

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Evangelical Beliefs and Attributions for Poverty in Southern Alberta

by

Jordan Patrick Gail

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

CALGARY, ALBERTA

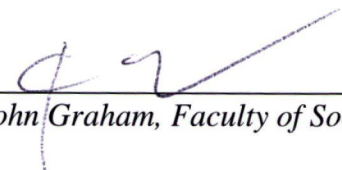
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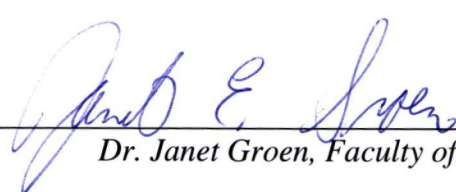
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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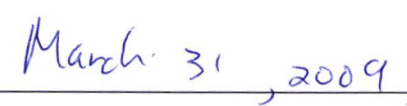
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Abstract

Cause explanations, or attributions, for poverty influence proposed solutions and support for poverty-related policies. Using semi-structured interviews, this study examined attributions for poverty and their relationship to religious beliefs within a group of Evangelical Pastors in Southern Alberta. While research suggests religious beliefs to influence attributions for poverty, this study found little effect but rather a strong association with the response to poverty. Additionally, major themes emerged: variation in attributions according to the 'type' of person identified; poverty awareness as an emerging issue in the Evangelical world; differentiation between international and domestic poverty; responsibility to address resting on multiple levels; and a unanimous identification of Christian responsibility. As attribution research has gone largely unexamined in Canada, this study makes a significant contribution to the current literature. The findings are discussed in light of their implications on previous research and discourse in the realm of poverty-related policies.

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I would like to acknowledge my beautiful wife Virginia for her tremendous sacrifice in single-handedly raising our children while I pursued this degree.

I would like to acknowledge my participants for their trust, compassion, and dedication to enhancing the lives of others.

I would like to acknowledge God from whom all blessings flow.

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Epigraph

for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life
(2 Corinthians 3:6, NIV)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Canada has a problem with poverty. As common sense and research suggest, beliefs regarding the causes, or attributions, of poverty significantly influence the support and generation of proposed solutions (Bradley & Cole, 2002; Cozzaredi, Tagler, & Wilkinson, 2001). When individuals holding similar beliefs regarding these causes and solutions unite, their influence and potential to address this issue is multiplied. In Canada and around the world, individuals adhering to evangelical Protestant beliefs are doing just that; many Evangelical sects (i.e., Pentecostal-charismatic) are gaining adherents at a momentous rate (Perrin, Kennedy, & Miller, 1997). These groups are uniting within a distinctive transnational sub-culture and becoming increasingly politicized (Kaufman, Bean, & Gonzalez, 2006; Reimer, 2003). This thesis examines a group of Evangelical Pastors and attempts to understand their beliefs in relation to their proposed causes and solutions to poverty.

Background

This project developed naturally out of a succession of observations and disillusionments that have been somewhat of a personal journey. It began with me as a child sitting in a Pentecostal Christian church in a rural resource town. This early exposure imbued in me a value for morality, holiness, and the workings of the Spirit of God. At the same time, while having never lived in poverty I was indoctrinated into the history and realities of the working class struggle against labour inequity, corporate greed, and job insecurity.

These roots unwittingly developed into a deep discontent with inequality, a synthesis of the value of justice with a seemingly pervasive nearness to poverty.

As an adult, increased understanding regarding the diversity and rich history of the Christian faith secured in me a place, and responsibility, for social action within the Church. Exploring a variety of protestant denominations inevitably led me back to the familiar world of evangelical Christianity, but with reservations. I sought to reconcile proclamations of justice and truth with observations of a near-combative resistance to meaningful discourse regarding inequality as well as, what appeared to be, moral incongruities; these largely consisted of dogma-reinforcing prioritization of energies and attention as well as a penchant for histrionics. Needless to say, my curiosity was fuelled by what appeared to be an insurmountable contradiction.

Assumptions

Underlying this project are a series of assumptions inseparable to its direction and the means of exploration. They exist as the overarching framework that has served as both the lens and guiding principles for this study:

1. I assume benevolence and sincerity amongst my participants. Essential to my approach, this has been critical in establishing rapport, indispensable for recognizing prejudice, and ethical in respecting and valuing the participants' interpretations of their own realities and beliefs.

2. I assume gathering and categorizing expressed viewpoints is an accurate and valuable method for representing the realities and beliefs of participants. This however requires the employment of established methods for enhancing trustworthiness.
3. I assume actions are precipitated by beliefs. In regards to poverty and the implications of this study, explanations regarding its causes and beliefs concerning alleviation are vital to mobilization efforts and/or poverty-related discourse.
4. I assume I have significant and conflicting biases. These stem from many years of disenfranchisement alongside a significant emotional investment in the message, propagation, and potential of the worldwide church. These biases require elaboration, transparency, and significant efforts to sufficiently ascertain their impact on the findings.

