

“Do children raised on income assistance develop “poverty scar” lifelong behavioral patterns and coping strategies that adversely affect their adult decisions”?

by

Brenda Lavallee

B.S.W., University of Victoria, 2024

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

In the School of Social Work

©Brenda Lavallee, 2025

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷ əŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷ əŋən and W̱ SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Jeannine Carriere, (School of Social Work)

Dr. Donna Jeffery, (School of Social Work)

Abstract

My research explored if income assistance, its accompanying policies and the associated poverty contributed to the development of “poverty scars” in children: lifelong behavioral patterns and coping strategies that adversely affected them in adulthood. Using photovoice methodology that employed visual and participatory qualitative methods, four participants were recruited who agreed to take part in a six-week research project, which included a community gala to present their experiences of living on income assistance through photographs. One participant withdrew without notice at the end of the second session. The literature review examined the income assistance program, highlighting how it is intentionally designed to be challenging for its users and only provides basic financial support. It is this level of financial support that induces “poverty scars” it forces children to develop coping strategies to manage their limited resources. In addition, it appears to create a sense of scarcity, and lowered self-esteem for its users. The research of Urie Bronfenbrenner (2014) reports that for children to thrive, effective public policies and practices must provide opportunities that include essential resources and sufficient parenting time. The literature review uncovered that children’s experience with poverty causes problems in all areas of their life. The findings of the research uncovered that the participants in my study, now adults, shared characteristics I define as “poverty scars” that manifested in longing from the necessities of childhood – particularly popular toys of the time, lack of opportunities and adequate food. This deep-rooted scarcity persisted into adulthood, resulting in acting out behaviours of lack, developed in childhood.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	v
CHAPTER 1: The Purpose for This Research.....	1
Introduction	1
A Statement of the problem Income Assistance: A Social Issue	4
Significance of the Research and the Research Question	5
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review	7
Introduction	7
The Welfare State Ideology	8
Social Programs.....	10
Problematizing Income Assistance and Its Users.....	13
Income Assistance: A Program of Last Resort	14
Income Assistance and Single Parents	20
Income Assistance and Children	23
Conclusion.....	27
CHAPTER 3: Conceptual Framework and Photovoice Methodology	29
Introduction	29
Photovoice Methodology	30
University of Victoria Ethical Considerations.....	34
Recruitment of Participants.....	35
Individual Interviews.....	36
Theoretical Framework	38
CHAPTER 4: Data, Data Analysis and Findings.....	42
Introduction	42
Data and Themes.....	45
The Gala	46
Dominant Themes Uncovered in Analysis.....	56
Analysis: Further Thoughts.....	77
CHAPTER 5: Conclusion	82
Introduction	82
The Literature	82
Themes of Hardships Uncovered	83

Implications.....	84
Limitations	85
Recommendations to Policymakers	86
Personal Reflection	87
References	89
Appendices.....	97
A – CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL.....	98
B - RECRUITMENT POSTER.....	99
C - FIRST CONTACT QUESTIONS.....	100
D - PARTICIPANT SECOND PRE-SCREENING INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM	101
E - PARTICIPANT SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	105
F - PARTICIPANT THIRD QUESTIONNAIRE CONSENT FORM	107
G - PARTICIPANT THIRD INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE	112
H - SAFETY PLAN.....	114
I - PARTICIPANT CONSENT DESCRIPTION RESEARCH LETTER	115
J - PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FORM.....	118
K - PARTICIPANT INFORMED CHECKLIST FOR PARTICIPATION	120
L - RESEARCHER’S FINAL CHECKLIST FORM	122
M - PARTICIPANT PHOTOGRAPH RELEASE FORM.....	124
N - GROUP PROMPT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.....	126
O – LAST GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS.....	127

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge that I work, live, and study on the traditional territories of the Coast Salish People. I would like to specifically thank the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh people for allowing me to be a visitor on their land.

Its important to acknowledge my committee members who supported me on this journey, particularly Dr. Jeannine Carriere, despite her limited time and other graduate students' commitments she agreed to supervise me. I appreciate your sacrifice Jeannine and will be forever grateful. I thank Dr. Donna Jeffery for pushing me beyond what I thought my educational learning limits could be.

A special thank you to Pamela Nesbitt a dear and loyal friend who believed in me on my educational journey from the beginning and challenged me to take this big step to complete a Master of Social Work degree.

I would like to express my appreciation to all the participants who took part in this research. Your bravery in embarking on this journey is truly commendable. By sharing your vulnerable experiences of being raised on income assistance, you have opened doors for other children who have faced similar circumstances. Your generosity and the act of communicating your painful memories through photographs have shed light on the harmful impacts of the income assistance program. This has brought attention to the inadvertent hardships that affect children, children can now find solace in knowing that poverty is not their fault and that they are not alone on this challenging journey.

Thanks to your use of income assistance, Stella, I gained firsthand experience of what it's like to be a child raised on income assistance. Now, I can use my experiences to provide solace and support to others.

Jarred, my son you have been the best thing that ever happened to me. I love you from every fiber of my being. Thank you for your unconditional support and love during my educational journey

With deepest gratitude, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS), for their unwavering support through out the last five years in completing my master's degree. Their support has been instrumental in my personal and professional growth, and I am truly fortunate to be employed with such a remarkable agency.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the children who have grown up on income assistance and have felt alone in their struggles. I understand the pain of not knowing when your next meal will be, the worry of not having enough money for special school events like hot dog day, and the shame of wearing second-hand clothes that don't fit well on the first day of school. I see and acknowledge your experiences.

The purpose of this thesis is to urge government and policy makers to consider the recommendations made by researchers who have written about and studied the harmful effects of income assistance policy and its accompanying poverty. The benefit of new action would be to reduce or eliminate the guaranteed future harm on children.

CHAPTER 1: The Purpose for This Research

“Poverty is a very complicated issue, but feeding a child isn’t.”

Jeff Bridges

Introduction

This research aimed to uncover whether provincial income assistance programs, (ia) negatively affected children’s agency, and whether it created what I call a “poverty scar.” My definition of “poverty scar” refers to behaviours carried from childhood into adulthood that compensate for a lack of financial resources at home, including limited access to food, clothing, extracurricular activities and a developed fear of going without. This social program is known by different names including the dole, welfare, social assistance and income assistance; this list is not exhaustive. Throughout this thesis the last three names will be used interchangeably. I grew up on income assistance and I developed strategies to get my needs met by stealing food, and clothes. Further, when my family visited others and I was offered food, I would often take an extra cookie or sandwich for later. I learned not to prioritize food, because I never knew when I would eat next. As I grew older, I continued to eat minimally, as this became my way of life. I also learned to stretch whatever resources I had to their fullest capacity due to the lingering fear that my needs would not be met. I also learned to keep family secrets and not to divulge any information to our neighbours, family or the income assistance worker about our home. These strategies persisted into adulthood, even when I was more financially established.

This project is deeply personal to me. Although I share very little about myself, even the small details I do reveal make me feel uncomfortable. I kept my experience with income assistance and the scars a secret, as I believed that somehow, I was defective. I perceived my

reluctance to talk about income assistance and my experiences as a “poverty scar,” highlighting the lasting impact of those early challenges. This topic is important for multiple reasons children are growing up with “poverty scars”; more awareness on this topic is necessary; income assistance rates need to be higher; and more consideration into policy development needs to be considered.

There is a prevailing belief that accessing income assistance is a simple process and that certain individuals benefit from it, ultimately enhancing their wealth (Seccombe, 2007). Income assistance users, however, report it as a difficult program to access and recall it as a completely demoralizing experience (Sheldrick, 2006). Some members of our society would rather sleep on the street and access food line-ups than apply for this program. The focus of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the impact of income assistance on children, and to learn how income assistance usage hurts children’s agency.

In examining the existing literature on poverty and its impact on children, it is evident that there is a substantial body of research featuring the negative long-term outcomes for children raised in poverty. Children who grow up in poverty face adversity in nearly every aspect of their lives, and the consequences can be devastating (Greve, 2019). However, much of this literature tends to conclude at age eighteen, leaving a significant gap in our understanding what happens to these children as they transition into adulthood. While some researchers like Jennifer Podesta (2017) and Pamela Attree (2006) explored the challenges faced by teenagers living on income assistance, focusing particularly on issues such as low self-esteem and limited opportunities due to their financial circumstances, there remains a notable absence of research specifically addressing children’s engagement with income assistance program and its accompanying poverty.

The terms single mothers, single parent, lone mothers and lone parents will also be used interchangeably, as they all refer to the same demographic. While there is extensive literature on the experiences of single mothers' engagement with income assistance, their children's experience is often overlooked and unexplored. This omission is critical, as the experiences of children accompanying their parents to income assistance offices can be profoundly damaging and humiliating. Children are often subjected to snide remarks and judgemental attitudes from the public, such as in schools, which can deeply affect their self-worth. Additionally, when children witness their parents being treated poorly by income assistance representatives, they internalize this negative treatment, leading them to feel that there is something inherently wrong with them, or even more harmful, that it is acceptable to be treated poorly. This insight underscores the importance of examining the problem of income assistance and its rates as a social issue, as well as the significance of the research and the intention of the research question.

A Statement of the problem Income Assistance: A Social Issue

My purpose in pursuing post-graduate studies in social work was to gain greater insight into the construct of inequality in society and to obtain knowledge that would provoke social change around income assistance poverty. The thesis process for my master's degree in social work has informed me that many factors contribute to poverty. The main contributor to poverty in Canada is the ideology supported by the Liberal Welfare State. It purports that citizens should be able to meet their financial needs with little to no assistance from the government (Hicks, 2007). This attitude creates hardship for those members of society that require more support to meet their daily needs. As an anti-oppressive social worker, I believe people have a fundamental right to access income assistance support that meets the market basket measure (Aldridge, 2017). The fact that income assistance rates remain too low to lift families out of poverty appears to be minimized as a serious social issue. While Premier David Eby's government has taken some initiatives to raise the quality of life for British Columbians, the current income assistance rates continue to remain well below the cost of items in the market basket.

Research highlights that accessing income assistance can have detrimental effects on its users. Gwen Brodsky et al., (2006) states that "[t]he level and kind of deprivation [lone parent] led families experience has long-term negative effects on the physical and psychological health of both these mothers and their children" (p.11). Building on the literature and research, both indicated that children suffered from low self-esteem, a lack of opportunities, stigma and experienced authoritarian parenting, while their parents endured emotional hardship while in receipt of income assistance. This hardship also impacted their children's agency and self-efficacy. In my social work practice, I have continued to raise awareness about how low-income assistance rates were harmful to children.

Significance of the Research and the Research Question

Although income assistance program's intentions are to get people back into the workforce, the details of such programs also convey an underlying message that undermines its user's dignity (Sheldrick, 2006). The topic of income assistance and its impact on children was developed because of my own experience with being raised on income assistance. I blamed income assistance for my circumstances. I believed if there was more money to live on, I could have had access to school food programs, dental care, decent shoes, quality clothing, and after school activities, such as dance, or acting classes. As an adult, I continue to harbour a deep fear of income assistance and grapple with doubt regarding my own emotional needs and what I am allowed to ask for. This fear was further intensified by the repercussions of stigma which demanded secrecy, a "cloak of silence." I maintained that silence. The experience of being on income assistance was a constant exercise in concealing the shame of that reality. Now as an adult, I began to question how other adults from similar backgrounds coped with the effects of having been raised on income assistance and its accompanying poverty. It is only within the scope of carrying out this research that I began to share with friends and acquaintances that I was raised on income assistance. I was surprised when I revealed my experience, because it prompted others to share their own experiences of either being raised on income assistance or spending a period of their childhood relying on it. It was interesting to discover that people only opened about this topic once I shared my own experiences. Because of this revelation I sought to uncover this question, do children raised on income assistance develop 'poverty scars,' i.e. lifelong behavioral patterns and coping strategies that adversely affect them in adulthood. This research attempts to determine how "poverty scars" manifest in adulthood.

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter two contains a discussion of the literature that I reviewed for this study. Chapter three offers a discussion of the conceptual

framework guiding my research and the methodology employed. I detail the use of photovoice methodology as a process, emphasizing how it enables participants to visually express their experiences. Additionally, I explain the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) practice including the necessary approvals obtained for this research. Chapter four focuses on presenting the data collected during the research highlighting my primary data sources, which include photographs, captions, group notes, and identified themes. I discuss the process of data collection and analysis, highlighting the main themes that emerged from the participant's contributions. By examining these themes, I sought to present a thorough analysis of the findings. In Chapter five, I conclude with a summary of my findings, reflecting on the literature review, data analysis, themes, recommendations, and personal insights gained from the research project. This project focused on the complex topic children's experience with income assistance poverty and the development of "poverty scars," along with their lasting impact on children's lives. To better understand these issues, it is essential to explore the existing literature on poverty and its impact on children. The literature review offers some highlights on the detrimental impact and outcomes of living with few resources for children.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

“ . . . poverty is not created by poor people. It has been created and sustained by the economic and social systems that we designed . . . the policies that we pursue.”

Muhammad Yunus

Introduction

The objective of the literature review was to explore research on whether children raised on income assistance develop “poverty scars,” or those behaviors and deeply ingrained beliefs that shape their self-perception and sense of worth. These scars manifest not only as coping mechanisms in response to the challenges of living on income assistance but also influence how these children view themselves and what they believe they deserve. They may internalize the idea of being “undeserving,” which can limit their aspirations and hinder their ability to advocate for themselves. This understanding of “poverty scars” emphasized the lasting impact of economic hardship on children’s identities and their potential for personal growth. I believe that children internalize their experiences with income assistance, and the negative aspects of these experiences can have lasting effects that follow them into adulthood. I concluded that the experience of poverty through income assistance was more detrimental to children’s well-being than traditional poverty, as inadequate financial support led to economic deprivation for children. This, in turn, manifested in issues related to low self-esteem and increased engagement in problematic behaviors adopted from childhood.

Income assistance, commonly referred to as welfare, is a provincial program that provides financial support to individuals who demonstrate a genuine need. To qualify for this assistance, applicants must meet specific eligibility criteria, which include a thorough assessment

of their financial circumstances. This program is only available to those who have already exhausted all other available public and private resources for support (Hick, 2007).

The literature I reviewed encompassed grey literature, books, and peer reviewed journal articles. Much of the literature in this review originated in the United States and the United Kingdom. At the time of writing, I was unable to find Canadian research specifically addressing “poverty scars” or the impact of income assistance on children throughout their lifespan. However, there are studies that indicated other impacts, such as children’s mental health related to poverty. For instance, the work of Comeau et al., (2020) suggested that while income assistance programs should ideally reduce health disparities linked to economic disadvantage, the reality is often different. Disadvantaged children face increased adversity, like their parents, who grapple with societal perceptions of income assistance users, framing them in terms of “deserving” and “undeserving” within the context of poverty. Income assistance rates appear to cause more problems than alleviating poverty for families. Additionally, this financial assistance has significant implications for parenting practices, frequently resulting in authoritarian approaches that negatively affect children’s well-being (Apgar, 2021). A recurring theme in the literature is that children raised in poverty often do not reach their full potential (McLoyd, 1990), highlighting the critical need for effective support systems within this complex framework.

The Welfare State Ideology

The welfare state is a government system that provides a range of social services and financial support to its citizens. There are three types of welfare states: the social democratic; conservative; and the liberal welfare state. Globally, the liberal welfare states include Canada, the US, Ireland, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Toby Bryant, Scott Aquanno, and Dennis Raphael (2020) describe these liberal welfare states as underdeveloped because they only address

the immediate needs of individuals. For example, they provide a basic financial amount intended to cover food and shelter, but this amount often falls short of meeting the actual cost of living.

The model of the welfare state depends on a country's views about poverty, which can be contrary to people's actual needs. Canada's welfare state model is based on attitudes dating back to the English Poor Laws (O'Connell, 2010). The welfare state ideology, rooted in the English Poor Laws, shaped Canada's neoliberal welfare policies. The concepts of "deserving" and "undeserving" originated from the Statute of Labourers, an early example of social policy that embodied the belief held by society that individuals who sought financial assistance from the government were often perceived as lazy and unwilling to work. This statute reflects a societal view that equates poverty with a lack of effort, reinforcing the notion that those in need are undeserving of support (Hick, 2007, p. 28). The overarching concept is that individuals are responsible for their poverty, and that government assistance should be difficult to access and hard to live on. Stephen Hick (2007) argued that policymakers often created such policies to prevent the abuse of government assistance programs, emphasizing control and oversight to reduce the risk of exploitation. This section of the literature review focused on the ideology of the liberal welfare state. Canada's liberal welfare state model grounded itself in a neoliberal capitalist approach, characterized by minimal government involvement. This type of welfare state blames people for their poverty and makes poverty an individual problem. In neoliberal welfare state countries, "labour...is weak" (Bryant et al., 2020, p. 24) and wages are low. These countries tend to have higher unemployment and more poverty than in social democratic welfare states, and lastly "there is no commitment to reducing long-term insecurity or inequality" (Bryant et al., 2020, p. 24). In this context government attitudes, and specifically the categorization of the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, create a punitive and distressing environment for income

assistance users, perpetuating stigma, and negative perceptions of their identities. The structure of welfare states not only shaped the experiences of those in poverty but also reinforces societal stigma and inequality, hindering the prospects for individuals relying on income assistance. Expanding on this understanding of societal perceptions, John Solas (2018) emphasized the themes of moral character, arguing that those who faced hardship and were industrious were often regarded as worthy of assistance, while those deemed unworthy and seen as lazy did not deserve help. Additionally, in his research John Solas (2018) provided a bleak picture of Victorian England illustrated by Thomas Hobbes's depiction of early social work practice as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (p.1) which encapsulated the prevailing attitudes toward the poor. This historical context underscores how the state often employs benevolent policies to mask the oppressive nature of its support system.

Social Programs

In exploring the development of social programs Katrina Raymond (2019) simplifies them into two categories, income assistance programs and service-based social programs, highlighting the implications of this ideological framework on the support available to those in need. Income assistance programs provided monetary payment to individuals, including employment insurance benefits, family benefits, and income assistance. Other social programs included but were not restricted to, healthcare, social housing, and legal aid, to name a few. The fundamental objective is to create a safety net for Canadians, ensuring that resources are in place to assist individuals experiencing hardship.

However, the liberal welfare states intentionally complicated access to these programs, often implementing means tests that restricted relief, thereby reinforcing barriers to support. The most notorious "means tested" social program today is income assistance. Means tested programs are designed to determine need, classifying those who access them as the most destitute (Bryant et

al., 2020). The adoption of these policy requirement ensures that applicants have exhausted all avenues of support, including borrowing money from family and friends. Under this welfare state model its policies focus on reducing or minimizing state assistance.

The (neo)-liberal British Columbia provincial government asserted that a certain amount of social relief should be provided, while attaching conditions to the assistance. The government prefers that income assistance serves as a temporary resource, intended to help individuals transition from difficult circumstances to more prosperous times. The intention behind income assistance policy never aimed to support families indefinitely. Even though certain citizens rely on income assistance to support their families, the policy has not evolved in response to changing social realities (Zhang & Han, 2020). Income assistance policy is instrumental in reinforcing dominant discourses about charity and deservingness, often perpetuating the notion that only certain individuals and families merit support, while neglecting the profound impact these judgements have on those deemed undeserving, ultimately reflecting a lack of consideration for the complex systemic realities that shape their circumstances. This approach is often referred to as “legislative poverty,” meaning that government policy creates and perpetuates poverty. Shifting focus from the discourse of income assistance, it became evident that legislative measures significantly shaped poverty; while the government often overlooked its role in creating it, the Together BC policy is designed to foster greater accountability and create opportunities for individuals to overcome barriers, ultimately assisting them in obtaining employment and moving off income assistance.

