionist discourse' (RED), where emphasis is placed on poverty and the absence of full citizenship rights as a main cause of social exclusion. Secondly is the 'moral underclass discourse' (MUD), which centres on the 'moral and behavioural delinquency of the excluded themselves' and is said to target specifically the 'unemployable young men and sexually and socially irresponsible young mothers' (Levitas 1998:8). For these people, although it is argued the reason for their exclusion is either moral or cultural, the route to achieving inclusion is claimed to be economic and consequently, paid work is identified as being necessary for social discipline (Levitas states unequivocally that within the 'moral underclass discourse', unpaid work is *not* acknowledged) (Levitas 1998:21). Finally, there is the 'social intergrationist discourse' (SID) which focuses more narrowly on unemployment and economic inactivity and again focuses on paid work as being the route to enhanced social inclusion (Levitas 1998:7). Similarly, of this discourse Levitas has argued that it also 'ignores unpaid work and its gendered distribution' (ibid:27). Although the emphasis on paid work as the route to enhanced social inclusion is threaded throughout New Labour discourse (as discussed within the remaining body of this

chapter), the contention here is that by focusing so heavily on the significance of paid work, these three categories oversimplify the criteria for inclusion into New Labour's community and seriously underestimate the 'ethical' dimensions<sup>1</sup>.

To explain, although this thesis supports the ideas adopted by Levitas concerning the centrality of paid employment as the route to enhanced social inclusion, it is argued that New Labour's concept of social inclusion is also conditional on individuals fully embracing and *internalising* the values articulated by New Labour concerning the role of 'work' and its significance for the 'community' rather than simply blindly adhering to the straightforward 'rights and responsibilities' exchange contracts. With this, it is argued that New Labour's articulation of community and citizenship has the possible effect of shaping in many ways not only the 'conduct' of individuals, but also on a more individual level, their specific value systems and identities. This tendency to explain the criterion for social inclusion primarily in terms of the straightforward rights / responsibilities exchange contract also does not take into account the role that social entrepreneurialism and volunteering plays as a means to achieving social inclusion<sup>2</sup>. For example, discussing Levitas's methods for understanding social exclusion, Bowring has argued that New Labour's communitarianism does not contain '*any* recognition of the existence and value of alternative modes of social integration' and that it contains '*no* acknowledgement of the social contribution made by unpaid workers' (Bowring 2000:308) (emphasis added). However, this contention does not stand up to scrutiny. For example, Blair has argued that the definition of a fully employed society is not simply where everyone who 'wants a job has a job', but that it also requires everyone to contribute 'all their talents through the things they do, *paid or unpaid*, in the service of others', he goes on to argue that it is 'A society in which when people ask you: 'what do you

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<sup>1</sup> Assuming one has accepted the understanding of morals and ethics as explained earlier 6.3.2.

<sup>2</sup> Although Levitas acknowledges the emphasis on volunteering in New Labour discourse, she claims it is secondary to paid work and identifies its advantages largely in terms of its role in increasing the employability of volunteers so that they can obtain paid work, or 'real work'. With this, volunteering is not considered to deliver social inclusion (Levitas 1998:147).

do', its *not* just your job you mention' (Blair 1999b) (emphasis added). Similarly, arguing for the importance on values such as courtesy and politeness, Blair cited the example of his mother's voluntary activities with meals on wheels, claiming that she 'saw it quite simply as her duty as well as her pleasure to help in the local community' and that 'Caring for and helping others was part of her being' (Blair 2000h). Thus the contention here is that the 'ethical dimension' constitutes an essential component to New Labour's notion of communitarianism as it is dependent on individuals not only abiding by the moral codes, but (central to this argument), actually 'internalising' them. With this, they become not simply 'moral' codes, but 'ethical' codes in that they inform one's judgements and values and they govern not only how one conducts oneself in relation to the community, but how one conducts oneself in relation to oneself. Thus social cohesion and membership to the community is not simply conditional on individuals seeking out and obtaining paid employment, but it also requires individuals to adopt and embrace a certain 'ethical' approach to the role of 'work', the discourse of enterprise and the centrality of the community. With this, individuals are invited to internalise these codes and value systems which involves rethinking one's ethical position and reconstructing one's identity. Central to this is that social inclusion is now presented as being almost entirely independent of social class, in that under this notion of communitarianism, *everybody*, regardless of economic position, material wealth or social class can be socially included provided they adopt the moral and ethical values articulated by New Labour discourse.

#### **6.3.4. Application**

With regards to unemployment, New Labour insists that to 'participate in the benefits, there has to be a give as well as a take', and that the bond between the taxpayer and the welfare recipient can only be restored by redesigning the welfare system so that the 'socially excluded' are reconnected back into mainstream society via 'character improvement'. (Blair 1996b, cited in Lund 1999:447). This emphasis on the importance of family and community values is heavily identified in the discourse of the jobseeker and has the effect of extracting a certain response or

action. With this, the jobseeker is encouraged to find employment in order to fulfil their obligations to their community and to better the lives of their families. The significance being that ‘paid employment’ is not in and of itself the end target, instead, the end target is the ability to demonstrate that one is committed to, and capable of taking active responsibility for the maintenance of their community, the well-being of their children and their own sense of self esteem and identity. Moreover, *every* individual is now subject to these obligations, regardless of their socio-economic status or employment history as paid employment is simply one route through which individuals can demonstrate their commitment to the community.

#### **6.3.5. Rewards for the ‘Family’**

Much of the Benefits Agency discourse regarding lone parenting hold strong ‘moral/ethical’ dimensions in that they invite jobseekers to become self governing and actively seek paid employment in order to satisfy the needs of the ‘family’ and specifically, the ‘children’. The DSS publish a magazine as part of the ‘New Deal for Lone Parents’ scheme, entitled ‘Solo: Supporting Lone parents’. The magazine is directed at lone parents who are considering entering full or part time paid employment, and contains interviews and statements from lone parents who have secured employment from the New Deal. Within this magazine, paid employment is seen to play a primary role in the development and enhancement of family unity and consequently, the strength of the ‘community’. ‘Solo’ highlights the benefits of paid employment by emphasising the link between paid work and the improvements one can make to the lives of one’s children and families. For example, the magazine contains an interview with ‘Julie’ a mother of four who took up part-time work:

‘The job’s been really beneficial to me and my children. My daughter, Elizabeth, has had her first birthday party in two years. I can afford to take the children out now - to Macdonald’s or wherever’ (DfEE undated:5).

This extract operates from a strong individualist discourse, amplified by the personal information it offers concerning the daughter's name and the details concerning how her life has been improved since her mother entered employment. Significantly, the text describes a mother who has only been capable of providing her children with what can be considered relatively basic luxuries since obtaining paid employment and consequently places heavy emphasis on the financial rewards to be had from paid employment and the direct benefits this can have on family life. With this, the text draws from the 'moral/ethical' discourse and indicates that one of the primary contributions a mother can make to establishing a stable family life is to obtain paid employment. Also, the use of the phrase 'My daughter, Elizabeth, has had her first birthday party in two years' is an example 'normalisation and abnormalisation', which is where the phrasing of a text demonstrates that the events or actions it is describing are not normal (Smith 1990). For example, by highlighting that this is the first birthday party in two years, emphasis is drawn to the fact that not only has the lifestyle of the individuals been improved since the mother found employment, but that it was previously unsatisfactory.

Similarly, the DfEE document 'Empowering Communities for a Better Future' includes a quotation from the daughter of a lone parent who had found work through the New Deal:

'It is great to be able to go out weekends and come back with a nice little extra like a magazine to wind down. Mum is happy. I am happy. I could not ask for more' (DfEE 1999a).

Again, this extract operates from the 'moral/ethical' discourse and articulates individuals who have experienced significant improvements to their lives entirely due to the rewards from paid employment. There are two elements to this that are of



interest. Firstly, the financial rewards are heavily emphasised and presented in an extremely positive light, illustrated in the statements ‘Mum is happy. I am happy’, and ‘I could not ask for more’. This presentation is of particular interest when juxtaposed against the modest demands and expectations of the individuals concerned, which in this instance is simply ‘a nice little extra like a magazine to wind down’. Thus despite the extract underlining the significance that paid employment has for improving one’s lifestyle, it simultaneously articulates a highly ‘reasonable’ family with relatively modest demands.

Similarly, the Benefits Agency published a leaflet that directs attention towards outlining the improvements made to the lives of children after their parent’s take up employment.

‘The New Deal for Lone Parents is about taking that important step towards a better future for you and your children’ (DSS 1998b:2).

And:

‘Paid work raises the family income and makes it easier for you to plan ahead with your finances and build a more secure future for yourself and your children’ (DSS 1998b:3).

Campaign advertisements that aim to denigrate certain forms of behaviour frequently employ references to children in order to achieve a more emotive and consequently persuasive effect (eg: anti speeding and smoking). These two quotations employ the same discursive device which draws an unequivocal link between paid work and a more ‘secure’ and ‘better’ future for one’s children. The possible effect of isolating

‘children’ as being the chief beneficiaries of paid employment, is that a parent is presented as only fully satisfying their parental obligations whilst being either employed or actively seeking employment. Much of the effectiveness of this form of discourse depends on ‘guilt implicativeness’ or ‘guilt attribution’, whereby although no direct statement or accusation of guilt is made, ‘guilt implicativeness’ is actively implied. This has direct ‘moral/ethical’ implications in that *any* parent, capable of employment but refusing to seek it, is presented as playing an active role in denying a child a secure and comfortable future (Watson 1997:87).

### **6.3.6. Rewards for the ‘Community’**

The magazine ‘Solo’, does not simply emphasise the rewards that the family receives from parents taking up employment, but also draws direct links between paid employment and an enhanced ‘community’ by identifying the specific benefits that the community gains when individuals find employment. The magazine includes an interview with ‘Jackie’, a lone parent who returned to work at a local Natwest Bank Call Centre:

‘Working again is mostly about my self-esteem and knowing I’m not having to rely on others now’ (DfEE undated:4).

Here, there is the implication that whilst ‘Jackie’ was unemployed, she was effectively ‘relying on others’ and that this was in itself unsatisfactory. This is amplified by the word ‘now’, which, by referring back to a past state of affairs emphasises that when unemployed ‘Jackie’ was ‘relying on others’ (Smith 1990; Woolgar 1988:76). Also, significantly, the text identifies the jobseeker as directly benefiting from paid employment in terms of enhanced ‘self-esteem’; achieved through both independence and the consequent contribution to the community. The use of personalised, individualist interviews such as this, is one effective way for articulating the duties that individuals have to market themselves and find

appropriate employment. With this, there is a two pronged form of governance, in that although the moral values are clearly articulated from the discourse of the formal, politicised government, the effects of the discourse in this instance can be located from within the community itself. Consequently, the friendly discourse through which these duties are articulated is highly significant as it indicates a move away from the centralised, political discourse, and operates on a more localised, individualist level, whereby governance occurs from within the community (O'Malley 1996).

Similarly, in a pamphlet published by the Prince's trust, emphasis is placed on the duties that individuals have to the community and the rewards to be had from paid employment. The leaflet contains an interview with 'Mark' who was unemployed for two years before launching a health and fitness club with a Prince's Trust loan of £3,500. He claimed:

'I don't know what I would have done, if The Trust had not supported me - I had nowhere else to go. Now I run a successful business, as well as helping the very diverse, local communities, so I feel I'm able to put something back, too' (The Prince's Trust 2000).

There are a number of rhetorical devices at play within this extract which serve to amplify the persuasive effect over the reader. For example, the phrase 'I don't know what else I would have done, if the Trust had not supported me - I had nowhere else to go' is a technique referred to by Woolgar as a 'pathing device', which is where, by referring to a past state of affairs, the text is able to provide the reader with a framework for making sense of the existing state of affairs (Woolgar 1988:76). In this instance, the effects of the device are that the text, once again, does not only articulate an ex-jobseeker who has experienced significant improvements to his life since obtaining paid employment, but also, whose previous existence had been

unsatisfactory. Also, although the emphasis here is on the improvements that 'Mark' has made to his own standard of living, it also places strong emphasis on the specific impact Mark's achievements have had for the local 'community'. One effect of this is that the objective of the jobseeker (and consequently, the 'active communitarian') should not be simply concerned with seeking out paid employment, but with 'putting something back' and with actively participating in the maintenance of the 'moral/ethical' community.

The same pamphlet claims:

'Running a business not only boosts their self-confidence, it develops their skills, and provides them with financial independence...Many of these businesses also play a key role in revitalising their local communities' (The Prince's Trust 2000).

Thus in these extracts, there appears to be two primary advantages to be had from paid employment. Firstly, the personal advantages to one's self-esteem and self-confidence, and secondly, the contribution to 'revitalising' the local communities. However, this link is further extended to suggest that if one is capable of benefiting the local community by taking up paid employment, it follows that one should also be 'obliged' to do so. To illustrate the point further, Mandelson and Liddle claim that if one has access to employment and training opportunities, it follows that one also has a responsibility to the community to take advantage of these opportunities.

'Thirdly, all rights carry with them obligations. Yes, young people have the rights to a much wider range of opportunity, but with the backing of the wider community goes an obligation to the wider community' (Mandelson and Liddle 1996:20).

Similarly, a DfEE consultation document outlined the significance of the link between the rights people have to education, benefits, and help finding employment; together with the responsibilities they have to take up these rights. Of this, they argued:

‘Too often in the past, Governments have provided entitlements without matching obligations and discouraged people from taking responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities’ (DfEE 1997:16).

Finally, Tony Blair argued in a speech:

‘Some years ago Margaret Thatcher caused controversy in a speech by quoting St Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat’. This injunction by Paul should never be used to justify the withdrawal of support from the helpless. We must always be willing to assist the vulnerable and disadvantaged. But what I think Paul meant was this: that everyone had a duty to get on and work for the common good (Blair 1996b, cited in Lund 1999:451).

It is clear that New Labour discourse identifies the individual, the family and the community as benefiting from jobseekers moving from unemployment into paid work. However, one consequence of this is that as a jobseeker, one has an obligation to seek paid work in order to better one’s own life, both financially and personally; to (if appropriate) better the lives of one’s family by providing for them sufficiently; but also, to realise one’s responsibilities to the ‘community’ and to contribute to its ongoing maintenance. With this, there is the implication that whilst those individuals

who are capable of work refuse to take the necessary steps to obtain it, they are simultaneously failing to realise their obligations to the community. In other words, any individual capable of engaging in paid employment, but ‘refusing’ to do so is in some way unequipped to make a full and valid contribution to the community.

### **6.3.7. Discussion**

The emphasis on paid employment as the route to enhanced social inclusion, is identified in a variety of schemes designed to encourage social cohesion through increasing individual’s employability, such as the creation of Education Action Zones and Employment Zones. Blunkett claims that New Labour’s education, training and employment policies are the best tools for tackling social exclusion and for ensuring that individuals are equipped with the skills needed to ‘improve their lives’ (Blunkett 1999c). Blunkett also argued that welfare to work creates a new contract, one that focuses people’s minds on work rather than benefit, that where people are able to work they should, and that benefit dependency is the cause of social exclusion (Blunkett 1999c). Similarly, a report by Harriet Harman in 1996 claimed that ‘work is the best form of welfare for people of working age’, and that ‘Work restores dignity to individuals, and it helps to rebuild communities’ (Labour Party 1996c). The report also argued that New Labour’s National Childcare Strategy, aimed at making it easier for lone parents to take up paid employment is good for mothers, as it allows them to move out of benefit dependence and into economic dependence, which in turn allows them to build ‘self-esteem as they support themselves and their children’. The strategy is also good for ‘society a whole’ as it builds ‘a nation at work, not a nation on benefit, providing the economy with the skills of women previously excluded from the workforce, and reducing the overall benefit bill to the taxpayer’ (Labour Party 1996c).

Thus for New Labour, in order for one to be considered a full member of a community, one must also be seen to be making a contribution to its ongoing maintenance by adopting ‘traditional British values of responsibility and respect for

others [in] a new agenda of opportunity for all' (Blair 2000d). There is a strong connection made between membership into the community and paid employment. The notion of community is also employed as a disciplinary mechanism, whereby failure to reconstruct one's ethical position and live by the moral codes set out in New Labour discourse constitutes a failure to conduct oneself according to the rules of the community. Moreover, the discourse of 'community' is utilised as a tool for encouraging individuals to take up paid employment, whereby to increase one's employability and find paid work is to enhance one's *own* sense of fulfilment, increase the benefits to one's family lifestyle, and to make a valid contribution to the community. All individuals are invited to conduct themselves in a way that is congruent to the discourse of the community in order to fulfil their roles as either citizens, parents, neighbours or jobseekers. Thus one of the central areas of significance is that emphasis is not solely placed on 'paid work'

#### **6.4. Enterprise Culture**

This section is concerned with the discourse of the 'enterprise culture' as a restructuring of governance; whereby emphasis is placed on the individual's duty to create him/herself as 'employable'. One significant element to this mode of governance is the importance on individuals being 'active' and 'enterprising' in their own governance, and taking full responsibility for their own conduct.

##### **6.4.1. The New 'Cultural Community' - An Outline**

Within New Labour discourse there is the emergence of a 'new cultural community' based on the ideology of the 'enterprise culture', whereby individuals are constantly encouraged to actively market themselves, improve their 'hard' and 'soft' skills and enhance their employability (when both in and out of work) in order to receive membership into the new community. Membership to this 'new cultural community' is conditional on individuals adopting an 'enterprising' approach to their self-management. To reiterate the points made earlier, (6.1.1.) it has been argued that the act of 'being enterprising' involves internalising an array of rules for governing

one's own conduct; such as initiative, calculation, responsibility and ambition (Rose 1992:146). It was also argued that 'an enterprising self will plot its future, and project itself into that future, transforming itself into the 'self' it wishes to be' (ibid). This notion of the enterprise culture finds its encouragement through key phrases such as: 'fully flexible labour force', 'framework for learning'; 'high quality education and training'; 'individual learning accounts'; 'lifelong learning'; 'knowledge driven economy'; and 'zero tolerance of underachievement' (Labour 1997c, 1997e, 1999a), together with programmes and innovations such as the Training and Enterprise Councils, Local Enterprise Companies, Employment Service Direct Hotline Numbers, New Deal for Lone Parents television advertisements, and the structural alterations made to brighten up the image of the old style Job Centre.

For New Labour, this emphasis on enterprise, marketing and the stakeholder economy has been heavily incorporated into the notion of community. In clarification of this, Mandelson and Liddle claim:

'New Labour's distinctive emphasis is on its concept of community. This is not a soft, romantic concept - conjuring up images of old dears attending bingo nights in draughty halls, or the world of the tightly knit mining community that now is dying away. Community is a robust and powerful idea, and it is at the heart of the stakeholder economy New Labour wishes to create. It means teamwork - working and acting together in companies, in local neighbourhoods, in the country as a whole to get things done' (Mandelson and Liddle 1996:19).

This can be discussed in terms of the 'reinvention of government' where, in this instance, 'community' becomes aligned to 'networks' and 'partnerships' (Osborne and Gabler 1993). This leads into the debate concerning New Labour's 'decentralising' of power through the attempts to bring together government,



voluntary organisations and businesses (Fairclough 2000:4). In this partnership, the power and authority of the state becomes dispersed and emphasis is placed on the role of the increasingly differentiated organisations (Rouse and Smith 1999:239).

Significantly, this articulation of community, whilst promoting the notion of a stakeholder economy, simultaneously trivialises the more traditional Labour concept of community. Some key terms used to describe this older concept of community are: 'soft, romantic, old dears, and bingo', the effect of this is to create an image of in geographical terms, locally based connections between neighbours and friends. However, the terms used to describe the 'new' community are considerably more dynamic, such as: robust, powerful, and stakeholder economy. To illustrate the point further, they go on to say that 'this tough and active concept of community is more than an individual obligation to be kind loving and charitable' (Mandelson and Liddle 1996:19). The effects of this are very similar, with the older, more culturally and socially based notions of community being trivialised and replaced with notions of a 'tough' and 'active' community.

Within New Labour discourse, this emphasis on the importance of the 'enterprise culture' is strongly threaded throughout the discourse of un/employment. One element of this is the way in which notions of competitiveness and cost-effectiveness are encouraged into the maintenance of unemployment. The DfEE has become fuelled by a performance driven ideology, and is linked to the cost-efficient, performance-related system (monitored through the Annual Performance Agreement). One effect of this has been where Social Security employees have personal targets for getting people back to work, and in some cases, elements of their salaries are even linked to back to work targets (Lewis 1995). Burchell claims that:

'[The] introduction of an 'enterprise form' to all forms of conduct - to the conduct of organisations hitherto seen as non-economic, to the conduct of

government, and to the conduct of individuals themselves constitutes the... promotion of an enterprise culture' (Burchell 1993).

Burchell goes on to discuss the ways in which the government has constructed different areas of 'society' based upon the idea of the economic enterprise. Using the example of education, he discusses the ways in which schools are operating under a competitive 'market' logic, and that whilst still operating under the framework set by central government (as identified with the national curriculum, direct funding by the state and the publication of league tables), they are simultaneously encouraged to function as 'independently managed quasi-enterprises in competition with other schools' (Burchell 1993). Moreover, the independence and competitive nature encouraged within the schools does not simply reconstitute its members as autonomous agents, but is a technology of government, in that the economic character that is threaded throughout the governance of education and employment is a technique of dominance.

#### **6.4.2. Skills Challenge**

This need for competitive marketing and active citizenship is heavily identified in the expectations employers have of their employees. For example, employers are increasingly demanding flexible, skilled workers, and are more likely to look for qualities in their staff such as adaptability, and 'soft' skills such as communication, teamwork, reliability, problem solving and the capacity to manage one's own training, over more standardised skills and experience (Seltzer and Bentley 1999:19). Seltzer and Bentley offer an example of the changing skills required from potential employees at Chrysler and Honda. At interview level, amongst other things, interviewees need to demonstrate 'higher order thinking, effective communication and team working', sit an examination, testing for 'hard skills' such as numeracy and verbal aptitude, and participate in 'hands-on assessment measuring less tangible skills such as oral communication, inter-personal and problem solving skills' (ibid:19). The point being made by Seltzer and Bentley is that in the past employees

were required to build up their knowledge and skills through a far more linear process, whereby basic education was followed by specialised training and work.. However, the employment market now demands a far wider range of inter-personal skills and a condition of continuous learning and education. These changes to employer expectations has been met by a variety of governmental organised directions aimed at increasing individual's parenting, emotional and relationship skills, as well as addressing issues concerning their motivational, analytical and leadership skills.

Flecker and Hofbauer refer claim that the changes to the structure and nature of working life has involved the construction of a 'new model worker', arguing that political rhetoric has revived 'the positive image of the self-responsible member of society' (Flecker and Hofbauer 1998:110). This image of the 'new model worker' can be identified in these new skills required by employers, whereby employee selection is more determined by 'tacit' or 'extra-functional' skills than with adapted technical skills. One consequence of this is that as well as competing for employment positions with one's educational and occupational qualifications, one also has to compete at the level of personality traits. In German speaking countries, 'key skills' is said to have become a buzz word, denoting connotations of 'self-reliance, work related virtues, social and communicative skills, and reflective abilities' (Flecker and Hofbauer 1998:112). It is also argued that the 'dissemination of the image of the 'model worker' not only conveys the demand for particular skills and personality traits but, at another level, focuses attention on finding the right kind of person' (Flecker and Hofbauer 1998:113).

Du Gay notes that the emergence of an enterprise culture and the 'enterprising subject' initially emerged under the government of Thatcherism and the so-called 'retail revolution' (Du Gay 1996, cited in Flecker and Hofbauer 1998:110). This involved a range of cultural changes in the way in which service was delivered to customers, such as the policy of 'staying close to the customer'. Du Gay claims the

policy ‘isn’t simply a matter of “logistical engineering”, since it also implies “engineering the soul” of the retail employee, to ensure that he or she automatically delivers the highly individualised quality service “demanded” by the enterprising consumer’ (Du Gay 1996:116, cited in Flecker and Hofbauer 1998).