Developing the Research Question

Admittance to the Master of Social Work program, to me, meant the opportunity to complete a thesis. An interest in research alongside an insatiable curiosity secured this path immediately. Upon entrance to the program, I immediately selected this topic as is, although the methodology for its exploration has undergone significant revisions and alterations. Having pondered this issue for many years, I felt secure my interest and investment in it would sustain long hours of transcribing, analyzing, and writing.

In developing my research question, my intention was to discover and illuminate factors that reinforced ambivalence and apathy towards social change in regards to Canadian poverty. Based on my observations and assumptions of ambivalence and apathy amongst Evangelicals, I had a number of questions: What is unique about Evangelicalism that allows its followers to ignore the poor? Are specific beliefs/interpretations held that permit/promote ignorance in regards to this issue or is evangelical sub-culture more important; is it something else? How do Evangelicals reconcile the wealth of doctrines and scriptures that speak to caring for the poor with inaction? Are concepts like moral deprivation, deservedness, or the Protestant work ethic relevant to contemporary beliefs about the causes of poverty? Are there barriers to Evangelicals being more socially active in regards to poverty in Canada? Important to reiterate however, are the biases evident in these questions. Having resolved to operate on the assumption of benevolence and sincerity I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews, fashioning my questions and probes to be as value-neutral as possible.

Purpose of the Study

The development of my research question included both an attempt to incorporate those noted above and address gaps in the current attribution literature. At the same time, efforts were undertaken to allow new areas to emerge and not exclusively seek answers to pre-assigned questions. After a thorough literature review, there appeared to be significant opportunities to contribute in this area; there was very little research using Canadian or Albertan populations and no qualitative studies on Evangelicals in relation to

poverty. The research that did exist, mostly from the U.S., offered a wealth of suggestions that were incorporated into the research design; this is addressed in more detail below. At its core, this study sought to understand the attributions Evangelical Pastors held regarding the poor and how they were reinforced by their beliefs. This implied the assumption that a relationship, primarily causal, did exist between religious beliefs and attributions for poverty. Using a semi-structured interview, however, allowed for the potential to discover these assumptions were incorrect.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Attributions for poverty are the ‘cause explanations’ often categorized as either internal (i.e., individualistic) or external (i.e., structural) (Bradley & Cole, 2002; Hunt, 2002). They consist of explicit causal beliefs that transcend the favorable/unfavorable evaluation of an entity (Cozzaredi, et al., 2001) and express underlying beliefs about why poverty exists. They are related to perceptions regarding how poverty should be alleviated (Bradley & Cole, 2002) and, more importantly, support for poverty related policies (Bullock, Williams & Limbert, 2003; Cozzaredi et al., 2001). This influence on poverty related policies is most often actualized in relation to welfare reform and the development of either progressive or restrictive policies. As policy development is considered to be the most effective strategy to reduce poverty (Reutter, et al., 2006), the significance of attributions for poverty cannot be overlooked by those working to alleviate it. As shown below, attributions do not exist in isolation as there are a number of variables that contribute to differing beliefs about why poverty exists.

One such variable, religious beliefs, is the focus of this research. More specifically, evangelical Protestant beliefs are investigated due to, not only personal interest but, their relevance across the planet. Globally, radical Protestant sects, (e.g., evangelical and Pentecostal-charismatic) are found to be rapidly spreading (Jenkins, 2002; Robbins, 2004). Largely attributed to the success of missionaries from the north, this expansion is most notable in the global south with Southern Christians being far more conservative in

both beliefs and moral teachings. Predicted to have profound effects on North America, this emerging Christian world will be anchored in the distinctly conservative Southern continents (Jenkins, 2004).

In Canada, there have been longstanding concerns regarding growing secularization and decreasing numbers of Christians attending church (Kaufman, Bean, & Gonzalez, 2006). Requiring caution in interpretation, the most recent census reports the numbers of Canadians attending religious services, finding Seven out of Ten Canadians identify as Christian (e.g., Roman Catholic or Protestant) with Roman Catholic having the most adherents (Statistics Canada, 2003). Overall, while the number of people identifying as Protestant has decreased, there are significant gains in select evangelical Protestant denominations. While there is little agreement on the numerical significance, the sources, or the reasons, conservative - evangelical sects are growing (Beyer, 1997; Bibby, 2002; Perrin, Kennedy, & Miller, 1997). This numerical growth, however, may not be because these groups are particularly successful, but rather because they are not failing as badly as others (Bibby & Brinkerhoff, 1994). The 2001 Canadian Census also found, in Alberta, Protestant denominations surpassed Roman Catholic and accounted for 39% of the population. Proportionally, individuals reporting Baptist, Pentecostal, Mennonite, Salvation Army, Christian Reformed Church, Evangelical Missionary Church, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Methodist, and Brethren in Christ totalled 201,315. Of the total population for Alberta (2,941,150), people attending these denominations equalled 15% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2003). These denominations have been

selected as they are affiliated with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) (2009), described in more detail below.