By taking a proactive perspective to addressing income assistance and poverty, the provincial government created a poverty reduction strategy. The “Together BC” (2019) policy was developed by the British Columbia provincial government, specifically by the New

Democratic Party (NDP). The British Columbia provincial government developed the Together BC policy based on the BC First Poverty Reduction Strategy Act, which was conceived in 2018. The *Together BC* policy aimed to reduce overall poverty by 25 percent and by 50 percent for children by 2024. At the time of this policy initiative “557,000 people and 99,000 children” (Together BC, 2019, p.7) were living in poverty in British Columbia, however it does not say the exact number of families that were on income assistance. The provincial government takes responsibility for failed past policy initiatives and calls for new measures. The Together BC policy intends to combat discrimination and stigma and in addition “includes an overhaul of unfair and unhelpful social assistance policies” (Together BC, 2019, p. 7). To their credit the provincial New Democratic Party have raised income assistance rates twice since coming into power in 2017. A single employable mother with one child received \$969.00 and in 2024 now receives \$1405.00 monthly (gov.bc.ca, 2024), which does not include child tax or Good and Service Tax (GST). All three combined do not meet the inflated cost of living in British Columbia, but they are enough for the government to take credit for raising the rates. The policy does, however, create a measure of accountability on the part of the government to have regular reviews to evaluate its progress. A concern with the Together BC (2019) policy is that its language perpetuates the discourse suggesting that individuals can escape poverty if they have the right tools. Phrases like “a hand up and breaking the cycle of poverty” (p. 8) were commonly used. While the intention behind social policies may be to provide a safety net, a closer examination reveals an underlying adversity toward income assistance users. Policymakers embedded this distrust in the policies, shaping how they were written and implemented. As we move into the next section, I will explore how this versarial stance manifests in income assistance policy, affecting the support offered to individuals in need.

Problematizing Income Assistance and Its Users

In this section I draw on the work of Australian scholar, Carol Bacchi (2012), in particular her approach to policy analysis. Bacchi emphasizes that the way we constitute problems influences our perception of ourselves and others, shaping the narratives around social issues. “Following this line of thinking, policies and policy proposals often contain *implicit* representations of what is considered to be the problem” (Bacchi, 2021, p. 21). For social workers, this tool offers a critical analysis of policy and an opportunity to reflect on one’s own understanding of a policy. Bacchi (2021) writes, “what one proposes to do about something reveals what one thinks is problematic” (p. 21). Therefore, examining the creation of income assistance policy offers a vital lens through which to explore its development and the consequences it has for those it intends to support. However, income assistance policy creates more immediate and long-term problems for its users than assisting them to transition into the workforce. From an objective perspective, the literature review indicated that policy design carries an underlying tone of inadequacy for its users, suggesting that policy makers may not hold a high opinion of income assistance recipients. This raises questions about the true intent behind such policies and their effectiveness in fostering genuine improvement in the lives of those they aim to assist.

To illustrate this further, Bruce Wallace et al., (2006) cite a Minister’s report of the income assistance program. They write that this Minister described how welfare will “drain the human spirit, kill self-esteem, and bring a sense of hopelessness” and “can lead to other problems like alcohol and drug abuse, family neglect and physical abuse” (Wallace et al., 2006, p. 13). While it is true that families accessing income assistance can encounter these problems, it is crucial to recognize that these issues are not caused by the income assistance program itself. Rather, these issues can manifest due to the poverty that accompanies income assistance. If

individuals had access to a guaranteed living income, the likelihood of experiencing negative outcomes would be significantly reduced by such support. Therefore, it is vital to address the root causes of poverty rather than attributing the problems that arise solely to its users. The literature review consistently highlighted a problematic perception of income assistance users, suggesting a frequent view of them as seeking a free ride. While the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) projects a public image of creating policy intended to help people, what is occurring is the problematization of its users. Income assistance policy creates barriers that reflect a complex narrative, struggling to balance the desire to support individuals with the notions of “deserving” and “undeserving,” ultimately penalizing those who genuinely need assistance while perpetuating negative perceptions that its users might exploit the system. Given this framework, we must consider the language, discourse, and discursive formations that shaped our understanding of income assistance. Stuart Hall (2005) encourages us to question how we come to understand our reality, emphasizing the ways in which people assign meaning to various concepts and how those meanings become significant. In this light, we might explore the narratives surrounding policy development, the values and assumptions embedded in policy and the specific narrative related to single parents’ families receiving income assistance. Stuart Hall’s work prompts essential reflective questions: How do I know what I know? Whose knowledge do I carry? How does this knowledge guide my practice with people?

Income Assistance: A Program of Last Resort

The literature I have explored thus far in this chapter provides insight into the government’s perception of its users, emphasising concerns stemming from fears of misuse and the belief that support may not reach those it is intended to assist. In contrast, this section will delve into literature that examines the users’ perspective and the impact of income assistance on their lives.

The literature reviewed was consistent in identifying that poverty continues to be viewed as a personal defect rather than a broader social issue, resulting in the continued mistreatment and marginalization of individuals grappling with economic hardship. In addition, the literature indicated that income assistance recipients shared experiences of an application process that can be both oppressive and punitive. The analysis also explored the impact on single parents' engagement and the effects on their children.

The MSDPR has undergone several name changes over the last five decades. However, what has not changed is the prejudicial views this agency has against those it serves. This social safety net is frequently referred to as "the program of last resort" (Klein et al., 2008) which means a person must have exhausted all their resources including help from family and friends. This program has gained a reputation for its harsh policies and indifferent service representatives who enforce those policies. As a child, I often wondered why this system was allowed to persist. I would question whether the adults were aware of the difficulties and hardships this imposed on children. Through my post secondary education studying social work, I gradually realized that income assistance was intentionally structured to create a severe and degrading experiences for those reliant on it. This realization became even more pronounced as I observed the evolution of income assistance policies over the years, which increasingly aimed to limit access and impose strict eligibility requirements on those in need.

In fact, after years of welfare reform, policymakers implemented additional measures to further reduce income assistance user's access, complicating the application process. Initially, the Canadian Assistance Plan (CAP) program in the 1970s provided provinces with the necessary funding to facilitate the distribution of welfare aid (Pulkingham, 2015). However, once the CAP program was withdrawn, the ease of applying for income assistance began to fade. The days

when one could apply at 9:00 AM and receive a cheque by 3:00 PM had passed. Instead, the application process had transformed into a bureaucratic and cumbersome ordeal, now accompanied by additional barriers such as three-week work search requirement, making it increasingly challenging for individuals to obtain assistance. Applying for income assistance had once been a more straightforward process; however, the stigma and social judgment surrounding those who sought aid remained unchanged. Society continues to perceive income assistance indicative of a moral deficit, which reinforced negative stereotypes (Seccombe, 2007).

In 2002, a significant welfare reform in British Columbia introduced stringent policies that felt reminiscent of the punitive measures of early English Poor Laws, imposing harsh restrictions on income assistance user. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) in Vancouver, British Columbia, representing new applicants and current income assistance users, made several complaints to the Ombudsman's office that the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, as it was known at the time, was not following their own procedures and was being unfair and limiting access to eligible applicants (Carter, 2009). One of the main problems with the eligibility process was that it was too complicated. The Ombudsman at the time, Kim Carter (2009), pointed out in her report, *Last Resort: Improving Fairness and Accountability in British Columbia's Income Assistance Programs*, that the “[g]overnment decides what programs they will establish. If those programs are ones that provide benefits to eligible applicants, then government decides to whom, and under what circumstances, those benefits will be provided” (p. 2). She further comments “A basic principle is that the benefit, whatever it may be . . . [must] be reasonably accessible to the group of people the government has designed it to assist” (Carter, 2009, p. 2).

Kim Carter's report addressed discriminatory practices by the new government overseeing the Ministry. She stated that "British Columbia's Income Assistance Program does not follow its own self-imposed service standards" (Carter, 2009, p. 6). The thinking guiding this report and peoples' access to financial social programs ran into the debate of who is "eligible" and who is "not eligible," which is comparable to a worldview on "deserving" and "undeserving". A message re-enforced by government and policy writers about income assistance is that "[s]ocial assistance is the income program of last resort" (Wallace et al., 2006, p. 39).

Since this complaint there have been some constructive changes to the income assistance application and requirement process under the New Democratic Party led by David Eby. A couple of significant changes include a program to assist single mothers to gain training for employment and rate increases overall (gov.bc.ca, 2024). Regardless of these changes, income assistance rates still fall well-below the cost of living in Metro Vancouver, British Columbia. There is a significant gap in the literature on income assistance that fails to adequately address its impact on the personal lives and challenges faced by its users. A significant amount of the existing research had focused on the perspective of researchers, leaving the voices of income assistance users unheard. Seth Klein et al., (2008) provided profiles of income assistance users struggle living on the fixed financial support of this program. They explained why income assistance users might engage in "panhandling, survival sex, or various illegal activities and why some remain in or return to abusive relationships" (p. 130). The financial hardship imposed by this program on its users not only leads to increased costs in areas such as healthcare, policing, and justice (Klein et al., 2008) but also creates a situation which makes it impossible for income assistance users to change their financial circumstances. The continual struggle for survival reduces their capacity for change.

The research of Byron Sheldrick, Harold Dyck, Claudette Michell, and Troy Myers (2006) studied the impact of income assistance on users in the inner city of Winnipeg. These authors offered a refreshing perspective by articulating the experiences and feelings of inner-city users of income assistance. The authors report statements by income assistance users such as: “It makes me feel alone, I’m not worth anything, and It makes me feel like less of a person” (Sheldrick et al., 2006, pp, 75-76). By prioritizing income assistance users’ narratives, these negative experiences underscore the need for a deeper understanding of the income assistance system and shed light on the challenges and realities faced by those navigating this system.

The literature I reviewed consistently included sections on policy recommendations aimed at improving income-based social programs, yet these suggestions are often overlooked. Policy development is heavily influenced by dominant discourses, which suggest that income assistance users are unmotivated to work and may be the so-called generosity of these programs. As a result, research recommendations to enhance income assistance do not seem to impact policy, reinforcing the notion that those who access these resources are failing to take responsibility for their financial situations. Furthermore, societal perceptions shaped dominant discourses by stigma, contributing to the concept of the “spoiled identity,” a term adopted from the work of Erving Goffman (1963). This stigma affects not only public perception but also the personal identity of individuals navigating the income assistance system.

Erving Goffman, a sociologist well known for his contributions to our understanding of stigma, provides an insightful explanation of the concept of “spoiled identity,” which can help illuminate the inherent stigma faced by users of income assistance, and how these negative perceptions impact their daily lives and interactions with the system. Erving Goffman (1963) defined stigma as a social or individual attribute that is discredited in specific social contexts. Stigma is crucial

to this literature review because it identifies the harm stigma can cause to peoples' agency and self-efficacy. Stigma serves as a powerful motivator that leads individuals to avoid applying for income assistance, as they fear acquiring a "spoiled identity." This concept of "spoiled identity" is illustrated in the work of Lennard J. Davis (2017), a disabilities scholar, who echoed Goffman's thoughts on how society categorized individuals as normal or unacceptable based on arbitrary social standards (Goffman, 1963, as cited in L.J. Davis, 2017). Stigma is a pervasive social construct that negatively impacts the identity of individual who rely on income assistance, often portraying them as unworthy or irresponsible. This harmful narrative, shaped by societal expectations and reinforced by policy discourse, not only damages personal identity but also perpetuates the misconception that income assistance users are akin to criminals, further marginalizing those in need of support.

Income assistance users are confronted with stigma that subjects them to humiliating public encounters. For instance, cashing income assistance checks at a bank can lead to verbal assault and judgmental glances from frontline staff, reinforcing the perception of welfare recipients as social outcasts. Erving Goffman emphasized the impact of societal perceptions on these individuals, describing how the "othering" process perpetuates stigmatization and discrimination (Goffman 1963, as cited in Davis, 2017). Stigma not only affects the self-esteem of income assistance users but also imposes significant critical social judgment, making it increasingly difficult for them to navigate a system that is already fraught with challenges. As Goffman notes, to change stigmatization of the "other," society must alter their views of who the "other" is (Goffman, 1963, as cited in Davis, 2017).

The literature I reviewed revealed that society often labels individuals receiving income assistance with disparaging language, which created negative images of their character. Karen

Seccombe (2007) identifies one popularized discourse depicting single mothers as “lazy, unmotivated, and dependent on the system” (p. 54). In this context these disparaging discourses serve to influence the public’s view of single mothers’ identity as they influence and shape what we think we know about specific circumstances or people (Munns, 2010).

Income Assistance and Single Parents

One discursive theme that has had lasting traction suggested that single mothers accessing income assistance lead an easy life, with critics claiming these women enjoy a free ride at taxpayer’s expense (Seccombe, 2007). However, the literature review depicted a vastly distinct set of circumstances for low-income parents. Dominant discourses distort these parents’ realities, overlooking the significant challenges they face, including financial insecurity, negative perceptions of their parenting, stigma, and the struggle to provide for their children. Addressing misconceptions is essential to fostering a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of poverty for single mothers, particularly those receiving income assistance.

The literature indicated that the experience of “poverty profoundly affects how individuals think, feel, and act” (Fell & Hewstone, 2015, p. 3). The emotional and psychological toll of navigating poverty and the additional toll of being on income assistance can lead to feelings of shame, isolation, and diminished self-worth, which further complicates parent’s ability to parent. Single mothers navigate a challenging path as they seek to be productive members of society, yet the social support they require often falls short of providing the necessary resources to achieve their educational, employment, or parenting goals. When mothers are unable to obtain their goals and decide to stay home with their children, they face another form of harsh criticism and stigmatization, further complicating their parental duties, educational, or work goals.

This literature review has already highlighted that the debate surrounding income assistance programs has a long history, focusing on questions of who truly needs the program, who should

be eligible, and what entitlements recipients should receive. This debate often fuels the dominant discourse that stigmatizes single mothers' engagement with income assistance. Karen Seccombe (2007) writes that society often characterizes single mothers as indolent, with low literacy, and having multiple children from different fathers. Contrary to these narratives, her research revealed that while certain participants may fit this characterization, women have encountered unforeseen circumstances that led to unemployment and raising their children alone with limited resources. Additionally, despite the discourse and literature suggesting that single mothers do not want to work, the majority of Karen Seccombe's (2007) participants expressed a desire to either work or attend post-secondary school. However, significant barriers to attaining full-time employment exist. These barriers highlight the complexity of the situation, emphasizing that these mothers are not simply defined by stereotypes, but rather by their often-difficult realities which society tends to overlook.

The literature review revealed another area where low-income parents face significant challenges. Research indicated that these parents often encountered numerous stressors while trying to manage their limited financial resources and parent effectively. The combination of these constraint and stressors often leads to an authoritarian parenting style. Vonnie McLoyd (1990) points out that "mothers who are poor, as compared to their advantaged counterparts, are more likely to use power-assertive techniques in disciplinary encounters and are generally less supportive of their children" (p. 322). Economic disadvantaged parents "value obedience more, are less likely to use reasoning, and more likely to use physical punishment as a means of disciplining and controlling the child" (Apgar, 2021, p. 322). Ben Fell and Miles Hewstone (2015) commented that "parental self-efficacy has been found to significantly impact parenting quality" (p. 16). "Lower-class parents are more likely to issue commands without explanation,

less likely to consult the child about his or her wishes, and less likely to reward the child verbally for behaving in desirable ways” (McLoyd, 1990, p. 322). Additionally, “the capacity of poor parents for supportive sensitive and involved parenting is diminished” (Conger et al., as cited in McLoyd, 1990, p. 322). This demographic of parents believes the world is difficult and challenging and they believe that being tough on their children will prepare them to survive in a harsh world (McLoyd, 1990).

Research conducted by Gary W. Evans (2004) found that poverty interrupted parents’ ability to engage in effective parenting. He addressed the perspective that “unresponsive and harsher, more punitive parenting occurs more often among low-income families. Beginning as early as infancy, which can have lasting effects on child development” (Conger & Elder, 1994; Magnusson & Duncan, 2002; McLoyd, 1998, as cited in Evans, 2004, p.78). Gary W. Evans (2004) concluded that “mothers of lower [socioeconomic status] offered less emotional support to their young children” (p. 79). In addition to these findings, Dawn Apgar (2021) discussed the characteristics of children and their future when parented under authoritarian style. In this style, “[c]hildren are expected to follow the strict rules established by the parents” (Apgar, 2021, p. 82) with failure to follow such rules typically resulting in punishment. Authoritarian parents often do not explain their rules, focusing instead on obedience and compliance. While this parenting approach “may produce children who are obedient and proficient, but are lower in happiness, social competence, and self-esteem” (p. 82).

This section ties into my research by highlighting the profound effects of poverty on children and how income assistance policies can exacerbate these challenges. We have learned that living in poverty is inherently difficult for children, and income assistance programs, which are often structured in ways that make participation burdensome, can make their situations even harder.

Children do not easily forget their struggles; the experiences of going without and facing limitations leave lasting impressions. Furthermore, the policies surrounding income assistance are rooted in a welfare state model that often overlooks the long-term impact on children. The harsh realities faced by low-income families can lead to a parenting style that is more authoritarian and less supportive, which in turn affects children's emotional and psychological development.

By examining the interplay between poverty, income assistance, and parenting styles, we can better understand how these factors contribute to what I refer to as “poverty scars,” the lasting effects of childhood experiences that continue into adulthood. These scars are often internalized and can shape a person's identity and coping mechanisms throughout their life. This understanding reinforces the need for policies that recognize and address the complexities of poverty and its impact on children, rather than placing additional burdens on families already in crisis. In this next section, I will explore how poverty shapes children’s self-esteem and the complex emotions they experience as they become invisible bystanders to the effects and challenges of income assistance poverty.

Income Assistance and Children

There is a substantial body of literature highlighting the negative impact of poverty on children, showing that those raised in impoverished environments faced significant challenges and adversities. However, there is a notable absence of research regarding adults’ reflections on their experiences growing up in families reliant on income assistance. Little is known about how these childhood experiences shape their perspectives and well-being in adulthood. This critical area of study requires further research despite the significant role income assistance played in shaping children’s experiences. Furthermore, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Greg J. Duncan (1997), experts in the field of poverty, acknowledge that “the research reviewed thus far suggests that

living in poverty exacts a heavy toll on child outcomes” (p. 64). However, they do not clarify what the heavy toll might be, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of how disadvantageous socioeconomic conditions influence children during their transitions into adulthood (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). This underscores the need for further exploration in this vital area.

While the contributions of scholars like Gary W. Evans (2004), Jeanne Brook-Gunn, Greg Duncan (1997), and Vonnie McLoyd (1990) are invaluable in illustrating the challenges and outcomes faced by children living in poverty—such as limited access to resources and opportunities – their research does not include the impact of income assistance poverty. These author’s research consistently demonstrated that poverty negatively impacts children’s outcomes. Income assistance reflects a more severe form of poverty, introducing additional challenges and hardships that contribute to the development of “poverty scars,” which can be even more detrimental to children’s well-being than those associated with standard levels of poverty. The economic deprivation resulting from the insufficient income assistance rates disproportionately affects children whose parents rely on this support. The small income assistance rates create an economic deprivation that never resets for children even when their economic situation changes as adults. The income assistance provided has historically offered only the bare minimum of financial support, which has proven to be insufficient for covering basic needs such as shelter and food, especially in a high-cost area like Vancouver in 2024. Building upon my understanding of how poverty shapes children’s experiences, this section of the literature review will delve into research on the impact of material disadvantages faced by both children and youth, as well as the stigma associated with poverty. Jennifer Podesta (2006) claims that children have been viewed as passive, subordinate and incomplete future adults (p.

55), however “[r]esearch reveals children as workers, carers, counsellors, and economic factors contributing to family and “real economies” (Ridge, 2002; Zelizer, 1985: 209, as cited in Podesta, 2017, p. 354). While children’s presence with their parents in income assistance offices can be viewed as insignificant, they experience the same stresses and disrespect their parents face. Society frequently overlooks the impact of these encounters, failing to recognize that children absorb the ill treatment directed at their parents. Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Greg Duncan (1997) recognized that prior research conducted by other scholars disagreed with the hypothesis that income did not impact children’s well-being. These authors found that current research indicated that children’s outcomes were more influenced by their parents’ “genetics, work ethic” (p. 67) and character than by other factors. Researchers have revealed that “the constraints on social participation associated with poverty means that children begin to understand the reality of being “different” at an early age,” (Middleton et al., 1994, as cited in Attree, 2005, p. 59). Erving Goffman’s (1963) research emphasized that the Greeks designed stigma to mark individuals as different, prompting others to avoid them. While visible scars may not be apparent today, the internalization of stigma often results in low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy or moral deficiency, as defined by societal standards of acceptability.