#### **6.4.3. The ‘Enterprise Culture’ as Applied to New Labour**

These changing demands placed on employees are acknowledged by New Labour, who have responded by emphasising the importance of enhancing one’s employability through a continuous programme of lifelong learning.

‘The pace of economic and technological change is creating increasing job insecurity and putting pressure on employees to adapt rapidly to new methods and patterns of working. No one is any longer guaranteed a job for life. Where employers find the costs of employment too high they are increasingly willing to move production and jobs across international borders. The challenge for every developed economy is to create the best possible security for people at work, while ensuring that the labour market is flexible enough to respond to changing economic circumstances’ (DfEE 1997:10-11).

This extract demonstrates that New Labour now fully embrace the notions of a flexible labour market, and consequently the need to equip workers with the skills to compete within it. Moreover, this articulation of the ‘enterprise culture’ has an equally significant effect on the discourse of *unemployment* as well as *employment*, in that jobseekers are also required to participate in the competitive market ethos and actively market themselves whilst out of work.

‘The DfEE’s unique contribution to the labour market is to help people develop their employability, so that they are able to adapt and upgrade their skills, as jobs and patterns of work change. Employability is increasingly the key to security in the labour market. To promote employability we must make a reality of lifelong learning...’ (DfEE 1997:10-11).

Thus, the role of ‘work’ and the emphasis on employability is becoming the primary target within the current political discourse, as individuals are required to embrace the need for continuous learning and enhanced employability in order to be able to compete within the labour market. Moreover, as has already been discussed, membership to the wider community and enhanced social inclusion is conditional on the ability to compete within the labour market (wherever possible), and to demonstrate that one has taken active responsibility for one’s own education, training, development and the education of one’s children.

In the magazine ‘Solo’, there is a section devoted to listing possible employable skills afforded to lone parents. The section is entitled, ‘Employable skills you never knew you had’, and is designed at offering practical advice on how to compile a CV and fill out an application form, by breaking down day to day parenting activities such as washing and cooking, ensuring children get to school on time, organising baby-sitters and general caring for children, into sections such as: ‘planning/organisation’, ‘resourcefulness’, ‘communication skills’, ‘budgeting’, and ‘responsibility/commitment’ (DfEE undated:6). Also, the DfEE published a document aimed at promoting a fully flexible workforce:

‘Our priority is to forge an entirely new culture which puts work first and is based on a modern, integrated, flexible service for all. This means a fundamental shift in the way we support our clients – away from merely

asking “*What money can we pay you?*” to “*How can we help you become more independent?*” In future, we will focus on enabling people to access a wide range of help and support – we do not want anyone to miss out on the opportunities that are available to them’ (DfEE 1998b:2).

The significance of this statement cannot be underestimated, in that it articulates an entirely new attitude towards the culture of work. With this, there is no room for individuals to refuse work, or to refuse the ‘opportunities’ available to them as the ‘new culture’ is entirely based around ‘flexibility’, ‘opportunities’, ‘enabling’, ‘responsibilities’, and importantly, ‘work’. Thus there is an undeniable emphasis within New Labour discourse on the importance of marketing and the creation of a programme of continuous learning and the entrepreneurial state, whereby policies concerning unemployment are increasingly focused on increasing the general employability of the workforce.

#### **6.4.4. ‘Working Community’ - the Role of ‘Work’**

It is clear that New Labour believes the central route to enhanced social inclusion is through paid work, and their strategy for eliminating social exclusion is based on offering *all* members of society who are capable of employment, the opportunity to become economically active through extensive training and advice (Blair 1996b, 1998; Blunkett 1999c; Labour Party 1996c, 1997e)<sup>1</sup>. For example, they argue that: ‘The best way to tackle poverty is to get people into jobs...’ (Labour 1997e:19); ‘In the end, it will be work that protects people from poverty’ (Blunkett 1999c); and ‘Families without work are without independence’ (Labour 1997e:25). Consequently, as social inclusion becomes more dependent on paid employment and more closely linked to issues such as the ‘skills challenge’, ‘enterprise culture’ and

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<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding this, they do make some exceptions; such as those ‘awaiting a major operation’, ‘the recently bereaved, single parents with very young children, people with demanding caring responsibilities or those suffering from acute illness’ (DfEE 1998b:9). However it is important to note that these groups excluded from the ‘work’ requirement are in what can fairly be described as a ‘transitory’ stage.

the ‘competitive market ethos’, it simultaneously becomes removed from notions of a locally or culturally based social network and defines people mainly in terms of their position within the labour market. One effect of this is that ‘community’ becomes defined in terms of an ‘economic community’, whereby membership is conditional on one realising one’s full potential; achieved not only through the experience of shared values between groups, but also through economic achievement and employability.

New Labour also place strong emphasis on the role that work has in enhancing the character of individuals through encouraging responsibility, reliability and flexibility. However, prior to the election of Tony Blair and the establishment of ‘New Labour’, the Labour Party had quite a different interpretation of the key rewards and benefits to be had from paid employment. For example, in 1988, they had argued that:

‘Most working people’s aspirations are modest and realistic. They want reasonable working hours with adequate breaks and holidays. They want recognition that employment is not the totality of life and working arrangements need to recognise this’ (Labour Party 1988a:12).

These comments are interesting in that they indicate that Labour understood financial gain as being the principal reward from paid employment rather than the belief that it is through work that one makes one’s life meaningful. As early as 1980, they argued for a 35 hour working week, longer holidays, time off for study and earlier voluntary retirement in an effort to improve the quality of life for working people (Labour Party 1980:7). Later they argued that:

‘For many people, if not most of the workforce, the actual experience of work is not a fulfilling one. It consists of boredom, lack of stimulation, repetition and in many cases an unpleasant and sometimes dangerous environment rather than job satisfaction and co-operation with colleagues’ (Labour Party 1988a:12).

Thus there appears to be a clear relationship between the views expressed within this Labour Party document, and those expressed years earlier by Goldthorpe in ‘The Affluent Worker’. Goldthorpe argued that despite increases in wage levels, the manual worker’s family and its fortunes remain the ‘central life interest’ and that despite the strength of the Trade Unions, their appeal and effects to workers have in many ways been instrumentalist rather than solidaristic (Goldthorpe 1968). He claimed that the involvement of workers in trade union organisations and the Labour Party was far more of an ‘instrumentalist’ move rather than one indicating a linking of traditional class loyalties. This is to say that the worker, rather than regarding his colleagues and working environment to be indicative of a united membership or working solidarity, instead viewed it in far more pragmatic terms in that it was seen as a means to an end. Thus for Goldthorpe, workers see employment in instrumentalist terms, with little inherent reward, whereby tedious employment is endured simply so that they can share the financial rewards in their home environment. Goldthorpe conducted an empirical study on workers in factory related work and found that most of the workers very much disliked the monotony, pace and stifling of initiative behind much of their work. He concluded that these workers were not expecting to find any form of emotional, creative or social satisfaction from their work, instead the only advantage to be had from work was in the wages which provided them with the means to securing their satisfaction when outside the workplace (Goldthorpe 1968).

However, New Labour now describe the rewards to be had from work in terms of the emotional advantages, development of self-esteem, and the increase in



independence. Significantly, employment is presented as a mechanism through which individuals establish their identities and promote themselves as active citizens and consequently has far more affinity with the theory that it is through work that one makes one's life meaningful. For example, Rose argued that the advantages to be had from the workplace do not relate to a social obligation, the actual social benefits from the workplace itself, or the 'social binding of the individual into the collective through the socialising habits of work'. Instead, the advantages relate to a form of self enhancement and self-promotion in that work allows the individual through a desire to 'make his life meaningful', to obtain responsibility, a sense of personal achievement and a 'maximised "quality of life"' (Rose 1989, 103).

Similarly, Donzelot refers to the movement in the 1980s and 90s of 'pleasure *in* work', established in France. This movement was intended to 'make work come to be perceived not just as a matter of pure constraint but as a good in itself: as a means towards self-realisation rather than an opportunity for self-transcendence' (Donzelot 1991:251). Donzelot explains that the ambitions of many similar programmes concerned with changing the structure of working life are invariably concerned with changing the 'relationship' of individuals to their productive work, and seek to remove the 'statutory' perception that the worker has of his work, from viewing work as a practice that robs him of his identity, towards viewing work as a way of exercising individual autonomy. For example, the new approaches involve 'putting the accent instead on the individual's autonomy, his capacity to adapt. It invites him to become an "agent of change in a world of change"' (Donzelot 1991:252).

This articulation of 'work' can be identified within New Labour discourse of un/employment. For example, The Prince's Trust published a pamphlet detailing individuals who have recently made the transition from 'Jobseeker' status, to successful employment, such as one woman who launched a clothing business with a £2,500 loan and a £1,500 bursary, claiming:

‘I didn’t know what I was going to do with the rest of my life. I’m so pleased to have been helped by the Prince’s Trust as it has enabled me to make something of my life, and earn a worthwhile living’ (The Prince’s Trust 2000).

Also:

‘The feeling of independence that work can bring, in terms of finances and greater self-reliance, is a great boost to self-esteem’ (DSS 1998b:3).

Significantly, the key terms used to describe the effects of employment are ‘independence’, ‘greater’, ‘great’, ‘boost’ and ‘self-reliance’ and ‘self-esteem’. Similarly, an interview with ‘Vanessa’, a lone parent who recently re-entered the employment market explained:

‘It drives me insane when people say it’s not worth getting off benefit and going back to work, of course it is - *you get so much out of working other than just the money*’ (The Labour Party 2000g: ix). (emphasis added).

With this, ‘work’ is discussed as being one of the primary routes to enhanced social inclusion. Paid work does not simply offer financial rewards, but the opportunity to develop a healthy family environment, make a valid contribution to the wider community, and broaden one’s social, tactical skills and personal development. Also, more recently Blunkett has made a distinct connection between issues such as high educational achievement, employability and continuous learning and successful citizenship, self-sustaining communities and strong families.

‘Our vision is nothing less than a new and stronger fabric of our society. Over the next five to ten years, we want all our young people to emerge from school with a sound basic education, committed to continuous learning and equipped with the personal skills they need to succeed as individuals and citizens. We want people of all ages engaged with learning. We want opportunity and hope for all our people. We want people and their communities once again proud of their determination. This is our vision: empowered and self-reliant individuals, strong families, self-sustaining communities - a nation equipped for the challenges and opportunities of the new millennium (Blunkett 1999c).

With this quotation, the implication is that in order for communities to develop and succeed, citizens need to be equipped to survive in a flexible employment market. For example, the connection is made between concepts such as: a ‘stronger fabric of our society’, ‘opportunity and hope’, pride, determination, strong families, self-sustaining communities; and issues concerning self-reliance, sound basic education, and continuous learning for all age groups. Thus the flexible labour market is an issue that needs to be embraced by all, and in many ways, being equipped to succeed within this market is an essential criterion for enhanced social inclusion.

This emphasis on paid work and flexibility is reiterated in much New Labour discourse. For example, in the DfEE consultation document, (referring to individuals who have missed out on ‘effective schooling’), Blunkett claimed: ‘For them, we have developed our welfare-to-work programme so that the young and long-term unemployed can improve their employability and *regain their place in society*’ (Blunkett, DfEE 1997:3).(emphasis added) Similarly, when speaking of families suffering from long term unemployment and underachievement at school, Blunkett argued ‘We cannot tolerate another generation brought up to fail’ (Blunkett 1999c),

the implication being that unemployment is a failure, and in a local election pamphlet it was argued that Labour is ‘Making Britain better for *hard-working* families’, and that ‘Step by step, New Labour is delivering for *hard-working* families’ (Labour Party 2000d). (emphasis added).

### **6.5. Fully Inclusive Community?**

The concept of community has been employed as a technique of dominance through its capacity to maintain social order. However, the success of this technique is dependant upon the affected subjects learning the core values of society, by internalising the values and ethics of the community rather than having these values externally imposed. Consequently, some attention needs to be devoted to those members of society who refuse to internalise the externally imposed values articulated under New Labour discourse, and analysis offered of some possible alternative modes of governance. Similarly, as ‘community’ becomes increasingly defined in terms of both moral/ethical and economic success, some analysis needs to be conducted of the possible effects this may have over those individuals who (despite the discourse of enterprise, employability and employment market flexibility); continue to fail in the employment market and in their role as active community members and parents.

As stated earlier, there are those individuals who are excluded from the strict communitarian discourse on moral, ethical and economic grounds, owing to their failure to raise their children according to the rules and guidelines as set out by New Labour, to refuse to undertake active involvement in the voluntary and community driven activities and to fail to take active responsibility for insuring against unemployment by failing to acquire the skills and knowledge required for competition in the flexible labour market. Of these failures, Mandelson has argued:

‘Once we set out this concept of community, it immediately becomes clear who are New Labour's enemies. They are the unaccountable who ignore the feelings of the community. They are the vested interests who want decisions to be taken to benefit them, not the community as a whole. They are the inefficient who let the community down and impede its success. And they are the irresponsible who fall down on their obligations to their families and therefore their community’ (Mandelson and Liddle 1996:20).

Thus there is a contradiction between the communitarian discourse of New Labour and the possible *effects* of this discourse, whereby one effect is the homogenisation of ‘community’, into a group that is both *capable* of actively marketing itself in the employment market, as well as adhering to the same strict moral and ethical values as identified from within New Labour discourse. Moreover, the New Labour discourse of communitarianism is conditional on its members not only having the *capacity* to take active responsibility for their status and insure themselves against risk, but also the *desire*.

There are a number of possible effects from this discourse. Firstly, as the previously disadvantaged groups (such as lone parents, disabled and long term unemployed) become focused targets for extensive back to work programmes, many of them will slowly begin to re-position themselves in the labour market. One possible consequence being that those individuals who still fail to find employment, either through their lack of marketable skills, lack of employment opportunities, or lack of enthusiasm for paid employment will to some extent become *even more* excluded under the current discourse than they may have been previously. This is because it is now accepted that labour market conditions cannot guarantee secure employment and consequently it is the responsibility of the individual to adapt to the labour market conditions by continually marketing him/herself, insuring for the future and enhancing his/her employability. Thus, the causes for unemployment cannot be charged to the labour market itself, but to the jobseeker's inability to *adapt* to the labour market. Moreover, as the discourse of unemployment targets specific groups,

(in particular lone parents and the disabled) and encourages them, not necessarily to take up paid employment immediately, but to insure for their future and develop their employability, it immediately negates the idea that they are to some extent 'exempt' from the same demands placed on their 'working age' counterparts. The consequence of this being that the only reason for individuals failing to consider acquiring or seeking out employment will be attributed to a form of 'moral/ethical' deficiency, and a failure to take responsibility for oneself, one's family and one's community.

## 6.6. Discussion

The 'ideal' citizen, community member and jobseeker has to follow a two pronged code of conduct to follow if he/she is to receive full membership to the 'new community'. Firstly, although paid work is emphasised throughout this chapter as being one of the essential requirements for membership to the new 'community', it needs to be stressed that simply being involved in paid employment does *not* necessarily guarantee membership<sup>1</sup>. Instead, full membership is *also* conditional on jobseekers embracing both the 'moral/ethical' discourse and the discourse of 'enterprise'. For example, the 'ideal' community only exists when all members (ie. 'jobseekers') internalise the 'moral/ethical' values articulated by New Labour. This involves acknowledging the role of voluntary work, reconstructing oneself in relation to the 'community' and adopting values such as 'tolerance', 'openness', 'adaptability', 'self improvement', 'fair play' (Blair 2000g), 'respect for others', 'honour', 'self-discipline', 'duty', 'obligation' and 'the essential decency of the British character' (Blair 2000g). In terms of the 'enterprise' discourse, jobseekers have to become thoroughly 'enterprising' in their approach to community driven activities, seeking out paid employment and enhancing their employability whilst in and out of work. Once these discourses have been embraced, there are two further and very specific routes through which the 'ideal' citizen can achieve full

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<sup>1</sup> This applies only to those capable of paid employment and not excluded under the terms set out by New Labour ('awaiting a major operation', 'recently bereaved, single parents with very young children, people with demanding caring responsibilities or those suffering from acute illness' (DfEE 1998b:9).

membership to the community, both of which are closely interrelated. The first route is through paid employment, which requires individuals not only to be currently employed, but also to be constantly increasing their employability and insuring against unexpected temporary unemployment. The second route is through the activity of ‘seeking’ employment, which involves being willing, capable and efficient in managing one’s jobseeking activities. Although these routes exist within a hierarchy, they are nonetheless both considered to be legitimate routes through which to achieve social inclusion and community membership.

This emphasis on ‘work’ and ‘activity’ is central to New Labour’s discourse of communitarianism and within New Labour discourse, workers are identified as achieving ethical satisfaction through the experience of work. However, one suggestion is that within this discourse, the achievement and satisfaction is gained as much through the experience of ‘working’ as it is through the nature of the ‘work’. With this, the significance of ‘work’ *sui generis*, as the route to self-fulfilment and self-realisation becomes subordinate to the very experience of ‘working’. In other words, the ‘actual’ job the individual holds (be it paid, voluntary, full time or part time) is less significant than the fact that the individual is engaged with ‘activity’ of ‘working’. Moreover, ‘working’, in this sense, can involve a wide range of activities, from being engaged in paid employment, to organised jobseeking, improving one’s employability, participation in voluntary work or other community led activities and with this, caring for the status of the community, the family and one’s own personal and ethical well-being.

This notion of community advocates a notion of social inclusion that is conditional on the adoption of certain moral and ethical values rather than material wealth or socio-economic status. Under these terms, all individuals can (theoretically) be socially included regardless of social class or employment status. With this, it is argued that the ‘work ethic’ actually takes precedence over the activity of ‘work’ itself, and all individuals are given equal opportunity to become included into New

Labour conception of 'community' (Rose 1999:488). This issue is discussed in more detail in the following chapter, which examines the argument that according to New Labour discourse, social inclusion is not actually conditional upon paid employment, instead, 'active jobseeking' and 'good jobseeking' can be just as effective a route to the form of social inclusion articulated by New Labour.



## Chapter Seven

### Ethical Techniques of the Self and the ‘Good Jobseeker’

It was argued in the previous chapter that under New Labour, ‘material’ or ‘economic’ social inclusion has in many ways been substituted with a value based social inclusion. This notion of inclusion is conditional on jobseekers not only securing paid employment and being economically active, but also following various prescriptive codes of conduct articulated through the ‘enterprise community’ and the ‘value-based community’. This chapter offers a closer analysis of these codes of conduct and identifies the more specific ethical technologies of the self the jobseeker is required to perform in order to be categorised as a ‘good jobseeker’. It is argued throughout this thesis that the official discourse of unemployment manages the conduct of the jobseeker from two very specific levels; the first being concerned with the wide range of practical jobseeking exercises the jobseeker is required to perform in order to qualify for benefit; and the second focusing on the more personalised ethical technologies of the self. This chapter is specifically concerned with this second level of participation and consequently, focuses on the ways in which technologies of power and technologies of the self articulate the conduct of the jobseeker (Foucault 1988; Dean 1995:560).

#### 7.1.1. Outline

It was argued in the previous chapter that being engaged in paid employment does not necessarily guarantee social inclusion, and that *as well* as seeking out, and where appropriate, obtaining paid employment, jobseekers must also subscribe to the discourse of enterprise and marketability through continuously marketing themselves, insuring against unemployment and taking active responsibility for their self management. Also, jobseekers have to engage with the moral discourse of communitarianism, which involves not only obtaining paid employment in order to enhance their own personal financial situation, but to contribute to the social cohesion and general maintenance of the community. This chapter elaborates on this argument, and claims that for some individuals, commitment to the community actually takes precedence over paid work as being seen to be ‘active’ in one’s

jobseeking and to be working towards enhancing one's employability can be an equal and often more secure route to social inclusion. In other words, in order to become a 'good jobseeker' or a member of the new cultural community one must adopt the 'ethic of enterprise', in that provided one adopts a thoroughly enterprising approach to jobseeking, is highly motivated, highly organised, professional and adaptable, one does not necessarily have to be *successful* in securing employment. Consequently, for the jobseeker, 'efficient', 'well organised' and 'determined' jobseeking is just as important as effective or successful jobseeking. Operating from a more closely textually orientated discourse analytic approach, this chapter focuses on the specific codes of conduct articulated through two Employment Service documents published in 1998, in an attempt to identify the various ways through which the jobseekers are articulated and the more specific ethical constructions they are encouraged to adopt. The first section of this chapter identifies the target reader of the documents and the second section focuses on the articulation of the 'good jobseeker' and his/her possible relationship to the target reader.

### **7.1.2. Documents for Analysis**

The two documents chosen for analysis are: 'The Job Kit: Your Job Search Guide' (DfEE 1998c) and 'Job Hunting: A Guide For Managers, Executives, Professionals, New Graduates' (DfEE 1998i). Both of these documents are concerned with offering jobseeking help and advice, varying from inviting the jobseeker to consider new and alternative ways of finding work, to advising them on how to write a CV and covering letter and how to perform at an interview. The 'Job Kit' is a large A4 sized document of sixty eight pages, it claims to have been designed with the help of people who both work in Jobcentres and the unemployed who they have 'helped to find jobs' and that its primary objective is to 'help put **you** in control of your job search by offering tips and practical advice' (DfEE 1998c:1). The 'Job Hunting' guide is a slightly shorter A4 sized document of forty six pages. The introduction claims that the document's purposes are to forward 'a practical approach to job hunting, and give details of other sources of information and help' (DfEE 1998i:4).

### 7.1.3. Governmental Authority of the Job Kit

A key concern with the Job Kit as a mode of governance is the extent to which it both a) encourages the jobseeker to perform an ethical technique of the self, and b) acts as a disciplinary mechanism. The essential element to the techniques of the self as a mode of governance is that the targets are in charge of their own governance, ‘Governance in this case is something we do to ourselves, not something done to us by those in power’ (Cruikshank 1996:235; cf. Burchell 1993; Foucault 1988; Rose 1989). For example, of the ethics of the self, Foucault has claimed ‘the kind of relationship that you ought to have with yourself, *rapport a soi*, which I call ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own action’ (Foucault 1972:253, cited in Barrett 1991:149). To illustrate further, there are three modes of governance, or more specifically, ‘techniques of regulation’ that have previously been identified as the primary concern of this thesis, the ‘disciplinary techniques of objectification’, the ‘disciplinary/ethical techniques of subjectification’ and the ‘ethical techniques of the self’. The first of these is represented by the experts or professionals, who ‘gaze’ upon a ‘passive’ population, who are considered ‘objects’ of the discourse. This is referred to in the power/knowledge dichotomy as a technology of power. The second, although similar to the above, is extended in that through the confessional process, the experts or professionals now possess a certain knowledge of the individuals. Here, the subjected individuals begin to adopt the discourse, which they use to inform their own technology of self and with this, they become, not passive objects, but active ‘*subjects*’ of the discourse. The third level is the ‘ethical techniques of the self’, whereby individuals, having made themselves an active subject of the discourse, can choose to do so without the use of the expert or professional, in that they can adopt or reject certain elements of the discourse and administer their own governance, without the aid of an external power. Although the distinction is never entirely clear, one can argue that technologies of power initially exist at the power/knowledge level, where experts and professionals construct individuals as ‘objects’ of knowledge, conversely, technologies of the self exist when individuals become active ‘subjects’ of the discourse and begin to adopt their

own ‘technologies of self’. This distinction should not be overstated, as active subjects of the discourse always remain to some extent defined by technologies of power and can never be entirely divorced from governmental techniques in that although the essential element to the techniques of the self is that the subject must regulate themselves (Leonard 1997:42), the existence of an external governing body will invariably remain (Foucault 1988).