While, for this study, it is not entirely assumed people attending evangelical denominations hold evangelical beliefs, a cursory glance at these numbers show potential for relevance. As noted above, large numbers of individuals holding evangelical beliefs may have a significant effect on poverty discourse as they have shown to align with individualistic attributions for poverty (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Hunt, 2002; Robinson, 2006). In addition, accounting for the effects of the transnational subculture (Kaufman et al., 2006) the relationship to evangelicalism in the U.S. must also be noted.

Acknowledging the many similarities between Canadian and U.S. Evangelicals and shortage of Canadian literature on the topic requires an extensive use of American literature.

Because so much research has been undertaken in the United States, and so little in Canada, this section reviews the literature describing attributions for poverty in relation to evangelical Protestants in both Canada and the U.S. It is divided into three main parts: The first is an exploration of social science research relating to attributions for poverty. This includes a definition of poverty, an examination of the methodologies used and populations studied, as well as trends and gaps in the literature; the second explores evangelical Protestantism. It includes a definition for 'Evangelical', an exploration of the current state of evangelicalism, as well as similarities and differences between Canadian and American Evangelicals; the third explores key findings regarding the relationship

between Evangelicals and attributions for poverty. This section will then conclude by highlighting specific gaps in the literature in order to justify examining Evangelical beliefs in relation to attributions for poverty in Southern Alberta.

Attributions for Poverty

In this first part, a number of aspects relating to attributions for poverty are explored. Poverty is first defined in order to inform readers and create a working definition to be used when engaging study respondents. Methodologies used in studying attributions are also highlighted, namely attribution typologies, instruments used, and populations studied. Some important findings are also addressed while dominant themes are given more attention (i.e., the effects of race and political affiliation on attributions). The last part of this section builds support for the relevance of this research by addressing important trends and gaps found in the literature.

Definition

Exploring attributions for poverty in Canada requires a definition of poverty that can adequately represent a Canadian population. As there are very few studies exploring attributions for poverty in Canada, the most notable, a study by Reutter et al., (2006), used a relative definition of poverty, as determined by Statistics Canada low-income cut-offs (LICO). The LICOs, are income levels at which Canadians, differentiated by family size and the population of their community of residence, spend 20% more of their income on basic needs than the average proportion spent by Canadians. Currently, families who

spend more than 54.7% of their income on basic needs are living below the LICO (Ross, Scott & Smith, 2000). In addition, as Canadians cannot agree on a unitary definition of poverty the LICO is the best known and, since its introduction in the 1950s, the longest used indicator (Graham, Swift, & Delaney, 2003). Although other indicators exist, it continues to be used by Statistics Canada as the standard for assessing poverty. This study will also use this ‘unofficial poverty line’ when exploring the attributions for poverty amongst Evangelicals.

Methodologies

Typologies

Attributions for poverty in North America are most often categorized as one of two types: internal, (i.e. individual), and external, (i.e. structural) (Bradley & Cole, 2002; Hunt, 2002). This basic framework was established by Feagin (1975), having conducted a nationwide public opinion survey examining beliefs about the causes of poverty in the U.S. In his benchmark study, 1017 respondents were randomly selected to evaluate a list of reasons why there are poor people in the country. The reasons were grouped into three categories: 1. individualistic explanations, which place the responsibility for poverty primarily on the poor themselves; 2. structural explanations, which blame external and social factors; and 3. fatalistic explanations, which cite nonstructural, but supra-individual (nonvolitional) forces such as luck, chance, sickness, or physical handicaps (Feagin, 1975). Since then, Feagin’s (1975) format has generally been used (Bullock et al., 2003),

with the occasional addition of a cultural or socio-cultural category (Bullock, 1999; Bullock et al., 2003; Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Reutter et al., 2006; Smith & Stone 1989).

The additional cultural category proposes that poverty is caused by the intergenerational transmission of defective values, personality traits, and behaviours (Bullock, 1999) (i.e., breakdown of the nuclear family, bad schools, being born into poverty, etc...) (Cozzarelli et al., 2001). It has been noted to reflect the perception that people are trapped in a subculture of poverty over which they have little control (Bullock et al., 2003; Reutter et al., 2006). Of the four types identified, the individual, structural, and fatalistic explanations have been more commonly focused on by researchers (Bullock et al., 2003). Nonetheless, the cultural category would be included alongside the structural and fatalistic explanations as an external attribution.

In attribution research, Feagin's (1975) typologies have been integral to eliciting, analyzing, and discussing attribution responses. They have, however, been criticized for being dated and not reflecting the full range of contemporary issues (Bullock et al., 2003). Therefore, a contemporary version, as used by Reutter et al., (2006), is considered. This has been integrated into the data analysis as it assists in defining and categorizing various attributions, is the only current measure of attributions that has been used in Canada, and includes all four basic typologies that have evolved since Feagin's (1975) original work.