Children feel pressured to conform to societal norms and align their preferences with their peers to fit in and gain acceptance within their social group. Living in poverty often forces children to make significant sacrifices. They may miss attending social activities, go without clothing like that worn by their peers, miss sporting and recreational opportunities, and most importantly, they often do not have access to the proper nutrition they need. Various ways that children internalize or manage this lack are by going without or by undervaluing their needs. Jennifer Podesta (2017) comments that “[m]any of the children spoke about ‘not really needing’

things, suggesting they were actively moderating their own needs and adapting preferences around what their families could afford” (p. 356). The lack of access to consumer items left the children feeling “embarrassed about their circumstances, particularly if their social activities were restricted by low family income” (Roker, 1998, as cited in Attree, 2006, p. 59). She declared that [c]hildren were agents in managing household budgets and strategizing, like delaying the purchase of items such as school shoes and “they limited the amount of water, phone, and internet use to keep costs down or extend services” (Podesta, 2017).

Poverty can have long-term consequences on children’s opportunities and prospects in adulthood, influencing their “life chance” (The Science of Early Childhood Development, 2007). In Jennifer Podesta’s (2017) study, the children reported sacrificing their own needs so as not to place more stress on their mothers, and as a strategy to avoid the disappointment of not being able to have things they wanted. Candice L. Odgers (2015) presents “another complimentary perspective on why socioeconomic position is such a robust determinant of children’s well-being” when she wrote “that feeling poor in relation to others leads to a series of negative comparisons, self-evaluations, and outcomes” (p. 726). This understanding aligns with existing research that highlights how economic deprivation influences children’s self-image and fosters maladaptive behavior, as they learn that their needs are unimportant, thereby demonstrating the profound impact that poverty can have on their overall development and interactions. Liwei Zhang and Wen-Jui Han (2020) sought to understand the outcome of economic deprivation on children’s behavior. These authors found that a constant, persistent lack of resources, and the duration of time a child experiences that lack, has a massive impact on the child’s emotional and mental functioning. Their study supported the current research that economic deprivation influences negative internalizing and externalizing behaviors in children. The researchers

suggested that looking at multidimensional poverty patterns could thus help future policymakers devise the right mix of policies and programs to support children from low-income families. They state that since children and families are all different, policy writers must be more innovative in policy design and stop designing one type of policy for everyone (Zhang & Han, 2020). Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Greg Duncan (1997) claim there are multiple scenarios as to what led to poor outcomes for low socio-economic children. These authors recognized a theme in which society blamed children for their poverty. They argue that children do not have a choice of the family they are born into, yet they experienced shame, stigma, and responsibility for their parents' poverty. Further research on the long-term impact of income deprivation only stands to better the lives of children across the lifespan.

Conclusion

This literature review reveals several of the systemic issues which perpetuate poverty. The structure of the liberal welfare state is fundamentally responsible for the impoverishment of its citizens. The current policies do not adequately financially support parents in their roles, and by operating under the assumption that everyone can lift themselves out of poverty, these policies overlook the systemic issues that perpetuate economic inequality and unfairly place blame on individuals for their socioeconomic conditions. This blame culture not only neglects the real needs of families but also fails to consider the long-term impacts on children, hindering their development and well-being.

The research consistently demonstrated that children raised in poverty will experience long-term adverse effects. Specific areas where children will experience such adversity include education, employment, mental health, cognitive development, physical development, and relationships. Children will have more difficulty through natural life transitions into high school and young adulthood; they will face more challenges, fewer opportunities, and fewer resources.

The research did not include subjects past the age of eighteen, and never fully explained the long-term hardship for those children into adulthood. The research only states that hardships will occur. As a social worker, it is crucial to acknowledge that children who experience poverty will face long-term adversity. While children are resilient and creative in managing the disparities that accompany poverty, it is important to recognize they should not have to shoulder such burdens. Instead, they deserve the opportunity to have fun, experience adventure, and grow in an environment that provides them with all the opportunities they need.

In the next chapter I will explore the methodology used for this thesis illustrating how it fostered a deeper understanding of the participant's narratives and contributed to the overall findings of this research. Through their photographs, the participants invited us to see their world when they were children, enriching our understanding of the complexities surrounding income assistance poverty and its lasting effects into adulthood.

CHAPTER 3: Conceptual Framework and Photovoice Methodology

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

Ann Frank

Introduction

My research aimed to uncover how children were affected by their parents' use of income assistance and how these children coped with the resulting poverty associated with that assistance. How precisely did the income assistance program, its representatives, its policies, and its poverty influence children's outcomes? Through this research, I observed varying degrees of poverty. There is poverty associated with the working poor who do not have all the associated harms associated with income assistance poverty. For example, income assistance users often faced heightened stereotypes and stigmas, which can significantly impact their sense of identity. The research revealed that policymakers deliberately designed income assistance practices and policies to create hardships and make the experience uncomfortable for users, resulting in the creation of categories of “deserving” and “underserving” (Hick, 2007).

Amber Gazso (2020) and Pamela Attree (2006) have conducted significant research focusing on the experiences of children and teens navigating the challenges associated with income assistance and its related poverty. Their work emphasized the nuanced realities faced by young individuals as they grow up in households reliant on such support systems. In contrast, Tracy Sheldrick (2006) has written an insightful article about the experiences of adults receiving income assistance, highlighting the complexities and stigma they encounter. Amber Gazso (2020) and Pamela Attree's (2006) research focused on children's engagement with poverty,

providing precise examples of how those growing up with limited financial resources learn to forgo certain necessities, such as food and entertainment, and reduce their utility consumption. These children became increasingly conscious of how their limited resources were utilized and developed strategies to extend their use. Such actions by children offer a deeper understanding of how “poverty scars” can develop, shaping their experiences and perspectives as they navigate their circumstances. By examining the intersection of childhood experiences and income assistance poverty, their work sheds light on how children engage in their environment with poverty associated with income assistance. This understanding is crucial to recognizing the long-term impacts that such circumstances can have on children's lives as they navigate the complexities of their environments. For my research I employed a methodology that is both versatile and adaptable for small subject groups. This approach not only fosters deeper engagement but also amplifies the impact on pressing social issues, driving meaningful change and understanding within society.

In the following section, I introduce and expand on the methodology of photovoice, and its adaptability. I also address the ethical considerations of the ethics test, ethics application and ethics requirements mandated by the University of Victoria, detailing the recruitment process and the rationale behind my choices of advertisement for participants. This section concludes with an overview of the theoretical framework that underpinned this research, setting the stage for a comprehensive understanding of the data analysis and findings.

Photovoice Methodology

Photovoice methodology was used for this thesis because of its flexibility. Photovoice is a visual research method. Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris (1997) developed photovoice in the 1990s as an action-oriented methodology. Photovoice was created specifically for the health field as a tool “for community members [to] come together to decide and change social issues in

their communities” (Jarldorn, 2016, p. 6). “Photovoice was born out of three distinct theoretical frameworks: empowerment education for critical consciousness, feminist theory, and documentary photography” (Sutton-Brown, 2014, p.170).

This methodology offers an opportunity for social workers, marginalized groups and communities to work together for social community change. The foundational components of photovoice methodology are to take action to dismantle a construct. Through the action of taking photographs, the optical features of photovoice can stimulate all the human senses and serve as a powerful catalyst for social change (Palibroda et al., 2009). This methodology empowers individuals and communities to advocate for policy reform, driving social change, and potentially promoting healing and personal growth (Wang, & Burris, 1997).

Moreover, the empowering nature of this methodology underscores how photovoice participants actively engage as researchers themselves. They do so by selecting what they wish to share and narrate their photographs demonstrating leadership in the decision-making process and contributing significantly to data analysis (Jarldorn, 2016). While there are indeed other research methodologies that involve participants in the collection and analysis of data, participants in photovoice are active in all aspects of the research. In contrast to traditional research methodologies, the art of photography captures the participant’s perspective, experience and narrative. For example, Jennifer Podesta’s (2017) article, references the experiences of several children but only names one. While there may be a reason behind her choice to mention just one name, it is not uncommon in research for the voices of the marginalized to be overshadowed by the researcher’s perspective. Critical analysis requires us to question whose voice is really speaking and whose perspective we are being introduced to. An important question to consider is whether what’s being communicated reflects the researcher’s subjective

perspective based on their interpretation of what they think they heard from the participant, or if it truly represents the perspective and voice of the participant. In contrast, photovoice empowers participants to express their own narratives, leaving little room for misunderstandings. This method has been utilized across the lifespan including children and youth. As Pamela Attree (2006) reminds us, [children] “are seen as ‘experts’ in their own lives” (p. 55), and their authentic voices shine through, offering a rich and nuanced understanding of their experiences.

The uniqueness of Photovoice allows participants to convey their narratives in creating photographs meaningful to them; in addition, this methodology also offers researchers a level of flexibility inherent in this methodology. Camille A. Sutton-Brown (2014) notes that her research revealed there was no specific way to perform a photovoice research project; however, her article provided a helpful illustration of a process to utilize. It is important to note that although there is no specific or single guide to conducting a photovoice project, Sutton-Brown writes that in order for a research study to be called photovoice, it must entail the following eight components: 1) create an advertising poster to recruit for participants for the project; 2) obtain consent from each participant; 3) hold a group to introduce photovoice; 4) distribute cameras and provide instructions how to use them; 5) present a theme for taking photographs; 6) provide time to take photographs; 7) the participants must meet to discuss the photographs; and 8) policymakers or community leaders must be sought out (Sutton-Brown, 2014, p. 171). Karin Hannes & Oksana Parylo (2014) addressed many pros and cons of photovoice to illustrate that, “the researcher is no longer the only one in control of the fieldwork” (p. 13). There are several ethical issues that need to be considered in planning, conducting, and disseminating research findings from photovoice research projects, including issues related to the recognizability of people and places, ensuring research subjects’ confidentiality and anonymity, and seeking

informed consent from research subjects. Furthermore, an implication of employing photovoice methodology is that a participant might choose not to express the true impact of their pain in their photograph and/or captions; this could be a lost opportunity to share their story.

Importantly, if policymakers or community members do not attend the visual presentation, the ongoing legacy that income assistance poverty is a personal problem rather than a social issue continues. Another perspective of the distinctiveness of photovoice is articulated by the work of Ann Harley's (2012) states that "photographs take the viewer to a particular place at a particular time in ways words cannot: A photograph. creates an immediate if vicarious sense of being there that is stronger than most readers will get from reading an ethnographic description or selected interview transcripts" (Schatz & Walker, 1995, p. 74, as cited in Harley, 2012, p. 330-331). This methodology has the capacity to provide policymakers an insider perspective on the impact of policy which can shift how policy is constructed, this insight can also broaden awareness of social issues among diverse audiences.

Photovoice's capacity to raise awareness is equally beneficial to social workers to effectively raise awareness and collaborate with marginalized and diverse groups to engage in praxis. In this research, the concept of praxis is defined as taking action to address the question of how income assistance contributed to the development of "poverty scars." This inquiry explores the nuances of these childhood experiences while also adopting elements of poststructuralism, which encourages a critical examination of the construction of knowledge and truth. Considering some of Michel Foucault's poststructuralist philosophy, photovoice methodology opens one more avenue to question constructs of "knowledge & truth". Post structuralism is not a methodology; it is a theory that "encourages a way of looking at the world that challenges what comes to be accepted as "truth and knowledge"" (McMorrow, 2018, p. 1).

Through this lens, ideas around power can be explored. Poststructuralism offers this project a wider scope through which to physically view the constructions of “truth” and “knowledge,” particularly in dissecting stories of single mothers and those who access the income assistance program who are often portrayed as lazy. In addition, poststructuralist principles permit insight into how language, discourse, power, and the universality of one truth have resulted in harm to oppressed groups (Dr. Jeffery, personal communication, April 13, 2022). Through the principles of poststructuralism, the researcher can critique and deconstruct “knowledge-truth” such as the narrative that income assistance users are lazy people. Though there are many dominant discourses surrounding income assistance users, single mothers and their children, it is important that the participant’s stories are grounded in their own experiences and voices. The next section on the University of Victoria’s ethical considerations lays the foundation to ensure that research is carried out in a truthful and transparent manner.

University of Victoria Ethical Considerations

The University of Victoria placed a strong emphasis on upholding the integrity and ethical standards of scholarly investigations, ensuring that all projects are conducted with the utmost care and consideration for participants. The Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) undertook a comprehensive and meticulous review process of all components of my research, ensuring that every detail was carefully considered to uphold the highest standards for the well-being and protection of all participants in the project. Obtaining consent to involve participants in research was an in-depth and thorough process that required careful attention to detail.

There were several steps required before I could begin the research. The first requirement was to complete a thorough ethical examination which required a comprehensive understanding of ethics and potential ethical dilemmas. This examination necessitated a deep understanding of the ethical considerations involved in working with diverse populations, as well as the specific

ethical guidelines pertinent to this type of participant centred research. Next, was to complete and submit the Human Research Ethics Standard Application an in-depth application process outlining every step of the research. The application also required submission of questionnaires, consent forms, the research outline, and safety plan for the participants. The HREB team carefully investigated the application, and it was sent back for refinement and clarity. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, HREB identified several factors that needed to be implemented to safeguard the participants emotional and mental well-being. For instance, there were the concerns that the topic could open or reopen triggering memories for the participants. It was a requirement for the participants to have a support person; this could be an elder or counsellor. In addition, all the members signed a safety plan (Appendix H) agreeing to follow steps for their well-being throughout the project.

At every juncture of the project, I conducted emotional check ins with the participants and encouraged them to connect with their support person. The overall ethics requirements and protocols covered a three-month period before I received the Certificate of Approval on January 6, 2023. Once the ethics department approved the research I began the recruitment process.

Recruitment of Participants

Recruitment is a crucial aspect of the research process, as it involved targeting a specific demographic that aligned with the study's objective. The participants were recruited through flyers posted at neighbouring community centres, libraries, and on social media platforms. The decision to utilize posters stemmed from the perspective of visibility. It seemed logical to put posters up at local bulletin boards at libraries and community centres as many people read them. I only posted my poster (Appendix B) within the Metro Vancouver area to recruit participants, taking into consideration the logistical factors related to the distance potential participants might need to travel. Residing in the East Vancouver area, I believed it would be more convenient for

participants to travel locally rather than to travel from other municipalities such as Burnaby, New Westminster or Surrey. Additionally, the poster (Appendix B) provided clear insights into the research project, offering essential information to help individuals decide whether they wanted to participate.

Individual Interviews

Key factors in selecting the participants included their lived experiences of income assistance between the ages of six and twelve, a significant period during which children become more aware of disparities in access to resources. This age range allowed for a deeper examination of how experiences of being raised on income assistance and its accompanying poverty shaped children's understanding of poverty and self-identity. At the beginning of the individual interviews, participants were informed that their involvement was strictly voluntary. Regrettably, there were no opportunities for bus tickets or stipends; however, I did provide snacks and beverages at our group sessions to ensure a comfortable environment. Four participants were selected, however after the second session one person withdrew. Their information has been excluded.

The questionnaires found in the Appendices were designed to assess the emotional and mental suitability of the participants for the project. The HREB recommended that a pre-screening (First Contact - Appendix C) questionnaire be developed to screen out recipients who may have difficulties dealing with the research content and evaluating their capacity to complete the project. In Appendix C, I developed nine questions, of which I will reference four that are particularly relevant to assessing a participant's readiness to engage in the study. The following questions were included:

1. (Question 3) Do you understand the criteria outlined in the poster to participate in the study?

This question is crucial as it gauges the potential participant's comprehension of the requirements, specifically assessing their emotional and mental readiness for the research.

2. (Question 6) You will be taking photographs of objects or people that remind you of being raised on income assistance. Are you comfortable with this? This question aimed to evaluate the participant's comfort level with using a camera and their ability to reflect on childhood experiences related to income assistance.

3. (Question 8) Do you feel emotionally and mentally able to participate in the study? This question provides significant insight into the participants' emotional and mental readiness. By this point in the questionnaire, I had already gathered a sense of their emotional state, particularly since (Question 4) asked if they were in crisis. If a participant answered 'yes' to that question, the interview would have been halted, and I would have thanked them for their time. By focusing on these key questions, I could better understand each participant's preparedness for the study while prioritizing their well-being throughout the process.

The individual interviews were conducted to gain insight into participants' readiness and suitability for the project. The pre-screening questionnaires were developed based on my professional experience and insights gained as an insider on the topic, along with my years of experience working through a trauma informed lens. All the questionnaires were thoughtfully designed to be sensitive to the well-being of the participants.

After completing the first contact questionnaire, eligibility of the participant was determined. Those who passed the screening process moved to the second questionnaire (Appendix E) which focused on evaluating suitability and readiness to participate in the research. The purpose of the third interview questionnaire (Appendix G) was to gather more in-depth

information about the participant and their fit for the research. Additionally, the development of the safety plan (Appendix H) involved prioritizing the well-being of the participants. Each person was required to sign a safety plan, which served as an action agreement form to safeguard their wellness through the research process. The final two sets of questionnaires included the Group prompt discussion questions (Appendix N), developed to use in the research sessions, and the Last Group questionnaire, created to close the research (Appendix O). Lastly, at the interviews all participants were informed they would be required to attend four in-depth two-hour live sessions, a public gala, and a closing session. This process permitted a comprehensive assessment of the participant's readiness and background for the research.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework outlines the research methodology upon which this project is based. In this project, I utilized photovoice, a qualitative methodology that aligns with a relativist ontology and constructivist qualitative paradigm. Understanding the distinction between realist and relativist ontologies is essential. Ontology refers to the study of what constitutes reality and what can be known through research. A realist ontology posits a single, objective reality that exists independent of human perception, while a relativist ontology recognizes that multiple subjective realities are shaped by individual experiences and perspectives. By adopting a relativist ontology, I acknowledge that reality is constructed within the human mind, allowing for the existence of multiple truths rather than a singular absolute truth (Killam, 2013).

This ontological position aligns with constructivist research paradigms, where understanding people's stories in context reveals the inherent value in the meanings derived from their experiences (Crossam, 2003; Drummond, 2005, as cited in Killam, 2013). Researchers drawing from this paradigm are particularly interested in finding meaning in individual

experiences (Killam, 2013). For example, in my research, I sought to understand how participants perceived their lived experiences in a specific environmental context. I focused on the subjective meanings participants attached to their stories, illustrating how their environments shaped their interpretation of events. This approach emphasized that under a relativist framework, researchers analyzed the diverse perspectives that contribute a richer understanding of reality (Killam, 2013).

A constructivist qualitative paradigm emphasizes beneficence, respect, and justice, (Killam, 2013) aligning closely with the ethical codes of social work that promote social justice, all while upholding the dignity and worth of all individuals (CASW, 2024). Both frameworks highlight the importance of fostering positive human relationships and ensuring that the voice of the participants is central. Constructivist qualitative paradigm seeks an insider's (emic) perspective to achieve a co-construction within the research. In other words, the researcher engages with study participants to gain an insider perspective on the phenomena, reflecting the emic viewpoint inherent in relativist ontology with qualitative inquiry. In the constructivist qualitative paradigm, participants are selected deliberately based on eligibility criteria and the sample size is often quite small (Killam, 2013). The use of photovoice methodology aligns seamlessly with a qualitative approach, providing a malleable and flexible tool for capturing participants experiences.

My research group comprised three carefully selected participants, chosen deliberately to reflect the principles of the constructivist approach. The small sample size was consistent with the adaptability inherent in photovoice methodologies, which are particularly effective for engaging with small groups. While a larger sample group would provide greater insight into the experiences of children raised on income assistance, due to time constraints only three

participants were involved; nevertheless, their experiences offer valuable insight into the impact of income assistance poverty on children. Katherine A Wyatt, et al., (2024) found that there are various recruitment methods, project designs, and outcomes, and that no one method fits all project subjects and communities. Therefore, photovoice projects should be specially designed to fit the needs of the specified population to enable the community and participants to benefit most from the project (n.p.).

Photovoice methodology provided a lens into the participants experience through their photographs. It offered the viewer a rich, nuanced insight into these children's experience which contributed significantly to the research findings and can include small numbers of participants. In their extensive research on photovoice methodologies, Wyatt, K., Bell, J., Cooper, E. Constable, L., Siero, W., Jeria, C.P., Darling, S., Smith, R., Hughes, E. (2024) found that photovoice projects should be specifically designed to fit the needs of the specified population, and that these studies can include a small sample of participants that may have been subjected to maltreatment for example (p.12).