#### **7.1.4. Targets of Governance**

It is important to identify the target readership in order to provide a more thorough understanding of the possible effects the text may have over the ethical conduct of the jobseeker and to identify the distinctions between the Job Hunting document and the Job Kit. It is clear that the Job Hunting document and the Job Kit are directed at a very different readership. For example, the Job Hunting document not only assumes a higher level of competency from the reader, but also affords them a far greater degree of autonomy in managing their own time. Implicit in the document is the assumption that the reader of the Job Hunting text is largely in control of their status and in need of only basic advice and information. This contrasts with mode of governance identified in the Job Kit, in that it encourages the reader to perform an ethical technique of the self, whilst simultaneously acting as a disciplinary mechanism. Compared to the Job Hunting document, the target reader of the Job Kit is very much articulated as being ‘deviant’ or ‘hostile’ and consequently, although this jobseeker must also be self-governing, the impetus for this governance must emerge from the official governmental discourse. For example, it is argued that ‘activity’ is the main route to social inclusion and that the ‘good jobseeker’ must be seen to be active in managing his/her jobseeking, but as well as *inviting* the jobseeker to be active, the Job Kit also serves to *coerce* the jobseeker into activity. For example, the Job Kit sets out a clear ‘action plan’ and weekly timetable detailing suggested jobseeking activities (DfEE 1998c:7). This timetable (called a ‘typical plan’) includes details of suggested day to day activities from Monday to Sunday, including visiting the Jobcentre three times a week, employment agencies once a week, as well as reading situations vacant in newspapers, producing letters of

application, following up any leads by telephone or in person and visiting the library or ‘any other sources of further information’ regarding potential employment positions. Finally, on Sunday, the jobseeker is entitled to a ‘Day off’ (DfEE 1998c:7-8). The significance is that the jobseeker’s acceptable daily routine is largely set out, and that despite these tasks being ‘voluntary’, there is a strong ethical obligation to complete the tasks that have been issued. This form of governance can also be noted in the nineteenth century poor law in the widespread use of practices designed:

‘...to force applicants to give up a certain portion of their time by confining them in a gravel pit or some other enclosure, or directing them to sit at a certain spot and do nothing, or obliging them to attend a roll-call several times a day, or by any contrivance which shall prevent their leisure from becoming a means either of profit or of amusement’. (Checkland 1974, cited in Novak 1997).

This disciplinary mode of governance is primarily identified in the Job Kit and not the Job Hunting document as the Job Hunting document affords the reader a far greater degree of autonomy in their self governance and articulates a reader who is co-operative and enthusiastic. Conversely, the reader of the Job Kit is articulated as being potentially hostile, possessing few employment skills, little experience, low self esteem, and as such, is in far greater need of guidance and direction. However, despite the differing degrees of autonomy afforded the different readers, they are both encouraged to be equally enterprising and professional in their approach to jobseeking. With this, there is a clear distinction made between the ‘sort of’ jobseeker the reader of the Job Kit is encouraged to aspire to and the sort of jobseeker that is clearly targeted in that although the Job Kit encourages the reader to be enterprising and highly motivated, there is every indication that the target reader is precisely lacking in these qualities. Consequently, the Job Kit is the main focus of this analysis in that it provides greater interest from a governmentality perspective

and the Job Hunting document is analysed primarily in terms of its comparability to the Job Kit.

#### **7.1.5. Social Inclusion and the ‘Active’ Jobseeker**

One of the main contentions throughout this work is that some previous research has tended to oversimplify the importance of paid employment for social inclusion. For example, it is argued here that it is not simply the act of being engaged in paid employment that guarantees social inclusion, but the adoption of the ethical and communitarian values articulated by the discourse of New Labour’s communitarianism. In other words, provided jobseekers are seen to be *active* in their jobseeking, they do not have to be *successful* in securing paid employment. For example, Levitas has argued that the role of *unpaid* work in securing social inclusion varies according to individual circumstances. She claims that in households where at least one adult member is in paid employment, the remaining adult is entitled to refuse paid work and be a ‘full-time parent’ and that under these circumstances, unpaid work can be considered a legitimate route to social inclusion (Levitas 1998:146). Conversely, in a lone parent household, or a household where both parents are unemployed, full time parenting is less likely to be considered a legitimate route to social inclusion and in these circumstances, paid work is needed for ‘social inclusion, self esteem and independence (ibid). Levitas argues that ‘Labour’s concern is not with individuals inclusion, but with those *households* where no-one of working age is in work’ and that ‘Paid work is, it seems, only necessary for social inclusion for those who would otherwise become a charge on the state’ (ibid:146). It is argued here that this potential to be excused from the paid work criterion is not restricted to partners of the *employed*, but is in fact extended to *all* jobseekers. With this, it is claimed that the condition of ‘activity’ takes precedence over the condition of ‘paid work’ as the route to social inclusion and that in order to be socially included, the jobseeker must be seen to be making constant efforts to increase his/her employability, but the practical, end result of these actions are *not* as significant as the fact that the jobseeker has been engaged in some form of ‘productive’ activity.

### **7.1.6. Rights and Responsibilities**

For New Labour, the exchange of rights and responsibilities is essential for social inclusion and citizenship is entirely conditional on individuals fulfilling their duties and contributing to the maintenance of the community. They argue that: 'Rights and responsibilities must go hand in hand' (Labour Party 1997e:18); 'A hand up not a hand out' (National Policy Forum Report 1999b:95); and 'The contract is simple: quality opportunities for real responsibility. 'Something for something' is the foundation' (Labour Party 2001d:26). It is argued throughout this thesis that according to New Labour discourse, the responsibilities individuals have to the community extends far beyond the need to be in paid employment, in that they also have to adopt the ethic of enterprise, marketability and flexibility and embrace the moral agenda of communitarianism, neighbourliness and family responsibility. This translates into a notion of social inclusion whereby membership is more conditional on the adoption of certain *values* than engagement in economic activity. However, there are acknowledged limitations to this argument as although the active jobseeker can be socially included, it does not automatically follow that they are entitled to the same degree of privileges or even rights as their working counterparts. For example, the Job Kit emphasises that the jobseeker has a 'responsibility' to be professional and efficient in their approach to jobseeking and the management of their time, as well as being highly motivated and enthusiastic. However, the 'rights' they are granted in exchange are significantly limited when compared to those rights afforded the reader of the Job Hunting document, in that the reader of the Job Kit is not afforded the right to refuse any legitimate offer of employment or to be specific about the type of employment they are prepared to accept. Thus although being seen to be active in one's jobseeking is a legitimate route to social inclusion, it must not be forgotten that the primary goal of the jobseeker is always to become engaged in paid employment and as soon as the jobseeker restricts his/her chances of finding this employment, he/she immediately fails to fulfil their duties.

### 7.1.7. The ‘Good Jobseeker’

The two documents chosen for analysis operate from within the confessional discourse, emphasising the importance of evaluating and re-evaluating oneself in terms of performance, skills and flexibility (Foucault 1979). The documents, together with general advice and information on how to conduct oneself as a jobseeker, make frequent reference to the role and importance of the CV, identified as being ‘one of the great confessional texts of our age, matching the diary, the psychoanalytical session and the religious confession in significance’ (Metcalf 1992:620; Miller and Morgan 1993). Careers guidance publications have long claimed that ‘The first stage in job-hunting is ‘know thyself’ (Roberts et al 1989:2, cited in Metcalf 1992:627). This confessional mode of governance, stressing the importance on providing young people with the ability to identify their positive characteristics and to match their skills to a job is not considered as simply benefiting the employers, but as being essential to the development of the individuals identities in providing them with a positive self image.

Within the documents chosen for analysis, there is a ‘client subject’ relationship established between text and reader. This relationship operates from the same confessional, disciplinary discourse as other ‘client subject’ relationships, such as the legal or medical consultation and the social work interview (Stenson 1993). Although it is not possible to analyse the effects of interactions between text and reader in the same way as it is to analyse transcripts from the social work / client interview, or doctor / patient consultation, one can still identify the confessional techniques and the techniques of the self that operate from within the texts. This relationship can be explored through examining the relationship between the ‘target reader’ and the ‘implied reader’ or the various ‘textual reader subject positions’ that function within the text. The ‘implied reader’ refers to the technique within the text where the behaviour or response of the reader is anticipated without ever being thoroughly defined (Iser 1974:34). Both the ‘Job Kit’ and the ‘Job Hunting’ document clearly articulate what this research refers to as a ‘good jobseeker’. This ‘good jobseeker’ is similar to the ‘Good Social Work Subject’ in that it is seen to



hold more resonance with the official discourse from which the text operates (Stenson 1993). For example, the ‘good jobseeker’ is an individual who is capable of managing his/her own governance and willing to take the necessary steps towards securing employment. For example, in the ‘Job Hunting’ document, the ‘good jobseeker’ is articulated as being ‘well organised’ (DfEE 1998i: 4,6,7,8,11,14,15,19,23,24,27) and ‘adaptable’ (DfEE 1998i:4, 7,16,19,29,30); as well as being highly motivated, confident, professional, committed to finding employment and thoroughly in control of his/her jobseeking. Similarly, the Job Kit articulates a ‘good jobseeker’ who is ‘competent’ (DfEE 1998c:20,23,42); ‘adaptable’ (DfEE 1998c:20,23,42,44); ‘hardworking’, ‘conscientious’ and ‘reliable’ (DfEE 1998c:20,23,24,42); a good communicator (DfEE 1998c:23,24,31,44); as well as being professional, organised, responsible, highly motivated and again, thoroughly committed to the task of finding employment (DfEE 1998c). One effect of this articulation of the ‘good jobseeker’ is that the ‘actual reader’ is invited to identify with the ‘good jobseeker’ or ‘implied reader’ and the number of possible responses the reader can make to the text are to some extent predetermined.

Interestingly, in terms of the Job Kit, a very clear distinction can be made between the implied reader and the target reader. For example, within the Job Kit, the implied reader, and consequently the ‘good jobseeker’ (7.4.) is clearly articulated as being ‘enterprising’, ‘industrious’, ‘organised’, ‘professional’ and ‘determined’. However, there is every indication that the Job Kit is targeted precisely at those readers who are lacking in many of these qualities. Conversely, the target reader of the Job Hunting document appears to have far more resonance with the implied reader and consequently, is afforded more autonomy in their self management and is addressed through a far more equal and less disciplinary discourse. This is significant in that whilst the two documents articulate a ‘good jobseeker’ who possesses very similar qualities, the Job Kit targets a far more ‘hostile’ reader (Stenson 1993). For example, relative to the Job Hunting document, the reader of the Job Kit is articulated as having low confidence, few employment skills and having perhaps spent large periods out of paid employment. Consequently, the prescriptive codes of conduct

articulated in the Job Kit operate from a far more disciplinary discourse and afford the reader far less autonomy. With this, interest in the Job Hunting document is primarily directed at drawing a comparison between the codes of conduct articulated between the two documents, and not specifically at the Job Hunting document in its own right.

#### **7.1.8. Text or *Context*?**

One of the significant areas of interest with the Job Kit is that it was first published in 1995, prior to the election of the Labour Party in 1997 and that despite a few minor alterations, the content of the document has essentially remained the same (DfEE 1995b; 1998c)<sup>1</sup>. There are two points to be made regarding this similarity, firstly that the shift in the government of the unemployed has been a gradual one, where much of the routes can be traced back to the Major Government; and secondly, that from a discourse analytic approach there is a need to pay some attention to the significance of *context* as much as text.

Regarding the first point, the changes to the government of unemployment had largely begun under the Conservative Government of the mid 1990s. Significantly, the JSA was initially implemented under the Conservative Government in October 1996, and had actually been running at a national level for some eight months before Labour had even been elected into power. Similarly it has been argued that the notion of ‘workfare’, although largely charged to New Labour, was in fact, very much in existence under the Major Government, identified not only through the JSA, but also through movements such as the abolition of the Employment Department

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<sup>1</sup> The presentation of the Job Kit is the primary difference, as in 1995 the document was presented as a ‘pack’, consisting of an A3 sized plastic folder containing five separate booklets. However, in 1998 this had changed to an A4 sized document and the contents of each booklet constituted a separate chapter. Also, the 1998 Job Kit contains a small number of references to additional assistance the disabled may require regarding general jobseeking, attending interviews, or sending applications on audio cassette, which represents their concern with inviting previously excluded groups to participate in the same market ethos.

and the introduction of the Department for Education and Employment (Jones 1996a). Thus it is argued that much of the current discourse of unemployment has emerged gradually, and is not thoroughly isolated to the Blair Government.

Secondly, it is argued that although the same Job Kit was in circulation during both Conservative and Labour Government's, the *context* was entirely different, allowing the document to have a variety of readings. With this, it is argued that a discourse analytic account of the Job Kit involves paying attention to its *context*. For example, it is argued that the set of social determinants surrounding the production of the Job Kit under New Labour, have, to some extent, determined the specific set of discursive practices employed within the text, and consequently, the participants' response to the text. This is referred to as the 'sociological version of the hermeneutic circle, where one pole is discursive, the other social' (Chalaby 1996:687). The premise behind this is that the meaning of a text is contingent, as it is the interaction that occurs between text and reader that makes a text meaningful (Billig 1990; Chalaby 1996). In other words, meaning is not 'internal' to the text, instead, the text is given meaning only when the reader interacts with it and it is the job of the discourse analyst to discuss the possible effects the text has on the reader through an exploration of how the texts construct and address their readers (either implicitly or explicitly). This is not to advocate an in-depth discussion of the social determinants surrounding the Job Kit under New Labour, and, unlike Chalaby, it is not believed that one needs to understand the social determinants of a text before one can understand its effects. Instead, it is argued that from a discourse analytic perspective, it is necessary to acknowledge that the social determinants and background of New Labour unemployment policy have a large role to play in determining both the possible responses the reader can make to the document, and the consequent relationship between text and reader. With this, it is argued that the Job Kit cannot be understood in complete isolation (see sections 3.3 and 3.4).

To illustrate further, under the Conservatives, the JSA had two primary objectives, a) the reduction of unemployment via the offer of advice and training on how to increase general employability; and b) a deterrent, the reduction of social security fraud, and the imposing of the need for unemployed claimants to actively seek work. It is this latter objective that, at least in terms of rhetoric was prioritised differently from New Labour. Similar to New Labour, the Conservatives placed great emphasis on the importance of enhancing individual responsibility and on the duties that the jobseeker had to the taxpayer. However, despite the fact that the Labour Party also stress the importance of responsibility, instead of describing the JSA and New Deal in terms of its role as a deterrent, they are much keener to stress its role for making individuals ‘employable’ and consequently, they use phrases such as: ‘empowering’, ‘enabling’, and ‘realising full opportunity’. This is not to say that the Labour Party do not also outline the importance of individual responsibility and the duties that the jobseeker has to the taxpayer and the community as a whole, but that the emphasis is different. With this it is argued that New Labour articulate a ‘good jobseeker’ who is not only responsible for his/her own employment and employability, but is also responsible for the general maintenance of the ‘community’. This is a form of ‘manifest’ or ‘embedded intertextuality’, whereby ‘one text or discourse type is clearly contained within the matrix of another (Fairclough 1995:118). For example, the discursive construction of the ‘good jobseeker’ within the Job Kit needs to be considered in terms of its relationship to the more general governmental text that clearly outlines the significance of responsibility, the communitarian ethic, and the discourse of enterprise, employability, activity and empowerment.

#### **7.1.9. Dominant and Subordinate Subject Positions**

In order to conduct a discourse analysis of the Job Kit and the Job Hunting document, one must also provide some analysis of the subordinate subject positions, absences and margins operating within the text. It is argued that a discourse analysis involves looking not only at what is being said, but also, by implication, at what is being rejected, similarly, Derrida was concerned with drawing out the ‘margins’ of a text, arguing that ‘The margins of a text do not constitute a blank, virgin, empty

margin, but another text' (Billig 1990; Derrida 1972:162). Whereas a Derridian deconstruction would be concerned with drawing out the text's intentional marginalisation of certain contradictions or inconsistencies, this analysis is more concerned with drawing out the marginalisation of alternative readings and subordinate reader subject positions. Consequently, this analysis is not simply concerned with the articulation of the 'good jobseeker' as being efficient, professional or enterprising, but also with the absences within the text and the 'marginalisations' of the jobseeker's right to be depressed, have high employment demands and expectations or actually may be either incapable or unwilling to take up employment. With this, the Job Kit affords the 'good jobseeker' the dominant subject position and consequently marginalises the existence of any alternative or conflicting subject positions<sup>1</sup>.

### **Document One: 'Job Hunting: A Guide for Managers, Professionals, Executives and New Graduates'**

#### **7.2.1. Target Readership**

Throughout the text, there is every indication that the target reader is an individual who is to a large extent in control of his/her employment status and appreciates the need to secure paid employment as soon as possible. The illustrations of the sorts of jobs the jobseeker may have previously had or may be looking for indicate that the jobseeker is skilled and experienced in his/her field and requires only light guidance and information. For example, the text gives examples of possible positions such as 'Senior Purchasing Executive' (DfEE 1998i:17); 'Purchasing and Materials Manager' (DfEE 1998c:17); and a 'Science Graduate' (DfEE 1998c:21). The document also advises the jobseeker what to do regarding any mortgage they may have (DfEE 1998c:5); how to best make use of 'any lump sum' they may have received (presumably redundancy payments) (DfEE 1998c:4); or how to arrange a funding reassessment if they have a son or daughter studying at university (DfEE

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<sup>1</sup> Some consideration must also be paid to the existence of 'ironic reader subject positions', whereby the reader does not subscribe to the prescriptions articulated from the Job Kit and instead either does not consider it appropriate to their particular situation or outrightly rejects it.

1998c:5). Also, the document explains that unemployment may have come as ‘a shock’ (DfEE 1998c:4) that the jobseeker may be ‘unused to the business of changing jobs’, and that they may be on the employment market through no choice of [their] own’ (DfEE 1998c:4). The document then goes on to offer guidance and advice on how to emotionally deal with the prospect of unemployment, the indication being that the jobseeker has spent at least most of their working lives in relatively productive and meaningful employment.

### **7.2.2. Relative Autonomy**

Although the Job Hunting document articulates a ‘good jobseeker’ who is relatively reserved and highly adaptable, the jobseeker is still afforded the right to demand a certain level of salary and to reject certain jobs they may consider inappropriate. For example, the jobseeker is invited to think ‘what level of responsibility [they are] aiming for?’; whether they are ‘more interested in personal performance or in administration, management or leadership?’; or whether they ‘want to practice a specialism, perhaps to act as a staff adviser or to be a manager with line responsibility?’ (DfEE 1998c:7). Similarly, when asked to reassess their jobseeking performance, the document asks the jobseeker to think about how many job offers they have had and, where appropriate what their reasons were for not accepting them’ (DfEE 1998c:29). Also, when discussing the purpose of the job interview, the document claims that:

‘It is also your chance to find out more about the job. You can discuss it with the employer; meet other people in the organisation; look at the establishment; find out more about the product or service and its market and discuss training and career prospects within the organisation’ (DfEE 1998c:23).

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The significance of this does not become clear until this level of autonomy is compared to that afforded the ‘good jobseeker’ articulated in the ‘Job Kit’, in that this jobseeker is not afforded *any* right to refuse employment, and the purpose of the interview is simply to convince the interviewer to give the jobseeker a job, rather than to assess the suitability of the position. This distinction is also identified later, when the Job Hunting document advises the jobseeker to ‘Set aside time - every day, or every other day, and set targets of job leads to be followed up each day or week’ (DfEE 1998c:8). This again contrasts entirely with the advice the Job Kit offers the jobseeker, which involves a far more complex and technical detailing of specific tasks the jobseeker should be active in, listing set tasks for Monday through to Saturday. Thus the reader of the Job Hunting document is largely articulated as being in control of their own employability, being self sufficient and as such is excused from much of the disciplinary discourse directed at the jobseeker through the Job Kit. However, significantly, although the target reader of the two documents are clearly distinct from one another; the articulated ‘acceptable’ modes of behaviour, attitudes to work and motivational skills are in many ways indistinguishable. Consequently, it is argued that the jobseeker is invited to aspire to the professional discourse of employability regardless of his/her status and as such the definition of a ‘good jobseeker’ includes all individuals, regardless of status.

## **Document Two: ‘The Job Kit: Your Job Search Guide’**

### **7.3.1. Part One - ‘Target Readership’**

There are two specific themes throughout the text that are indicative of the target readership of the Job Kit. Firstly, the examples given in the Job Kit of realistic attainable employment positions are predominantly from the low or semi-skilled employment sector, indicating that the target reader may have limited employment skills. With this, the indication is that the target reader has either spent large periods out of the employment market, or has hitherto been involved predominantly in low skilled, seasonal employment (Esping-Andersen, cited in Driver & Martell 1998:112). Secondly, the text employs a simplistic and often patronising language and style which indicates its readership may well be from the lower educated section

of society. This is amplified by the adoption of an extremely informal, often colloquial discourse, which affords the text a ‘mentoring’ quality that presupposes a lack of self-confidence and a limited knowledge of effective and efficient jobseeking (Fairclough 1992:204). The implication of this is that the reader is articulated as being inexperienced and in many ways incapable of developing effective jobseeking skills independently and consequently in need of in depth support and advice. Thus there are two specific concerns to be discussed in this section; that the document directs a sizeable amount of attention towards those readers who are either; a) predominantly from the unskilled or partly skilled occupational classes with limited employment experience; or b) suffering from some degree of educational disadvantage which has in turn had a negative effect on their confidence and self-esteem.

A further point relating to the ‘target reader’ concerns its relationship to the ‘implied reader’ and the ‘textual reader subject positions’ that function within the text whereby the actual reader is invited to identify with or aspire to, the implied reader (Iser 1974:34). Within the Job Kit, a clear distinction can be made between the implied reader and the target reader in that the implied reader and consequently the ‘good jobseeker’ (7.4.) is clearly articulated as being ‘enterprising’, ‘industrious’, ‘organised’, ‘professional’ and ‘determined’. This notion of ‘enterprise’, is said to encompass an ‘array of rules for the conduct of one’s everyday existence’ such as ‘energy, initiative, ambition, calculation and personal responsibility’ (Rose 1992:146). However, there is a clear distinction between this implied reader, articulated as an ‘enterprising self’ (Fairclough 1995, 2000; Heelas and Morris 1992; Rose 1992) and the ‘actual’, or target reader as there is every indication that the Job Kit is targeted precisely at those readers who may be lacking in many of these qualities. With this, it is argued that the text is targeted not at a generic jobseeker, but at the ‘hostile’ or ‘deviant’ jobseeker, in that the text is specifically targeted at those jobseekers who are not ‘enterprising’, ‘professional’ or ‘determined’ (Stenson 1993; see also 6.2.1.). This distinction clearly highlights the ethical mechanism inherent in the relationship between text and reader, in that the implied reader



comprises the source of ethical authority with which any actual reader who possesses these qualities is invited to identify, and to which any actual reader who does not possess these qualities is encouraged to aspire.

### **7.3.2. Limited Skills and Experience**

The Job Kit appears to have a target readership from the unskilled, semiskilled or skilled manual section of the labour market, with relatively undeveloped job hunting skills. When examples are given within the text of certain employment possibilities, they are predominantly from the lower skilled occupational classes; such as: secretarial, driving, au pairs, nannies, mothers' helps (DfEE 1998c:10); child minding, gardening, local shop work (DfEE 1998c:12); machine worker (DfEE 1998c:23); kitchen assistant, kitchen supervisor, catering assistant (DfEE 1998c:24); and warehouse assistant (DfEE 1998c:36). A large proportion of the attainable jobs referred to in the Job Kit can be broadly categorised as relatively low-skilled, low-paid, often temporary and insecure employment. For example, the Job Kit suggests that jobseekers can often find vacancies for child minding, gardening or shop work by looking at advertisements in local shop windows (DfEE 1998c:12). Significantly, whilst the document articulates a 'good' jobseeker as being industrious, enterprising, determined, highly motivated, flexible and professional, there is every indication throughout the text that the target reader is a jobseeker who has spent large periods of his/her working life either unemployed or in poorly paid, poorly skilled and often insecure employment. For example, when referring to the sorts of skills and experience the jobseeker may include in a CV, the options appear relatively limited. The document states:

'Many people today consider themselves unskilled because they don't have much work experience or because they don't know how to do anything else...The following may help you think about the skills you already have including leisure and social activities and other things you have achieved' (DfEE 1998c:6).