Instruments Used

Many studies used similar data collection methods to explore attributions for poverty. Some used individual interviews (Reutter et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006), group interviews (Reutter et al., 2006), questionnaires (Bradley & Cole, 2002; Bullock, 1999; Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Hunt, 2002), or all three (Reutter et al., 2006). Nearly all researchers, with the exception of Reutter et al., (2006) who used a mixed methodology, employed quantitative approaches; largely using scales derived from Feagin (1975), the most notable version being created by Hunt (2002). The importance of a qualitative approach cannot be underestimated as, only through its usage, Reutter et al., (2006) were able to find structural factors as precursors when participants attributed poverty to more individual reasons. As this research seeks to explore the evangelical beliefs in relation to attributions, individual interviews will be used to elicit qualitative data.

Populations Studied

A number of different population have been studied, including: students (Bullock et al., 2003; Cozzarelli et al., 2001), common laypeople (Bradley & Cole, 2002; Reutter et al., 2006), minority groups (Hunt, 1996; Hunt, 2002; Robinson, 2006), religious groups (Hunt, 2002; Regnerus, Smith, & Sikkink, 1998), people receiving welfare (Osgood, 1977; Wilson, 1996), people that are homeless (Lee, Jones, & Lewis, 1990), and people living in the middle-class (Bullock, 1999). Although there are some notable international/cross-cultural studies, the majority have been conducted in the U.S.

Canadian attribution research is almost non-existent prior to the 90's with the exception of a handful of studies focussing on a range of related variables including: nationality (Lamarche, & Tougas, 1979), election results (Lambert, Curtis, Brown, & Kay, 1986), and the effects of education among high school and university students (Guimond, Begin, & Palmer, 1989). Of particular interest is a study by Krahn, Lowe, and Hartneagel (1987); they examined attributions for unemployment amongst 421 randomly sampled adults in Edmonton, finding structured and individualistic beliefs to be equally prominent. Interesting to note is their speculation that longer experience with unemployment would lead to increased structural explanations.

Since then, research on attributions for poverty continues to be scarce in Canada: there are two cross-cultural studies including Canada, one focused on poverty in relation to developing nations (Hine, Montiel, & Jayme, 1999) and the other emphasizing the effect of cultural differences on the attributions in relation to attitudes toward social provision (Shirazi, & Biel, 2005); one study focused on nursing students (Reutter, Sword, Meagher-Stewart, & Rideout, 2004); one examined populations residing around the Great Lakes (combined Canadian and American) with an emphasis on self-efficacy and perception of governmental programs (Bradley, & Cole, 2002); one study was completed solely on attributions among the general population of adults (Reutter et al., 2006); and a telephone poll was conducted among a cross-section of Canadians in 1999 (Ipsos News Centre, 1999). Apart from the study by Reutter et al., (2006) and the telephone poll (Ipsos News Centre, 1999), there appears to be no research conducted exclusively on attributions for poverty amongst Canadian adults. There is an interesting article, however by Robertson

(1999) referencing two 1997 Canadian pre-election surveys that used 12 focus groups. She found, in “economically secure” groups a preoccupation with emotional, moral, and intellectual deficiencies of poor parents. Considering the existing Canadian findings point to a marked difference in attributions for poverty from American populations (Reutter et al., 2006), this significant gap in the literature, and near total within Alberta, point to the need for additional research.

In the U.S., Feagin’s (1975) original study found, on average, individualistic factors as considerably more important than structural or fatalistic in explaining poverty. Subsequent studies have reaffirmed that individualistic attributions are more often espoused by Americans than structural (Bullock et al., 2003; Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Hunt, 2002; Kluegel & Smith 1981; Robinson, 2006; Smith 1985; Smith & Stone 1989;). In contrast is the study conducted by Reutter et al., (2006), appearing to be one of the only current studies to address attributions in a Canada-specific context. The authors surveyed 1671 people from neighbourhoods in two Canadian cities (Edmonton and Toronto), conducting individual interviews with 59 low-income and 60 higher-income people. They found the dominant ideology in Canada to reflect a structural understanding of the causes of poverty, with large variations in how the public understands the causes of poverty. These results were congruent with a telephone poll conducted in Alberta and Ontario by Ipsos News Centre (1999). This poll found 30% of respondents thinking that people live in poverty mainly because of their own choices and actions while 51% believed people to live in poverty through no fault of their own.

In both American and Canadian literature, a number of variables have been found to affect attributions for poverty, these include: gender (Bullock, 1999; Reutter et al., 2006; Shirazi & Biel, 2005); age (Cozzaredi et al., 2001; Reutter et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006); income (Reutter et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006); stereotypes (Cozzaredi et al., 2001; Toporek & Pope-Davis, 2005); and education (Reutter et al., 2006; Toporek & Pope-Davis, 2005). Throughout the different studies, some variables have shown to take precedent over others in importance or effect on attributions, the most notable being race (Cozzaredi et al., 2001; Hunt, 2002; Robinson, 2006), political affiliation (Cozzaredi et al., 2001; Robinson, 2006; Shirazi & Biel, 2005), and religious beliefs (Cozzaredi et al., 2001; Hunt, 2002; Robinson, 2006; Youdin & Cleaveland, 2006). The effects of race and political affiliation will be further explored here although, as noted above, religious beliefs will be examined in the third section.