The purpose of this study was to uncover whether income assistance and its accompanying poverty manifested "poverty scars" and induced problematic behaviour affecting children's mental, emotional, and physical well-being throughout their lifespan. In our society poverty is minimized, yet it induces extreme stress among its citizens and creates additional challenges for parenting. While the impression in Canada is that children's well-being is a top priority within the welfare state, the reality is that children receiving income assistance are often treated as insignificant. Their well-being is typically disregarded, reducing them to mere numbers on a page without meaningful attention or consideration. They become nameless, faceless entities, their needs dismissed, and their existence reduced to policy. Pamela Attree

(2006) argued, that “children’s views are increasingly sought in planning services intended to improve their health and well-being . . . [however], “those from socially excluded groups are easily overlooked” (p. 55). Policies frequently go unrecognized as significant contributors to social problems and instead, parents are blamed for their lack of initiative to better their socioeconomic situation. Children raised on income assistance experience substantial emotional, physical, cognitive, mental, and social harm. Their chances for emotional competence, higher education, and happiness diminish proportionally with the length of time spent on income assistance (McLoyd, 1998). Policymakers appear to lack insight into the detrimental influence of income assistance on children’s well-being. It must be questioned to what extent policy writers influence policy outcomes and who ultimately ensures that policy writers’ work is aligned with peoples’ needs rather than government economic and social agendas. This is a topic that merits further exploration in social work. With a solid understanding of the applied methodology and its unique advantages for my project, I will now turn to the data collected and the findings that emerged from this photovoice project.

CHAPTER 4: Data, Data Analysis and Findings

“Poverty is the thief of dreams”

Unknown

Introduction

Poverty is the thief of dreams (Convoy of Hope, 2025); this poignant statement encapsulates the experiences of the lives of participants in this project, whose lives were profoundly shaped by the challenges associated with the income assistance program (ia) and its inadequate support rates. Income assistance rates fail to meet the basic needs of families, leading to significant hardships, particularly for children. As a result, the shortcomings of the British Columbia income assistance program not only exacerbate poverty but also hinder children’s overall well-being and development.

In this section, I will introduce the participants, share insights into their backgrounds, and highlight the individual and unique perspectives they brought to this research. I will also present some of their photographs, which feature a visual representation of their experiences with poverty. Additionally, I will discuss other data collected and highlight key themes that emerged, showcasing the impact that poverty had on the participants’ lives and aspirations.

The research initially included four participants who were selected for their engagement with the British Columbia income assistance program between the ages of six to twelve years old. However, after the second week, one participant withdrew without notice, as stated in the recruitment poster (Appendix B) that participants could exit the research with out consequence or explanation. Due to time constraints related to the thesis requirements and the participants’ availability, I carried on with a small group of three participants. Out of this small intimate group, relationships of trust and camaraderie developed. The remaining three women continued

to participate in the research up to its conclusion. One participant chose to use a pseudonym, another opted to use her second name, while the third used her real name. Two of the women were employed, and one was in the process of attaining more specialized skill development in her field. All participants had post-secondary education, which is particularly notable given that the research consistently indicated that children who grow up in poverty are less likely to complete high school (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). All would be considered professionals in their field. Two of the women were mothers; one had an adult child, and the other had two children aged six to twelve. All participants had experienced income assistance between the ages of six and twelve, each with a unique story shaped by their encounters of living on income assistance and its accompanying poverty. Their backgrounds as children included experiences of divorce, struggles with family mental health, and involvement with child welfare. Despite their differing circumstances, a common thread connected them. They were all impacted by income assistance in similar ways, expressing a sense of shame, feelings of lost opportunities, and a tendency to internalize their experiences with poverty, leading to a pervasive belief of not being good enough, or unable to catch up to their peers, or questioned what they thought they deserved. In the following sections, I will delve deeper into each participant's individual experiences beginning with Diamond.

Diamond, a pseudonym used to protect her identity, lived with her parents until she entered foster care. During our interviews, I learned that for her living on income assistance was a daunting and frightening experience. She expressed that she rarely remembered there being a lot of food in the house and often had to make what little food she had last. Additionally, Diamond recalled her parents not being around much, which contributed to her feelings of isolation. At school, she felt different from her peers due to the extent of the poverty she

experienced. Amid these limitations, she managed to complete her post-secondary education in a field she truly enjoyed. At the time of the research, Diamond was single and spent her leisure time exploring new hobbies and adventures. She became involved in the project after seeing the poster, and as I got to know her through this project, I witnessed her inquisitive and captivating personality.

Kim, a married mother of two, was a professional who became involved in the research through an acquaintance who informed her about the project. Although she was very interested in participating, there were many moments during our interviews when Kim expressed uncertainty about whether she had “suffered enough,” for her to have a worthwhile contribution to the research project. She recounted her distinct experiences growing up, reflecting on the divide between those who “have” and those who “have not”. Before her parent’s divorce, she lived in a beautiful, stable and secure home that her father had built. However, after the relationship broke down, her life changed drastically as her mother went on income assistance. Kim poignantly remarked, I never wanted to be in my mom’s position, which was living on income assistance, unemployed and in poverty. She elaborated, I didn’t want to be the person who had needs, especially having to rely on someone else. I made sure I didn’t have to rely on anyone. This desire to avoid her mother’s circumstances influenced her views on income assistance. As she confided, I felt shameful as a kid who had divorced parents and moving to a poorer neighborhood (personal communication, March 19, 2023). Despite these childhood challenges, Kim expressed having led a fulfilling life. Her life was rich with meaningful employment, friendships, partner and children.

The third participant, Leigh, opted to use her second name to protect her identity for this project. She was a highly educated professional who, at the time of the research, was actively

seeking further education to enhance her skill set; additionally, she was in the process of moving out of British Columbia to pursue new opportunities in a neighboring province. Leigh learned about the project through a Facebook posting, and during our initial interview sessions, she presented as a curious potential participant who asked numerous questions. Considering her impressive background, she occasionally hesitated, much like Kim unsure of whether she could contribute meaningfully to this research. Her experience with income assistance was initially overshadowed by her family's mental health challenges. Although she faced some life setbacks, Leigh's talent and inquisitive nature allowed her to excel academically. Leigh expressed that even though she encountered limited financial resources constraints growing up she remained determined to achieve her goals. Leigh expressed, I always knew I could accomplish what I wanted to, emphasizing her belief that not everything is tied to money. She stated, I can do without a home and food as long as I'm going somewhere. Leigh moved to Japan as a young adult and built an amazing career and life; she returned to Canada after the 2011 Japanese tsunami. Leigh brought unique experiences to the group, particularly those related to her upbringing on income assistance and living with its associated poverty. Throughout this chapter, I will further explore the participants shared experiences and insights.

Data and Themes

Beginning Phase of Research with Participants

The initial phase of this project involved convening as a group, establishing guidelines, and engaging in discussions about income assistance and its history. I wanted to shape the subsequent sessions in a participatory manner, giving voice to the participants. Carmen Sutton-Brown (2014) highlights the significance of voicing experiences from an insider perspective to gain new insights into our socially constructed realities and cultures. She writes, "It oscillates between private and public worlds in its attempt to publicize and politicize personal struggle via

photography, narratives, critical dialogue, and social action” (p.170). During the initial contact, I asked the interviewees if they felt comfortable using a camera, as stated in question number seven of the First Contact Questionnaire (Appendix C), explaining that they would be taking photographs of objects or people that reminded them of their experiences growing up on income assistance. There was not a consistent response among the participants regarding their comfort level with using a disposable camera versus a regular camera; while one or two expressed comforts with their own devices, another preferred a disposable option. At our first meeting after discussing the pros and cons of both, it was decided that participants would use their phones, as this would allow for easy uploading and sharing of pictures during our group sessions, rather than relying on developing film, which could be restrictive. In the second session, after reintroducing the participant driven nature of photovoice methodology from the first session, the group took ownership of the project by actively engaging in discussions, sharing the personal meanings behind each of their photographs and planning for the gala.

The Gala

The photovoice gala hosted at Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS), a child welfare agency, offered a warm social space and technical equipment for those unable to attend in person, allowing guests to join via Zoom. Research participants scheduled the gala for 1.5 hour. The versatility of photovoice methodology provided the option to have the gala be private or public (Palibroda et al., 2019). The participants opted for a more intimate atmosphere, inviting personal friends, relatives, and organizations that support families.

It is not uncommon for participants to feel anxious about presenting their photographs (Palibroda et al., (2019), a sentiment that was evident during the planning stage and at the gala. For example, Diamond chose to attend anonymously, revealing her identity only to me. It was a profound moment for me, as the researcher, to witness her standing quietly on the sidelines. The

guests were unaware of her identity as the person behind those images, while she absorbed the heartfelt discussions about her photographs. I could not help but wonder why she chose to remain silent and invisible, never asking her about her decision. While I assumed her choice was driven by a desire for privacy, there could have been many other reasons behind her choice. I also wondered if she chose to remain anonymous and due to feelings from a “poverty scar” or feelings rooted in shame. These are questions for which I still do not have answers.

Meanwhile, Leigh had moved out of the province to face the challenges of joining the gala via Zoom. This added some complexity as we worked to ensure her photographs were visible to her on the screen so that she could answer guest’s questions. She later expressed in the last closing reflection questionnaire (Appendix O) her additional nervousness, highlighting the difficulty of connecting with the room from afar.

Kim was unable to attend the gala, but she gave me permission to share details about the meaning behind her captions. For this participant, the lack of access to the same types of lunch snacks as her peers, snacks such as fruit roll-ups, caused her distress. The participants’ experiences highlighted the effects of childhood deprivation, illustrating how even seemingly simple things, such as the absence of a lunch snack, can leave lasting effects. The silent struggles that research participants faced were palpable, reminding us of what matters to children.

The photographs created a powerful opportunity to capture attention and garner support from decision makers, highlighting the effects of income assistance policy and its accompanying poverty on children. In this context an unexpected outcome of holding the gala at the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society was the heartfelt response from the CEO, Bernadette Spence. After attending and viewing the photographs, she established a concrete budget for the Family Preservation Program, at VACFSS allocating \$25,000 yearly to each

family preservation team. This funding aimed to reduce the impact of poverty on the Indigenous families they serve. This action by VACFSS CEO demonstrated the influence of photovoice methodology's impact. As Michele Jarldorn (2016) notes, photography can become the voice that necessitates social justice and raise awareness of social issues. Together, these elements highlight the transformative influence of photography in shaping lives and fostering meaningful change. Following the gala, it became clear that not providing a comment box or comment sheet for guests to submit questions was a lost opportunity. Beverly Palibroda et al., (2009) recommended having "a comment box or comment book for guests to submit their questions" (p. 59), which could have further enriched the conversation and engagement surrounding the impact of the photographs. This could have been incredibly beneficial; I wish I had known this information beforehand. Implementing this idea would have provided guests with the opportunity to ask questions of the research participants who were not in attendance, potentially uncovering insights and inquiries that I and the participants may have overlooked during our research process. Knowing about this option in advance would have allowed for a more interactive experience, fostering deeper discussions and connections among attendees. Overall, despite this missed opportunity, the gala was a fulfilling experience filled with memorable moments.

Data Collected

Considering privacy and confidentiality concerns, the University of Victoria's ethics committee stressed the importance of ensuring that participant's information would not be stored on servers potentially outside of Canada. Therefore, it was recommended that photographs be sent to my university email and then copied onto a USB for printing to protect participants data. Twenty-seven photos were submitted, but participants did not indicate whether these were the

only photographs they took, and I never inquired about any additional ones. It appeared that participants were very selective in what they chose to photograph, and each of the photographs had a strong meaning to them.

These tables were constructed to categorize the data collected.

Types of Data	Amount
Photographs	27 photographs
Interview questionnaires	12 pages of notes
Interview notes	13 pages of notes
Captions	27
Participant's reflective comments	3 pages
Themes	2 pages

Photographs Taken by Each Participant

Participants	# of Photographs Submitted
Diamond	5
Leigh	7
Kim	6

The selected data collection methods were implemented to investigate if income assistance, including its associated poverty, had long-term negative effects on children. The above tables were used to organize the types and amounts of data collected. The data collection included: photographs, captions, interview questionnaires, interview notes, and the participant's final reflective comments (Appendix C, D, G, and O).

Transcription

In the world of qualitative research, transcribing spoken language into written form generates a record of the conversations and discussions that underlie the research. Jorg Hecker and Neringa Kalpokas (2024) suggest that “[t]ranscripts act as the raw material for [researchers’] analysis, creating a tangible record of the conversations and discussions that form the basis of the research” (n.p.). They further articulate “[t]ranscribing, in qualitative research, doesn't merely involve verbatim transcription (the word-for-word rendering of verbal data into text)” (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2024, n.p.). Transcription can also encompass the translation of non-verbal cues such as laughter, pauses, or emotional expressions that can provide valuable context and insights into the participants’ experiences and perspectives” (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2024, n.p.).

This research employed a thematic qualitative analysis to identify themes within the photographs, personal sessions, and captions provided by the participants. After transcribing my notes from each session, the application of thematic analysis was utilized. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading through a data set (such as transcripts from in depth interviews or focus groups) and identifying patterns in meaning across the data to derive themes (Nowell et al., 2017). This type of analysis aligned well with photovoice methodology due to its versatility. The analysis required an active process of analysis searching through the data seeking out similarities and themes within the data.

The participants were asked to take photographs that captured memories from their childhood related to their experiences with income assistance poverty. The prompt was: “What reminded you of growing up on income assistance and the hardships you faced?” The photographs could be metaphorical, objects, or people; the meanings of the photographs were determined by the participants themselves. For instance, a memory of a juice box could symbolize the times they

went without, evoking feelings of longing for something they never had. Constantly worrying about not having good shoes further emphasizes this sense of deprivation. Additionally, encounters with Safeway cashiers could serve as powerful symbols, representing the humiliation the child felt while witnessing a parent who had to use a welfare food voucher. These connections illustrate how everyday objects and memories can embody the struggles faced during their upbringing.

Although seven themes surfaced through thematic analysis, only a few of the more prominent themes were noted here, including feelings of scarcity, comparing oneself to others, shame, and a pervasive sense of loss. Under these broader headings, various sub-themes were identified. For instance, within the theme of self-esteem, participants expressed feelings of “not being good enough”, “never being able to catch up to their peers”, and “projecting an appearance of having material goods”. This expression of “having” appeared to be a way to cover up the access to basic resources like a beautiful bed, clothes or toys. In many ways this need to cover up what they were lacking and pretending they had more or access to more material goods represents a “poverty scar”. Some participants described how the items they have now offer some peace. For example, they are now able to purchase what they lacked in childhood, and this ability to purchase items now covers those “poverty scars” of not “having”. The following section will showcase some of the photographs taken by each participant, along with their personal reflections on how living in poverty had impacted their lives.

Data Analysis

Kwok Kuen Tsang, (2020) commented that “there are several methodological challenges in photovoice research and one of the challenges faced by the researcher is the data analysis procedure” (p. 136). There is no set path to unpack qualitative data analysis; there are multiple

systems available to researchers such as: grounded theory method, and inductive thematic analysis that assist the researcher in sifting through, exploring, and understanding their data. In this study, I took a participatory interpretive qualitative thematic approach. Photovoice is a participant driven methodology encouraging and supporting involvement from the participants at all stages (Wang & Burris, 1997). The participants guided, navigated, and provided feedback for the structure of our discussion meetings, and gala. They chose what to photograph, selected photographs that were most meaningful to them, and provided context and understanding about their photographs. While a photovoice method suggests that participants be involved in the data analysis, due to family and work obligations, the participants were unavailable to engage in the data analysis. Because of this situation, I conducted the thematic analysis on my own.

The data for this photovoice project consisted of interview questionnaires, group discussions, photographs, captions, and closing questions. Initial analysis employed a general thematic analyses approach: familiarization, coding, generating themes, and reviewing themes (Wang & Burris, 1997). For qualitative research to be considered trustworthy, it is crucial to demonstrate a meticulous, thorough, and transparent analysis of the data. This involves recording, systematic organization, and providing detailed information about the analytic methods, allowing readers to assess the credibility of the process (Nowell et al., 2017).

In conducting the research, under thematic analysis, inductive and deductive methods helped frame the researcher's analysis of the data. While an inductive approach allows themes to emerge organically from the data, I approached the research with a deductive mindset understanding that I had some preconceived themes I might expect to find in the data (Caulfield, 2023). My preconceived notions revolved around the belief that children raised on income assistance inevitably face significant hardships. Reflecting on my own experiences growing up

in similar circumstances led me to feel fear of scarcity and feelings of shame associated with welfare. I lacked adequate clothing and missed out on extracurricular activities like dance class. In addition, I grew up hungry, never having access to food; there was never fruit in our home. This curiosity fueled my desire to explore the commonalities in their lives and understand the broader implications of growing up under such conditions.

The first step in my analysis involved familiarizing myself with the data, which prompted me to reflect on the purpose of this thesis and what I aimed to uncover. The intention of this research was to illustrate the challenges faced by children raised on income assistance, emphasizing the systemic issues they encountered because of their engagement with income support systems and the pervasive nature of poverty. This work aimed to highlight the impact of poverty and the various intersecting pathways that hinder these children's opportunities and well-being throughout their lives.

After becoming familiar with the data, I began the coding process by beginning to preview the answers from the questionnaires and transcribing the group discussion notes. The transcripts were not verbatim. Only comments related to the participants' experiences and vocabulary were transcribed whereas utterances such as "um," "uh," and "like they said" were all omitted. Subsequently, I examined the photographs and captions looking for themes. It was at this stage that I began to question precisely how to approach the data analysis.

Questions I considered in my analysis included:

- What words, thoughts, experiences did the participants share?
- What experiences appeared most impactful?
- Were there certain words that each used?
- What appeared less frequently?

- What appeared more important collectively?
- How did they describe living with income assistance poverty as a child?
- Was there any competition between participants of whose experience was worse or better?
- How did they feel about income assistance today?
- What strategies did they still employ for survival?
- Did they share common feelings, and what were those feelings?
- What were the losses and benefits of living on income assistance as a child?

Having considered the guiding questions in my analysis, I will now shift focus to the photographs, questionnaires, discussions, and captions, which provided a deeper and richer reflection of the participant reflections about the participants lived experiences. This analysis will explore the synergy between the images, discussions, and captions, examining them for commonalities and themes while considering insights gained from the data. I previewed each of the participants' photographs and captions, examining each for commonalities, similarities or themes taking into consideration all the previous query questions. I meticulously conducted the analysis of the data multiple times to ensure that no significant information was overlooked.

I created a word document to capture all the similarities in language, word usage, comments, thoughts, and feelings. I sought to find a common denominator among the themes and the participants' experiences. Later, I grouped all the similar feelings and thoughts from the discussion notes. However, certain themes emerged with greater prominence due to the frequency with which they were mentioned by the participants. For example, expressions of not feeling good enough, stealing and hoarding food, cost of lost opportunities, and the feeling of never being able to catch up or not having access to the same items and opportunities as their

peers, were dominant. Each theme underwent comprehensive analysis, supported by the participants' words, feelings, and comments. Everybody talked about these themes in some capacity: scarcity; comparison with others; not fitting in; inadequate clothing; lowered self-esteem; and food insecurities. These themes permeated every aspect of the research process.

The interview questions, photographs, and discussions were saturated with these themes, indicating their overwhelming presence and significance. While there were other themes present, it was evident that these themes had a much greater impact on the participants' experiences, leaving a lasting impression on their lives. What is significant about these commonalities was that each member still carried vivid memories of their experiences; the memories did not disappear when they reached the age of eighteen or when the participant no longer received income assistance.