In this extract, the indication is that the Job Kit is predominantly aimed at those people who ‘consider themselves unskilled’, ‘don’t have much work experience’, or ‘don’t know how to do anything else’ as opposed to those who are enterprising, determined, highly motivated or industrious. This indication is amplified in the following section as the Job Kit goes on to invite the reader to ‘tease’ out a number of possible skills that they may not be aware they have and consequently, may put into a C.V. For example, the Job Kit states that if the jobseeker has ever been a member of a sports team or club they can claim that they are skilled in:

- ‘ - getting on well with other people
- following or giving instructions
- being committed to something
- following a routine
- using your own time’ (DfEE 1998c:6).

The specific wording of these skills indicates that they are designed to be directly appealing to potential employers, although it is evident that these skills have not been acquired through considerable experience *of* paid employment. Thus, there is an interesting point in that whilst the text articulates a jobseeker who holds all the skills necessary for successful employment, there is at the same time, the suggestion that the actual ‘target reader’ is not in possession of a wide range of traditionally employable skills. To illustrate the point further, whilst the Job Kit articulates an enterprising and professional jobseeker, much of the information and advice that it offers is of a very basic level and assumes a certain degree of naïveté in the basics of jobseeking. Thus, the indication is that the Job Kit is not targeted at *all* jobseekers, but at those jobseekers who are considered to be failing in their jobseeking roles and who are less likely to find employment independently. This indication that the Job Kit is targeted at the ‘deviant’ or ‘hard to reach’ jobseeker is supported by a

consideration of the wide range of policy directions that target individuals who have been unemployed for three months or more. Fifty per cent of jobseekers find work in the first three months and a further twenty per cent in the first six months, meaning that intensive measures to assist the 'short-term' unemployed would be largely redundant (Campbell 2000:29). Instead, it is the 'at risk' jobseekers that are targeted more closely, such as those with literacy and numeracy problems, those with disabilities and lone parents.

The document also appears to target a jobseeker who has been predominantly engaged in temporary positions, stating claiming that when constructing a CV, the reader should group these positions together rather than emphasising them separately. For example the document states:

'If you have had many different jobs, emphasise the skills and experience you have gained by grouping them together. For example, I have worked in many different types of jobs during vacations including office, shop and factory work' (DfEE 1998c:22).

Similarly, the document allows a voice for those jobseekers who have limited work experience by stating:

'If your work experience is limited you may want to include temporary, holiday, part-time or voluntary jobs. Give the job title and the main duties involved. KEEP IT BRIEF' (DfEE 1998c:22).

Also, the document allows the possibility that a jobseeker may have spent a considerable time out of work and suggests that despite this, jobseekers may have

obtained skills through either ‘bringing up children and running a home’ (DfEE 1998c:25); or through voluntary work or hobbies (DfEE 1998c:43).

‘Additional information

This is optional - but useful if there are gaps in other parts of your CV. If you have had a break at home make this positive. Do this by describing the skills you have used in, for example, bringing up children and running a home’ (DfEE 1998c:25).

Thus there is every indication that the target readership of the Job Kit is those individuals who have been predominantly involved in either unskilled or semiskilled employment or who have spent large periods out of paid employment and consequently do not have considerable experience or professional expertise in the employment market. For example, with regards to writing a C.V., the Job Kit offers advice for those jobseekers who have not been in employment for some time and who may consequently have difficulty obtaining referees. One could argue, however that it is problematic to claim this is entirely indicative of a target readership of poorly skilled or poorly experienced jobseekers. Notwithstanding this, one can *also* argue that the jobseeker articulated in these particular extracts is, in many ways congruous with an individual who has been employed in predominantly seasonal and unskilled or semiskilled employment, or who has spent sizeable periods out of the employment market. Thus the text suggests that a considerable degree of concern is directed towards those individuals who have previously been relatively unsuccessful in their employment activities and as such are either inexperienced in effective jobseeking or have been unwilling to take the necessary steps needed to address their future employment prospects. Again, the interesting point here is concerning the distinction between the target reader and the implied reader, in that whilst the implied reader and the ‘good jobseeker’ is articulated as enterprising, efficient and capable, the implication is that the target reader is lacking in many of these qualities.

### **7.3.3. Limited knowledge of effective jobseeking**

As well as directing attention towards those jobseekers who may be considered limited in employment skills and experience, the Job Kit also appears to presuppose a low self esteem and limited knowledge by its target readership in some of the basics of effective jobseeking. Here, the Job Kit adopts a ‘mentoring’ quality and directs attention at improving the self esteem of its readership. Cruikshank argues that attempts such as this to promote self esteem constitute a new ‘mode of governing the self’ and a ‘practical and productive technology available for the production of certain kinds of selves...’ (Cruikshank 1996:233). This emerges directly from the confessional and disciplinary discourse, as it is argued that those who attempt to improve their self esteem (or ‘undergo “revolution from within”, ‘are citizens doing the right thing; they join programmes, volunteer, but most importantly, work on and improve their self-image’. Self esteem is ‘technology of citizenship and self-government for evaluating and acting upon ourselves so that the police, the guards and the doctors do not have to (Cruikshank 1996:234). Cruikshank also argues that self esteem is a ‘social goal’ that enhances society in that the relationship we have to ourselves is directly related to responsible citizenship, which depends on ‘personal and social responsibility’ and that those who fail to link their ‘personal fulfilment to social reform are lumped together as social problems, are diagnosed as ‘lacking self esteem’ and are charged with ‘antisocial behaviour’ (ibid). From this, a jobseeker without self esteem is a jobseeker lacking the ability to manage his/her jobseeking activities efficiently. Consequently, under the codes of the ‘good jobseeker’ those lacking self esteem are deviant jobseekers and need to be re-educated. Thus there is more indication that the target reader is a ‘deviant jobseeker’, one not only lacking employable skills and experience, but also lacking self esteem. Significantly, this reiterates the ongoing distinction between the target reader and the implied reader as it is essential that the reader aspires to the identity of the ‘good jobseeker’, who is not only professional and enterprising, but also highly confident.

Much of the information and advice within the document is of a very basic level, describing such things as what a CV is, what it is used for, to the importance of using a good pen and a hard surface when writing a covering letter; suggesting that the intended reader may not only possess few work experience skills, but may also be relatively limited in formal education (DfEE 1998c:29). For example, when advising the jobseeker how to write a covering letter, the Job Kit states:

‘Be clear. Don’t use a long word if a short one will do’ (DfEE 1998c:29).

There is the implication here that simplicity is invariably preferable, which makes assumptions about the communicable skills of the jobseekers as well as their level of acquired knowledge. For example, in the document, jobseekers are reminded that if they need to obtain references, they should ask the referee’s permission *before* handing their name and address over to potential employers (25); making sure any covering letter they send is neat (29); also they are told about the importance on keeping the application form clean (34); filling the application form out in block capitals when specifically asked to do so (34); making sure the application form arrives on time (29, 35) and at the interview, arriving on time, telling the truth, speaking clearly, not fidgeting or slouching in the chair, not swearing and not interrupting (46, 49-50). One effect of these sorts of emphasis is that the text articulates a jobseeker who may not be capable of conducting him/herself in an appropriate manner without being specifically told to do so.

As well as containing a relatively simplistic content, the Job Kit also has a simplistic presentation, involving a large quantity of headings, subheadings, clearly labelled and simple tables and a wide use of bright, primary colours. The style of language is also very straightforward and ‘friendly’, with a heavy reliance on colloquialisms, and the use of words such as ‘don’t’, ‘won’t’, or ‘aren’t’ and a large number of

exclamation and question marks<sup>1</sup>. The increase in conversational styles of discourse such as this is said to mark a shift between spoken and written discourses whereby the distinction between speech and writing becomes blurred (Fairclough 1995:204). This trend has been identified not only in the printed media, advertisements, but also in ‘new designs for official forms, such as claim forms for social welfare payments’ (ibid). Similarly, a breakdown has emerged between the ‘public’ and ‘personal’ behind much of Tony Blair’s speeches and interviews, and his presentation as the ‘normal person’ (Fairclough 2000:97-105). One of the effects of this conversational and informal style of language is that the authorial voice of the document is afforded more of a ‘mentor’ quality and is seen to operate from a similar level to that of the reader or audience. For example, the Job Kit begins with asking the jobseeker to answer ‘some basic questions’ concerning their jobseeking activities and to tick a corresponding box for every positive answer (the questions include such things as: ‘do you have a C.V.’; do you visit the Jobcentre regularly’; and are you confident about producing letters’). At the conclusion of the list, the document states:

‘Don’t worry if you didn’t score too well. The purpose of this Job Kit is to help you fill in any of the gaps and give you some useful tips and information’ (DfEE 1998c:5).

This role of ‘mentor’ explicit within the text serves to minimise the governmental and official-political discourse from which the document has emerged which invites the jobseeker to adopt a more accommodating approach to the text. This effect can be identified in a number of examples throughout the text.

‘Consider checking for voluntary organisations. Volunteering can be a chance to use your existing skills, gain experience, develop new interests

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<sup>1</sup> There are twenty four uses of the word ‘don’t’ and only two uses of the words ‘do not’.

and get training in new areas of work. It could sometimes lead to a paid job. Looks good on a CV too' (DfEE 1998c:11).

This colloquial use of language affords the document a 'conversational' style which enhances the familiar and 'supporting' qualities the text has for the reader. Moreover, this style of language, when juxtaposed against the explicit encouragement and support offered, serves to remove many of the barriers between reader and text. For example, the friendly and supportive discourse differs from more formal discourses in that it enables a more personalised relationship between reader and text, so much so that the invitation for the reader to identify with the text and adopt the advice offered is made all the more compelling. This technique is also identified in the social worker / client interactions, whereby, similar to the Job Kit, the role of the social worker is to extend citizenship through encouraging productive interactions and identification with either the 'good social work subject' or the 'good jobseeker'. With this, the social worker and the Job Kit both promote 'instructional texts', enhanced through the discourse of the 'friendship model' (Stenson 1993:53). This 'friendship model' can be identified elsewhere:

'And finally

You have put your CV together and you're happy that it provides a good picture of your strengths. The REAL test is to use it to apply for jobs and contact employers.

Good Luck!' (DfEE 1998c:25).

Here, the use of exclamation marks and capital letters serves to amplify the conversational style of the text and accentuate the personalised and friendly character. This supportive and encouraging role is also identified in the following extract, where the text goes on to offer practical advice and support for the jobseeker in terms of who they should prepare the night before an interview.



‘Think about what you will wear

This may depend on the sort of work you will be doing, but in general:

- Give yourself plenty of time to decide what to wear and get the clothes ready the day before.
- You don’t have to buy a new outfit! Aim for a neat, tidy, clean and uncluttered appearance.
- If you look good it will help you feel good!’ (DfEE 1998c:47)

Significantly, the advice offered here is not simply concerned with the practical issues of preparation, such as planning the route to the interview location, or ensuring all the appropriate documents are ready, but is also concerned with the ‘emotional’ and psychological well-being of the jobseeker. This concern is further noted, when on the same page of the document, it is stated:

‘And finally...

- Try to get a good night’s sleep!’ (DfEE 1998c:47).

Thus the significance is that the text constructs the jobseeker as lacking in confidence and in need of not only practical advice concerning the basics of job application, but also emotional support and encouragement. With this the indication is that the target readership of this document is not simply a generic ‘jobseeker’, but a ‘deviant jobseeker’ in that they may be relatively unskilled and inexperienced in effective jobseeking and consequently in need of both practical advice and emotional support, or they may be unwilling to take the necessary steps to secure employment. Moreover, the implied reader is clearly articulated through the detailed information offered concerning the definition of a ‘good jobseeker’ and is seen to be enterprising, professional and highly motivated. Consequently, the implied reader, as articulated

through the definition of the ‘good jobseeker’, is the ethical mechanism that enables the text to prescribe the conduct of the ‘actual’ reader. This analysis now focuses more closely on the ‘good jobseeker’ and the ethical consequences it has over the conduct of the actual reader.

## **Part Two**

### **7.4. Definitions of a ‘Good Jobseeker’**

The Job Kit articulates the conduct of the jobseeker through a detailed illustration of the various activities the jobseeker is encouraged to perform. With this, there emerges from the text a very clear image of the ‘good jobseeker’, providing both detailed information of the sorts of activities the ‘good jobseeker’ should be involved in and illustrating the sorts of attitudes the ‘good jobseeker’ is expected to adopt. With this, a ‘good jobseeker’ is not simply required to perform certain practical activities, but more importantly, to adopt ‘certain attitudes’ (Foucault 1988). Consequently, this section attempts to identify precisely the various and sometimes contradictory articulations of the ‘good jobseeker’ in terms of the identities he/she is invited to adopt and the techniques of the self he/she is invited to perform. Within the Job Kit, the ‘good jobseeker’ is articulated as being: a) professional and highly organised; b) highly motivated and flexible; and c) reserved and possessing relatively modest demands.

#### **7.4.1. A ‘Good Jobseeker’ is Professional and Highly Organised**

The significance of ‘professionalism’ is central to the Job Kit, as one of the key characteristics of the ‘good jobseeker’ is the ability to hold a professional and organised approach to jobseeking. Significantly, the text turns the act of jobseeking into a highly complex ‘professional’ project, dependant upon effective targeting and requiring a high degree of organisation and political acumen. Similarly, well organised administration is presented as being essential to effective jobseeking and in order to become a good jobseeker, one is obliged to adopt a professional approach

to one's own management through becoming highly organised and efficient and keeping a constant record of one's jobseeking activities and their outcomes.

There are many instances in the text where the jobseeker is encouraged to become highly organised and reminded of the advantages of keeping a close record of progress and following designated action plans. For example, in terms of organisation, the Job Kit states that it is a 'good idea' to keep all paperwork together, (such as completed application forms; CVs; job advertisements and references) in order to keep a close 'track of progress' (DfEE 1998c:17). It is also suggested that efficient jobseeking involves entering the details of all jobsearch activities into a carefully constructed chart, (referred to as the 'Jobseeker's Log' DfEE 1998c:17-18), listing such information as: employer; contact details; name of contact; position applied for; the date and the mode through which contact was made; and details of the end result. The Job Kit also goes into step by step detail as to the appropriate 'action plan' a 'good jobseeker' should adopt, stating that 'you can't just 'look for a job' (DfEE 1998c:4), that 'Looking for a job can take longer than you think' and that 'Ideally you need to set time aside each day and work to a plan' (DfEE 1998c:7). With this, the Job Kit claims that the 'good jobseeker' needs to adopt a definite action plan in order to identify his/her day to day activities and keep an extremely close track of progress. Moreover, the Job Kit outlines a clear weekly timetable which the jobseeker is encouraged to follow. This timetable (called a 'typical plan') includes details of the suggested day to day activities from Monday to Sunday. For example; on Monday, it is suggested the jobseeker visits the Jobcentre and produces any letters of application; on Tuesday, follows up any promising leads gained earlier in the week by telephone or in person; Wednesday visits both the Jobcentre and employment agencies; Thursday, reads the situations vacant in newspapers and identifies suitable jobs; Friday, replies to these advertisements, arranges interviews and returns to the Jobcentre for the third time; Saturday, visits the library or any other sources of further information regarding potential employment positions; and finally, on Sunday, the jobseeker has a 'Day off' (DfEE 1998c:7-8). This is of particular significance in that the elaborate detail offered in the weekly plan clearly

articulates an ideal jobseeker who is both thoroughly in control of their self-management, governance of their time and importantly, thoroughly ‘active’ in their approach to jobseeking. With this, the act of jobseeking is professionalised and portrayed as a form of employment in itself in that it occupies such a degree of the jobseeker’s time. This in turn has strong ethical significance for the text in that the ‘good jobseeker’ is obliged to redefine him/herself in terms of this professional, active discourse and as such, alternative, less active forms of discourse are illegitimate.

The jobseeker is also encouraged to become highly resourceful and strategic in his/her jobseeking techniques. For example, the jobseeker is told to read through various telephone directories, in order to identify the companies and organisations that operate in the local area (DfEE 1998c:11). When looking for work in local or national newspapers, the jobseeker is encouraged to carefully study news articles as well as the situations vacant, because it is argued that they often provide information regarding new firms that may be moving to the area, firms who may have recently won contracts, or firms who may be planning on expanding and as such are often a useful source of information (DfEE 1998c:9). The jobseeker is also told to read through any other newspaper advertisements, as they may offer contacts or other sources of information about a company, and that this is ‘useful when making a call to see if they have any jobs’ (DfEE 1998c:9). Significantly, this presents the value of making speculative phone calls to companies regarding employment opportunities as self evident and an essential element to the activities of a highly motivated jobseeker. Also, the Job Kit encourages the jobseeker to use the local library as a resource for finding out possible employment opportunities, claiming:

‘Your local library can be one of your most valuable sources of information. Find out what’s going on in your local area - you might uncover some job leads’ (DfEE 1998c:13).

The significance here is that it is clear the ‘good jobseeker’ must occupy him/herself with far more than simply looking at the job advertisements in either the Jobcentre or newspapers in order to fulfil the demands as set out by the Job Kit. Instead, he/she must adopt a far more extensive and thoroughly enterprising approach to jobseeking and his/her jobseeking time must include both active research into the local area and constant inquiry into new jobseeking techniques.

The Job Kit also suggests ‘word of mouth’ as a jobseeking technique and strongly encourages the jobseeker to discuss any possible employment openings with relatives or friends. Significantly, this technique is referred to in the Job Kit as ‘networking’ and is presented as a highly organised and co-ordinated activity. For example, clearly ordered, step by step instructions are provided concerning how one should organise oneself whilst ‘networking’, under clear, bold subheadings such as: ‘THINK?’; ‘PLAN’; ‘DO’ and ‘THEN’ (DfEE 1998c:13-14). With this, the jobseeker is encouraged to plan in advance how he/she will address colleagues and what information he/she will both ask for and provide, identifying exactly how the colleagues can be of assistance, precisely what kind of work the jobseeker is looking for and what skills they have (DfEE 1998c:14). The significance of referring to ‘word of mouth’ through the more professional discursive term ‘networking’, is that the act of asking friends or relatives about employment openings is reconstructed as an enterprising and professional extension of efficient jobseeking. This reconstruction is essential to the text in that it serves to minimise any stigma that may be attached to contacting old acquaintances and requesting help. Significantly, within this statement there is also a clear distinction between the dominant and subordinate subject positions in that the dominant position is very much a ‘professional’ and ‘highly organised’ jobseeker, whilst the subordinate position is an awkward and insecure jobseeker, faced with the potentially humiliating task of contacting old colleagues and asking them for work. Thus the text places into the margins the possibility that the status of ‘jobseeker’ may not be entirely ‘professional’, but may involve having to perform demeaning and undignified tasks

(Billig 1990; Derrida 1972). This importance on maintaining the ‘professionalism’ of the jobseeker is also identified in the following extract, where the jobseeker is set a number of questions regarding his/her jobseeking technique and is asked to tick a box if he/she is active in a number of techniques, such as having a CV or attending the Jobcentre. The jobseeker is then invited to ‘grade’ his or her jobseeking performance according to the number of boxes that were ticked. One of the question asks:

‘Do you read daily newspapers (local and national), trade magazines and journals for the job information and vacancies? Do you know where to find copies if you don’t want to buy them?’ (DfEE 1998c:4).

The significance here is regarding the phrase ‘don’t want to buy’. It is essential to the authority of the text at this stage that the jobseeker is articulated as professional and the statement ‘don’t want to buy’ allows this notion of professionalism to be maintained. Conversely, if the document were to suggest that the jobseeker ‘can’t *afford* to buy’ the newspapers owing to his/her unemployment status, the ‘professionalism’ of the jobseeker may have been undermined. Again, the subordinate subject position articulated within this extract is clearly linked to the ‘old’ notion of unemployment, surrounded by images of ‘dole’, ‘exclusion’, ‘poverty’, ‘social tension’, and ‘deprivation’ (Labour Party 1982c:2). However, the text marginalises this image of unemployment, replacing it with more dynamic images concerning ‘efficiency’, ‘enterprise’ and ‘professionalism’.

#### **7.4.2. A ‘Good Jobseeker’ is Highly Motivated and Flexible**

Another interesting area within text is that in order to become a ‘good jobseeker’, one has to be thoroughly determined and enthusiastic in all approaches to employment. This extends beyond willingness to adopt as many jobseeking techniques as possible and includes having unwavering enthusiasm for jobseeking

activities and being highly flexible with regards what one is prepared to do in order to secure employment.

In terms of motivation and enthusiasm, the Job Kit explains that some employers do not even reply to job applications or letters, but in spite of this, the jobseeker must not ‘become disheartened’ and must ‘keep trying’ (DfEE 1998c:8). Also, it is claimed that instead of employers offering a job, they sometimes agree to keep details on file. In the event of this, the jobseeker is told not to think of it as a ‘brush-off’, but to remember that ‘you’re a step closer to getting a job than before you started’ (DfEE 1998c:8). The jobseeker is also told that advertisements placed in the press carry more competition and that the jobseeker is not to be ‘surprised’ if they are unsuccessful or do not even receive a response. Instead, they are reminded that ‘The more jobs you apply for, the greater your chance of getting an interview’ (DfEE 1998c:10). Finally, the Job Kit concludes on the last page with: ‘remember that *someone* does fill every vacancy; so the more job vacancies you find, the more jobs you try for, the better your applications, the better your chances of that *someone* being you’ (DfEE 1998c:65). With this, the ‘good jobseeker’ is not afforded the right to become dispirited with unsuccessful jobseeking, but is required to be constantly motivated and encouraged to seek out as many jobseeking techniques as possible, and to pursue them with the same vigour and enthusiasm, regardless of how many times they are rejected.

As well as remaining enthusiastic in their jobseeking, the ‘good jobseeker’ must be highly flexible in their approach to both jobseeking *and* employment. The Job Kit offers a number of sample covering letters and application forms, which are designed to help the jobseeker ‘**write better letters**’ (DfEE 1998c:28). With this, the jobseeker is strongly encouraged to learn from and wherever possible, to replicate the contents and presentation of these samples. For example, one of the samples is prepared to work Saturdays ‘on a rota basis’, has their own transport, is available for interview ‘at any time’ and could ‘start immediately’ (DfEE 1998c:31). The next

sample is available to work ‘full-time including evenings and weekends if required’, and is available for interview ‘at your convenience’ (DfEE 1998c:32). Similarly, the sample application form is willing to work extra hours, is able to start work ‘straight away’, and has a clean driving licence and own transport (DfEE 1998c:38). This is essential to the ethical construction of the jobseeker, as the reader of the Job Kit is explicitly encouraged to use the sample application form and covering letters as a direct guide for his/her own job applications and with this, is clearly encouraged to adopt the same qualities of flexibility and adaptability with regards employment.