Race has been widely recognized as a mediating factor in attributions for poverty (Cozzaredi et al., 2001; Hunt, 1996; Hunt, 2002; Robinson, 2006; Toporek & Pope-Davis, 2005). It is so pronounced that, in a sample of graduate students from across the U.S., exposure to multicultural training workshops was found to be predictive of a greater tendency to endorse structural, as opposed to individual, explanations of poverty (Toporek & Pope-Davis, 2005). As can be assumed, predictors are largely shown to be similar with those of other marginalized populations; white participants have shown to predominantly select individualistic attributions, with black participants selecting the most structural ones (Cozzaredi et al., 2001; Hunt, 1996; Hunt, 2002; Robinson, 2006). This trend has even been found amongst white participants who otherwise express little

or no traditional prejudice suggesting that white public opinion has reached an era of stable acceptance of a racially-based economic gap (Kluegel, 1990).

There is evidence that an individual's political affiliation has a significant impact on their attributions for poverty. In the early 90's, a study of 112 students at a California University showed conservatism to correlate positively with an endorsement of individualistic causes of poverty, whereas it was negatively related to a belief in the importance of societal causes of poverty (Zucker & Weiner, 1993). Since that time, there have been additional studies supporting the findings that a conservative association positively affects, even precludes, individualistic attributions (Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Robinson, 2006; Shirazi & Biel, 2005). A recent study by Robinson (2006) used data from the 1990 General Social Survey (a national databank containing items from Feagin's (1975) original response set as well as variables used by past researchers) as well as interviews with twelve leaders of a non-profit organization. He examined variables such as: age; education; gender; family income; party affiliation; political views; prestige; race; region; religious affiliation; religious upbringing; and work status. When placed on an Individualistic vs. Structuralistic continuum (IvS Index) he found, of all the variables included, the frequency distribution matching most closely the general shape of the IvS Index score distribution was that of the respondent's political views, suggesting political affiliation as the most predominant influence (Robinson, 2006). In addition, a study by Cozzarelli et al., (2001) found, of all the socio-demographic variables they included (i.e., gender, age, ethnicity, political affiliation), political affiliation to be the most consistent predictor of affect, stereotypes, and attributions.

Trends and Gaps in the Literature

The most apparent trend found is related to the necessity of creating a more inclusive set of variables for examining attributions. There is a growing awareness that attributions are dependent on multiple factors and change according to poverty sub-types (Hunt, 1996; Reutter et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006). Reutter et al., (2006) note that people have different causal attributions for different low-income populations, such as single men, single-parent mothers, working low-income people, or welfare recipients. This can be seen in other studies, for example, a survey by Lee et al., (1990), found public beliefs about the causes of homelessness to emphasize structural forces and bad luck over individual factors. Similarly, Wilson (1996) discovered attributions directed toward sub-populations of the poor (welfare dependents, the homeless or migrant workers) to diverge distinctly from those directed toward the 'generic' poor. Another finding by Robinson (2006) indicated that Americans believe there are at least two kinds of poor people resulting in more balanced attributions leaning only slightly in either direction on the Individualistic-Structuralistic continuum.

The lack of research focusing on attributions for different sub-groups of the poor is the most noticeable gap in the literature although other important gaps exist. As addressed above, there is a lack of research focused on attributions for poverty specifically for Canadian adults (Reutter et al., 2006). There is also a lack of qualitative research, necessary in light of its effectiveness in identifying structural precursors for individual

attributions (Reutter et al., 2006). There are also a number of specific variables recognized to be lacking, including: political ideology (Reutter et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006); a variety of ethnic, social class, and age categories (Cozzarelli et al., 2001); and religious beliefs (Hunt, 2002). Most curious is the neglect of religious beliefs, given the centrality of Protestant themes in explanations for individualistic orientations and ideologies; it is central in offering theodicies - explanations for the way social life distributes social rewards and shapes life chances (Weber, 1958). Despite suggestive evidence that religion, particularly as it intersects with race/ethnicity, may be an important determinant of how people think about the subject of poverty (Feagin, 1975), this neglect continues.

Evangelicalism

“[Evangelicalism] is a sub-culture that is international in scope, and influences internal to evangelicalism have shaped the religiosity of core members more than external cultural influences” (Reimer, 2003, p.160).