All participants spoke about "learning to go without," a theme highlighted in Jennifer Podesta's (2017) research which revealed the participants in her study describing the challenges they faced in learning to navigate a life of scarcity, forgoing basic needs like "going without food, clothes and social activities" (p. 356). In my study, one participant shared a significant memory of receiving a gift for Christmas labeled "eight-year-old girl." Even after thirty years, this memory haunts her, underscoring the theme of self-esteem. These feelings of "not being good enough" and a "sense of inferiority" were also shared by all participants. Another example reflecting these feelings is the limited opportunities available to children raised on income assistance compared to their peers. One participant expressed the significant loss of not having been able to pursue a musical talent, while another participant revealed their desire to learn another language; these types of opportunities never materialized due to the family's financial circumstances. These unavailable opportunities left participants feeling inadequate, never having

been able to reach their true potential (McLoyd, 1990). Further, the photographs captured by participants revealed compelling insights, for example, “I am still doing this thing, I am just being way more clever about it” (personal communication, March 5, 2023). Reflecting on Kim’s comment, although she has greater financial resources now and does not need to shop at thrift stores, she still chooses to do so. She specifically seeks out name brands while thrift shopping. However, upon closer examination, it became evident that an underlying fear may have driven this behavior, a fear that her current situation could change, reminiscent of her childhood when her parents divorced. Before the divorce, she enjoyed a comfortable life with her father, only to face a significant financial shift when she moved in with her mother, where resources were much tighter. This fear of instability continues to influence Kim’s choices today, illustrating how she manages. She commented she has become “more clever” (personal communication, March 19, 2023) in her approach to shopping to navigate her past experiences. Furthermore, thematic analysis revealed several key themes including the hardships of economic deprivation, the deep sense of loss, and the pervasive unfulfilled dreams experienced by each participant to varying degrees. The next section will explore the more dominant themes, accompanied by photographs that depict a deeper context.

Dominant Themes Uncovered in Analysis

Theme: Scarcity

Each participant spoke about their experiences related to the theme of scarcity. The language surrounding scarcity included phrases such as “learning to go without,” “never having enough,” and “you never know when you’re going to have enough” and “squirreling things away.” These expressions reflected the participant’s understanding of scarcity, which signifies the limitations of available choices or the short supply of essential resources. For these participants, as children the most necessity was the lack of access to healthy, nutritious food,

inciting a fear of scarcity, of never having enough. Food insecurity appeared to produce a “poverty scar” when these participants were children; they were always living in fear of a lack of access to food. Diamond spoke about how she stretched her limited food resources and became creative with what she had at her disposal. This understanding relates to Richard E. Ahl's (2024) theory, which suggests that children who experience scarcity learn to conserve their resources. Throughout this section, you will see Diamond, Kim, and Leigh’s photographs which visually express how they perceived scarcity in their childhood.

Diamond

Diamond shared her personal experiences of growing up with severe food scarcity, where she had to make do with scraps and often moldy food. The caption “scarcity” highlighted Diamond’s personal experience of the lasting effects of growing up with little to no access to food. She reflected on the scarcity of home-cooked meals and the limited availability of school lunches. Stale tortillas and chips became her sustenance. The photographs captured the resilience and resourcefulness of Diamond, as she explained how she toasted tortillas on a flatbottomed pan.

Diamond's Photograph on Scarcity



These images shed light on Diamond's complex relationship with food. Even though she now has the means to purchase groceries, the impact of the scarcity she experienced as a child lingers. Diamond shared her struggle to prioritize healthy food, considering it a luxury rather than a necessity. The photograph symbolized her determination to make her limited food resources last, even though it sometimes leads to wasted food.

Diamond's story serves as a reminder of the hardship children experience while on income assistance, a demonstration that the financial support provided by income assistance fails to meet children's needs. Children on income assistance must develop a resourcefulness to survive. It also establishes that these hardships do not disappear after the age of eighteen, and in fact appear to last much farther into adulthood. Diamond's photographs of food provide her with newfound understanding that she is worthy of enjoying nutritious and delicious foods. She is embracing

the idea of prioritizing healthy options while letting go of past scarcity and recognizing that self-care and self-worth are essential. This insight comes from the final questionnaire.

Kim and Scarcity

Kim's perspective on scarcity reveals deep emotional layers and personal struggles. She did not provide a comprehensive summary of what scarcity meant to her, particularly regarding her experiences and relationship with food. I took her comments from the questionnaire, group notes, photographs and captions and synthesised Kim's reflections. Kim articulated feelings of shame associated with her circumstances, particularly influenced by her parents' divorce and the subsequent changes in their financial situation. Throughout the research, she frequently referenced the contrast between "have" and "have nots" (personal communication, April 11, 2023). She recalled living in a beautiful house with her father, a stark contrast to the "disheveled house" and poor neighborhood she moved to with her mother. This life changing event impacted Kim greatly. She expressed multiple mixed ideas about her situation; for example, she commented that I didn't want people to know I was on welfare. I remembered the feeling of shame. It shaped how I moved in the world. I let people know what they needed to know and not all the details (personal communication, February 22, 2023). These statements reflected feelings of shame and her desire to shield her vulnerabilities. Her statement, "I hope this is enough," in my request for more information to understand the meaning of her caption on "Scarcity." This reflection led me to her comment, I let people know what they need to know and not all the details (personal communication, February 22, 2023). I wondered if the concept of a "poverty scar" was connected to her reluctance to provide more details about what scarcity meant to her; I reflected on whether Kim was only providing the bare minimum in response to her previous questions and if this was an unconscious action on her part, that Kim continued to leave out

pertinent detail when responding to questions. Her statement, “I’m just more clever” at it now (personal communication, February 22, 2023) resonates with me. What was Kim indicating she was being “more clever” about? This raises the question of what she was feeling in terms of her understanding of scarcity and what that might mean for her current perspective.

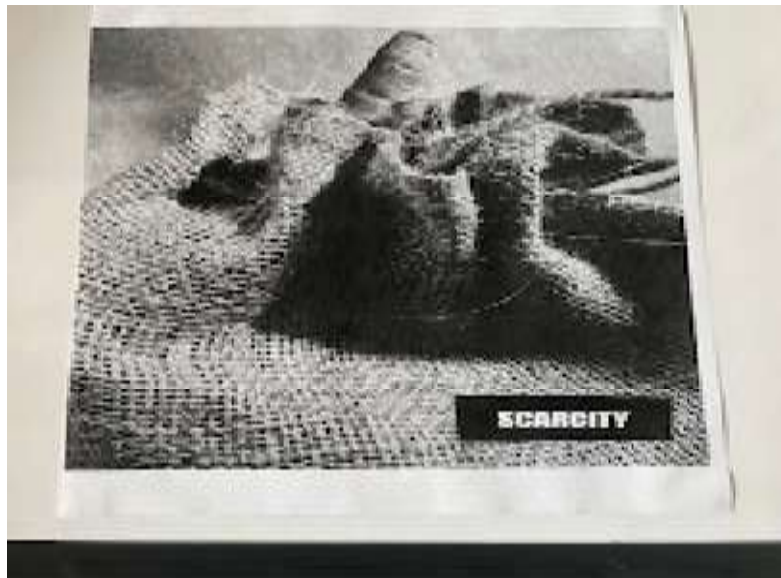
This statement arises from a broader discussion with the participants in how they may continue to manage with scarcity, even though they no longer face the same financial constraints. While I did not delve into their incomes, it was clear that Kim and Diamond were professionals, and I assumed they made a reasonable salary. However, for Kim, the feelings associated with her past experiences with scarcity and living on income assistance have not completely vanished; instead, they seem to persist in a more concealed manner. It appears that she has become more adept at hiding her shame, adapting her behaviors to mask the emotional impact of her childhood experiences with poverty. This cleverness in concealing her past struggles reflects a complex relationship with her identity and the lingering effects of poverty in her early life.

Kim’s Photograph on Scarcity



Leigh's Photograph on Scarcity

Leigh, another participant in the research, shared a powerful photo captioned "SCARCITY" showing a potato sack and a carrot that symbolized the harsh reality of scarcity in her life. This photograph represented to her that once all the vegetables were gone from the sack there was no more food to sustain her family.



Scarcity was a recurring theme among the participants, but it was particularly pronounced in Leigh's experiences. She revealed that there was never enough food in her life, which left her feeling inadequate and lacking. Despite relying on income assistance as a social safety net, Leigh expressed that there was no true sense of safety while relying on this support. During our group discussions, Leigh highlighted the impact of the income assistance policy at that time. The policy implemented a dollar-for-dollar claw back, which deducted any additional income earned from the assistance provided. This claw back applied to various income sources, including earnings from work and child support. Unfortunately, this policy had detrimental effects on Leigh's family, pushing them further into destitution. In our group discussion, Leigh reflected on her family situation as an adult, noting that what made matters worse, for her was

the realization that the policy did not consider the well-being of children. Leigh recounted that her mother had found employment. She recognized that while her mother had found employment, which initially marked a period of financial improvement for the family, the system's claw back policy negated any potential benefits. Leigh described this time as one of the best periods of their lives, yet the joy was overshadowed when her mother had to repay the income assistance money earned, dollar for dollar.

This policy, which seemed to disregard the needs of children, led to a deeper level of poverty and struggle for their family just as they were beginning to get ahead. It became clear to Leigh in our discussions that the ministry's approach failed to acknowledge the real-life implications for families, particularly how such policies could exacerbate the challenges faced by children in similar situations. It was an incredibly challenging and impactful time for Leigh, as she witnessed her family's poverty persist despite their earnest efforts to improve their financial situation. Income assistance policies have evolved; they no longer claw back benefits dollar for dollar when recipients engage in paid work. Now, recipients can earn a certain amount without penalty, but once that threshold is exceeded, they must declare their income, which can still lead to a reduction in benefits. This change acknowledges the hardship that claw back policies previously imposed on families, recognizing the struggle to achieve stability while working.

This photograph emphasized the profound impact of scarcity, the flawed nature of income assistance policies, and the failure to consider the welfare of children affected by claw backs. Thus far the data analysis has illuminated the various ways in which participants have experienced hardship and scarcity throughout their lives, offering valuable insights into their coping mechanisms in the face of poverty. As we shift our focus, we will now explore another

significant theme the sense of not fitting in, which further underscores the complex emotional landscape shaped by participants experiences.

Theme: Never Fitting In

The theme of “Never Fitting In” emerged prominently from the data, revealing a complex interplay of emotions and experiences among participants. Beneath this overarching theme, several sub-themes surfaced, including not having the same lunch as peers, lacking access to similar clothing, and being deprived of essential resources. Kim expressed that being on assistance created a feeling and energy that shapes us in our formative years, emphasizing how individuals begin to recognize the contrasts between themselves and others in terms of “having” and “not having” (personal communication, April 11, 2023).

Diamond’s experience of never fitting in with her classmates at school was conveyed in this statement, I didn’t share the same experiences, as my classmates when they talked about new TV shows, shoes, clothes, toys, and even the meals they enjoyed (personal communication, April 9, 2023). Similarly, Leigh shared her experiences, stating that while she felt loved by her classmates and had a strong reading ability—having read the King James Bible before entering school—she also grappled with feelings of invisibility (personal communication, February 20, 2023). She created an image that encapsulated her struggle, captioned “never fitting in,” illustrating the emotional undercurrents that persisted amid her interactions at school. All participants conveyed a sense of disconnection from their social environment, highlighting how the theme of “never fitting in” was deeply embedded in their lives, shaping their identities and perceptions of themselves in relation to their peers and families.

Diamond' Photograph Empty Park



Diamond showcased a photograph of a playground, which poignantly represented multiple experiences from her childhood, particularly the theme of never fitting in. For her, the playground symbolized a carefree space where children laughed and played, yet she felt an overwhelming sense of exclusion. Unlike her peers, Diamond did not have the opportunity to fully embrace the joys of childhood; instead, her experiences were overshadowed by constant worries about money and food. The image captured not just the innocence of childhood play but also the emotional weight she carried, reflecting a reality where the simple act of enjoying oneself in a park felt out of reach. This contrast highlighted the profound impact of her circumstances, reinforcing her feelings of disconnect and the struggle to find a place where she truly fit in.

Kim's Photograph Excess



Kim did not provide a summary of each of her photographs but instead wrote out a caption statement that spoke to her unique experience of living on income assistance. She took a photograph of snacks that are considered an affordable expense for most families. In Kim's family this was considered excessive. Kim contributed six photographs to the project. In this photograph, Kim captured the essence of her personal experience living on income assistance. The image focused on a simple snack, Fruit roll-ups and processed cheese and crackers, which are considered affordable for families on a tight budget. As Kim reflected on her time on welfare, she recalled feeling a great deal of shame associated with her family relying on income assistance. It was a secret she felt compelled to keep. Kim vividly remembered the absence of fancy lunches, as funds were tight following her parent's divorce. Upholding the dignity of her parents became of utmost importance to Kim, as she wanted to avoid being labeled as one of "those people". The lack of access to desirable snacks deepened her sense of difference, leaving her with a persistent feeling of never truly fitting in. This sentiment of inadequacy was a recurring theme through the project, as Kim expressed her attempts to compensate for what she felt she had missed out on. Illustrating the profound impact of her circumstances on her identity.

Leigh's Photograph Never Fit In



Leigh's caption, "Never fit in," resonated with a common theme among many of the participants the feeling of "Never Fitting In" and "Feeling Left Out." Leigh commented that she had felt like she was constantly trying to catch up, and that she could never fully belong. She related this feeling of lack to her continued pursuit of education, recognizing that it was a way for her to compensate for the perpetual sense of "Never Fitting In." Regardless of these challenges, Leigh had obtained higher education and was committed to further education while recognizing that it had not eased the anxiety of "Never Fitting In".

The research supported the notion that children raised in low socioeconomic conditions have limited access to resources, and social outlets. This lack of access hinders their participation in various activities, including sports and education, which can impact their future goals and limit future opportunities. Bent Greve (2019) states that "[t]he many and varied consequences for children growing up in poverty are the reason why one needs to be aware of how to deal with it, given that the consequences are also long-lasting" (p. 55). Bent Greve's commentary underscores the myriad and profound consequences that children growing up in

poverty face, emphasizing the urgent need to understand and address these challenges due to their long-lasting effects.

For instance, Leigh's experiences reflect the emotional toll of feeling invisible and disconnected, which can be exacerbated by a lack of resources that promote social engagement. Kim's reflections on her simple snacks reveal the shame and stigma associated with poverty, as she struggled to maintain her family's dignity while feeling different from her peers. Similarly, Diamond's photograph of the playground encapsulates her longing for carefree childhood experiences that were overshadowed by financial worries.

These narratives shed light on the pressing need for systemic changes that prioritize the well-being and security of children facing financial hardship. By sharing the stories of Leigh, Kim, and Diamond, it is important to highlight the importance of creating supportive environments that enable all children to thrive, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Addressing these disparities not only serves the immediate needs of families but also lays the foundation for a more equitable future where every child can fulfill their potential. These disparities may contribute to lowered self-esteem, another prominent theme in the data analysis.

Theme: Lowered Self-Esteem

The narratives of children on income assistance reveal a pervasive struggle with self-esteem, heavily influenced by their encounters at school, peers and familial dynamics. Media portrayals often depict poor individuals with messy hair, poor vocabulary, and disheveled clothing, reinforcing negative beliefs about self-worth (Treanor, 2020). Self-esteem is fundamentally tied to one's beliefs about themselves, it can be severely compromised when individuals feel unworthy of good jobs, healthcare, love, or respect. Participants in the research expressed a strong sense of not being "good enough".

Kim articulated her awareness of the disparities between herself and her peers, specifically highlighting the theme of “haves” and “have nots”. At the gala, she requested that her photographs be arranged into two distinct sections:

1. **Lack:** This section represented the “have not” Kim’s captions:

- Necessity
- Inferiority
- Scarcity

2. **Prosperity:** This section symbolized the “have” captions available to others:

- Abundance
- Plenty
- Excess

By structuring her presentation in this way, Kim aimed to visually communicate the stark contrast in her experiences and opportunities, further underscoring the impact of these disparities on her self-esteem.

The emotional presence of parents plays a crucial role in building children's self-esteem. However, parents burdened by financial strain often lack the emotional capacity to nurture their children’s self-worth (Evans, 2004). Parents who are struggling in poverty often adopt authoritarian parenting styles because their own hardships lead them to believe that being hard on their children will prepare them for a harsh world (McLoyd, 1990). Poor parents think that instilling discipline and toughness will ultimately make their children stronger and better equipped to handle life’s challenges. However, this approach can paradoxically diminish self-esteem, leading to feelings of inadequacy and depression. Leigh’s described her experience as a “survivor of torture” and goes on to illustrate the dynamics, of her journey, balancing a strong

sense of determination. I always knew I could accomplish what I wanted, with a rejection of symbols of poverty. Leigh stated that thrift stores, “depressed her” (personal communication, February 20, 2023). These children navigated the complex dynamics of their environments at home and at school, often contending with the physical and emotional absence of their parents amid the harsh realities of entrenched legislative poverty. These multifaceted experiences shaped their beliefs about what they deserved and contributed to diminished self-esteem.

Diamond’s Photograph Broke and Binded



Diamond's photograph, titled “Broke and Binded,” poignantly illustrates her experience of receiving her sister’s hand-me-down shoes, highlighting a significant aspect of her childhood. Although she doesn't explicitly state it in her caption, it appears that she never had access to new shoes. Instead, she consistently wore donated or second-hand footwear that was often already quite worn. She navigated these realities while grappling with feelings of deprivation and the implications it had on their self-esteem. Diamond reflects: my clothes were always either too big for me or too small; nothing matched. I stood out amongst other kids, and I knew it. Now that she can afford new clothes and shoes, she finds herself overspending on cheap, low-quality

items to have as many possessions as possible. She adds, I try to tell myself it's OK to buy a shirt that costs more than four dollars (personal communication, April 11, 2023). This internal struggle underscores how her past experiences continue to shape her relationship with self-worth and material possessions. This experience reflects a broader theme in the research, echoing Pamela Attree's (2005) suggestion that children are acutely aware of their family's financial limitations and the differences these limitations create in their lives.

Kim's Photograph Inferiority



This section focuses on Kim and her photograph titled “Inferiority,” which depicts children’s toys that are often found in second-hand stores. These toys are rarely wrapped; instead, they are typically spread out on a shelf, possibly missing parts and often showing signs of wear. This photograph has a profound impact because, while most people might not find this situation atrocious, through the eyes of a child, it evokes feelings of hurt and inadequacy. Kim reflected on recognizing the contrast between herself and others who have more, noting moments of comparison, such as comparing lunches or visiting other kids’ homes. During these visits, she felt the need to hide the fact that her family was on income assistance and tried to

present herself differently. She stated, I have the appearance of having (personal communication, February 18, 2023). As a child Kim recognized that being on income assistance meant she was somehow less than her peers. Kim also commented, there wasn't one specific moment of realization, but rather a series of moments and feelings that categorized her as part of the "have-nots" (personal communication, April 11, 2023). This is a comment often repeated by Kim throughout the research. These experiences have had a lasting impact on her perception and behavior in the world.

Even though Kim is no longer on assistance, she revealed that the drive to never need help can be isolating and leads to the belief "that to need is "SHAMEFUL" (personal communication, April 19, 2023). For Kim, this feeling of inferiority and the need to hide her true self may stem from a gradual lowering of her self-esteem, serving as a perfect example of how such experiences can cultivate a breeding ground for the development of a "poverty scar."

Leigh's Photograph Addiction Fantasy Escape



Leigh's photograph, titled "Addiction Fantasy Escape," delves into the opportunities available to her and her generation. In our group discussions, she noted that traditionally, marriage was viewed as a promise of security, stability and social status. During our discussions,

Leigh described growing up in White Rock, and it is interesting to observe the presence of a train track in her photograph. I initially missed this fine detail, which sparked my curiosity about why she included it. My original focus had been on the wedding dress and the hopes it represented for Leigh.

Leigh's photograph and experiences revealed the complexities of her upbringing. She stated that her mother did not struggle with addiction in the conventional sense but rather had a profound reliance on the bible. As she reflected on her childhood, it evoked a memory of being that little girl with her face pressed against the window, "watching the people (those not on income assistance)" (personal communication, April 9, 2023). Leigh expressed confidence in her ability to accomplish her goals. However, it appears that beneath this confidence, societal expectations about the expectation for little girls to grow up and marry may have impacted her self-esteem. Leigh wondered, why anyone would want to marry her, questioning what families would want their son to marry a girl from her background (personal communication, April 9, 2023). This internal conflict suggests that her aspirations, coupled with the weight of her experiences and societal norms regarding marriage, have left her grappling with insecurities.