The jobseeker is also encouraged to increase flexibility by considering voluntary work as well as paid work, or by seeking out employment further afield and even abroad. The Job Kit claims that voluntary work can be a ‘chance to use your existing skills, gain experience, develop new interests and get training in new areas of work’, that ‘It could sometimes lead to a paid job’ and that it ‘Looks good on a CV too’ (DfEE 1998c:11). Also, the Job Kit reminds the jobseeker that Jobcentres display full-time, permanent, part-time and temporary vacancies in the local and adjoining areas and that they can also provide help when looking for jobs in other parts of the country and abroad (DfEE 1998c:9). Later in the document, the jobseeker is invited to ‘take stock’ of their jobseeking progress and think about whether they are ‘*really* keeping [their] options open’ regarding what work they have been prepared to look for (DfEE 1998c:58). The jobseeker is then invited to think about whether they could ‘move away and look for work in another area (or abroad)’; consider ‘voluntary work’; or consider looking for ‘one, maybe two, part-time jobs’ (DfEE 1998c:58). The Job Kit concludes by devoting two sections to discussing the advantages of ‘working abroad’ and ‘voluntary work’ (DfEE 1998c:62-63).

This emphasis on flexibility and the breaking down of geographic restrictions to work is also identified in new ‘high tech’ alterations made to some Jobcentres. On January 2001, Employment Minister Tessa Jowell announced the introduction of ‘electronic touch-screen terminals’ (called ‘Job Points’) into one thousand



Jobcentres, providing access to every Jobcentre in the country and around three thousand jobs (Jowell 2001). It was argued by Jowell that the 'Job Points' will 'be a tremendous help for people looking for work. The traditional display boards can only show a limited number of local vacancies, whereas the Jobpoints have access to our national job bank of around 300,000 jobs and opportunities, which are updated instantly and include third party, European and international vacancies' (Jowell 2001). With this, there is the invitation for jobseekers to be more flexible in terms of where they look for work, and not to focus on a small geographic areas.

#### **7.4.3. The 'Good Jobseeker' is Reserved**

Throughout the document, the 'good jobseeker' is identified as enterprising, professional, highly motivated and resourceful, however in contrast to this, he/she is also encouraged to be reserved and have relatively modest needs. With this, the only distinctive need of the jobseeker is the need to find employment as quickly as possible and the sense of urgency that surrounds this is seen to far outweigh any concern the jobseeker may or may not have regarding the type of work, quality of work, or level of pay. This articulation of the 'good jobseeker' is clearly represented towards the end of the document, where the jobseeker is advised on how to behave at an interview. The document informs the jobseeker that at the end of the interview, it is normal procedure for the interviewee to be asked if they have any questions they would like to ask the interviewer. With this, the jobseeker is provided with a list of suitable questions they may like to use, such as; 'Who would I report to?', 'What will my first job be?', 'What training will I have, if any?' and 'Does the company carry out job reviews?' (DfEE 1998c:46). Interestingly, these questions are not seen to represent a genuine concern on the part of the jobseeker as to the suitability of the employer, but instead are simply in place in order to enhance the jobseeker's interview performance by demonstrating to the interviewer that they are enthusiastic about the job on offer. For example, the Job Kit states that the jobseeker should ask questions simply because: 'Asking questions, but not too many, can show you are interested' (DfEE 1998c:46). With this, there is a complete absence of any guidance for the jobseeker, and the notion that he/she might want to use the interview in order

to ascertain the suitability of the employer is thoroughly neglected. Moreover, one can assume the questions asked concerning job reviews and training are in place primarily as a tool through which the jobseeker can convince the interviewer they are enthusiastic and ambitious, and not for the jobseeker to use in order to ascertain whether the employment position is appropriate to his/her particular needs. This is highly significant to the ethics of the jobseeker as the luxury of being able to choose which jobs may or may not be suitable is clearly a privilege only afforded to those already in employment.

It has been argued that paid work does not guarantee social inclusion, and that it is possible for a 'good jobseeker' to be considered socially included. This is because the 'good jobseeker', by definition, should have adopted the ethic of enterprise, marketability and flexibility, and embraced the moral agenda concerning communitarianism, neighbourliness and family responsibility. However, despite being socially included, it is clear that the 'good jobseeker' is by no means entitled to the same rights and privileges afforded to his working counterparts. Interestingly, despite the strong emphasis within the discourse of unemployment on the exchange of rights and responsibilities, in reality, those rights do not appear to extend past the right to 'access' employment and certainly do not include the right to reject it.

This theme is identified elsewhere in the document as it becomes clear that the only legitimate objective for the jobseeker is to become engaged in work, be it paid work, voluntary work, or part time work and with this, any technical or logistical issues concerning the nature or quality of work are thoroughly marginalised. For example, throughout the document, there is great detail and advice offered concerning how the jobseeker should identify their basic skills, how they can efficiently manage their jobseeking time, how they should construct a CV or a covering letter and how they should perform at an interview. However, distinctly absent from the Job Kit is any advice concerning how the jobseeker should identify those jobs that they may be suitable for, or how they should isolate those jobs they may prefer. Emphasis is

constantly directed at adaptability and how the jobseeker can adapt their skills to fit the job. The Job Kit states: ‘How can you best fit your skills to match the job’ (DfEE 1998c:40); ‘Be positive and emphasise why you are perfect for the job’ (DfEE 1998c:29) and ‘Don’t always rely on the job title being correct. Check the details. You may be able to do the sort of work required’ (DfEE 1998c:9). Thus the emphasis is very much placed on ensuring the jobseeker is fully flexible and capable of adapting any skills they may have to fitting the requirements of a variety of employment positions rather than carefully and painstakingly selecting a smaller number of perhaps more suitable positions<sup>1</sup>.

This emphasis on the centrality of employment is clearly represented in the following quotation. In the section concerning appropriate interview techniques, the Job Kit suggests a number of questions the jobseeker may be asked at the interview, and a number of possible answers the jobseeker may want to give. In response to the question: ‘Why have you had so many jobs?’, it is suggested the jobseeker simply emphasise how they: ‘would rather be in work than out of work’ (DfEE 1998c:42). This is essential to the text as it clearly articulates a jobseeker who’s primary need is to simply be ‘employed’ and thoroughly places into the margins many issues concerning the nature and quality of work preferred and moreover, the luxury of the jobseeker being able to carefully select the sort of employment they would like to be engaged in.

Similarly, the Job Kit provides advice for those jobseekers who are applying for jobs they are overqualified for. The jobseeker is advised that if they are questioned at

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<sup>1</sup> There is one instance in the document where the jobseeker is told that whilst ‘networking’, they should be able to explain ‘What kind of work [they] are looking for’ (DfEE 1998c:14). The significance of ‘networking’ (as explained in 7.4.1.) is clearly linked to the portrayal of the jobseeker as being ‘professional’ and ‘highly organised’ and with this, it is considered that encouraging the jobseeker to identify the ‘kind of’ work they are looking for is primarily in order to enhance the organisation and efficiency of jobseeking and consequently does not undermine the argument that for the purposes of the Job Kit, the ‘kind of work’ is secondary to the importance of actually ‘working’.

interview level about being overqualified, they can respond by emphasising that they are either a) 'looking for something fresh/new/different' or b) that they 'can take as well as give instructions' (DfEE 1998c:44). The significance being that this suggested question is simply one out of twenty and the fact that the jobseeker may apply for jobs he/she is overqualified for is not emphasised in the text as being of any particular significance. With this, it is portrayed as being little more than an acceptable and even expected element of every jobseeker's duty. Also significant is the position of this question in the text. The questions that immediately preceded this one have involved a neat juxtaposition of opposing endings. For example, the possible question immediately preceding this was: 'Aren't you a) too young, or b) too old?' and preceding that, the Job Kit asks: 'Why have you had a) so many jobs, or b) only one job?' (DfEE 1998c:43). This is interesting in that the question 'Aren't you over qualified?' is quite distinct by the absence of 'Aren't you *under* qualified?'. This again, adds weight to the argument that the objectives of the 'good jobseeker' cannot and should not extend beyond the need to find employment as quickly as possible, which invariably involves the lowering of demands and expectations on the part of the jobseeker in question.

There are also a number of instances of authoritative discourse as the jobseeker is told precisely how to conduct him/herself at the interview. At the interview, the jobseeker is told 'DO NOT sit until invited'; 'Fidget and slouch in the chair'; 'Smoke'; 'Swear (even mildly)'; 'Criticise former employers'; 'Interrupt'; 'Draw attention to your weaknesses'; or 'Go over the top - stay calm and stick to the facts' (DfEE 1998c:50). Also, if the jobseeker is asked when they are available to start work, they are instructed to simply answer: 'As soon as possible!' and clearly told: 'Do not put any barriers in the way' (DfEE 1998c:46). The significance lies in the use of the phrase 'Do not' as it is quite distinct from the more colloquial discursive style that has been used so far in the text. For example, throughout the document, the word 'don't' has been used twenty four times compared to the words 'Do not', which have been used only twice. This commanding tone strongly emphasises the fact that the jobseeker is almost completely defined by his/her responsibility to find

work as soon as possible and must not conduct themselves in a way that may even slightly jeopardise that responsibility.

### 7.5. Discussion

One of the primary areas of interest with the Job Kit is that it does not appear to be directed at *all* jobseekers, but at the ‘hard to reach’ jobseeker. Similar to highly targeted policy directives such as the Employment Zones, Education Action Zones, New Start, Sure Start and Health Action Zones, the Job Kit targets a very specific sort of jobseeker, in that it is predominantly targeted at the ‘deviant’ jobseeker, the ‘inactive’ jobseeker, the ‘hostile’ jobseeker, or the jobseeker in need of ‘character improvement’ (Blair 1996b). Regardless of how realistic it is to expect this jobseeker to secure meaningful paid employment, he/she is still compelled to adopt the same market ethic of enterprise, employability, flexibility and professionalism as well as being ‘competent’ (DfEE 1998c:20,23,42); ‘adaptable’ (20,23,42,44); ‘hardworking’, ‘conscientious’ and ‘reliable’ (20,23,24,42); and a good communicator (23,24,31,44). In terms of responsibility, the jobseeker is issued the sole responsibility for his/her jobseeking success and the only legitimate explanation for a failure to secure employment is the jobseeker’s employability. With this, there is an absence of any guidance concerning the sorts of jobs the jobseeker should apply for, and any reference or acknowledgement of other factors that may contribute to a jobseeker’s lack of success.

Significantly, these heavy demands placed on jobseekers to become ‘active jobseekers’ are not necessarily applied as standard, and single parents for example have far greater pressure placed on them than mothers in two parent households (Percy-Smith 2000:19; Levitas 1998:146). The interesting point here is that although the ‘good jobseeker’ is expected to adopt the same market ethic and abide by the same moral and ethical codes regardless of educational or economic status, he or she is not necessarily entitled to the same rights. Thus although within the unemployment discourse, the emphasis is very much on rights and responsibilities, a

‘deviant’ jobseeker is not entitled to the same rights as a ‘good jobseeker’ or someone currently employed. For example, unlike the target reader of the Job Hunting document, the jobseeker articulated within the Job Kit is not afforded the right to refuse a job offer, be selective in the jobs applied for, refuse to consider voluntary or part time work, be concerned about salary, and at interview level, is expected to sit only when asked, not smoke, not swear, not fidget and not criticise former employers. Thus the jobseeker targeted in the Job Kit is a potentially deviant jobseeker and consequently in need of far more extensive surveillance.

This leads into the debate concerning the qualities required for social inclusion and the ‘evolving’ nature of citizenship, whereby ‘A key aspect of the duty of a citizen is to take the responsibility to provide for themselves where they can, to avoid state dependency and be in paid employment if at all possible’ (Dwyer 1988; Heron and Dwyer 1999, cited in Burden and Hamm 2000). However, it is argued here that New Labour unemployment policies, to a large extent subordinate ‘economic’ inclusion and instead emphasise ‘active inclusion’, or ‘ethical inclusion’. With this, social inclusion is dependant on one being enterprising in one’s *approach* to jobseeking, as well as being highly motivated, highly organised, professional and adaptable, without necessarily being *successful* in securing employment.

## Chapter Eight

### Role of Resistance

#### 8.1.1. Outline

The key focus throughout this thesis has been to discuss the various ways in which the unemployed are constituted as objects of knowledge and active subjects of the discourse. This is taken directly from Foucault's work which focused on the ways in which individuals were 'scientifically categorised' and made thinkable and describable (Foucault 1977; 1979; May 1996; Silverman 1985). However, this prescriptive articulation of the unemployed does not only occur within the dominant, official governmental discourse, but also through discourses of resistance. With this, it is argued that discourses of resistance play an equally significant role in prescribing the conduct of the jobseeker. Whilst the dominant discourse of unemployment invites the jobseeker to relate and aspire to the 'good jobseeker', the discourses of resistance invite the jobseeker to relate and aspire to the 'hostile jobseeker'. Although operating in contrast to the 'good jobseeker' identified in the official discourse, this 'hostile jobseeker' is articulated using the same discursive techniques, such as the implied reader, dominant reader subject positions, and 'reverse discourse' (Iser 1974; Kingfisher 1996; Scott 1990).

It can be argued that the unemployed still hold a relatively denigrated position in society and within official government discourse they are associated with the 'permanent have-not class, unemployed and disaffected from our society' (Labour 1997e:18). Throughout the discourse, the character of the unemployed is often constructed in opposition to that of the *employed*, and the status of the long term unemployed in particular is frequently used to mark the distinction between the socially *included* and the socially *excluded*. As such, the unemployed are often portrayed as a group of individuals not in full control of their status. Goffman argues that when individuals hold a denigrated position (or 'spoiled identity') they respond by aligning with groups of similar identities and that this alignment enables the construction of an alternative system whereby the 'otherwise stigmatised self has legitimacy' (Goffman 1963; Kingfisher 1996:534). Kingfisher notes how welfare

rights groups provide welfare recipients the ‘opportunity to work on their own identities and to counteract negative stereotypes that blame recipients for their own poverty by replacing them with theories that blame the system instead’ (ibid). As such, resistance groups depend on the rejection of the deserving/undeserving poor distinctions and on looking to structuralist rather than individualist explanations for welfare benefit, in that they blame high unemployment levels either on the lack of decent employment opportunities or the existence of the capitalist economy.

### **8.1.2. Selection of Resistance Discourses**

The main body of this thesis has analysed dominant governmental discourses relating to the jobseeker. These have been understood as an extended ethical authority discourse which articulates an ideal ‘jobseeker’ reader-subject position. For methodological clarity, this has been addressed as if the relation of influence goes in one direction only (that is: the textual authority discourse creates certain possibilities of being in relation to itself, which the ideal real subject then adopts). Clearly, empirically one would expect to find resistance to such a mechanism, which also warrant consideration. However, it is important to point out that it has never been the intention of this chapter to provide a comprehensive analysis of *all* the discourses of resistance available to jobseekers. Instead, this chapter is concerned with identifying the more dominant resistance discourses that are readily accessible to individuals and providing an analysis of their specific articulated subject positions. For clarification, the discourses chosen for analysis have been confined to the larger UK based groups such as: ‘Urban 75’; the ‘Nottingham Campaign Against Jobseekers Allowance’; ‘The Revolutionary Communist Group’ and a site established by ‘Dr Doom’. There are a number of reasons for choosing to only analyse four discourses of resistance.

Firstly, there are a number of discourses which articulate some degree of hostility to the dominant discourse of the ‘jobseeker’. However, this chapter is concerned with analysing specific ‘*resistance discourses*’ and *not* simply documents that provide



some information (however hostile) concerning unemployment policy. It is important to distinguish between those discourses of resistance which directly engage with the prescriptions for unemployment related conduct found in the dominant discourse, and those in which resistance to dominant ideas about unemployment are simply an aspect of a *wider* political concern with government under capitalism. Empirically, there are far more of the latter than the former (many of these discourses focus far more on political issues such as the retention of Clause IV (Citizen); Trade Union issues (Freedom Press); or employment rights (Socialist Worker) and as such devote very limited time to specific discussions of the ethical consequences of the Jobseekers Allowance and New Deal). For the purposes of this research, the problem with offering an analysis of *these* discourses is that they do not actually engage specifically with the ethical mechanism analysed throughout this thesis. Instead, although the texts are in some way resistant to the dominant ethical prescriptions, they are not in direct confrontation with them, they do *not* offer significant, alternative, corrective ethical codes of conduct with regards the 'jobseeker'. For example, the Nottingham Campaign Against Jobseekers Allowance and Urban 75 were selected because they offer very prescriptive codes of conduct for the jobseeker, they are targeted *directly* at the jobseeker and offer specific advice and guidance concerning how they should manage their own conduct. Consequently, it is argued that providing an analysis of these less directional, less ethically prescriptive discourses would be contrary to the very theoretical and methodological basis for this thesis.

This leads to the second difficulty with attempting to provide a more thorough analysis of resistance to the JSA. As already mentioned, there are very few actual 'resistance discourses' in operation (following the definition explained above). As such, it automatically follows that there are obvious limitations to the number of 'resistance discourses' that can actually be analysed. It is essential to the empirical basis behind this thesis that the few discourses selected for analysis are seen to be a clear reflection of the more dominant resistance discourses in order to provide as representative analysis as possible. In other words, if this thesis were to include an

analysis of a much wider number of resistance discourses, it would, inevitably be forced to include an analysis of subsidiary discourses and risk portraying a less than representative picture of the substantive resistance to the JSA and New Deal.

Thirdly, it is argued that a discussion of a larger number of discourses would greatly restrict the amount of detail the analysis would be able to provide. This would run entirely contrary to the discourse analytic methodological basis for this research which is clearly concerned with identifying the specific techniques and textual manoeuvres employed within the text in order to identify the possible relation between text and reader (see sections 3.1, 5.1, 5.4.). Although the first section of Chapter Five did adopt a far less detailed discourse analysis, this was *only* to identify the primary themes in order to facilitate the more thorough, textually located discourse analysis in the second section. It is argued that the inclusion of a more generalised analysis, without the support of a rigorous textually located discourse analysis, would be lacking in clarification and scientific empiricism. Thus it is argued that this form of textually located discourse analysis is essential to the empiricism of this study in that it is precisely through the identification of the various rhetorical manoeuvres that one is able to identify the possible ‘effects’ of the text over the reader.

Fourthly, it is argued that an analysis of more resistance discourses would, in any way be largely redundant and repetitive. Extensive research into the resistance discourses has shown that most of the more dominant UK based discourses are too closely linked to warrant individual analysis. For example, ‘Brighton Against Benefit Cuts’ publishes a newsletter called ‘Where’s My Giro?’. This newsletter is regularly cited in the Revolutionary Communist Group (analysed in this chapter). Significantly, ‘Brighton Against Benefit Cuts’ have their postal base in Merton, which is exactly the same as the ‘Merton Claimants Action Group’. Both ‘Merton Claimant’s Action Group’ and ‘Brighton Against Benefit Cuts’ also make frequent references to ‘Groundswell’ and use the ‘Jobseeker’s Allowance Survival Guide’

(published by Urban 75 and selected for analysis in this chapter) as a main source of reference. Similarly, in order to be placed on Groundswell's mailing list, jobseekers are told to write to the 'Nottingham Claimants Action', who publish 'Up Your Giro!', which is the newsletter *also* published by the Nottingham Campaign Against Jobseekers Allowance (also analysed in this chapter).

### **8.1.3. Overview of Resistance Groups**

There are a number of groups and organisations aimed specifically at resisting the compulsory elements of the JSA and New Deal. These organisations are intended to be readily accessible to claimants and offer a wide range of services, from practical advice on how to cope with the unemployment system, to more general moves towards claimant solidarity. For the purposes of this research and for the reasons explained above, analysis of these organisations has been confined to the larger UK based groups such as: 'Urban 75'; the 'Nottingham Campaign Against Jobseekers Allowance' (NCAJSA); 'The Revolutionary Communist Group' (RCG) and also a website established by 'Dr Doom'. Access has been obtained largely through the Internet as each of these groups have Websites as well as extensive publications accessible thorough the Internet.

There are strong links between these resistance organisations, and they frequently refer to each other by name and provide extensive links to each other's sites and publications. Also, with the exception of 'Dr Doom', the first three organisations appear to emerge from a very similar political position that involves not only demonstrating resistance to the practical implications of the unemployment regime, but being explicitly hostile towards the current government and the economic system. These three groups operate from within the same 'ideological-discursive formation', or 'speech community', sharing not only a very similar style of language, presentation and targeting similar readers, but also sharing certain ideological and discursive norms (Fairclough 1995:27). Also, all three groups

articulate a ‘hostile jobseeker’ and both Urban 75 and the NCAJSA openly target the unemployed, working class male.

#### **8.1.4. Access**

Given that large groups of individuals remain excluded from Internet access, it is problematic to use this media as the primary source of information. However the decision to use the Internet as the primary data source is defended for a number of reasons. Firstly, the information gathered from the Websites is by no means exclusive to the Internet, and most of the analysis was conducted on downloaded pamphlets and newsletters, both of which are also readily accessible to readers in paper format. Thirdly, for the purposes of this research, Internet access was by far the most efficient way to gather data.

Secondly in addition to Internet access, information was also obtained through a short unstructured interview with the producer of the ‘Dr Doom’ Internet site. This change in methodology is justified for two reasons. Firstly, it is argued that there was vital information gathered from the interview that would not otherwise have been accessible. For example, Dr Doom had been active in many Left Wing political activities in the UK, more recently, with specific reference to JSA and New Deal resistance. It is believed that an interview of this kind provided valuable (and otherwise completely inaccessible) information concerning the nature and the impact of resistance activities. Secondly, although the resistance discourses were analysed using from the same theoretical and methodological perspective as the dominant governmental discourses, it can not be forgotten that these discourses hold very different properties to the dominant discourse and as such, should be treated with more caution. For example, as was discussed in section 5.1.3., with any analysis of this kind, there is the question concerning how much influence the various texts subject to analysis can be said to have over the reader and the general population. This is a much easier question to answer when considered in relation to the dominant discourse and Phillips argued that the rhetoric used within a given genre is invariably

taken up by the mass media and the public, which results in the discourse of the genre penetrating into the language usage of individuals (Phillips 1996:209). However, Phillips was arguing in relation to more dominant discourses, which she referred to as the 'macro-processes of social and cultural change'. The resistance discourses operate on a far less secure and familiar ground in that they are obviously read by a far smaller audience and receive considerably less attention from the media, the government or lay individuals. Consequently, it is argued that in order to justify conducting research of this kind, where there was previously very little concrete knowledge concerning the persuasiveness of these discourses, it was considered useful to find some alternative method for gathering (even if simply anecdotal) information concerning the nature and effectiveness of JSA resistance in the UK.

#### **8.1.5. Foucaultian Theories of Resistance and Power**

As discussed in the methodology, Foucault's conception of discourse is that it is productive, it produces the object about which it speaks (3.3. - 3.6.). As such, power, as operating within the discourse, is not invariably negative or coercive, but is productive in that it produces substance and meaning (Mizen 1998:36). However, there are a number of theories criticising Foucault's conception of power and in particular, resistance, which need to be addressed. Mizen in particular has expressed criticisms of post-structuralist accounts of resistance to the new disciplinary elements of welfare provision and accuses post-structuralism of an 'idealist methodology' that fails to take account of the inertia, resistance and opposition to the 'welfare's coercive thrust' (Mizen 1998:37). Mizen has two specific criticisms of post-structuralist theories of power that this section will take issue with. Firstly, Mizen claims that post-structuralist accounts assume the unemployed are invariably passive, docile and submissive objects (Mizen 1998:37). Working from this assumption, he then argues that these theories seriously underestimate individual resistance and hostility to the unemployment discourse. These accusations will be addressed in turn.

Firstly, although Mizen makes what is arguably a reasonable criticism of some of Foucault's earlier work on disciplinary techniques, it nonetheless fails to take proper account of the entire analysis provided in Foucault's work on ethics (Foucault 1988). Here, it was argued that the central element to this method of power and surveillance is that individuals are *active* in their own self-management and governance, and specifically *not* docile or submissive. The central component to this theory of power is that following the methods of surveillance, individuals now begin to adopt the discourse, and use it to inform their own technology of self. With this, they are not passive objects, but active '*subjects*' of the discourse. Moreover, it is argued that once one has made oneself an active subject of the discourse one can choose to do so without the use of the expert/professional, in that one can adopt or reject certain elements of the discourse and administer one's own governance without the aid of an external authority. This area is also taken up by Rose who argues that individuals are not simply docile objects of knowledge, but active agents in their own governance and as such, active '*subjects*' of the discourse (Rose 1989). The argument here is that Mizen has misunderstood one of the most central components of Foucault's later work.