Definition

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2007), ‘evangelical’ means: 1. of, relating to, or being in agreement with the Christian gospel especially as it is presented in the four Gospels; 2. Protestant; 3. emphasizing salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion, the authority of Scripture, and the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual; and 4. of or relating to the evangelical Church in Germany, adhering to, or marked by fundamentalism, or marked by militant or crusading

zeal. This definition is similar to that provided by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) (2007), (the national association of evangelical Christians in Canada). They define an evangelical as someone who holds: 1. Belief that in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God provides the way for the forgiveness of one's sins; 2. Belief that the Bible is the Word of God, and is reliable and trustworthy; 3. Commitment of one's life to Jesus Christ and self-identification as a "converted Christian"; 4. Disagreement with the statement that "the concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in these modern times"; 5. Disagreement with the statement "Jesus Christ was not the divine son of God"; and 6. Weekly church attendance. In addition to this definition would be, 7. a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, as according to Kaufman et al., (2006), this is noted to be the defining trait of Evangelical Protestants. While both these definitions have been included, for the purpose of this study adherence to the definition as provided by the EFC and Kaufman et al., (2006) will suffice. Additionally, the EFC website outlines affiliate congregations in every province of Canada allowing researchers to easily determine denominations that subscribe to evangelical beliefs. For the purposes of this study, Evangelical will refer to evangelical Protestantism and exclude Catholic ultramontaniam, which has been included in definitions of evangelicalism (Choquette, 2003).

Here the term 'evangelical' is used in its broadest scope. As definitional standardization is rare amongst social scientific usages of terms such as Pentecostal and charismatic (Robbins, 2004), this study uses affiliation with the EFC as the entry point into locating and examining Canadian Evangelicals. This organization is important as it is the national

association of evangelical Christians in Canada. Founded in 1964, it boasts a common statement of faith for 24 denominations as well as more than 15, 000 supporting individuals (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2009) and member denominations with a constituency of over 1 million (Couto, 2009). Its purpose is to act as a positive gathering place for evangelical ministries, a positive forum for evangelical leaders, and as a positive contributor to public policy (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2009). An undoubtedly large parachurch organization, the largest member denomination is the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Other member evangelical denominations include the Salvation Army, the Mennonite Brethren Church, the Christian Reformed Church, Christian and Missionary Alliance churches and Convention and Fellowship Baptists. The EFC seeks to promote renewal among the churches and to serve as a forum for interacting and stimulating Canada's 2.5 million Evangelicals. It also represents an evangelical voice to the media, government, courts and the general public and produces a bimonthly magazine, *Faith Today*, and newsletter (Couto, 2009).

Evangelicalism in Canada and the U.S.

By the early 1990's, Canadian evangelicalism had gained a measure of prominence, wealth, and respectability in modern Canadian society. Despite extreme American stereotypes, Canadian Evangelicals have been found to be remarkably similar to other Canadians (Stackhouse, 1993). They have also been found to be quite similar to American Evangelicals, albeit some notable differences. As this study focuses on

Canadian evangelicalism, and the majority of scholarship uses American data, it is important to distinguish between Canadian and American traditions.

There are remarkable similarities between U.S. and Canadian Evangelicals. One of the foremost researchers on this topic, Sam Reimer (2003) explains that U.S. and Canadian Evangelicals share the four historic emphasizes of evangelicalism: 1. Experiencing salvation (conversionism); 2. Embracing the authority of Christian scripture (Biblicism); 3. Embracing the redemptive work of Christ on the cross (crucicentrism); and 4. Evangelizing to the lost (activism). He notes that religious participation and commitment is high in both groups however Canadian Evangelicals show less support for evangelism (activism) than their U.S. counterparts. In addition to this, other findings have shown large similarities in the political/moral values of Canadian and American Evangelicals (Kaufman et al., 2006).

Despite the similarities, there are substantial differences between U.S. and Canadian Evangelicals. In Reimer's (1995) analysis of Canadian and American social surveys, he argues that in Canada cultural supports are minimal leading to increased conviction regarding religious beliefs and practices. Regarding beliefs, Reimer (2003) has also found American Evangelicals to more often list moral issues as the source of national and local problems opposed to Canadian Evangelicals who are more concerned with economic issues. In addition, the Canadians are also more likely to criticize the institutional evangelical church and show little variation between regions opposed to American

Evangelicals who vary significantly in religious orthodoxy between regions (Reimer, 2003).

These findings are similar to those of Kaufman et al., (2006) in their study on the political role and influence of evangelical Protestants in the United States and Canada. They used a number of nationally representative social surveys to gather their data, including the 1998 General Social Survey (U.S.), the 1999 Social Inequality Survey (Canada), and self-administered questionnaires for 1284 (U.S.) and 974 (Canada) respondents. From this data, they found American evangelical Protestants to be less fiscally conservative or anti-government as previously thought. Similar to Reimer (2003), they also found that, in some ways, Canadian Evangelicals are actually more devout and committed to their religious identity than their American counterparts. The last major finding was that there were surprising differences in political affiliations and goals. This was again similar to that of Reimer (2003) in his claim that, of all the differences found between U.S. and Canadian Evangelicals, the most prominent difference is in political attitudes.

Canadian Evangelicals may not be as fundamentalist or politically active as their U.S. counterparts however, there now appears to be renewed vigour as Canadian evangelical Protestants have been engaging in political discourse and gaining supporters at a momentous rate (Kaufman et al., 2006). In addition, a 1996 survey of three thousand Canadian adults found Evangelicals, like those in the U.S., to support conservative political parties (Guth, & Fraser, 2001).