Theme: Loss

Children raised in poverty experience loss in all domains of their lives. They often live in poor neighborhoods, live in housing infested with rodents, and encounter under-resourced schools with less-trained teachers, and many spend a week or more time in foster or other institutional care (Evans, 2004). The greatest loss that impoverished children experience is the potential they could have achieved if they had access to the same opportunities as their peers (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Each participant spoke about how their photographs represented specific aspects of their loss. For each of the research participants, varying degrees of this sense of loss persisted, as their memories surfaced. Kim commented in the group discussion, I wish we didn't have to be on it (income assistance), I wish that wasn't part of my story (personal communication, February 18, 2023). The feeling of being different lingers, regardless of how much they accumulate, whether material possessions or education. An interesting observation I made was how hard each participant tried to compensate for what they felt was lacking in their lives, and yet they often found it impossible to fully fulfill that need.

Each participant's photographs tell a unique story about how loss has manifested in their lives. These images serve as poignant reminders of their experiences, conveying the emotional weight they carry. Through their reflections, they reveal not only their struggles but also their resilience as they navigate the complexities of their circumstances, striving to find meaning and hope amid their sense of lack. We will begin with Diamond's photograph of a couch and the drawings on the wall and what loss means to her.

Diamond's Photograph Couch and Drawing on the wall



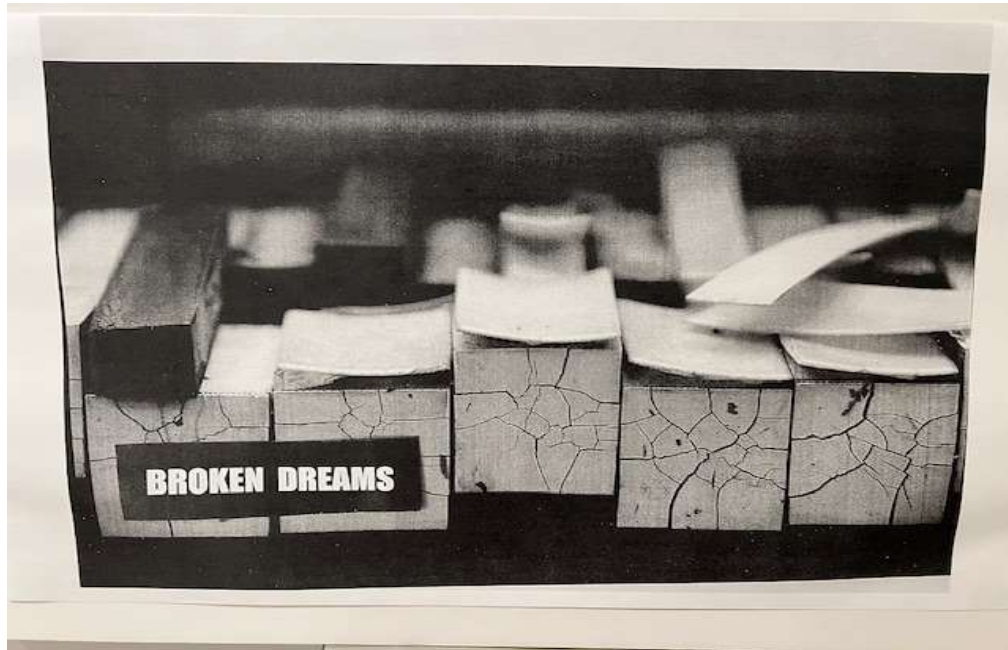
Diamond's reconstructed image of her former living room poignantly reflects her childhood experience of loss, particularly the markings on the walls that tell a story of solitude and unfulfilled potential. As she recalls, because I was left alone a lot, I used to draw on the walls in the living room with crayons—who wouldn't? (personal communication, April 9, 2023) This image symbolizes the missed opportunities and dreams that remained unvoiced, as there was no one to guide her or show her what was possible. Diamond commented "I was never put in extracurricular activities or knew about them for that matter. I didn't know what career options were out there in the world. My parents were never there to say, you'll be a lawyer one day, or I could see you as a doctor (personal communication, April 9, 2023). Lacking parental support and guidance, her aspirations were directionless, and the absence of encouragement left her experiencing a sense of loss. The messages Diamond heard were that I was going to be a waitress, probably stealing tips (personal communication, April 9, 2023). At first glance, the photograph of the couch and the drawings on the wall might seem trivial or even frustrating to an outsider, dismissing it as mere childish scribbles. Yet for Diamond, these marks represented a profound glimpse into her future, shaping her dreams and aspirations in ways that would resonate loss of a potential future. While Diamond expressed loss through her photograph of drawing on the wall, Kim's photograph reveals a different narrative, one that explores the complexities of loss and what it meant to her.

Kim's Photograph Abundance



Kim's photograph of a beautiful bedroom set embodies every little girl's dream, representing the abundance and comfort she always longed for. Growing up, Kim wished to have what other kids had—a lovely bedroom that reflected her desires. She shares that I spent a lot of time trying to make my room nice (personal communication, March 10, 2023). However, her parents divorce had a profound impact on her, particularly regarding the financial resources that would no longer be available. She recalled an unspoken understanding that at her mother's house, they simply couldn't afford certain things, which filled her with shame. I didn't want to be known as the kid who doesn't have much (personal communication, March 10, 2023). Kim confided that she never had friends over to her house, partly because she felt the house was dishevelled and partly because she did not have a nice bedroom. For Kim, the inability to have a nice home and bedroom left a lasting "poverty scar," one that she continues to compensate for even today.

Leigh's Photograph Broken Dreams



Leigh's photograph of broken piano keys encapsulates the theme of broken dreams, symbolizing her lost opportunities in pursuing her musical talents. She reflects on the oppressive nature of the welfare system, stating, the welfare system was intended to be oppressive, and I knew this to be true in my life (personal communication, April 26, 2023). Another comment made by Leigh following the gala, a comment initiated by reflection question three (Reflecting on your experience, what was an insight you gained?) (Appendix O) captured her realization that I was the only one in my family raised entirely on welfare, I was born into it while her older siblings had different experiences (personal communication, April 26, 2023). This reality shaped her upbringing, marked by social isolation, mental health challenges, and the struggles of being raised by an invalid single mother. These factors defined her harsh experiences, and she acknowledges that being on social welfare significantly contributed to her inability to pursue music. Ultimately, the lack of financial resources became a barrier to her dreams, exemplifying

how many children, like Leigh, are denied the chance to reach their true potential due to inadequate income assistance rates.

Analysis: Further Thoughts

I began this chapter by briefly reviewing the rationale for this research study. In this study my purpose was to investigate the long-term effects of the poverty experienced by children living on income assistance. I questioned if the income assistance rate offered contributed to children developing “poverty scars.” The main findings of this research revealed a common thread among the participants, despite their small number. All three individuals indicated that the poverty they experienced while living on income assistance as children had a profound impact on their lives.

Within the constructivist qualitative paradigm, having a limited number of participants is not only acceptable but can also provide rich, in-depth insights. The adaptability of the photovoice method allowed for a powerful representation of their experiences. Regardless of the small number of participants, the photographs captured the challenging realities of their childhoods, illustrating the resilience and strength they exhibited in the face of adversity. These visual narratives serve as a testament to their struggles and underscore the lasting effects of growing up in poverty. A sense of loss regarding the absence of something important and meaningful was prevalent among all participants.

An insight made during the interviews was that all three participants stated they did not feel their situation was that bad. Initially, they did not recognize how income assistance and its accompanying poverty impacted their lives, leaving them with fears of never having their needs met or feeling deserving. Some participants questioned the degree of their suffering and felt they had not suffered enough to be part of the study. The issue of not having “suffered enough” could

be attributed to the framing of the questions such as, *how have you been affected emotionally, mentally, physically, or cognitively by being raised on income assistance?*

The information sought for this research was how they managed the intensity of poverty and how it currently impacted their life. As the researcher it was my responsibility to ensure emotional safety and consider ethical consideration in addition to my other responsibilities for this project. However, at different stages of the research two clients expressed not being impacted by income assistance. During the second interview questionnaire, Kim commented I don't feel I was impacted that much (personal communication, March 5, 2023); however, her comments about feeling shame led me to wonder if she had in fact been affected, or if she had not made a connection between her shame and income assistance poverty. Leigh recounted that I struggle with the fact that the welfare system didn't impact me in the ways [I thought] it should (personal communication, May 5, 2023). However, at the end of the project when the final questionnaires were returned, Leigh expressed she did not realize how she had been impacted by income assistance poverty (personal communication, May 12, 2023). On the other hand, in our third session discussion Kim stated, I did my work on this, I didn't think this [would] bring anything up, but I am feeling like I am going to have some processing after this is finalized (personal communication, March 12, 2023).

Furthermore, my analysis highlighted the significance of understanding a child's perspective. For this group, not having toys like their peers, not having enough food, or access to extracurricular activities, robbed them of the normalcy crucial to their well-being. When these essential elements were unattainable, it left a lasting impression on the child, creating feelings of inadequacy and a sense of lacking. Although Vonnie McLoyd (1998) mentioned that the timing of a child's experience of poverty greatly influenced high school

completion, all three participants had successfully completed high school and pursued post-secondary education, with some obtaining bachelor's degrees. Even with their financial and career success, there were still remnants of pain or loss for each of them. For example, these findings illustrate how Kim's drive to compensate for missed opportunities, Diamond's belief in her worthiness of nutritious food, and Leigh's journey to overcome feelings of inadequacy reflect the lasting impact of childhood poverty and the complex ways individuals navigate their experiences.

A key observation from the research was that children often seemed overlooked in their exposure to income assistance and its poverty. There appears to be a significant gap in understanding the negative consequences of how the monies provided to families is not enough to raise children, making it seem as though these children are invisible. The structure of income assistance is divided into two categories: support and shelter allowance (gov.bc.ca, 2024). Currently, neither of these amounts adequately addresses the needs of families or children, leaving their essential requirements unacknowledged and unmet. Equally significant, these systems operate under the assumption that when a child witnesses their mother's responses during negative interactions with income assistance, its poverty or representatives, that they are not affected by the encounter. Harm occurs because the child is not developed to manage the emotional outlet and may struggle to make sense of the situation, often internalizing the idea that they are the problem because their mother must seek help from income assistance.

Children actively navigate poverty, just like their parents. They seemingly go without, forgoing extracurricular activities and missing out on birthday parties. They stop asking for necessities like lunch or a visit to the dentist (Attree, 2006). Podesta (2017) points out that children consciously moderate their own needs and adapt their preferences

based on what their families can afford. The participants in this study were all acutely aware of the limited amount of money available to their families, and they either heard the message of “we can't afford that” or realized that there simply wasn't enough money in the household. Children strategize and manipulate their environment and resources to make ends meet; despite the hardships they face, these children learn to adjust and create meaning out of their circumstances (Podesta, 2017). In some situations, they come to terms with there never being enough and recognize that their wants and needs cannot be met. The findings highlight that income assistance and its accompanying poverty, creates lasting hardship for children throughout their lifespan.

In closing, this chapter, photovoice methodology was introduced alongside the participants, the data methods, the transcription process, the data analyses, and findings. Utilizing photovoice approach, the research project empowers marginalized individuals to share their experiences through digital storytelling, ensuring that the voices and narratives of the participants are authentically represented. The gala, a vital component of this photovoice research, offered an opportunity to publicly display the work and engage with decision-makers, creating chances for systemic changes by demonstrating through images how a social issue harms a particular demographic. This illustrates the profound influence that photography can have in generating meaningful change.

After the gala the data analysis began: the data was synthesized utilizing a thematic analysis approach which revealed recurring themes of scarcity, lowered self-esteem, loss and the pervasive feeling of never fitting in. Each participant's unique story contributed to a broader understanding of how living on the financial support offered by income assistance shaped their identities and experiences. These participants dealt with harrowing encounters of poverty as

children; for instance, Diamond expressed the pain of not having access to food, while Kim grappled with hiding her poverty and Leigh struggled with the lost opportunity to pursue her musical dreams. Their photographs and captions illustrated how they navigated their circumstances, developed coping strategies that appear to continue to affect their adult lives. The participants' photographs, captions and narratives exposed how the concept of "poverty scars," can develop. The intention of this research was to highlight the impact that the money income assistance provides is not enough for families to live on, and the rates create harm due to the depth of poverty it causes a family. The quote, "poverty is a thief of dreams," (Unknown, 2024) highlights the participants experiences of being raised on income assistance and the depth of poverty they encountered, and the losses suffered.

It became clear that poverty is not merely a financial state but a complex web of emotional and psychological challenges that these children carried into adulthood. The resilience of the participants is recognized, affirming that income assistance is not a program designed to take care of the basic needs of children. The participants stories illuminated the harsh realities of living on income assistance and in moving forward it is important to heed the work of Bent Greve's (2019) who convincingly argues that the myriads of consequences growing up in poverty leave a long-lasting effect.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.”

Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

This research explored whether children raised on income assistance developed “poverty scars” lifelong behavioral patterns and coping strategies that negatively impacted their adult decision-making. I define “poverty scars” as the lasting effects of coping with limited financial resources while relying on income assistance. Drawing from my own experiences growing up in this environment, I sought to examine whether others developed similar scars and how these experiences influenced their adult behaviors and choices. This section will conclude by reviewing relevant literature, uncovering themes of hardship, and addressing limitations, implications, recommendations, and a personal reflection.

The Literature

I drew from various sectors of literature, focusing primarily on the roots of the liberal welfare state and the creation and purpose of the income assistance program. This led to articles discussing the discourse on the harm caused by income assistance poverty, highlighting the impact of the historical English Poor Laws, and how their ideology has been carried into Canadian policy. The articles reviewed highlighted that the government has a history of creating policy that is punitive in nature to its users. This is evidenced in historical policies, where income assistance procedures, and application processes often aimed to make accessing extremely challenging. Additionally, it revealed that income assistance is a controversial program funded by taxpayers’ money, although the program is designed to be temporary with a primary focus on helping individuals return to the workforce, many users tend to remain on income assistance far longer than intended.

Further, there is a large volume of literature on single parents accessing income assistance and the general discourse surrounding this demographic, often portraying them as a financial burden to both the program and society. Articles by Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Greg J. Duncan ((1997), Gary Evans (2004), and Vonnie McLoyd (1990) focus on the hardship of parent's engagement with poverty and how it can negatively impact their parenting. These authors extensive research articulated that disadvantaged children experience hardship in all areas of their lives. Children's experiences of poverty extend beyond the home, as they encounter hardships within their communities, friendships, and school environment. The body of research reviewed extensively details the detrimental effects of poverty on children. The following section will provide an overview of the data analysis.

Themes of Hardships Uncovered

This research project adopted a photovoice methodology, providing an opportunity to engage a small group in discussion on the contentious topic of income assistance poverty and its impact on children. In the previous chapter, using thematic analysis, I uncovered through the photographs, captions, discussion notes, and questionnaires that the participants shared common feelings of insecurity. They all reported similar challenges, including scarcity, never fitting in, lowered self-esteem, and loss. From the research, these hardships manifested as "poverty scars." The manifestation of these scars stems from the lack of access to basic needs. Poverty leaves lasting impressions that can foster a scarcity mindset, instilling a belief that basic needs may go unmet. This leads to fears about insufficient access to essentials such as food, toys, new shoes, and other important items for the child. The lasting effects of financial hardship during childhood does not fade with age; instead, they continue to impact individuals well into adulthood.

In the study the data revealed that each were grappling with their own “poverty scar,” often employing strategic coping mechanisms that, although normalized, had a profound impact on their lives. It became evident that they experienced varying degrees of hardship. The participants began to recognize how some of their financial coping strategies were linked to their experiences of being raised on income assistance. A year later, I wondered how those participants had fared. Had they found healing? Had they overcome some of the scars left by poverty, or discovered alternative ways to manage the lasting effects of their experiences with income assistance poverty?

Implications

The implications of the study’s findings strengthen the existing evidence-based research, confirming that poverty has harmful effects on children. My research diverged from previous studies by intending to uncover the experiences of adults who were once children growing up on income assistance. This research helps frame the problem by showing that poverty associated with income assistance is equally harmful to children both in the short and long-term. Research on the impact of poverty on children is abundant, but there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the experiences of adults who grew up in poverty and relied on income assistance as children. Research on children’s experience with poverty typically concludes at age of eighteen years (Duncan, Kalil, & Zio-Guest, 2018, as cited in Liwei Zhang & Wen-Jui Han, 2020, p. 1853); however, extending this research beyond this age would be beneficial, as it would allow us to examine the lasting impacts of poverty.

This study highlighted that poverty placed disadvantaged children at higher risk for poor outcomes across multiple domains, including mental health, physical health, and educational achievement. Unfortunately, there appears to be a lack of understanding regarding the seriousness of the experiences of children positioned at the bottom of the income ladder and the

growing disparities between the rich and the poor (Odgers 2015). The findings support the conclusion that children's encounters with income assistance have detrimental outcomes. Bent Greve's (2019) research emphasized that the consequences of growing up in poverty have long-lasting negative effects on children. While this research informed and helped frame the problem, it's essential to acknowledge and capture the limitations of the project.

Limitations

The research conducted in this study presented several limitations that I must acknowledge, as these limitations may have influenced my findings. One limitation was the small size of the participant group. While having a small cohort of participants allowed for in-depth discussions about the subject and fostered an intimate setting, it also meant that the absence of even one participant could impact the overall findings. This is particularly relevant given that one participant dropped out unexpectedly. Additionally, the small group size could have influenced the perceived credibility of the entire project.

Moreover, a further limitation was the time constraints imposed on the study to complete the Master Social Work requirements. I conducted the research over six weeks; however, feedback from participants indicated that they would have preferred a longer duration, such as ten weeks. This suggested that a longer period might have provided more comprehensive insight into the participants' experiences.

Additionally, the research did not address the social impact of other related events in the participants' lives, including factors such as addiction, domestic violence, divorce, child welfare, and mental health. Each of the participants had been affected by some aspect of these issues, potentially influencing their experiences in the study. The absence of a comprehensive exploration of these social problems limits the depth of understanding of the broader social context surrounding poverty, as each of the participants had experience with these social issues.

This research was not approached through an anti-racist lens for several reasons, including my experiences related to colonization and my ongoing efforts to shift from a Eurocentric worldview to an Indigenous perspective. While I aimed to remain objective, I recognized that incorporating a race analysis would have fundamentally changed the direction of the research, especially given that only one participant identified as Indigenous. This shift would have required the inclusion of different materials focused on the systemic causes contributing to poverty among Indigenous people in Canada. The literature would have required a focus on income assistance for Indigenous peoples both on and off reserves, as well as an in-depth analysis of how colonization impacted this demographic. As poverty for Indigenous peoples within Canada is a systemic problem based on many factors, it was beyond the scope of this research.

Another potential limitation of this research is the presence of the researcher's own biases regarding income assistance and subjective experiences with poverty. Critical reflexivity requires careful consideration of how elements of power, privilege, and individual experiences of the researchers could have influenced my interpretations during the research and analysis of the data (Strega & Brown, 2015). It is important to acknowledge that these understandings could have affected the objectivity of the findings.

Recommendations to Policymakers

It is disheartening to observe the wealth of literature available on poverty and yet policies continue to be oppressive and fail to meet the needs of families and children. The narrative around poverty must be redefined by policymakers and challenged within government ideology, shifting it from a negative perspective to one that acknowledges its users' potential. To make a meaningful difference, we must advocate for increased income assistance rates, eliminating punitive application process, implementing effective measures to support parents, and recognizing the long-term benefits of investing in children's futures.

The focus on distinguishing between the “deserving” and “undeserving” poor requires interruption. Income assistance should be viewed as a human right, and those who seek it should not face punishment. Policymakers need to change the way they communicate the message about income assistance and its accompanying poverty, as this messaging significantly influences societal perception and contributes to the pressing issues related to income assistance. Liwei Zhang and Wen-Jui Han (2020) comment that policy design can not be “a one-size fit all policy” (p. 1838). Our policies must embrace adaptability and flexibility, considering the diverse needs of different families. It is crucial for policy writers to actively engage with poverty research and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by those in need. By doing so, they can create policies that truly align with the realities on the ground and support the well-being of children. Governments must also recognize the long-term implications of neglecting the needs of children today. Failing to prioritize their well-being will only exacerbate social problems in the future (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). It is time for policymakers to envision a society that strives to take care of its children and invest in their healthy futures.