The second complaint is that post-structuralism does not account for resistance. In support of this accusation, Mizen gives the example of the 'Restart Interview', which, according to official discourse, is designed to rebuild the confidence of the jobseeker and offer training and advice on jobseeking skills. However, Mizen claims that in contrast to this, it has been 'dogged by indifference, suspicion, and defiance', whereby the unemployed simply participate in order to protect their benefit entitlement and as such, have not internalised the discourse and rhetoric of 'employability' (Mizen 1998:44). He argues that this refusal to internalise the rhetorical claims and official discourse of unemployment constitutes a wide scale level of resistance left uncovered by post-structuralist theory and that:

‘Given that ‘the over-riding influence of Foucault’s work is on the ways in which individuals are classified, excluded, objectified, individualised, disciplined and normalised’ (Best and Kellner 1991:55), it comes as little surprise that this libertarian impulse - the processes of disobedience, opposition and struggle to escape these new forms of control - is either ignored or excluded by the post-structuralists’ (Mizen 1998:48).

Again, it is argued that this criticism does not stand up to scrutiny. Instead, Foucault outlined a clear conception of resistance, arguing: ‘where there is power, there is resistance’ (Foucault 1977:95). In his work on the *Genealogy*, Foucault described power in terms of its relationship to discourse, and his conception of power is that it is productive as much as it is negative or oppressive. Power is something that is exercised rather than possessed and is not exclusively negative ‘...but produces pleasure and meaning as well as more coercive dimensions’ (Barrett 1991:135). Foucault was interested in specific discourses, such as medicine or psychiatry and as such, a ‘discourse’ is seen as a type of genre that depicts whole events, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours and is responsible for how people think, live and speak (Parker 1992). In other words, discourses may limit what can be said, but they also simultaneously provide the ‘spaces - the concepts, metaphors, analogies for making new statements within any specific discourse’ (Henriques et al.1984:105). This understanding of discourse applies not only to the dominant discourse, such as the official discourse of unemployment, but also the subordinate discourses, such as the discourse of resistance identified in this chapter. With this, both these discourses articulate certain subject positions and inform certain identities and ways of thinking and being and although the discourse of resistance operates in opposition to the dominant discourse, it carries the same restrictive and enabling properties. Thus the post-structuralist argument is not that individuals simply cannot resist the dominant discourses, but that the subordinate discourses of resistance also hold significant restrictive and enabling properties.

To reiterate the points made in the earlier chapters, concern here has been with identifying the various ways in which jobseekers are made into subjects (Dean 1995:560; Foucault 1988; Gordon 1991; Rose 1993). In keeping with Foucaultian theories of power, it is argued that the discourse of resistance objectifies and categorises jobseekers to the same extent as the dominant discourse of unemployment. With this, the resistance discourse presents certain possibilities of being through the articulation of dominant and subordinate subject positions and the presentation of the ‘hostile jobseeker’. Within the texts chosen for analysis, this ‘hostile jobseeker’ is grouped into two broad categories; the ‘industrious jobseeker’, and the ‘recalcitrant jobseeker’. The ‘industrious jobseeker’ was primarily identified in Urban 75 but also to some extent from the site produced by Dr Doom. This jobseeker resists attempts to *coerce* him into poorly paid work and demands the right to decent employment opportunities. He fully subscribes to the work ethic and rates manual labour significantly higher than mental labour. The ‘recalcitrant jobseeker’ was identified in the NCAJSA and the RCG, it offers a more direct mode of resistance in that he is anti-capitalist and resists the idea that within a capitalist society, work can itself be meaningful. This mode of resistance is less directional, resisting the JSA and New Deal at an ideological level. These two modes of resistance will be discussed in turn.

## **8.2. Analysis of Resistance Groups**

### **8.2.1. Urban 75**

Urban 75 is a non-profit organisation offering a wide range of advice and information for its readers. Together with information on JSA and New Deal resistance, its Website is highly political, and provides advice on legal rights regarding drugs and arrest; coverage of leading activist events such as the Anti-Capitalist riots; a list of the top five companies that should be boycotted (including such companies as Proctor and Gamble; Shell and Nike) and a simulation game called ‘punch’, where the reader is invited to vent his/her frustration by punching a politician. The language used in the site is often highly confrontational, employing a very colloquial and ‘slang’ style, with a high use of obscenities and abusive terms.



The document encourages a certain mode of resistance to the JSA and appears to target a certain sort of individual, identified in broad terms as the ‘industrious jobseeker’. The ‘industrious jobseeker’ celebrates manual labour over mental labour, is male, is relatively unskilled and probably has basic formal education. Although adhering to notions of the work ethic, this jobseeker offers resistance primarily to attempts by the dominant discourse to coerce him into unrewarding, poorly paid work and demands the right to stay in control of his own jobseeking.

It is argued that the site encourages an emotional response in that the reader is invited not simply to resist the governmental discourse, but to demonstrate an antagonistic approach towards it and consider it with disdain and contempt. Analysis of Urban 75 is primarily focused on a twenty five page document called the ‘Jobseekers Allowance Survival Guide’, this includes specific advice on such things as: ‘the questions they ask’; ‘penalties’; ‘active signing’; ‘refusing a job’; and ‘what if I’m forced into work?’ (Urban 75 2000). The document provides a wide range of practical and also controversial advice concerning how the jobseeker can cope with unemployment and manage benefit advisors. This advice includes explaining to jobseekers how to satisfy the ‘actively seeking work’ requirement with the least amount of effort; precisely what information to put in the application form in order to qualify for benefit; what information to withhold in order to limit the likelihood of being sent onto a training course; and how to ‘subtly’ fail at a job interview (Urban 75 2000).

### **8.2.2. The ‘Hostile Jobseeker’**

There is every indication that the ‘Jobseekers Allowance Survival Guide’ is directed at those individuals who have ‘suffered’ first hand experience of unemployment and are dissatisfied with the services provided them by the Employment Service. The style of language employed throughout the document is very simplistic and colloquial, indicating that it may be directed at an individual with limited formal education and the examples given of likely employment opportunities are of manual,

unskilled/semi-skilled work (see 8.2.3.). Also, students, women, and semi-professionals and professionals are excluded from the discourse (students are told to refer to a different document for help and advice and the document refers specifically to men). (see section 8.2.3.).

Within any text there is the articulation of an ‘implied reader’; a textual reader subject position with whom the actual reader is invited to identify and in the Jobseekers Allowance Survival Guide, this dominant reader subject position is described as the ‘hostile jobseeker’, but more specifically, the ‘industrious jobseeker’. For example, the use of confrontational language, directed at all governmental officials, articulates the implied reader as being hostile not only towards the JSA, but towards authority and the existing government (whoever they may be). Thus, the text articulates a clear dominant reader subject position based not simply on frustration, but also aggression. It is argued that this confrontational style has exclusionary effects over its readership in that it minimises the possibility that a reader can engage with the text on a practical or information gathering level alone, as it elicits a strong ‘emotional’ response that excludes those readers who might demonstrate a more passive, conformist approach to the governmental discourse. For example, the text articulates a reader who refuses to work within the confines of the JSA, considers the options available via the JSA to be entirely devoid of worth, and refuses to consider using the facilities offered for his/her advantage. By implication, a jobseeker/reader who is prepared and willing to accept some of the assistance on offer and is keen to take some of the jobs available through the Jobcentre is a jobseeker operating in complete contrast to that articulated in this document.

This high level of hostility is explicit throughout the text. For example, the document describes the ‘basis’ behind ‘work trials’ and ‘Re-motivation Programmes’. It states that Work Trials ‘...allow employers to try you out for 3 weeks while you stay on the dole and there’s no guarantee of a job at the end of it. *People end up working in kitchens for scumbag employers who have no intention of ever taking on properly*

*paid staff* and Re-motivation Programmes ‘...are like voluntary schemes in terms of content and are used to break down people’s resistance to accepting low paid and crap work’ (Urban 75 2000). (emphasis in original). The use of the term ‘dole’ is significant here in that it signifies a return to the ‘old’ style of language used to refer to benefit and social security. Not only does this indicate a resistance of the new discourse and its various connotations surrounding the JSA, but it also links back to the unemployment discourse of the 1980s and the ‘old labour’ discourse, with phrases such as ‘dole’, ‘on the social’ and ‘giro’. Significantly, by referring to the new discourse of unemployment with the ‘old’ term; ‘dole’, it undermines attempts made by the official New Labour discourse to repackage the discourse of unemployment into a more attractive programme. For example, one of the main areas of interest with New Labour’s discourse of unemployment is the way in which it has become ‘repackaged’, which clearly includes the shift from phrases such as ‘on the dole’, ‘social’ and ‘giro’; to the more ‘active’ phrasing such as ‘continuous learning’; ‘enterprising’ and ‘jobseeking’. This extract has the effect of completely dismissing this new discourse.

The Guide also encourages a high level of secrecy and deceit, advising jobseekers to withhold information in order to have a ‘hassle free’ existence. For example, the jobseeker is advised that if they have a CV, ‘*make sure there’s nothing on it they shouldn’t know about*. If necessary do a new one just for them and keep the real one to send for jobs you actually want’ (Urban 75 2000). The document also mentions that ‘You are supposed to give advanced warning if you are going away from home, even if this is only for a day’, but that ‘Obviously there’s no need for them to know unless you’re away on your signing day’. As well as this being a deliberate defiance of Employment Service rules it also dismisses the rules as petty. Also, the readers are told when the Employment Agency ask them what they will do to look for work, they should only agree to those things the Employment Service cannot check up on, such as attending the Jobcentre. By suggesting this, there is the implication that the reader should not feel compelled to abide by the Jobseekers Agreement. Although it does not necessarily follow that the jobseeker should not look for work if he/she so

desires, it *does* eliminate the possibility that the jobseeker should conform to any of the demands laid out by the Employment Service.

Similarly, when asked if there is any other help or training the jobseeker would like, the reader is advised to ‘Ask for help or training you really need to get a job, which they can’t provide...’ Again, this demonstrates resistance towards steps taken by the Employment Service to move jobseekers into work. The document also offers suggestions for how the jobseeker can deliberately spoil their chances of getting a job, without being found out by the Employment Service. Things to avoid are ‘Deliberately writing a crap application’; ‘Making unreasonable conditions for accepting as job’; ‘Creating an unfavourable impression at interview by being deliberately aggressive, obstructive, apathetic or drunk’; or ‘Refusing to give references’. It goes on to state that: ‘*Remember- they have to prove that you spoil your chances. So be subtle*’ (Urban 75:2000). (emphasis in original). The Jobseekers Allowance Survival guide is significant in that not only does it articulate a hostile reader subject position, but by implication, it inverts the ‘good jobseeker’ and excludes the more ‘co-operative’ jobseeker seeking help and advice (cf. Iser 1974:34; Stenson 1993). With this, the ‘good jobseeker’ is actively excluded from engaging with the text (Billig 1990).

### **8.2.3. The ‘Shopfloor Culture’**

The ‘Jobseekers Allowance Survival Guide’ operates strongly from within the ‘shopfloor culture’ in that it whilst resisting the efforts made by the Employment Service to move jobseekers into work, it still appreciates the need for paid employment, and rates blue collar, manual, ‘real work’ significantly higher than white collar work. It is argued that one of the central features of the ‘shopfloor culture’ is that it seeks ‘enjoyment in activity’ whereby membership is conditional on individuals imposing their own sense of meaning onto their work and being fully in control of their work and time. This culture also celebrates manual work over managerial work and incorporates a strong sense of masculinity, chauvinism and

toughness, all of which serve to exclude the female reader (Willis 1977; Campell 1993; Levitas 1998:157).

Throughout the document there is every indication that is directed specifically at 'men' and the sorts of possible jobs referred to in the document are exclusively 'male' jobs, such as 'bricklayer'; 'building labourer'; 'plumber'. Similarly, a predominantly male readership is implied by the suggested jobseeking methods, such as 'ask around sites', or read 'trade papers' and the assistance sought by jobseekers such as 'tools'; 'driving lessons'; 'PSV', 'HGV'. Also, the guide offers advice concerning who can qualify for hardship payments, stating that 'you can only get a hardship payment or access to Social Fund / Crisis loans if you are in a vulnerable group (got kids, caring responsibility or *your partner is pregnant, sick or disabled*)' (emphasis added). This reinforces the notion that the JSA and New Deal is specifically targeted at the young working class male. Ironically, although women tend to lose benefit entitlement before men (as they are more likely to have partners working full time) it is argued that the compulsory elements of the JSA focus most heavily on the unskilled male (Murray 1995:14; Novak 1997:108). Within the document there is also the significant absence of any detailed advice or discussion concerning the problems that are more likely to be faced by women, such as how single parents can cope with the problem of raising a family whilst working, or problems concerning child care. It is also argued that women are excluded through the open celebration of manual labour, together with the hostile content and aggressive tone identified within the document. Within this 'shop floor culture' manual labour is rated more highly than mental labour, as manual labour is associated with '...the social superiority of masculinity' and mental labour with the '...social inferiority of femininity' (Willis 1977:148). It is argued that this attitude towards manual and physically demanding work is heavily associated with working class culture and involves a 'primitive confrontation with exacting physical tasks' (Willis 1977:53). Thus, by implication, by emphasising the superiority of manual labour, the document is undermining the role of 'mental' labour, and excluding those groups closely associated with it, such as women, professionals and governmental

officials. For example, the document provides a list of likely questions the jobseeker will be asked at their initial interview. In response to the question ‘Do you have a written summary of your skills and abilities?’ the document states:

‘Because they’re all white collar workers they think everyone should have a CV. Most manual workers don’t have and don’t need a CV’ (Urban 75 2000).

Within the text there is a strong invitation for the reader to associate with the ‘manual worker’. Moreover, the invocation of community and the derogatory tone implicit in the phrase ‘because they’re all white collar workers’, articulates a hostile ‘them’ and ‘us’ relationship between benefit officers and claimants and by association, presents the white collar worker (‘them’) as being distinct from the manual worker (‘us’) (Woolgar 1988:75). This is illustrated throughout the document, where the Benefit Workers are consistently referred to in these ‘them’ and ‘us’ terms. For example, the document refers to the benefit workers as ‘Adjudication Officers’ four times; ‘Employment Service’ three times; ‘Client Advisors’ three times; ‘Benefit Advisors’ once; and ‘them’ eight times; ‘they’ forty three times and ‘the bastards’ once.

#### **8.2.4. ‘Reverse Discourse’**

Another area of interest is the use of ‘reverse discourse’, a discourse that ‘draws on the very vocabulary or categories of dominant discourses in order to make a case for oppressed groups’ (Kingfisher 1996:541). For example, whilst resisting steps taken by the dominant discourse to move jobseekers into work, the text operates from within the ‘shopfloor culture’ and accepts that individuals should *in theory* be in paid employment. Thus to some extent, this ‘resistance’ draws from and actually supports some of the fundamental aspects of the dominant discourse (Kitzinger 1987) in that it stresses the importance of being engaged in meaningful employment. Also, similar

to the dominant discourse, the discourse of resistance emphasises the need for individuals to manage their own time and to be entirely self governing. For example, the document reads:

‘You might be forced to apply for jobs by a Direction or a Notified Vacancy but that doesn’t mean you have to get the job. Stay in control of your own “job seeking”. **Don’t let the bastards get you down - stuff their law. RESIST!** (Urban 75 2000).

There is a certain mimicry implicit in the term ‘job seeking’ amplified by the use of inverted commas, which has the effect of ‘mocking’ and indicating disdain for the official ‘job seeking’ discourse. Also, the emotional ending to the extract, with the use of capital letters, bold print and punctuation marks serve to articulate a very clear and hostile subject position. However, the phrase: ‘stay in control of your own jobseeking’, borrows heavily from the dominant discourse that also encourages jobseekers to be fully in control of their own self-management and self-governance (Foucault 1979; Kingfisher 1996; Scott 1990). It is argued that this is a conservative form of resistance as it operates from within the confines of the dominant discourse, which in this instance, also stresses the need to maintain full control over one’s management and status.

The document goes on to offer a list of training schemes or help the jobseeker might find useful in order to improve his/her employment prospects. These include such things as: ‘tools; driving lessons; PSV; HGV, other qualifications you want but can’t afford’ (Urban 75 2000). With this, the document does not reject the need for paid employment, but it rejects the restrictions imposed on the jobseeker by the official discourse. Instead, it demands that the jobseeker is allowed a sense of ‘personal mobility’ and left in control of his/her own jobseeking (Willis 1977:27). This need for personal mobility is further reflected in the guide. The guide explains that the

jobseeker will be asked write down all the things they are prepared to do each week in order to find work, and that one of these is whether they will ask friends, family and people they have worked with in the past if they know of any job vacancies. The guide then recommends that the jobseeker agrees to this, explaining that it is:

‘...easy, just asking mates in the pub if there’s any work. It counts as a jobseeking step’ (Urban 75 2000).

This is indicative of the moves taken to impose one’s own sense of order over the official rules, whereby one is conforming to those rules, whilst also maintaining a sense of personal mobility. One element to the shop floor culture is the need to remain free from the constraints of institutional time, in that whilst the jobseeker is, at least in theory ‘jobseeking’, he/she is also in ‘the pub’ and as such remains in control of his/her own time (Willis 1977:29). This use of ‘reverse discourse’ borrows directly from the dominant discourse which emphasises the importance of being self governing and as such subverts the neo-liberal notion of self-governance (Burchell 1991; O’Malley 1996; Rose 1999:479; Stenson 1993).

The Jobseekers Allowance Survival Guide provides readers not only with technical advice concerning how they can manage specific problems, but also with more general support concerning how they should conduct themselves and manage their own time. This mode of resistance borrows from the dominant discourse in that it stresses the need for the jobseeker to be self governing. As well as the discourse resisting official constraints placed on jobseekers, it subscribes to the notion of the work ethic, celebrates blue collar work and as such articulates a very clear dominant subject position. In keeping with Foucaultian notions of discourse and resistance, the Guide holds both restrictive and enabling qualities. For example, although the Guide affords readers the right to resist the official discourse of unemployment and to maintain a sense of personal autonomy and freedom of time, it simultaneously



restricts certain possibilities of being and the reader is not allowed to associate with the ‘good jobseeker’.

### **8.3.1. Nottingham Campaign Against Jobseekers Allowance**

Similar to the Jobseekers Allowance Survival Guide, the Nottingham Campaign Against Jobseekers Allowance (NCAJSA) is extremely hostile and employs the same use of colloquial and aggressive language. However, the discourse pays little attention to providing practical information and advice, and appears more directed towards establishing some measure of claimant solidarity. It is also more overtly ideological and political, demonstrating hostility towards capitalists, managers, and ‘bosses’ as well as government officials. With this, the reader is invited to associate with the ‘recalcitrant jobseeker’, who offers a far more extreme form of resistance than that identified in Urban 75. This resistance does not employ the use of ‘reverse discourse’ (by borrowing from the governmental discourse and appreciating the benefits of ‘meaningful’ paid work), and resists the idea that ‘work’ itself can be meaningful (Kingfisher 1996; Scott 1990). Analysis of the NCAJSA is primarily focused two separate issues of the short newsletter called: ‘Up Your Giro!’.

### **8.3.2. Solidarity**

Instead of the strong emphasis on practical information identified in Urban 75, the NCAJSA newsletter appears more concerned with providing a base from which claimants can gather a sense of solidarity, it encourages activism and resistance, and as such has the effect of eliciting a powerful emotional response.

‘It may seem that you have no choices and no power on the dole, but we don’t have to take this lying down’ (NCAJSA 1997).

This is a powerful and emotional claim, made more so by the colloquial style of language. Significantly, the use of the words ‘dole’ and giro’, makes an implicit link to discourses more closely associated with the unemployment culture of previous governments and preceding the introduction of the JSA and New Deal. As well as providing a link back to a strong and long standing employment culture, this demonstrates a clear mode of resistance that outwardly rejects the new and perhaps rhetorically more attractive governmental discourse of ‘jobseekers allowance’. Similarly, a previous issue argued:

‘Don’t get demoralised, isolated, apathetic or afraid. Get your own back by starting up conversations of your own with other claimants and all working class people about how shit the system is and about how we need to get together and fight it. Get informed about who is your enemy and who you can trust. Get your own back’ (NCAJSA 1996).

The use of war metaphors in the phrases ‘we need to get together and fight it’, ‘get informed about who is your enemy and who you can trust’, and ‘get you own back’ (used twice) indicates a ‘militarisation of thought and social practice’ (Chilton 1988, cited in Fairclough 1992; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). This ‘militarisation of thought and social practice’ encourages hostility and claimant solidarity against what it portrays to be a self-evidently unfair benefits system. This portrays the unemployment system as an aggressor that forces jobseekers (the victims) into submission. Although eliciting a powerful emotional response, this form of resistance remains relatively unfocused, offering little in the way of practical or technical advice on how to manage specific problems. Instead, the resistance suggested tends to be sensationalist, encouraging an emotional response rather than a technical ethical engagement. Arguably, links can be drawn between this unfocused style of resistance and the undetermined ‘enthusiasm for revolution’ witnessed in the Free Left movement of May 1968, which, according to Gordon, was quite unprecedented in that it also never had a definite intent or plan (Gordon 1993).

### 8.3.3. The ‘Recalcitrant Jobseeker’

The dominant reader subject position articulated throughout this discourse is identified as the ‘recalcitrant jobseeker’, a jobseeker who not only resists the unemployment discourse, but also fully rejects the work ethic and the notion that work can be meaningful, whilst existing under a capitalist system.

‘There is no such thing as a ‘good job’, they are all degrading and usually only the bosses benefit from our labour’ (NCAJSA 1996).

This extract is highly sensationalist and excludes the possibility that a reader may engage with the text on a superficial level. This is quite distinct from many other resistance discourses, which primarily tend resist coercive and disciplinary techniques, whilst also adopting notions of the work ethic, and even the deserving / undeserving poor distinctions (8.2.). For example, a study of single mothers on welfare in America demonstrated that whilst the women resisted being categorised as ‘lazy’, they did not resist the idea that many other people on welfare were lazy. This is an example of ‘deviance disavowal’ in that although they acknowledge the existence of the marginalised group, but they fully deny membership to that group (Kitzinger 1987:92). Also, they adopted the work ethic, arguing that not only were they hard working, spending a great deal of time on essential parental tasks, but that they also wanted to be engaged in paid employment (Kingfisher 1996:538). The level of resistance identified in the NCAJSA however, is far more extreme, resisting not only the categories imposed on them by the official discourse, but also the idea that ‘work’ itself can be meaningful. This open rejection of the work ethic is identified throughout the documents. When discussing Project Work, Issue two of ‘Up Your Giro!’ states:

‘What’s the point? We gain virtually nothing financially, we lose freedom of choice and we waste our time. But the bosses get paid £60-£75 a week by the government for our labour. If we complain, they say we are lazy scroungers’ (NCAJSA 1997).

This is an example of ‘role inversion’ in that although the discourse refuses to comply with the obligation to seek out paid employment, it simultaneously rejects the stereotype of ‘lazy scrounger’ (Kitzinger 1987:92; Scott 1986:22, cited in Kingfisher 1996). The extract clearly rejects the ‘rights and responsibilities’ exchange contract articulated by the dominant discourse, as it seriously questions the value of the ‘rights’ on offer. Also significant is the emphasis on freedom and the ability to manage one’s own time. For example, the document states that some of the disadvantages of Project Work are that ‘we lose freedom of choice and we waste our time’. Essential to the discourse is the right of the jobseekers to remain in control of their own status and to preserve their own sense of personal mobility (Willis 1977:27).