Attributions for Poverty and Evangelicalism

This last part is an exploration of the role religious beliefs, notably evangelical, have on attributions for poverty. It highlights some key findings including the intersection of ethnicity, evangelicalism, and attributions for poverty. As there does not appear to be any literature that addresses evangelicalism in relation to attributions for poverty in a Canadian context, the findings must be understood in light of the significant differences between American and Canadian Evangelicals.

Key Findings

Among Whites in the United States, Protestantism has historically fostered an individualistic view of poverty that attributes responsibility for poverty to characteristics of poor persons themselves rather than to aspects of social structure (Feagin, 1975). Since Feagin's (1975) pivotal work, research on the relationship between religion and attributions for poverty has been scarce, although what does exist shows significant findings. The most important study in this respect was conducted by Hunt (2002). In this study, he interviewed 2854 Californians by telephone, examining the relationship between race, religious affiliation, and beliefs about poverty. He found, while accounting for other predictors like race and ethnicity, 'religious factors' were at work shaping peoples' ideological thinking about inequality. Most notable is his finding that Protestants and Catholics are most likely to endorse the historically dominant individualistic interpretation of poverty. Furthermore, he shows Protestants as significantly less likely than the other examined affiliations to endorse structural beliefs. These results are

consistent with Robinson's (2006) analysis of the 1990 General Social Survey data finding, among a number of other factors, individuals raised in evangelical Protestant traditions were the most likely to have individualistic opposed to structuralistic poverty cause attributions (Robinson, 2006).

Interestingly enough, in an earlier study using the 1996 General Social Survey and 117 in-depth interviews, Emerson, Smith, and Sikkink (1999) found religion to have an independent effect on explanations of racial socio-economic inequality; they found that white conservative Protestants are more individualistic and less structural in their explanations of the black-white socio-economic gap than other whites. This suggests that, although attributions are mediated by race/ethnicity and religious beliefs, some mediation by religious beliefs also occurs independently.

Conclusion

Gaps in the Literature

There are large insufficiencies in the literature regarding attributions for poverty. Not only is religion a factor that is largely overlooked (Hunt, 2002), as well as Canada-specific contexts (Reutter et al., 2006), but there is also a growing need for research to explain how individualistic attributions are maintained (Robinson, 2006). Another important gap in the literature is directly related to the effect of evangelical beliefs on attributions for poverty. Hunt (2002) states a need for future research to examine possible implications of denominational variation, specifically measures tapping the

fundamentalist/modernist dimension, among Protestants. Considering that 15% (Statistics Canada, 2003) of Albertans associate themselves with denominations affiliated with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (2007), this gap is a significant one.

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Overview

This section presents the methods and approaches used to gather and analyze data in order to examine the beliefs of the participants. It begins by presenting the theories that informed my research. It then outlines the process of selecting participants and highlights some ethical considerations. The methods for collecting and analyzing data are then presented prior to discussing the strategies used to establish reliability, validity, and generalizability as well as the process of making thematic connections. For each decision made, justifications are presented emphasizing suitability for describing the experiences and meaning this group identifies in relation to their attributions for poverty.

Theory and approaches that informed my research

Paradigms

Implicit in the selection of a qualitative research methodology is the idea that reality is subjective and multiple realities exist; some researchers believe in a mind-independent reality (realists), while others believe in multiple realities (relativists) (Raines, 2008). As different researchers embrace different realities, so do the individuals being studied as well as the readers. Qualitative researchers, therefore, conduct research with the intent of reporting these multiple realities (Creswell, 2007). Assuming multiple realities exist requires the researcher be positioned to explore these realities by lessening the distance between him/her and those being studied. It also requires, in addition to being positioned

within the study, recognition that research is value-laden with unavoidable biases; this necessitates active reporting of biases and values by the researcher. To be expected, this changes the language, or rhetoric, of the report to more closely resemble a narrative with a personal voice and qualitative terms. Because qualitative researchers seek to understand meaning and experiences, inductive logic and emergent design is used; this often includes working with details before generalizations, context descriptions, and continually revised questions (Creswell, 2007).

For this study, an interpretive-phenomenological approach is used based on a constructivist paradigm. Often combined with interpretivism (Creswell, 2007), a constructivist philosophy is built on the thesis of ontological relativity, holding that statements about existence depend on a worldview, and no worldview is determined solely by empirical or sense data about the world (Patton, 2002). This paradigm, or worldview, recognizes that individuals seek understanding of the world and develop it through the subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2007); these meanings are varied and multiple, they are formed through interactions with others as well as cultural and linguistic constructs (Patton, 2002). This leads researchers to seek a complexity of views while relying on the participants' perspectives of the situation (Creswell, 2007). In practice, this requires broad and general open-ended questions with a specific focus on processes and the participants' contexts. As they intend to make sense of the various meanings, researchers position themselves in the study recognizing their interpretations are shaped by their own experiences and background.