Personal Reflection

This project revealed that societal norms of punishing the poor have become acceptable behaviour. One must understand the complexity surrounding poverty, particularly regarding income assistance, and how single mothers and their children face significant challenges due to it. Pervasive blame accompanies poverty; by focusing on meeting the children's needs and refraining from blaming the parent, we can alleviate the challenges faced by both the parent and their children. The findings of my study suggest that the income assistance framework fails to adequately consider the unique needs of children, focusing on parental employment rather than the well-being of the children themselves.

This research highlights the need for a more child-centred approach in policy design that prioritizes the holistic needs of families.

The participants in my study articulated through their photographs at the gala that due to the financial situation of being on income assistance as children they experienced emotional, and mental hardship that has followed them into adulthood. It is my hope that this small group of brave soul's experience can somehow bring to light the harmful impact of income assistance poverty.

As a social work practitioner, this research has deepened my understanding of poverty, government policy, and income assistance. I now approach the experiences of single parent families with greater nuance and critical insight. My hope is that all governments in Canada, including federal, provincial and Indigenous will reconsider the structure of income assistance to better support families. I aspire for this work to enlighten social workers, encouraging them to engage with families empathetically. Moreover, I hope that future policy developers will shift the narrative from one of "undeserving" to "deserving," and create policies that better support children. I hope this research provided them with additional insights into how income assistance rates can create "poverty scars" in children, prompting these policy writers to prioritize the well being of children in their policy decisions.

References

- Ahl R.E., Amir, D., McAuliffe, K. (2024). Recalling experiences of scarcity reduces children's generosity relative to recalling abundance. *J Exp Child Psychology*. doi: 10.1016/j/jecp.2024.105914
- Alderidge, A. (2017, May). Maytree: How do we measure poverty? Backgrounder. https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/How_do_we_measure_poverty_May2017.pdf
- Apgar, D. (2021). *Social work licensing bachelors exam a comprehensive study guide*. New York: NY, Sringer Publishing Company
- Attree, P. (2006). The social costs of child poverty: A systematic review of the qualitative evidence. *Children & Society*, 20,54-66. <https://10.1002/CHI:854>
- BC First Poverty Reduction Strategy (2018). Social development and poverty reduction Retrieved from <https://news.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/bcs-first-poverty-reduction-strategy>
- Bietsas, A. & Beasley, C (eds.) (2012). *engaging with Carol Bacchi: Strategic interventions & exchanges*. Adelaide : University of Adelaide Press, 21-24 Retrieved from <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/press/titles/engaging/>
- Bridges, J. (n.d.). Brainyquote.com. Retrieved October 21, 2024, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/jeff_bridges_474488
- Brodsky, G., Buckley, M., Day, Shelagh., & Young, M. (2006). Human rights denied. single mothers on social assistance in British Columbia. Retrieved from: [www.poverty and humanrights.org/docs/denied.pdf](http://www.povertyandhumanrights.org/docs/denied.pdf)
- Brooks-Gunn, J., and Duncan, G.J. (1997). The effects of poverty on children. *The Future of Children*. *Children and Poverty*, 7(2), 55-71.

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1982). Children and families; The silent revolution, *Australian Journal of Sex, Marriage and Family*, 3(3), 111-123. doi:10.1080/01591487.1982.11004218
- Bryant, T., Aquanno, S., & Raphael, D. (2020). Unequal impact of COVID-19: Emergency neoliberalism, and welfare policy in Canada. *Critical Studies* 15, 22-39.
- Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) (1994). Social Work Code of Ethics. Retrieved from <https://www.casw-acts.ca/en#:~:text=Canadian%20Association%20of%20Social%20Workers>
- Carter, K. (2009). Last resort: Improving fairness and accountability in British Columbia's income assistance program. Ombudsman B.C.'s Independent Voice. Public Report No. 45 to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia Retrieved from <https://bcombudsperson.ca/assets/media/Public-Report-No-45-Improving-Fairness-and-Accountability-in-BCs-Income-Assistance-Program.pdf>
- Caulfield, J. (2023). How to do thematic analysis: step-by-step guide & examples. Scribbr. Retrieved from <https://www.scribbr.com/author/jackcaulfield/page/20/#:~:text=There%20are%20various%20approaches%20to,bias%20when%20formulating%20your%20analysis.>
- Comeau, J., Duncan, L., Georgiades, K., Wang, L., & Boyle, M.H. (2019). Social assistance and trajectories of child mental health problems in Canada: evidence from the national longitudinal survey of children and youth. *Canadian Journal of Public Health* (2020) 111585-593. Doi10.17269/s41997-020-00299.
- Convoy of Hope (2025, February 28). Retrieved from <https://convoyofhope.org/articles/poverty-quotes/>

- Evans, G.W. (2004). The environment of childhood poverty. *American Psychological Association (99)2*, 77-92. <https://doi: 10.10370003-066X.59.2.77>
- Fell, B., & Hewstone, M. (2015). Psychological perspectives on poverty. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. *Inspiring Social Change*, 2-45.
- Frank, A. (2024). Convey of hope Retrieved from <https://convoyofhope.org/articles/poverty-quotes/>
- Gandi, M. (2024.) Convey of hope Retrieved from <https://convoyofhope.org/articles/poverty-quotes/>
- Gazso, A., Baker Collins, S., Smith-Carrier, T., Smith, C. (2020). The generationing of social assistance receipt and “welfare dependency” in Ontario, Canada. *Social Problems (67)*, 585-601. <https://doi: 10.1093/sopro/spz032>
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma, notes of the management of spoiled identity*. A Touchstone Book, Simon & Schuster.
- Goffman, E. (2017). Selections form stigma. In Editor Lennard J. Davis, *The Disability Studies Reader 5th edition* (pp. 131-140). Routledge.
- Greve, B. (2019). Poverty the basics. In Greve (Ed.), *Quality of life for those living in poverty* (pp. 53-66). Routledge.
- Guy-Evans, O. (2023). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, September 2022. Retrieved <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bronfenbrenner.html>
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation & the media*, Media education foundation transcript :
Challenging media

- Hannes, K., & Parylo, O. (2014). Let's play it safe: Ethical considerations from participants in a photovoice research project. *International Journal of qualitative Methods* 2014 (13), 255-274. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/160940691401300112>
- Harley, A. (2012). Picturing Reality: Power, ethics, and politics in using photovoice. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 11(4), 320-339.
- Hecker, J. & Kalpokas, N. (2024). The ultimate guide to qualitative research – part 2: Handling qualitative data. Atlas. Retrieved from <https://atlasti.com/guides/qualitative-research-guide-part-2/research-transcripts#:~:text=The%20importance%20of%20transcripts%20in%20research%20lies%20in%20their%20ability,the%20basis%20of%20your%20research>
- Hick, S. (2007). *Social welfare in Canada: Understanding income security* (2nd ed). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.
- Income Assistance Rates (2024) Government of British Columbia Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/bc-employment-and-assistance-rate-tables/income-assistance-rate-table>
- Jarldorn, M. (2016). Picturing creative approaches to social work research: Using photography to promote social change. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 28(4), 5-15.
- Killam, L.A. (2013). *Research terminology simplified: paradigms, axiology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology*. Sudbury. On: Author.
- Klein, S., Pulkingham, J., Parusel, S., Plancke, K., Smith J., Sookraj, D., Vu, T., Wallace., & Worton, J. (2008). *Living on welfare in BC. Experiences of longer-term “expected to work” recipients*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC Office. Retrieved from

https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2008/bc_LoW_full_web.pdf

content/uploads/2011/01/WomenPovertyFactSheet.pdf

McLoyd, V. C. (1990). The impact of economic hardship on Black families and children: Psychological distress, parenting, and socioemotional development. *Child Development*, (61)2, 311-346.

McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Association* (53)2, 185-204.

McMorrow, A. (2018). Introducing poststructuralism in international relations, International Relations at Queen's University Belfast, UK. Retrieved from <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/72723>

Munns, J. (2010, October 4). Michel Foucault: power, discourse and 9/11 <https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2010/10/michel-foucault-power-discourse-and-911.html>

Nowell, L. S., Morris, J.M., White, D.E., & Moules, N.J., (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, 1-13.
Doi:101177/I609406917733847

O'Connell, A. (n.d.). A genealogy of poverty: Race and the technology of population. Toronto, ON Retrieved from <https://ojs.uwindsor.ca/index.php/csw/article/view/5822/4785>

Oggers, C.L. (2015). Income inequality and the developing child: Is it all relative? *American Psychologist*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0039836>

Palibroda, B., Krieg, Murdock L., Havelock, J. (2009). A practical guide to photovoice: Sharing pictures, telling stories and changing communities, The Prairies Women's Health Centre of Excellence Retrieved from <https://rpay.link/guide/pdf20.pdf>

- Patel, P.A. (2011). Bioecological Theory of Development In: Goldstein, S., Naglieri, J.A. (Eds) Encyclopedia a of Child Behavior and Development (pp.247-249). Springer, Boston, MA
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-79061-9_438
- Pipe, J. (2005). Real leadership real progress for British Columbia. A proven plan for a golden decade. Retrieved from
https://www.poltext.org/sites/poltext.org/files/plateformesV2/Colombie-Britannique/BC_PL_2005_LIB_en.pdf
- Podesta, J. (2017). Children’s agency: ‘getting by, getting back, getting out and getting organised’ under welfare-to-work in Australia. *Children & Society* (31),353-364.
 doi: 10.1111/chso.12206
- Pulkingham, J. (Ed.). (2015). Social assistance in British Columbia. In Beland, D. and Daigneault P.M. Welfare Reform in Canada. Provincial Social Assistance in Comparative Perspective. University of Toronto Press.
- Raymond, K. (2020). Social programs in Canada. In the Canadian Encyclopedia. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/social-programs-in-canada>
- Science of Early Childhood Development (2007). Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. 1-16.
<http://www.developingchild.net>. Retrieved from https://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Science_Early_Childhood_Development.pdf
- Secombe, K. (2007). “So, you think I drive a Cadillac?” welfare recipients’ perspectives on the system and its reform. Pearson Education, Inc
- Sheldrick, B.M., Dyck, H., Michell, C., & Myers, T. (2006). Welfare in Winnipeg’s inner city: exploring the myths. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 15(1), 85.54

- Solas, J. (2018). Deserving to deserve: Challenging discrimination between deserving and undeserving in social work. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 15 (20), 62-70.
- Strega, S., & Brown, L. (2015). From resistance to resurgence. In Strega and Brown (Eds), *Research As Resistance Revisiting Critical, Indigenous and Anti-Oppressive approaches* (pp.1-16). Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Sutton-Brown, C.A. (2014). Photovoice: A methodological guide. *Photography and Culture*, 7 (2), 169-185. Doi: 10. 2752/175145214X13999922103165
- Together BC. (2019). British C <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6pUQ4EDHeQ> Columbia's poverty reduction strategy. [https:// www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plans-strategies/poverty-reduction-strategy/togetherbc.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plans-strategies/poverty-reduction-strategy/togetherbc.pdf)
- Treanor, M.C. (2020). Child poverty: aspiring to survive family. University of Victoria, Policy Press, 1-14. doi10.1332?policy press/9781447334668.001.0001
- Tsang, K.K. (2020). Photovoice data analysis: critical approach phenomenological approach and beyond. College of Educational Administration. Beijing Normal University. Beijing
International Review of Education 136-152
- Unknown (2024). Convey of hope Retrieved from <https://convoyofhope.org/articles/poverty-quotes/>
- Van Kershbergen, K. (2015). The welfare state in Europe. In Alellsina, A. Bickerton, C.J. & Acemoglu, D. *The Search For Europe Contrasting Approaches*. (pp 269-286). OpenMind BBVA. [https:// www.bbvaopenmind.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/BBVA-OpenMind-book-the-search-for-europe-contrasting-approaches-1.pdf](https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/BBVA-OpenMind-book-the-search-for-europe-contrasting-approaches-1.pdf)
- Wallace, B., Klein, S., Reitsma-Street, M. (2006). Denied assistance: Closing the front door on welfare in BC. An Economic Security Project Report. Canadian Centre for Policy

Alternatives. Retrieved from

https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2006/denied_assistance.pdf

Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health education & behavior*, 24(3), 369-387.

Wyatt, K.A., Bell, J., Cooper, J., Constable, L., W. Siero., C. Pozo Jeria., S, Darling., Smith, R. (2024). Involvement of children and young people in the conduct of health research: A rapid umbrella review. *Health Expectations*. Doi 10.1111/hex.14081.

Yunus, M. (2017). Quote 260: Professor Muhammad Yunus, Poverty, Quotes. Yunus Centre.

Retrieved from

<https://www.muhammadyunus.org/index.php/quotes/10?keyword=#:~:text=I%20believe%20that%20we%20can,the%20policies%20that%20we...>

Zhang L., Han W.J. (2020). Uncovering multidimensional poverty experiences in shaping children's socioemotional trajectories during the first 6 years of schooling. *Family Process*, 59 (4), 1837-1855. doi: 10.1111/famp.12530

Appendices

A – CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL



**University
of Victoria**

Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board
Michael Williams Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada
T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jeannine Carriere (Supervisor)	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER 22-0453 Board member review - delegated
PRINCIPAL APPLICANT: Brenda Lavallee Master's student	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 06-Jan-2023
UVIC DEPARTMENT: Social Work SOCW	APPROVED ON: 06-Jan-2023 APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 05-Jan-2024
PROJECT TITLE: The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future	
RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: None	
DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: None	
DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL: Ethics test certificate Sept 26.pdf - 07-Oct-2022 Dec 4 Poster for advertisement research.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 first contact questions.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 prescreening participant interview questions.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 participants third interview questionnaire for ethics application.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 Group discussion questions.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 ethics application Pre-screening consent form.doc - 04-Jan-2023 dec 4 Participant third questionnaire consent form for ethics applicaiton.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 Participant Consent Description of the Research Letter.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 Participants photograph release form October 10.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 Subject media release form.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 Documents uploaded to Ethics Application.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 safety plan document.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 Confidential form for Ethics application oct 10.doc 26.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 Participant informed Check List Oct 10.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 Researcher's final check list.doc - 04-Jan-2023 Dece 4 Resource List Appendix P.docx - 04-Jan-2023 Dec 4 Ethics application reviewed by JC Oct 7 2022.docx revised Dec 3 word doc.docx - 04-Jan-2023	
Conditions of approval	
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.	
Amendments To make changes to the approved research procedure in your study, please submit "Amendments" or "Annual renewal with amendments" form. You must receive research ethics approval before proceeding with your amended protocol.	
Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.	
Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.	
Certification	



B - RECRUITMENT POSTER

RESEARCH STUDY ON INCOME ASSISTANCE POVERTY

I am looking for participants to participate in a research study entitled 'The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future. As a Graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master Social Work degree.

Purpose and Objectives

The researcher seeks out individuals nineteen years of age or older who have lived consistently on income assistance (welfare) between the ages of 6 to 12 this is a criterion for the study. The purpose of this research study is to explore if children raised on income assistance and its accompanying poverty experience any long-term negative impacts, such as stresses about food, deficit attitude, and cannot let go of childhood experiences.

Importance of this Research

This research study is essential because income assistance poverty can be detrimental to children's future as it may prevent them from attaining their true potential. Your contribution to this research can raise social awareness that income assistance poverty may hurt children throughout their life and potentially leaves poverty scars that can be passed down to the next generation.

What is involved

The research study is based on Photovoice methodology. This type of methodology asks participants to take photographs. In this research study, participants will take pictures of objects, buildings, clothes, and/or abstract items that remind them of their experiences living on income assistance and its accompanying poverty as a child. The participants will be required to commit to meet once a week for six weeks for two hours, plus additional time to take photographs. Their photographs will be shared in our weekly group discussion, and in the fifth week, there will be a public community display of the photographs.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research are to be part of a research study aimed at raising awareness of a social program that can potentially harm children's well-being and society.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanation.

Contact Brenda Lavalley at bmlavall@uvic.ca if you consider participating in this research.



1. You have the right to not answer any questions
2. You have the right to stop the interview screening interview at any stage.
3. Do you understand the criteria outlined in the poster to participate in this study?
4. Are you in crisis?
5. Do you currently have the support of an Elder, counsellor or spiritual advisor? This is mandatory to participate in the study.
6. Are you comfortable using a camera? You will be taking photographs of object, or people that remind you of being raised on income assistance?
7. Can you commit to six two-hour discussion group sessions plus set time outside of group to take photographs?
8. Do you feel emotionally and mentally able to participate in this study?
9. The next step would be to set up a pre-screening interview; the questions could be triggering do you feel able to answer them?



D - PARTICIPANT SECOND PRE-SCREENING INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future

As a Graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master Social Work degree. I am researching 'The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future.'

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose and objective of this research study are to uncover if children raised on income assistance (welfare), particularly between the ages of six and twelve, carry any negative experiences into adulthood. Participants for this research study will be asked to go into their community and photograph people, places, or things, that represent an experience, memory, or metaphor that reminds them of growing up and experiencing welfare poverty. **Participants are asked not to take photographs of people that depict them in a poor light; further photographs in which a person is not identifiable do not require a consent form.**

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this pre-screening interview and research. They may include the resurfacing of uncomfortable old/new memories, addiction relapse, and the triggering of depression or trauma. In prevention, the following steps will be taken: You have been notified that by continuing in this pre-screening interview, you could be triggered. It is mandatory in the research project that all participants have additional outside support of an Elder, Spiritual advisor, or counsellor, and you have declared you have outside support. If you are selected for the research project, a safety plan will be provided to you and in the safety plan you have outlined your plan of action in the event you are triggered (Appendix H) and will follow through with the actions. In addition, if the participant requires additional support Brenda Lavallee will be able to assist.

Participant's Selection

You are being pre-interviewed because you currently identify as meeting the criteria of having lived on income assistance between the age of six and twelve. These pre-interview questions have been developed to assess participants' eligibility to participate in the research project. All participants will be contacted by email and notified after the screening process if they have been selected or have not been selected to participate in the research. **How participant will be selected after** the pre-screening interview the questionnaire responses will be reviewed. Participation selection will be based on these factors, they must meet the criteria of having lived on income assistance consistently between the ages of six and twelve, be emotionally fit to re-engage in feelings and experiences of being on income assistance as a child, have the time

available to participate, are willing to take photographs, and lastly a keen interest to be involved in this type of research project.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is essential because we get to explore if income assistance and its accompanying poverty is determinantal to children through their lifespan. The participant's contribution is sharing their personal experiences, which may influence future research.

Anonymity

This research is being conducted under photovoice methodology; this type of research calls for a public display of the photographs. This will occur in the sixth week; it can be arranged for the participant to take photographs and not attend the final presentation or be identified by name. I understand that I can remain anonymous through this process while my photographs are being displayed.

What is involved

By voluntarily participating in this research, you will commit to meeting weekly for six weeks in a group for two hours. In the group, we will discuss the photographs taken and their meaning to you. The photographs and comments used for the public display and possible other photographs will be collected as data for the thesis. The participant does have the right to choose what photographs they want the public to view. Brenda Lavalley will cover the cost of film development.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause inconvenience to you by committing to the six-week time frame, weekly two-hour commitment, travel time and time away from family.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include investigating whether income assistance and its accompanying poverty can harm children within their lifespan.

Compensation

This is a voluntary commitment. There is no financial compensation to participate.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this research is voluntary at all stages; participant can withdraw at any time. If you are chosen and decide to participate and then change your mind, you can withdraw without any consequences or explanation. The participant who leaves their identity and data will be protected, and no mention of them or their contribution will be noted in any form. The participant will be able to take their photographs. The discussion **data and transcripts up to that point will not be available to any participants to take upon leaving**. This data has all member's contributions; it is only gathered for research purposes. If you are not selected to move

to the next Interview your data will be disposed of immediately if you do move to the next Interview, *it will be disposed of after Brenda Lavallee is approved for her thesis.*

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data collected by these pre-interview questionnaires will be protected in a password protected computer, and the computer will be locked in a file cabinet. *All data will be destroyed upon Brenda Lavallee's completion of her degree.* Additionally, for participants who are not selected to participate in the study their private information from this pre-screening will be protected and destroyed professionally at the end of the selection process. ***Further, if chosen to participate, the study participants confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of group work; therefore, Participants are asked to keep the discussions confidential reminding participants not to share information they are not comfortable with. It cannot be guaranteed that the information shared in the group will not be shared outside the group even though it will be requested not to share what takes place in the group with others.***

Dissemination of Results

The research study will be shared with my supervisor Jeannine Carrier, co-supervisor, Donna Jeffery, the defense committee, and the final thesis will be placed in the library of the University of Victoria, Internet and UVic Space.