‘The Evening Post says the Nottingham City Council has employed four more housing benefit snoopers, funded by the government. Councillor Jon Collins says it ‘will continue our excellent record rooting out fraudsters’. Maybe you could comment on how pathetically low housing benefit is as well Jon. Bet you’ve got a nice pad yourself, which you’ve worked hard for, no doubt. You don’t make us feel like being law-abiding I’m afraid Jon’ (NCAJSA 1996).

Again, this is an example of ‘role inversion’, in that it challenges the label and stereotype of the unemployed as the ‘fraudster’ and the taxpayer as the ‘victim’ (Kitzinger 1987:92). The text, through referring to the Local Councillor and the ‘unfairness’ of the system, inverts this stereotype and implies that it is the Local

Councillor who is the ‘fraudster’ and the jobseeker who is the victim. Also, the common stereotype of the unemployed as being financially well off and with extra undeclared income is replaced with the reference to the well-off Councillor, living in his ‘nice pad’. Also significant is the note that the ‘snoopers’ are ‘funded by the government’, the implication being that it is not welfare claimants that waste taxpayers money, but officials. Thus the primary feature of this mode of resistance is that it rejects the validity of the provision of services such as; social security payments, the quality of training schemes and the quality of employment opportunities. There is also the creation of a ‘them’ and ‘us’ culture between the *employed* and the *unemployed*, which translates into a relationship between the empowered and the disempowered.

The mode of resistance suggested tends to be relatively unfocused, not dealing with specific concerns or suggesting particular activities, but offering a general resistance to the principle of the JSA and New Deal. With this, it encourages the reader to ‘resist’, but does not offer any practical information as to how the jobseeker can actually resist practical things such as a Jobseekers Direction, the Restart Interview or a Notified Vacancy. Again, similar to Urban 75, this mode of resistance holds both restrictive and enabling properties in that although the reader is afforded the right to legitimately resist the obligations placed on him/her by the Employment Service and to question the validity of the opportunities offered; the text simultaneously articulates certain possibilities of being that require the fostering of a thoroughly hostile and antagonistic approach to the dominant discourse. Significantly, both the discourses of resistance identified in Urban 75 and the NCAJSA openly exclude large groups of subordinate individuals, such as the female lone parent, the disabled and ethnic minorities.

#### **8.4.1. The Revolutionary Communist Group**

The Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) publishes a newsletter every few months, about ten or eleven pages long called ‘Fighting Poverty Pay!’. Similar to the

NCAJSA, this document is openly political, claiming to exist in opposition to the capitalist system and to stand up for the rights of workers and the unemployed. Much of the language employed is equally hostile and aggressive, using obscenities such as ‘twats’ (2001c:3); ‘wankers’ (2001d:7); and ‘shit’ (2000:6; 2001b:3; 8; 2001c:4; 6). The documents also use subheadings such as: ‘No to Slave-Labour!’ (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001b:3); ‘Fight Labour’s Social Fascism!’; (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001b:9; 2001c:6); ‘Fight Slum Landlords!’ (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001b:7); ‘Multinational Slave Labour in Britain’ (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2000:2); ‘Class Solidarity not Racist Division!’ (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001c:3; 2001d:2); and ‘Time for the boss-class to be behind bars!’ (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001c:9). Each newsletter ends with the phrase ‘SEND YOUR INFO ON DODGY BOSSES, DOLE HARASSMENT, LABOUR AND TRADE UNION CORRUPTION AND YOUR LETTERS TO: FIGHTING POVERTY PAY!’.

However, unlike Urban 75 and NCAJSA, the RCG sympathise with the position of women and ethnic minorities and recognise that they are more likely to suffer from low wage, part-time jobs and receive low benefit and few social services. The documents occasionally run articles that are specifically concerning the problems faced by women and ethnic minorities. They also claim to oppose all discrimination against black people, women, lesbians, gay men and people with disabilities. It is important to note, however, that the RCG are primarily concerned with low pay and poor working conditions rather than specific unemployment policy and there is every indication that the newsletter is targeted at a individual who is likely to be unemployed, with a history or at least an interest in wider, left wing based political activism. Much of the resistance emerging from these documents is ideological, it consists of resisting the capitalist system as much as possible by avoiding multinational corporations and being engaged in protests against corporations such as Nike, McDonalds, Shell and employment agencies.

Many of the documents are targeted at international concerns, such as demanding the

withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland, actively supporting socialist Cuba and condemning the US blockade, and campaigning for a 'greener environment'. The documents also provide information concerning industrial action taking place world wide in a bid to rally support for the socialist cause. The information provided includes details of a strike in Spain against 'Casualisation' where Spanish workers have been forced into temporary contracts and deregulated employment relations (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001d:9). There is also information provided of a strike by Bangladeshi garment workers, where the workers (mostly females) apparently work between eighty and one hundred hours and do not have union rights or rights to holidays or maternity leave. The document claims that the exploitation of the Bangladeshi workers is an impact of 'capitalist globalisation' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001d:9). There is also information provided on a protest against the International Monetary Fund in Papua New Guinea, against unemployment and economic recession in Argentina (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001d:10) and a similar protest in Gabon over high unemployment (ibid). Analysis is focused on five issues of the newsletter, dated from October 2000 to July 2001.

#### **8.4.2. Use of Statistics**

One of the major targets of the RCG is the use of statistics by the Government. The documents consistently criticise the official unemployment figures and alleged New Labour 'successes', claiming they do not reflect the 'real' unemployment or employment crisis. Under the heading, 'New Deal: The Nightmare Continues', it is argued:

'Labour declares New Deal a success. But their own figures expose the truth. Young people are being forced into low-paid, crap jobs or possible destitution on a massive scale. This 'success' is now to be extended to cover almost anyone not in full-time work. (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001a:1).

The same document goes on to argue that ‘Labour celebrates lowest unemployment for 20 years. No wonder, seeing as they've brought back the workhouse principle’ (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2000:2), and that ‘Throwing large statistics around is easy. What this figure actually represents is a vast number of individuals forced into insecure jobs for poverty wages or senseless schemes under threat of benefit cuts’. (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001a:1). Similarly, the document claims that by December 2000, thirty nine per cent of the young people leaving the New Deal had found unsubsidised employment for three months, eleven per cent were on other Benefits, twenty per cent had transferred to other training or moved abroad, and thirty per cent (nearly one hundred and forty three thousand), had gone to an ‘unknown destination’. ‘That's 142,800 young people who've either been forced into relying on their parents, working in the shadow economy or onto the streets’. The document also claims that ‘...it seems that even those who get (usually low-paid) jobs, often don't keep them for very long, but get trapped in the low pay/no pay cycle, short-term crap jobs followed by periods on the dole. For the over 25s, 267,000 had left New Deal, of whom 62,570 had got jobs, 80% of them for 3 months or more. So, by far the majority were back on the dole or had disappeared’ (Figures from 'TUC New Deal Briefing' no. 52. Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001c:4).

The use of phrases such as ‘What this figure *actually* represents’ and ‘...their own figures expose the *truth*’ (emphasis added) (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001a:1) has links with Foucault’s notion of ‘truth construction’, identified earlier in section 5.5.6. in that it draws from Foucaultian notions of truth, affording the author the status of rational expert/intellectual (Foucault 1980). One of the effects of this is that the authorial voice of the text is portrayed as being the speaker of ‘truth’ reaffirming the relationship between text and reader. Also significant is the reversal of statistical evidence, in that statistical evidence is frequently employed within the dominant discourse, providing the text a more authoritative voice. By the resistance discourse inverting this statistical evidence, it subverts the authority of the dominant discourse (cf Smith 1990:27).



### 8.4.3. Jobseeker's Allowance

Unlike Urban 75 and the NCAJSA, much of the material published by the RCG is targeted more directly at employment *rights* than specific unemployment policy. However, their concerns with poor pay, poor working conditions and inequality within the labour market feeds directly into resistance discourses on unemployment policy. The document argues that the Jobseekers Allowance and New Deal operate in co-operation with the capitalist system whereby individuals are forced off benefits into poorly paid employment. As such, the discourse is antagonistic towards both the unemployment and the economic system.

Similar to NCAJSA, the documents tend to offer little in the way of practical advice on how to resist the implications of the JSA and New Deal, instead offering more general information concerning how it has affected large groups of individuals. However, the newsletter does include *some* factual information regarding the specifics of the New Deal and explains precisely what each of the four New Deal options entail. It argues that the most popular option is training and education because 'you carry on getting JSA while learning' and that this is 'all right, provided you can find an organisation offering the training / course you want'. Otherwise you should 'expect some mind-numbing course from the Job Centre' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001a:1-2). Concerning the 'Environmental Task Force' option, the document claims it invariably involves: 'slaving for benefits, maintaining tow-paths for example, or in Charity shops, but that it is the subsidised employment option which is the least popular: 'Imagine working for someone who's being paid to employ you! An employer receives £60 for having a young person work a 40 hour week and £40 for a 30 hour week. For over 25s they get £75 or £60...Over half the employers said they'd only taken a New Deal placement for the wage-subsidy. One in three engagements was terminated before the six months was out'. (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001a:2). It goes on to argue that 'The threat of a scheme can put you under pressure to take a crap job or just give up claiming your rights. This was the choice of some

112,000 18-24 year olds until July 2000, who just seem to have dropped out of the statistics for unknown destinations' (Fighting Poverty Pay!2001c:4).

The documents employ the same use of colloquial language employed by Urban 75 and the NCAJSA which strengthens the familiarity of the relationship between text and reader. Also similar to Urban 75 is the implication that *some* employment opportunities may be rewarding. Although the document demonstrates great hostility to idea that employers receive money to offer jobseekers 'crap' work, it does also imply that some of the offers of training might be beneficial to the jobseeker, claiming that the training and education option of the New Deal is 'all right, provided you can find an organisation offering the training / course you want' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001a:1-2).

#### **8.4.4. Resistance to Sanctions**

Unlike Urban 75, there is little advice offered concerning precisely how one can resist benefit sanctions or Jobseeker's Directions, although some effort is made to advise Jobseekers on how they can manage their benefit advisors. The document advises jobseekers that if they are sent on a training scheme, the money they receive is paid by the Trade and Enterprise Council, and not the Benefits Agency. Consequently, when they sign back on, they should be treated as a new claim and thus entitled to a thirteen week permitted period, where they can legitimately restrict their job search to their chosen field of work. 'There should be no mention of New Deal for 6 months for 18-24 year olds or 18 months for over 25's. Appeal. Complain' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001b:8). The same issue also argues that legally, a jobseeker can legitimately refuse a job if the travelling time exceeds one hour each way 'by a route and means appropriate to your circumstances', but that a Decision Maker may decide it is reasonable for the jobseeker to travel longer if they've restricted their availability for work or if they previously travelled longer to a job (Decision Makers Guide 34498) and that if that happens, the jobseeker should appeal and complain (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001b:8). It is also argued that if a Decision Maker takes

longer than fourteen days to make a decision, the jobseeker should 'Complain to the Customer Services Manager immediately. Threaten to go to your MP or the Ombudsman about it. Bureaucrats always bow to higher powers' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001b:8). Also, the same issue explains that jobseekers with qualifications have been told not to mention them when applying for unskilled jobs. Stating: 'They're asking you to lie. If you sign an application form for a job and hide a qualification, you can be sacked for misrepresentation. Of course, when you sign back on the dole it was your fault that you'd been sacked. No Benefits. Complain. Organise!' (ibid). The document also advises jobseekers on how to avoid being offered employment through an agency. It claims that the jobseeker should at all costs 'Try not to let your adviser force you to say you'll go to agencies in your Jobseekers Agreement'. Employment agencies are a major target within the discourse and jobseekers are advised to insist that they: '...don't like their working practices, that they reduce workers rights, supply scabs for strikes and have notoriously bad records on Health and Safety' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001b:3). The document states that if the jobseekers does get sent to an agency anyway, they should:

'...try asking the interviewer about trade union organisation at the company. Would they mind if you started one up? What about sick pay, paid holidays etc? Many will not employ you if you say you have a criminal record. If the terms and conditions of the job differ significantly from your Jobseekers Agreement you should be able to refuse it outright. NO TO SLAVE-LABOUR!' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001b:3).

However, despite the highly antagonistic and confrontational approach to unemployment policy, the Government, the capitalist system and the multinationals, much of the actual resistance to benefit sanction is very limited, and some of it is even quite defeatist. For example, jobseekers are advised to: 'Insist on knowing and claiming your rights. It may only be a modest weapon for the moment, but it could slow the present tendency to transform unemployment rights into charity' (Fighting

Poverty Pay! 2001a:4). The document also states: 'It always pays to ask exactly this when they shove their forms under your nose. You can protect yourself against sanctions by demanding an extension of the time-limit given for providing the information' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001a:4). Thus there is an implicit assumption here that much of the available channels of resistance are relatively unsuccessful in that although they temporarily may make the work of the Benefit Agency and Employment Service more difficult and possibly postpone sanctions and the implementation of a Jobseeker's Direction, it is only really a postponement and the jobseeker will almost eventually be forced to either abide by the Jobseekers Agreement or face inevitable benefit sanctions.

#### **8.4.5. Employment Rights**

Much of the discussion with the RCG is regarding employment rights. Given that it constitutes such a large focus within the discourse, it is considered necessary to provide some analysis of this. The document explains that the New Deal is working in co-operation with major high street stores such as Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer and Boots, who offer to provide training for careers in retailing. The document notes how although retailing constitutes eleven per cent of employment positions, it actually accounts for fifteen per cent of all job vacancies. (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001c:3). The document states that 'They have these problems because the jobs they've got on offer are crap'. It argues that under this scheme, New Deal candidates are either sent to work whilst being trained under the Training and Education Option of the scheme, (whereby the company does not pay the employee, who simply receives Benefits plus ten pounds), or they are sent into 'Subsidised Employment', (whereby they receive the minimum wage and the company receives a substantial wage-subsidy from the JobCentre). They go on to state that 'Either way it's cheap labour for the company and a crap job for you!' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001c:3).

The document also publishes a letter from an 'Ipswich Unemployed Activist' who claims that instead of the four options that should have been available to him as part

of the New Deal, there was actually only one and he was assigned to a Housing Charity for thirteen weeks. The letter states that in Ipswich there is a Community Resource Centre where many of the unemployed discuss political organising and campaigning issues. The letter states 'I could tell you so many similar stories-some worse, some better, about the New Deal. What I have yet to come across is anybody whose life has improved' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001d:8). Similarly, issue ten of the newsletter 'Fighting Poverty Pay!' includes a letter from 'Tracey', who claims to have been 'forced' off Jobseeker's Allowance after six months. Under the subheading 'Multinational slave labour in Britain', the letter states:

'Having been unemployed and claiming Job Seeker's Allowance for 6 months, I was forced onto Labour's New Deal scheme to get me off benefits. I was told by my personal 'adviser' that I must accept the 'voluntary' option of the New Deal - working for 'Groundforce', landscaping and digging paths. I refused this 'voluntary' option and my benefit was immediately cut. For four weeks I was expected to live on one day's benefit, £7.46!' (Fighting Poverty Pay!2000:2).

The use of inverted commas surrounding the words; 'voluntary' and 'advisor' adds a mimicry quality to the extract, reflecting a disdain for the 'real' meaning of the terms 'voluntary' and 'advisor' (see also page 232). The letter goes on to state:

'With no other option I was then forced to register with Claire's Recruitment, a job agency in Blackburn. Within hours I was working 10 hours a day packing chocolates for Cadbury's, Nestle and other multinational brands. The factory was disgusting. We stood all day in lines by the machines for £3.70 an hour. We were not paid for any lunch or breaks and told if we arrived 1 minute late, 45 minutes would be docked from our pay. If a machine broke down, the time the machine was out of

operation was docked from our pay. Multinationals such as Cadbury's and Nestle are making vast profits from slave labour and poverty wages. People such as myself have no option other than to work for them or starve' (Fighting Poverty Pay!2000:2).

Here, the targets are the JSA and New Deal for treating the unemployed unfairly and for not offering them reasonable alternatives to benefits and also the multinationals who exploit the workers. The same letter concludes by saying: 'We know why unemployment is going down, because people are being victimised and harassed by the benefit system. How many millions of people like myself have been forced off Benefits into slavery like this?' (Fighting Poverty Pay!2000:2).

#### **8.4.6. Gender and Ethnic Minorities**

One of the most significant differences between the NCAJSA and the 'Jobseekers Allowance Survival Guide' is that the RCG actively sympathise with the position of women and ethnic minorities. There is not an explicit exclusion of women from the discourse, although one could argue that the use of hostile and aggressive language holds certain implicit exclusionary qualities, especially with regards Asian women. As such, it is possible that although the discourse sympathises with the position of women and ethnic minorities, it is not necessarily *targeting* them as a reader. Notwithstanding this, the discourse makes frequent references to the fact that women and ethnic minorities suffer disproportionately from unemployment and low pay. For example, the document references the Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit survey of ten Jobcentres in Manchester which claims that women are the lowest paid workers, earning on average eighty two pence for every one pound earned by men and that they are far more likely have poorly paid, part-time positions. Citing the example of female sales assistants who earn less than half the average male full-time pay, the document argues that 'The gap between male and female wages in Britain is the worst in the European Union' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001b:4). Also, citing a survey by the Transport and General Workers Union, the document claims that there are

over six million workers in Britain earning less than five pounds an hour and that of these, there are nearly twice as many women as men (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001a:6).

The document also refers to the voucher system for asylum seekers as 'racist' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001a:4) and reference the examples of farm work, where asylum seekers get paid less than half that of British workers (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001c:2). Also, under the subheading 'Racist Britain' the document cites Government statistics which claim that the unemployment rate for male ethnic minorities is thirteen percent, nearly double that of white males (seven per cent) and that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women have the highest unemployment rate of all (nearly twenty four percent) (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001c:8). There is also reference made to the rioting in Oldham and Burnley, which is explained as being 'A revolt against unemployment and poverty' (Fighting Poverty Pay! 2001d:3). The document claims that the districts of Oldham and Burnley are the poorest areas of Manchester, created through the low paid mill work of the 1960s and early 1970s, which was predominately taken up by Asian workers.

In spite of the obvious sympathies with women and ethnic minority groups, each issue of the published newsletters employ the same use of colloquial and hostile language, indicating that the RCG still has a relatively 'masculine' context, (although not as explicit as either Urban 75 or NCAJSA). Similar to NCAJSA, the mode of resistance is relatively unfocussed and although with regards international concerns there are attempts made to rally support for the socialist cause and get organised in activism, with regards resistance to the JSA and New Deal, there appears to be degree of pessimism in terms of what can actually be achieved. Also, although the resistance discourse articulates what has been called the 'recalcitrant jobseeker' the distinction between the recalcitrant jobseeker and the industrious jobseeker is not as clear as it was in Urban 75 and NCAJSA. For example, the implied reader in the RCG does not subscribe to notions of the work ethic in the same way as Urban 75,

but he also does not appear to dismiss all employment opportunities as unrewarding. However, this is not implied very often and given the obvious political influence over the RCG and the active hostility to multinational corporations and employment agencies, there is the indication that a large number of the employment options available to the jobseeker under a capitalist system will be exploitative.

### **8.5.1. 'Dr Doom'**

In addition to this openly confrontational discourse, this research identified a more intellectual but quite isolated discourse of resistance. This particular Website articulates a distinctive and reflexive reader subject position and appears to target a more diverse reader. The intention behind including analysis of this 'atypical' mode of resistance is to outline the dominant reader subject positions and distinctive possibilities of being articulated between this site, and that of Urban 75 and the NCAJSA. However, it needs to be stressed that this form of resistance remains relatively isolated and quite distinct from the other mainstream resistance discourses. It was argued that Urban 75 and the NCAJSA largely target the (probably white) working class male, whereas the site established by 'Dr Doom' targets a far more diverse reader. However, although not focusing on the manual worker; the site still articulates (to some extent) the 'industrious jobseeker' in that it is particularly concerned with jobseekers and readers being self-regulating and ethically reflexive in their understanding of the basic mechanics and long-term implications of the social security discourse. This again is a use of 'reverse discourse', in that it borrows directly from the dominant discourse which stresses that individuals should become more responsible and self-governing (Kingfisher 1996). In spite of this, the site appears largely at odds with the aggressive and confrontational use of language and employs a more intellectual style, using fewer colloquialisms and frequently referring back to quality newspapers such as The Financial Times and official governmental Websites as source material. The site does not employ 'sensationalism' as a discursive device, instead providing a more 'factual' and less impassioned presentation, with frequent reference to official statistics. The site is also far more



concerned with the global context and includes a number of translated French texts, as well as a number of links to resistance site in both France and Belgium.

### **8.5.2. Target Reader**

Relative to Urban 75 the NCAJSA site and the RCG, this discourse articulates a more ‘passive’ implied reader. The information provided is less impassioned, involving a high number of statistical tables and data published by the DfEE and much of the information provided is presented objectively, with basic factual commentary and relatively little editorial. It is argued that the site is in theory less exclusive as it provides a voice for individuals from differing levels of education and employment, for those both in and out of employment, and for males and females.

‘Up to the end of April 1999, 50,000 employers had signed Employers Agreements. Employment Minister Andrew Smith claimed that, thanks to the New Deal, a fall of a third in youth unemployment between April 1997 and April 1998 had been followed by a further fall of 40% in the year to April 1999. In addition, up to the end of March 1999 the New Deal for People aged 25+ had moved 10,500 long-term claimants into jobs -- more than 2,000 in February 1999 alone. During April 1999, over 16,700 under-25s started the New Deal. Source: DfEE Press Release 238/99, 27 May 1999’.

This reliance on statistical data affords the site a well organised and professional appearance and implies that it may be largely intended for readers who primarily want to gather ‘objective’ information regarding the implications and mechanical details of the JSA and New Deal. Throughout the site, there is every indication that it is intended largely for ‘information gathering’ purposes alone. However, it could also be argued that the more formal and professional textual style may exclude the male, blue collar worker directly targeted by Urban 75 and the NCAJSA. For

example, the frequent references to official documents and the more intellectual style threaded throughout the text may exclude precisely those individuals most likely to be directly affected by social security changes.

In addition to Website analysis, there was also an in-depth interview conducted with the producer of the site. From this, it was discovered that the individuals who made contact with the site producer were predominantly students seeking practical information in order to complete academic assignments or intellectuals seeking to establish a link based on ideological interests. Significantly, only a small number of claimants appear to have accessed the site and the producer claimed to have had correspondence with claimants approximately once every two or three months. However, this contact tended to be on a purely ‘information gathering’ basis and generally involved requests for advice concerning specific individual problems. The producer also acknowledged a clear distinction between the style of language used in this site and that of other resistance sites, believing the aggressive and confrontational discourse identified in Urban 75, the NCAJSA and the RCG deters many people from getting involved (predominantly women). Conversely, instead of encouraging solidarity or organised protests, the site was intended to encourage readers to become more reflexive in understanding their own situations and not to accept the dominant discourse at face value.

### **8.5.3. The ‘Truth’ about the JSA and New Deal**

One of the primary areas of interest with this site is that it claims to speak the ‘truth’ about the New Deal and JSA; and its professional presentation and inclusion of statistical data affords the site a highly privileged pedagogic status. For example, the text claims to have identified ‘The real thinking behind the New Deal’; ‘The real object of the New Deal’; and ‘The real reason for the New Deal’. With this, the text is afforded the highly privileged position of an informed advisor, whose role is to provide invaluable advice and practical information regarding the ‘truth’ behind the

JSA and New Deal. For example, the site claims to translate the DSS and DfEE literature into ‘English’, arguing that:

‘Much of the information in this section is taken from government sources. It is often confusing and constantly spun (claimants become "eligible" to "volunteer" for "opportunities"). I try to translate it all into English, but life is too short to deconstruct every nuance and distortion’.