Data and Disposal

Data from this pre-screening interview will be disposed of professionally if the person is not selected to move to the next interview. The information gathered at the pre-screening interview **will not be used in the thesis unless the person is chosen to participate in the project.** *In addition, the group recording transcriptions will not be destroyed if the participant leaves the project before the end. The transcripts are important data to the research. The information which the participant contributed to the transcriptions will not be used in any form.* All their data will be destroyed except the transcripts. The recordings will be deleted weekly, and all transcription notes with their contribution will be redacted. Those selected to participate will have their questionnaire, answers, and notes used in the thesis. At the end of the project, all the data will be disposed of through a professional shredder.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Brenda Lavallee at bmlavall@uvic.ca and the Graduate supervisor Jeannine Carrier at Carriere@uvic.ca. In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study or raise any concerns by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

I have been informed of the following:

- I can withdraw from the project at any time without reason.
- I require consent from an individual before I take their photograph.
- I am aware not to take a photograph that depicts someone in a poor light
- I have been informed that I do not need the consent form signed if I take a photograph of an individual who cannot be identified in the photograph
- I can use a pseudonym. (Not my real name)
- I am aware of the timeline and weekly commitment to the project
- I have been informed of the risks
- I understand this is voluntary
- I have been informed that my responses to the pre-screening questionnaire and notes made by Brenda Lavalley during this interview will not be used if I am not selected to participate in the research. The questionnaire answers and notes will be destroyed after the selection process.
- I am aware that my confidentiality has limits in terms of the group work otherwise it will be protected, and I am under no obligation to attend the community presentation or answer any questions or questionnaires.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participating in this pre-screening interview, and you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.



The second set of questions is for participants selected to participate in the study.

1. Have your circumstances changed from our first pre-screening interview? Do you feel you are in crisis?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Did you grow up with both parents?
4. Were addictions, violence, or mental health in your home?
5. How did you witness your parent/s manage poverty?
6. What were some overt and covert messages you remember about being on income assistance as a child? Did your parents believe money was for only certain people, e.g., the middle or upper class? Did your family have money and lose it? Did they believe that being on income assistance limited their life choices? Did they see themselves as powerful or powerless?
7. Did your parents make you feel responsible for the family's poverty?
8. Did being on income assistance impact where you could go?
9. How did being on income assistance impact your self-esteem or self-efficacy?

10. Did income assistance impact your friendships? Or school attendance?
11. What was the message or memory of growing up on income assistance that impacted you the most?
12. What would you like me to know about your experience growing up on income assistance?
13. Did you receive a message that receiving income assistance was shameful
14. Were you told not to tell anyone you're on income assistance,
15. Did you ever hear or interpret your parent/s behavior that money is hard to come by, and there is no future for people on income assistance? Or only people require income assistance, or maybe receiving income assistance was perceived in a more positive light like, it's been created to help people, we have paid taxes in the past, we are entitled to it.
16. Do you have other support, such as an Elder, counselor, or spiritual advisor
17. Are you willing to sign a safety plan in the event you are triggered, which authorizes me to contact your support if you need additional support.



The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future

You have been selected to participate in a research study as a Graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master Social Work degree.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose and objective of this research study are to uncover if children raised on income assistance (welfare), particularly between the ages of six and twelve, carry any negative experiences into adulthood. Participants for this research study will be asked to go into their community and photograph people, places, or things, that represent an experience, memory, or metaphor that reminds them of growing up and experiencing welfare poverty.

Expectations of the participant are to set time aside outside of group to take photographs. As a group we will meet weekly for six weeks for two hours to discuss their photographs, select photographs, organize data, and plan for the public presentation that will be held on the sixth week. These actions will assist Brenda Lavalée in completing her thesis for her Master Social Work degree. Further, you will be provided two other release forms 1) **Participant Photograph Release Form** (Appendix M) which permits Brenda Lavalée to use the photographs you took, and 2) a **Subject Consent Form** (Appendix N) if the participant takes a photograph of a person or pet.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this interview and research. They may include the resurfacing of uncomfortable old/new memories, addiction relapse, and the triggering of depression or trauma. In prevention, the following steps will be taken: You have been notified that by continuing in this interview, you could be triggered. If you are selected to participate in the research its mandatory that all participants have additional outside support from an Elder, Spiritual advisor, or counsellor. You have declared you have outside support. You have been informed that to mitigate any triggers; you will have been provided a safety plan and preplanned through the safety plan your course of actions if you are triggered. In addition, if the participant experiences a trigger, there will be additional support from Brenda Lavalée.

Participants Selection

You are being interviewed because you currently identify as meeting the criteria of having lived on income assistance between the ages of six and twelve. These interview questions have been developed to assess participants' eligibility to participate in the research project. All participants will be contacted by email and notified after the screening process if they have been selected or have not been selected to participate in the research. **Participant selection process** the questionnaire responses will be evaluated after the interview. Participation selection will be based on these factors, they meet the criteria of having lived on income assistance between the ages of 6 and 12, be emotionally fit to re-engage in feelings and experiences of being on income assistance as a child, have the time available to participate, are willing to take photographs and lastly have a keen interest to be involved in this type of research project.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is essential because we get to explore if income assistance and its accompanying poverty is determinantal to children through their lifespan. The participant's contribution is sharing their personal experiences, which may influence future research.

Anonymity

This research is being conducted under photovoice methodology; this type of research calls for a public display of the photographs. This will occur in the sixth week; it can be arranged for the participant to take photographs and not attend the final presentation or be identified by name. I understand that I can remain anonymous through this process while my photographs are being displayed.

What is involved

By voluntarily participating in this research, you will commit to meeting weekly for six weeks in a group for two hours. The group discussions will be recorded. In the group, we will discuss the photographs taken and their meaning to you. Some of your photographs and comments will be collected as data for the thesis. You will also prepare to participate in a public community event displaying your photographs. Brenda Lavalley will cover the cost of film development.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause inconvenience to you by committing to the six-week time frame and weekly two-hour commitment, travel time, and time away from family.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include investigating whether income assistance and its accompanying poverty is harmful to children within their lifespan.

Compensation

This is a voluntary commitment. There is no financial compensation to participate.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this research is voluntary; at any stage, you can withdraw. If you decide to participate and then change your mind, you can withdraw without any consequences or explanation. The discussion **data from the group will not be available to any participant to take upon leaving**. This data has all member's contributions; it is only gathered for research purposes. It will be disposed of after Brenda Lavalley is approved for her thesis. The participant who leaves their identity and data will be protected, and no mention of them or their contribution will be noted in any form. The participant will be able to take their photographs.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data collected by these interview questions will be protected in a password protected computer, and the computer will be locked in a file cabinet. All data will be destroyed upon Brenda Lavalley's completion of her degree. Additionally, for participants who are not selected to participate in the study, their private information from this interview will be protected and destroyed professionally at the end of the research project. *Further, if chosen to participate, your confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of group work. Participants are advised not to share information they do not want others to know. Participants are asked to keep the discussions confidential and not share what occurs within the group with outsiders.*

Dissemination of Results

The research study will be shared with my supervisor Jeannine Carrie co-supervisor Donna Jeffery, the defense committee, and the final thesis will be placed in the library of the University of Victoria, internet, public visual display, and UVic Space.

Disposal of Data

Data from this interview will be held until Brenda Lavalley's thesis is approved. Up to that point, the interview questions, answers, and notes from this interview will be held in secure storage. The only persons with access to it will be the Graduate supervisor Jeannine Carrier and Brenda Lavalley. The information gathered at this interview **will not be used in the thesis unless the person is chosen to participate in the project or provides permission for the researcher to use their answers in the thesis**. *In addition, the group transcription recordings will not be destroyed if the participant leaves the project before the end. The recordings are important data to the research. The information which the participant contributed will not be used in any form.* All their data will be destroyed except the recordings. The recordings will be deleted and their comments in the transcription notes will be redacted out. Those selected to participate will have their questionnaire, answers, and notes used in the thesis. At the end of the project, all the data will be disposed of through a professional shredder.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Brenda Lavallee at bmlavall@uvic.ca and the Graduate supervisor Jeannine Carriere at Carriere@uvic.ca. In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study or raise any concerns you might have by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

I have been informed of the following:

- I can withdraw from the project at any time without reason
- I require consent from an individual before I take their photograph.
- I am aware not to take a photograph that depicts someone in a poor light
- I have been informed that I do not need the consent form signed if I take a photograph of an individual who cannot be identified in the photograph
- I can use a pseudonym. (Not my real name)
- I am aware of the timeline and weekly commitment to the project
- I have been informed of the risks
- I understand this is voluntary
- I understand that my answers to the consent form will be used in the thesis
- I have been informed that the photographs, transcriptions, and notes will be destroyed after Brenda Lavallee completes the requirements for a Master of Social Work.
- I am aware that my confidentiality cannot be protected due to the nature of participating in group work. I am under no obligation to attend the community presentation or answer any questions or questionnaires.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY PLEASE *SELECT STATEMENT* only if you consent:

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: _____
(Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: _____
(Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____
(Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.



The third of questions are for participants selected to participate in the study.

1. Have your circumstances changed from our first pre-screening interview? Do you feel you are in crisis?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Did you grow up with both parents?
4. Were addictions, violence, or mental health in your home?
5. How did you witness your parent/s manage poverty?
6. What were some overt and covert messages you remember about being on income assistance as a child? Did your parents believe money was for only certain people, e.g., the middle or upper class? Did your family have money and lose it? Did they believe that being on income assistance limited their life choices? Did they see themselves as powerful or powerless?
7. Did your parents make you feel responsible for the family's poverty?
8. Did being on income assistance impact where you could go?
9. How did being on income assistance impact your self-esteem or self-efficacy?

10. Did income assistance impact your friendships? Or school attendance?
11. What was the message or memory of growing up on income assistance that impacted you the most?
12. What would you like me to know about your experience growing up on income assistance?
13. Did you receive a message that receiving income assistance was shameful?
14. Were you told not to tell anyone you're on income assistance,
15. Did you ever hear or interpret your parent/s behavior that money is hard to come by, and there is no future for people on income assistance? Or only people require income assistance, or maybe receiving income assistance was perceived in a more positive light like, it's been created to help people, we have paid taxes in the past, we are entitled to it.
16. Do you have other support, such as an Elder, counselor, or spiritual advisor?
17. Are you willing to sign a safety plan in the event you are triggered, which authorizes me to contact your support if you need additional support.



I commit to taking the following steps in committing to my own safety.

Early warning signs (thought, mood, behavior, situation) that a crisis might be happening.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What external and internal coping strategies can I draw from to aid in my emotional and mental well-being (a prayer, affirming quote, ceremony, counselling appointment, and/or 12 step meeting).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

People I can call to ask for help (name and phone number)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Professionals I can call to ask for help (names and phone numbers)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If I have plans to harm myself, I will do the following:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Signature: _____ Date: _____



I - PARTICIPANT CONSENT DESCRIPTION RESEARCH LETTER

The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future

You have been selected to participate in this research project. As a Graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master Social Work degree.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose and objectives of this research study are to uncover if children raised on income assistance (welfare), particularly between the ages of six and twelve, carry any negative experiences into adulthood.

Importance of this Research

This research is essential because we get to explore if income assistance and its accompanying poverty is determinantal to children through their lifespan. A contribution made by the participant is sharing their personal experiences, which may influence future research.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you meet all the criteria of having lived on income assistance continuously between the age of six and twelve.

What is involved

By voluntarily participating in this research, you will commit to meeting weekly for six weeks in a group for two hours. The group will discuss photographs representing an experience, memory, or metaphor. We will discuss the photograph's meaning and how it reminds you of growing up and experiencing welfare poverty. Some of your photographs and comments will be collected as data for the thesis. As a group, we will choose data themes, and you will also prepare to participate in a public community event displaying your photographs in the sixth week. Each participant will be required to set time outside of the group to take photographs. Further, you will be provided two other release forms 1) a participant photograph release form and 2) a subject consent form if the participant takes a photograph of a person or pet. These actions will assist Brenda Lavalley in completing her thesis for her Master Social Work degree.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause inconvenience to you by committing to the six-week time frame and weekly two-hour commitment, travel time, and time away from family.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research. It may include the resurfacing of uncomfortable old/new memories, addiction relapse, and the triggering of depression or trauma. In prevention, the following steps will be taken: You have been notified that you could be triggered by continuing in this research project. You have been informed that to manage the triggers, you must complete the plan in the SAFETY PLAN FORM and have additional support like a counselor, Elder, or spiritual advisor. In addition, if the participant experiences a trigger, there will be additional support from Brenda Lavallee.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research study include whether income assistance and its accompanying poverty are harmful to children within their lifespan; next, to bring social awareness to others of the possible harm income assistance poverty creates.

Compensation

This is a voluntary commitment. There is no financial compensation to participate.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be entirely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanation. If you withdraw from the research study, **you can take your photographs.** The exception is that the transcripts are not available during the research the reason is that other group members' information is on the transcripts. Your information will be redacted, and none of your information will be used in any form. The participant does not have to answer or fill out the questionnaire.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data collected by these pre-interview questionnaires will be protected in a password protected computer, and the computer will be locked in a file cabinet. *All data will be destroyed upon Brenda Lavallee's completion of her degree.* Additionally, for participants who are not selected to participate in the study, their private information from this pre-screening will be protected and destroyed professionally *at the end of the selection process. Further, if chosen to participate, your confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of group work. Participants are advised not to share information they do not want others to know. Participants are asked to keep the discussions confidential and not share what occurs within the group with outsiders.*

Dissemination of Results

The research study will be shared with my supervisor Jeannine Carrier, co-supervisor, Donna Jeffery, and the defense committee. The final thesis will be placed in the library of the University of Victoria, Internet, public visual display, and UVic Space.

Disposal of Data

Data from all the interview screenings which have been selected their data will be held until Brenda Lavallee's thesis is approved. Those questionnaires for potential participants not selected will be destroyed after the selection process. The Graduate supervisor, Jeannine Carriere and Brenda Lavallee will only have access to the data. Participants selected to participate will have their questionnaire answers and notes used in the thesis. At the end of the project, all the data will be disposed of through a professional shredder.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Brenda Lavallee at bmlavall@uvic.ca and the Graduate supervisor Jeannine Carrier at Carriere@uvic.ca. In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study or raise any concerns by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
----------------------------	------------------	-------------

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.



The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future

1. Confidential Information

The research participant in the study 'The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future' understands that their confidential information will be safeguarded. They are equally asked to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants and their information within the discussion groups.

Confidential information shall include all data, materials, products, technology, and other information disclosed or submitted, persons' participation, orally, in writing, or by any other media, to Brenda Lavallee _____.

If a participant leaves before the completion of the project, the participant will be unable to take transcription notes with them; they can take their photographs. To guard their confidentiality, their name or data will be secured in a password protected computer, their information will not be used throughout the project, and all data will be destroyed professionally at the end of the project.

2. Obligations of Transcriptionist

A. **Brenda Lavallee** agrees that the confidential data collection material for the research study will be used solely for this study. Confidential information will only be disclosed to Graduate supervisors Jeannine Carrier or Donna Jeffery.

Brenda Lavallee agrees not to disclose, publish, or otherwise reveal any of the Confidential Information received from _____ participant of the project to any other party whatsoever except with the specific prior written authorization of _____.

B. Materials containing confidential information must be stored in a safe location to prevent third persons unrelated to the project from accessing said materials. Brenda Lavalée will not duplicate confidential Information except for this Agreement.

3. Completion of the Work

Brenda Lavalée will use some photographs from each participant in her thesis. Once the Master Social Degree is approved, she will professionally destroy all transcriptions, notes, and photographs.

Participant Signature and Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.



The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future

I have been advised of the following:	Participant's Initial	Researcher's Initial
I have been informed of the research objective and purpose of participating in the research project.		
I know I do not have to answer any questions (for research with interviews/questionnaires).		
<p>I have been alerted of the ethics requirements in requesting permission before taking a picture of a person or pet. I understand the subject must agree to have their photograph taken and they must sign a consent form. I am not to take a photograph that depicts someone in a poor light.</p> <p>It has been explained what can be photographed.</p> <p>It has been explained that I do not need consent signed if I photograph an individual who cannot be identified.</p>		
I have been informed that I can leave the project anytime and take my photographs. My contribution to the recorded transcripts will not be used and redacted. Any remnants of my participation in this project will be entirely deleted once Brenda Lavalley receives her thesis.		
I am aware I can use a pseudonym (different name). I am aware of how my anonymity and confidentiality will be protected.		
I have informed of the potential risks, inconveniences, group process, timeline, and time commitment of the project.		
I have been instructed that all the data will be destroyed after Brenda Lavalley completes the MSW		

thesis requirements. I understand a thesis/dissemination will result in others viewing the results via Internet, UVic Space.		
--	--	--

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

**The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future****Checklist for Researcher**

- Has the participant agreed to be in the project?
- Did you go over the consent forms?
- Has the participant been informed of the ethics requirements in requesting permission before taking a picture and acquiring consent? Are participants aware of the improprieties of taking a picture that depicts someone in a poor light?
- Have they been notified that they can leave the project any time and take all their pictures?
- Has the participant been advised that they can use a pseudonym?
- Do they understand the timeline and time commitment of the project?
- Do they understand what to photograph?
- Have all consent forms been signed?
- Do they know the benefits, risks, confidentiality, voluntary, and anonymity?
- Are they aware that they do not have to answer questions or questionnaires?

- Do they have a clear understanding of why they have been invited to participate in the research study?
- Have you discussed how their data will be used and when it will be disposed of?
photographs and notes will be destroyed upon MSW approval.
- Have you spoken about the limitations of confidentiality in sharing information in a group?
- Consent will be verbally asked at the beginning of each group.
- Is the participant emotionally well to partake in the research?
- Have they signed the Safety Plan?
- Do they have an Elder, counsellor, or Spiritual advisor?
- Have you spoken about UVic Communicable Disease Plan?
- Are they aware that the dissemination thesis will be on the Internet, UVic library, and UVic Space?



The Impact of Welfare Poverty on Children's Future

This photovoice project aims to understand whether children carry any negative experiences of being raised on welfare into adulthood. As a participant in this study, I have taken photographs of people, places, and things, representing an experience, memory, or metaphor that reminds me of growing up on income assistance (welfare) and its accompanying poverty.

Who are the people running this project? How can I contact them?

I have read the above information I permit Brenda Lavalley bmlavall@uvic.ca to use my photographs in her research thesis at the University of Victoria. The photographs can be used in the public presentation at the end of this project.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of after Brenda Lavalley has been approved and met the requirements of a Master Social Work. All the data will be held in secure storage, the transcriptions, photographs, and notes will be disposed of through a professional shredder, and the audio-recorded data will be deleted weekly.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study or raise any concerns by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher, and that you are voluntarily consenting to your photographs being used in this research project.

I understand not to take any photographs that stigmatize, oppress or present someone in a poor light.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Future Use of Data PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.



These group discussion questions have been created to open dialogue:

These questions have been created to challenge ‘Truth and Knowledge’ more specifically poststructuralism theory of interrogating language, power, and discourse, these concepts permit the participants and me to challenge what we know. It also offers the participants insight into how language has been used to frame certain groups as better or worse. We will explore what truth is and whose truth and knowledge have been accepted ‘as the truth’ and whose knowledge has been ignored.

This inquiry allows us to explore how discourse has been used to frame people who access income assistance.

The following are some examples of questions that will be explored in our group discussions.

1. What is discourse? How is it used to frame certain groups? (I will define what discourse is and provide examples)
2. What discourses have influenced how you think of yourself and others?
3. Have you ever questioned how language has been used? (I will provide an example of how language is manipulated to frame certain groups).
4. What is your thought about privilege and power? (I will provide examples of power and privilege)



O – LAST GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Last Session reflective questions

1. What area did you most struggle in: Interview sessions, groups sessions, or presentations?
2. If you could change one thing throughout this process, what would it be?
3. Reflecting on your experience what is an insight you gained?
4. What was it like emotionally and mentally taking the photographs?
5. Has going through this process changed your view of your experience growing up on income assistance?
6. What is a gold nugget you can take from this experience that inspires you or raises a feeling of bravery?