Similar to the Labour Party document analysed in Chapter Four (see section 5.5.6.) (Labour Party 1982c) and the RCG in this chapter (8.4.2.), this draws from Foucaultian notions of truth construction in that it affords the author the status of rational expert/intellectual (Foucault 1980). Similarly, the text claims:

*‘If you have been paying attention, you will recall that the New Deal Gateway will ideally push the "client" straight into a "proper" job’* (emphasis added).

This clearly demonstrates a move to establish a ‘teacher / student’ relationship between the text and reader. Instead of employing the same use of sensationalist discourse identified in Urban 75, the NCAJSA and the RCG, the text invites readers to believe what is said through the inclusion of statistical data and the professional presentation. With this, the reader is also encouraged to subscribe to the dominant subject position embedded throughout the text. This use of ‘truth construction’ is identified throughout the document in that the text frequently outlines the dominant discourse, and then explains rationally and scientifically how this can be translated into ‘real’ terms.

‘The government has insisted that a principal aim of the New Deal is to eradicate poverty. Since benefit levels are restricted by spending limits (themselves the product of Labour's desire to woo middle class voters by keeping taxation down), the unemployed, it is claimed, would be better off in work. Actually, the assumption that people are automatically better off in work than on benefits is not supported by the facts. Again, the American workfare experiment has shown up the existence of a new underclass: the working poor. People in low paid jobs often turn out to be no better off than on benefits’.

This discourse of resistance is highly rational and scientific, affording the text the authorial voice of rational expert or intellectual. Foucault wrote of the role the intellectual has in the construction of truth, arguing there had been a shift away from the ‘universal’ to the ‘specific’ intellectual (Foucault 1980:126-33). The universal intellectual was considered to be the unspoken consciousness of individuals and the ‘master of truth and justice’ whereas the ‘specific’ intellectual speaks and articulates ‘truth’ not in the ‘universal’, but in his own specific sectors, such as housing, medicine, or economics. This emergence is seen as a feature of the ‘extension of technico-scientific structures’ and the growth of scientific rationality and legitimacy. This rational construction of ‘truth’ is identified further in the document, where it attempts to identify ‘the real thinking behind the New Deal’. Here, the text addresses three reasons put forward by New Labour for the New Deal, such as ‘to save money’; ‘to eradicate poverty’; or ‘to end social exclusion’ and explains how these reasons are illogical and do not stand up to empirical ‘fact’.

‘Given that that the number of young unemployed is actually falling, there is something positively perverse about the New Deal's emphasis upon getting them into work. The £3.5bn the government envisages spending during this parliament should, more logically, be concentrated upon the

older, long-term unemployed who represent a far more intractable problem.

The sums simply do not add up. The inescapable conclusion is that, in the end, the New Deal is not about saving money’.

In this extract, the reader is invited to believe the intentions of Government are ‘positively perverse’ and that the text is providing the ‘logical’, ‘actual’ and ‘inescapable’ ‘truth’. The authorial voice of rational expert is made all the more effective by the implicit distinctions drawn between government policy and ‘the truth’. Also, the phrase ‘the sums *simply* do not add up’ indicates that in addition to being highly illogical, the official Government reasoning is also disingenuous in that it is deliberately concealing ‘the truth’ and obfuscating reality.

## 8.6. Discussion

This chapter has attempted to identify the prescriptive codes of conduct and various possibilities of being articulated from some of the key resistance discourses. It is argued that the discourses selected for analysis articulate two specific forms of ‘hostile jobseeker’, ‘the industrious jobseeker’ and ‘the recalcitrant jobseeker’. The ‘industrious jobseeker’ was primarily identified in Urban 75 but also to some extent from the site produced by Dr Doom. Both these discourses are specifically aimed at resisting attempts to *coerce* the jobseeker into obtaining what they identify as ‘demeaning’ work, and demand that jobseekers are allowed the right to select ‘quality’ employment opportunities. These resistance discourses also borrow heavily from the dominant discourse in that they encourage jobseekers to be well informed and entirely self governing. For example, it was argued in previous chapters that in order to identify with the ‘good jobseeker’, one must internalise the discourse of communitarianism, appreciate the need to work within the market and contribute towards the community by continually work towards enhancing one’s employability. Although the ‘good jobseeker’ may not necessarily be engaged in paid employment, he/she is nonetheless extremely hard working, enterprising and determined.

Significantly, the discourse of resistance identified in *Urban 75* and *Dr Doom* also encourages many of these qualities in that the reader is invited to identify with the ‘industrious jobseeker’ and encouraged to remain in control of their own jobseeking, and to be self-disciplined and hard-working.

The discourse specific to *Urban 75* has routes in the older and more militant elements of trade unionism in that it operates tightly from within the work ethic and celebrates masculinity and manual labour. One significant element to this mode of resistance is that it celebrates manual labour over mental labour and as such, largely excludes the female reader. Similarly, the aggressive tone and confrontational style is closely associated with a working class notion of masculinity. Levitas argues how films such as ‘*The Full Monty*’ have illustrated the importance of manual work and the way in which unemployment particularly affects male identity (Levitas 1998:157). In a discussion of social exclusion and masculinity, Campbell argues that the problem of social disorder are both real and gendered: ‘it is not just ‘the poor’ who suffer most, but that poor women also have to resist the aggressive colonisation of space by poor men (Campbell 1993, cited in Levitas 1998). She argues that pathological male behaviour is not *produced* by their unemployment status, but that unemployment *reveals* the way in which masculinity is constructed across society, in particular with regards low-skilled young males and anti social expression (Campbell 1993; Levitas 1998:157). Moreover, the inherent link between self-esteem, social status and paid employment is considered to be far more marked in men than in women owing to women’s disproportionate involvement in unpaid work. Significantly, it is argued that the male response to being denied employment status (given its associations with respectability and self-esteem) is unlikely to be as marked or aggressive in females than in males.

In contrast to the ‘industrious jobseeker’, ‘the recalcitrant jobseeker’ offers more overt resistance to the dominant discourse as he/she not only resists the compulsory elements of the JSA, but also the notion that work can, in itself, be meaningful. This

jobseeker is hostile to capitalism and refuses to accept the value of paid work in an environment where the financial profits go to the 'bosses' rather than direct to the worker. It is argued that this style of discourse targets a very specific reader and deters many people from getting involved (predominantly women). There are also profound links between the identity prescribed by the 'recalcitrant jobseeker' and the 'Free Left' movement in May 1968. The motivation behind this movement was frequently described by the media as being somehow disingenuous and that: 'These student demonstrations are not serious political movements pursuing real aims: they are more like a highbrow version of football hooliganism' (The Observer 1968, cited in Hall 1978:243). They were also described as a '...cold and deliberate exercise in violence by evil men using the young and gullible to their own ends'; and 'a calculated effort by skilled left-wing agitators to bring our police into disrepute and terrorise the community' (Sunday Express 1968, cited in Hall 1978:243). However, Hall argues that the period of 1968-9 constituted not a 'temporary or passing rupture, but a prolonged and continuous state of semi-siege' and that the meaning, causes and consequences of this period have still never been fully reconciled. He argues that as a direct response to this period, there still remains a 'radical and revolutionary politics', resembling a somewhat 'wild anarcho-libertarian scenario' (Hall 1978:251).

These resistance discourses can also be understood in relation to what Lockwood calls the 'proletarian worker'. This proletarian traditionalist emerges from the working class sections of society, has a strong sense of pride in doing 'men's work' and is most closely associated with industries involving heavy manual labour, such as mining, docking and ship-building (Lockwood 1982:360). These groups of men are said to share a distinct occupational culture that extends to their social lives and workmates are frequently neighbours and 'leisure-time companions'. Lockwood argues that:

‘The existence of such closely-knit cliques of friends, workmates, neighbours and relatives is the hallmark of the traditional working class community...As a form of social life, this communal sociability has a ritualistic quality, creating a high moral density and reinforcing sentiments of belongingness to a work-dominated collectivity. The isolated and endogamous nature of the community, its predominantly one-class population, and low rates of geographical and social mobility all tend to make it an inward-looking society and to accentuate the sense of cohesion that springs from shared work experiences’ (Lockwood 1982:361).

Lockwood also argues that these occupational solidarities and proletarian consciousness is ‘centred on an awareness of ‘us’ in contradistinction to ‘them’ who are not part of ‘us’ (Lockwood 1982:362). The ‘them’ are seen as the bosses, managers and the white collar workers and the ‘us’ are those incapable of escaping a manual wage and are subject to the constraints of a distant and incomprehensible authority. This understanding of power relations is centred around notions of the ‘dichotomous or two-valued power model’. This movement can also be discussed in relation to ‘old social movements’. Old social movements tends to be fuelled by economic tension and membership is determined by social class. However, in recent years, these old social movements have been replaced by new social movements, which focus on non-economic concerns and are driven by heterogeneous social groups rather than social classes (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Touraine 1981; Melucci 1980). The lack of old social movement activity has to some extent been attributed to the failures of socialism. For example, Casey argues that: ‘The failure of socialism and the demise of the working class and its historical political movement, organised labour, has been followed by the rise of “new” social movements with a plurality of interests and agendas’ (Casey 1995:16). However, the demands, objectives and discourse of the ‘recalcitrant jobseeker’ are far more akin to the objectives and organisation of the old social movements.



## Chapter Nine

### Summary and Conclusions

#### 9.1.1. Overview of New Labour Changes

There have been a variety of attempts to explain the basis for the changes made to the Labour Party. Driver and Martell list a number of these interpretations. Firstly, it has been argued that the central values and objectives of 'New Labour' have actually remained the same and that New Labour is either 'Old Labour in disguise' (Willets 1997); or little more than a media and marketing creation developed by Peter Mandelson (Driver and Martell 1998). This argument focuses on the media presentation and argues that 'Under Mandelson, Labour has had its media image finely cultivated, right down to parliamentary candidate's haircut and clothes' (Driver and Martell 1998; Jones 1997; Rosenbaum 1997). However, these interpretations ignore the substantial changes made to the Labour Party; whereby 'Keynesian economic theory, aimed at maintaining full employment has been replaced with a tough anti-inflationary policy; and on the supply side, nationalisation and government planning have been replaced with the flexible labour market, welfare to work, and 'education, education, education' (Driver and Martell 1998).

Another argument (put forward by some members of New Labour) is that the Labour values of equality, community and social justice remain central to the Party, but that they now employ different measures to meet these ends. However, Driver and Martell argue that this is not the case, claiming that many of the old objectives of the Labour Party have disappeared and that: 'Public ownership is no longer a defining issue, neither is equality, and the critique of capitalism and social justice has mutated from economic redistribution into individual opportunity' (Driver and Martell 1998:160). Similarly, Cohen argues that 'The clear red water which separates Labour from other parties has diminished (Cohen 1994). It has also been suggested that New Labour is 'Thatcherism Mark II' (Driver and Martell 1994; Hall and Jacques 1997; Kenny and Smith 1997). This argument believes New Labour has made a series of dramatic U-turns on the economy, social policy and defence and that 'Blair has taken an Anglo-American neo-liberal view of entrepreneurialism and

individualism as the basis for economic success' (Driver and Martell 1998:161). In spite of these differing perspectives, this thesis has argued there have been substantial changes made to the Labour Party, that they have changed the way in which unemployment has been problematised, they have embraced the market ethic, and they have placed new emphasis on notions of communitarianism and individual responsibility. This section will now offer an overview of these changes, as discussed in the main body of the thesis.

### **9.1.2. Economic Changes**

At the first party conference in September 1994, Blair set about to lead the Party into what became a process of national renewal, renewal within the party and the removal of the socialist commitment (Pelling and Reid 1996). The removal of Clause 4 in March 1995 was seen as a continuation of attempts to revise the Party's aims since the election defeat of 1983 (the significance of removing Clause 4 is, however problematic as the extent to which it was ever really put into practice is subject to continuous debate).

Since around 1993, there has been a clear relaxation of resistance to market forces and a lowering of enthusiasm for public ownership as Labour found themselves forced to accept some of the previous Conservative economic logic. They realised their ideas for universal free benefits may well have to concede to further acceptance of market forces as 'The deepest post-war recession, growing fraud of public benefits and unpopularity of tax increases led the Party to look for more cost-effective ways to target benefits' (Maor 1997:231). Significantly, during the 1980s and early 1990s, Britain experienced widening inequalities between the rich and poor and Labour responded by consistently stressing their belief in increasing taxation on the higher income households in order to fund their commitment to socialist equality. However, by the 1990s, despite the fact that the Labour Party still claimed to be committed to reducing inequality, they had almost completely abandoned their policy of increasing taxation on the better off (Maor 1997:232).

This change in attitude towards the market is apparent in the following quotation by Blair:

‘In the past, Democratic Socialists equated public interest with public ownership and had no developed analysis of the limitations of public ownership through the state as a means of helping the individual. But in practice it had become evident that the state could become a vested interest in itself, every bit as capable of oppressing individuals as wealth and capital’ (Blair 1991:32).

Although the Kinnock leaderships began to make a clear break from the economics of social democracy, the Blair Government has fully embraced new economic measures and moved away from the policies of Keynesianism and public ownership, towards Post-Fordist flexibility, globalization, and increased insecurity (Driver and Martell 1998:41). It is argued that although ‘The market was accepted under Kinnock. Under Blair it was positively celebrated’ (ibid 40). Levitas states that by 1995, the constitution of the Labour Party had come to encapsulate a completely different set of policies. ‘Gone were questions of equity and distribution; of political, social and economic emancipation; a higher standard of economic and social life; and improvements in conditions at work. In their place were some of the phrases that ‘echoed like mantras through the 1997 election campaign; ‘the many not the few’; ‘the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe’ and the words ‘enterprise, partnership, opportunity, community and trust’ (Levitas 1998:112; Blair 1995b).

### **9.1.3. Rights and Responsibilities**

The emphasis on the enhancement of skills and individual responsibility encouraged by New Labour can be traced back to policies previously pursued under the Thatcher governments. However, there has been a notable shift in emphasis towards the issue of self-help within the Labour Party since approximately 1995 and Labour now

argue when individuals are offered employment and training, they have a reciprocal duty to take them up. Significantly, they claim that this is ‘empowerment not punishment’ (Labour Party 1997d). In response to current fears concerning job insecurity and the demise of a ‘job for life’, Labour have attempted to reconstruct the issue of job security, from a structural feature of the economy and the labour market, towards a problem determined by the conduct of the individual. Labour’s language of opportunity has changed job security into something that is seen to be achieved through individual efficiency and ‘life long learning’; they have established ‘individual learning accounts’ and continue to emphasis that ‘the young unemployed have a responsibility to seek work, accept reasonable opportunities and upgrade their skills’ (Labour Party 1996a, cited in Levitas 1998). Security has now ‘been constructed as something individuals achieve through employability and individual obligation (Levitas 1998:121). It appears to be the policy of the Government to assume that individuals have the responsibility and potential to make efforts to acquire new skills and upgrade their old one’s in a constant effort to make themselves more employable. Hitherto, social policy measures employed by Labour were concerned with alleviating poverty whereas now they are centred around a far more ‘active’ step to prevent poverty, as well as promoting opportunity and potential (Walker 1999).

#### **9.1.4. Subjects of Governance**

One of the primary areas of interest with the discourse is that it is not directed at all jobseekers, but specifically at the jobseeker most in need of ‘character improvement’ and it is argued that the jobseeker most clearly targeted through this discourse is unlikely to be able to make these necessary transformations without the extensive assistance of governmental agencies (Blair 1996b). Thus it is primarily the deviant jobseeker that is targeted by the policies and encouraged to become communitarian, hard working, enterprising and highly motivated. This was discussed more thoroughly in chapter six, which explained how the discourse directly targets the ‘hard to reach’ jobseeker, and the jobseeker least likely to find employment independently.

## 9.2. Conclusions

It is argued that New Labour articulate a notion of social inclusion that is conditional not simply on economic participation within the labour market, but on the adoption of certain moral and ethical values, together with an ethical engagement with both communitarianism and 'active citizenship'. With this, individuals and jobseekers alike have a responsibility to not only seek out and where appropriate, obtain paid employment, but to subscribe to the discourse of enterprise and marketability through continuously marketing themselves, insuring against unemployment and taking active responsibility for their self governance. Also, in conjunction with the 'rights and responsibilities' exchange contract, individuals must take an active role in enhancing the community base through becoming 'individualistic' rather than 'passive and dependant' and adopting an 'entrepreneurial' approach to both their jobseeking and their participation in community driven activities (Rose 1992:159). However, it is argued that these new demands placed on jobseekers to be 'active' in their jobseeking, as well as being 'enterprising' and 'industrious' are not necessarily applied as standard, and there is far closer targeting of those individuals seen to be in need of 'character improvement' (Blair 1996b). Individuals such as the long-term unemployed, lone parents, the disabled and those with learning difficulties are expected to adopt the same market ethic and abide by the same moral and ethical codes as their more immediately 'employable' counterparts. The unemployment status of these individuals has become thoroughly professionalised in that the act of 'jobseeking' is articulated as a highly professional and strategical project whereby all jobseekers are encouraged to be just as efficient, active and self governing as their more employable and economically successful counterparts.

These demands for all individuals to abide by the same market ethic and follow the same ethical codes of conduct are very much in keeping with New Labour's emphasis on 'one nation, one community' (Blair 1996b). The discourse of communitarianism articulated by New Labour is founded on values and qualities

such as honour, self-discipline, duty, obligation and ‘the essential decency of the British character’ and clearly attempts to cut across class boundaries (Blair 2000f; 2000g). It is argued that this notion of ‘community’ is aligned to certain moral and ethical values and as such, prioritises ‘ethical’ social inclusion over material or economic social inclusion. With this, social inclusion is not conditional on one’s material, class or employment status, but on one’s contribution to the community and one’s approach to jobseeking, in that regardless of status, one has to be seen to be highly motivated, highly organised, professional and adaptable. Significantly, the discourse of the ‘jobseeker’ does not promote social inclusion at the material level, or at the level of class or one’s relation to the market, instead material social inclusion is marginalised within the dominant discourse in favour of a value based social inclusion. This, in many ways reflects the reality that unemployment policy can do little to ensure material social inclusion at unemployment level given the burden of benefits on the economy and that by producing subjects who make the correct ethical response to the discourse, they can be encouraged to align their own desires and sense of self realisation to those of Government.

### **9.2.1. Social Inclusion and ‘Status’**

This form of social inclusion can be related to Weber’s notion of ‘status’ (Weber 1982). For Weber, the ‘status’ of an individual is determined by the evaluations others make of him, and a ‘status group’ is a number of individuals who share the same status situation and follow a particular lifestyle (Giddens 1971:166). In contrast to class, the possession of material property is not a sufficient basis for entry into a dominant status group as status groups. Instead, status groups are determined by ‘...a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honour’ (Weber1982:65). Weber argues that ‘honour’ may be anything shared by the plurality and is often unrelated to class situation; for example, property is not recognised and respected in status in the same way that it is in class situation (Weber 1982:65). Significantly, Weber argues that within ‘status honour’, ‘Both propertied and propertyless people can belong to the same status group’. This theory of status can be useful in understanding New Labour’s notion of social inclusion in that according to the

official discourse, ‘community’ is defined on ethical grounds whereby affiliation is not determined by class or material status. Instead, although New Labour discourse cannot enforce adherence to the dominant value scheme, all individuals are, at least in theory, entitled to adopt the scheme and become members of the same ‘community’.

Significantly, Weber argues that ‘...status honour is normally expressed by the fact that above all else a specific *style of life* is expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle’ (Weber 1982:65) (emphasis in original). Thus, this notion of social inclusion becomes a matter of adopting a professional work ethic which allows for social inclusion at the level of ‘status’, because although individuals may remain unemployed, their orientation towards their *unemployment* can be seen to have an affinity with the ideal typical orientation of professional employed people towards their *employment*. With this, social inclusion is conditional on jobseekers adopting an ‘entrepreneurial’ approach to their jobseeking and their engagement with the community, and provided they are ‘active’ in their jobseeking, they do not necessarily have to be successful in securing paid employment, as the condition of ‘activity’ takes precedence over the condition of ‘paid work’. However, there are, of course, huge problems with this articulation of social inclusion.

Firstly, although all individuals, whether engaged in paid employment or not, are obliged to abide by the same rights and responsibilities exchange contract, they are not guaranteed entitlement to the same rights. For example, in the analysis of the Job Kit and the Job Hunting document (DfEE 1998c; 1998i) it was argued that the jobseeker is not entitled to the same degree of privileges or even rights as their working counterparts and although the Job Kit emphasises the responsibilities the jobseeker has to be professional and efficient in their approach to jobseeking, the ‘rights’ they are granted in exchange are significantly limited. For example, the reader of the Job Kit is not afforded the right to refuse any legitimate offer of employment or to be very specific about the type of employment they are prepared

to accept. With this, the luxury of being able to choose your employment, or decide whether you actually want to work is only really afforded those individuals who are either already engaged in paid employment, or who, for whatever reason, will not be an economic burden on the state.

Secondly, this notion of a value based social inclusion, and 'status' is not applied as standard and although a 'good jobseeker' can be considered socially included by fulfilling his/her duties as a jobseeker and embracing the work ethic, the 'hostile jobseeker' has to be engaged in paid employment. The jobseekers who refuse to adhere to the dominant discourse and who habitually resist the obligations placed on them to be enterprising, efficient and self governing, are instead governed through methods of discipline and coercion. These jobseekers may well attend the compulsory training schemes set up by the Employment Service, but they are essentially uncooperative, refusing to subscribe to the communitarian ethic of New Labour and resisting both in practice and in principle the attempts made by the Employment Service to enhance their 'employability'. Significantly, for the deviant or hostile jobseeker, social inclusion *is* conditional on paid employment, and concern is not so much with their notions of communitarianism or their ethical engagement with the discourse, but with getting them into paid employment and managing their conduct through methods of coercion.

Another problem is that there is a profound difference between discourse and practice in that the form of social inclusion articulated by the official, dominant discourse may well, and probably does, operate in contrast to the notion of social inclusion fostered by jobseekers themselves. For example, the dominant discourse suggests that individuals do not have to be engaged in paid employment in order to be socially included. Instead, social inclusion is conditional on individuals fully embracing and internalising the values and codes of conduct concerning the role of 'work' and communitarianism. However, within this consumer market, the downplaying of material social inclusion at the official discursive level does not



necessarily mean those individuals continuing to survive on low incomes are going to hold a comparable status position to those engaged in paid employment. Thus, there is arguably a clear discrepancy between New Labour's official articulation of social inclusion, and the more materialistic notion of social inclusion perhaps fostered by individuals most directly affected by low incomes and poor educational advantages.

### **9.3. Absences**

Unfortunately, owing to obvious time constraints, it is considered that there are two primary areas that have been left untouched by this research. Firstly, there is the absence of an analysis of the discourse of unemployment beyond the official texts and documentation. There is undoubtedly a discrepancy between the discourse of unemployment and social inclusion, as articulated by Government, and how this is actually put into practise, not just in terms of how individuals respond to the discourse and how they understand themselves in relation to it; but also how and whether the Employment Service actually deliver the services set out in the official discourse. The other obvious absence is the analysis of data beyond the United Kingdom. Of this, Giddens has argued: 'The debate around New Labour, lively and interesting though it is, has been carried largely in ignorance of comparable discussions that have been going on in continental social democracy for some while. Tony Blair's break with old labour was a significant accomplishment, but a similar sort of break has been made by virtually all continental social democratic parties' (Giddens 1998:viii). Thus it is argued there are clear links to be drawn between the UK and the US, but also with many European countries, in particular France, Germany, Sweden, which have unfortunately, been excluded from this analysis.

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