Theoretical Perspective

The interpretive-phenomenological approach has been selected because it allows reality to be defined by the participants' interpretations of their own realities (Williams, Unrau, & Grinnell, 2008); it also allows for an active role by few participants, is appropriate when attempting to understand opposed to explain or predict a topic, and is inductive in analyzing, interpreting, and reporting findings as opposed to formulating a hypothesis (Unrau, Grinnell, & Williams, 2008). In addition to this, an interpretive approach asks respondents: what they know; what relevant experiences they have; how consistent are their attitudes, do they express some larger perspectives or ideology; are their actions consistent with their expressed attitudes; and, how strongly are their attitudes held? (Engel & Shutt, 2008). This approach, and subsequent questions, is appropriate for describing the meaning of beliefs, or attributions, as it allows for the data to emerge from the respondents rather than imposing a strict framework for them to respond to. This approach also fits well, and is complemented by, a phenomenological methodology.

Strategies of Inquiry

Qualitative research is primarily phenomenological (Holosko, 2001) although phenomenology is, by some, considered a paradigm rather than a research strategy (Tesch, 1990). It is concerned with exploring the structures of consciousness in human experience (Creswell, 1998), or understanding the human experience from the individual's own frame of reference (Holosko, 2001). Phenomenological researchers study the ordinary life-world: they are interested in the way people experience their

world, what it is like for them, how to best understand them (Tesch, 1990). They search for the essential, invariant structure (essence) or the central underlying meaning where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning (Creswell, 1998). This approach has been selected because it emphasizes a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world (Williams, Unrau, & Grinnel, 2008). This is a good fit when the central purpose is to describe the beliefs, encompassing experiences and meaning, regarding the attributions for poverty from the perspective of the people involved in the study.

Participants

Sampling Methods

This study employed non-probability, purposive sampling methods. Non-probability sampling is useful for qualitative studies (Schutt, 2008), or when it is impossible to develop a sampling frame for the population (Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2005). Purposive sampling has been chosen as it is used to maximize information, not facilitate generalization to the broader population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). It is also used to study sub-sets of populations (Schutt, 2008) (i.e., Evangelical Pastors). Furthermore, this study also utilized criterion sampling, with specific criteria addressed below, to ensure the participants have some depth of experiences with the phenomenon, increasing the likelihood cases would be information rich (Heppner & Heppner, 2004; Patton, 2002); it is implied that employed Pastors who hold fast to the inerrancy of the Bible will have strong theological predispositions influencing their beliefs about poverty.

Participant Selection

For a participant to be included in the sample they were asked a series of questions (Appendix A) to ensure they met the following criteria: a) ordained and listed as head pastor or associate pastor in the congregational directory of churches affiliated with the EFC (2007). This was intended to increase the likelihood that participants' subscribe to evangelical doctrines while defining the boundaries of the sample, making it manageable. It was also designed to ensure participants will have regularly attended services, effectively excluding recent converts or those unfamiliar with the doctrines; b) male, Caucasian, and between the ages of 30 – 60. As gender (Bullock, 1999; Reutter et al., 2006; Shirazi & Biel, 2005), age (Cozzaredi et al., 2001; Reutter et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006), and race (Cozzaredi et al., 2001; Hunt, 2002; Robinson, 2006), have been shown to be mediating factors for attributions these rigid boundaries have allowed this study to focus on a select group. This homogenization was intended to allow for in-depth description; serving to focus the study, reduce variation, and simplify the analysis (Patton, 2002) making the information more robust and manageable; and, c) participants were required to be in agreement a series of questions used by the EFC (2007) to determine adherence to evangelical values. These questions state an Evangelical is someone who: (1) Believes that in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God provides the way for the forgiveness of one's sins; (2) Believes that the Bible is the word of God, and is reliable and trustworthy; (3) Has a commitment of one's life to Jesus Christ and self-identification as a "converted Christian"; (4) Disagrees with the statement that

"the concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in these modern times"; (5) Disagrees with the statement "Jesus Christ was not the divine son of God"; and (6) Attends church weekly. In addition to these questions it was also determined the participants'; (7) Agreeance with the statement that the Bible is inerrant, or free of mistakes. According to Kaufman et al., (2006), this is noted to be the defining trait of Evangelical Protestants.

Parameters and Size of Sample

The sample is comprised of evangelical Pastors living and working in Southern Alberta. For the purpose of this study, they consist of individuals belonging to denominations associated with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) (2009) (For a description of the EFC, see Chapter 2). Southern Alberta is defined by the parameters set out by the Government of Alberta (2009). This includes the area of Alberta south of, and including, Drumheller, spanning east of British Columbia, west of Saskatchewan, and north of the United States.

The only criteria used in selecting sample size was the perceived sufficiency of cases to allow the planned types of data analysis (Monette et al., 2005). As this study sought in-depth information, a small number of people could be used (Patton, 2002), therefore a minimum sample size of 6 was offered. This number has been chosen based on resource and time limitations. As criteria are required to alert researchers of inadequacies in the original sampling approach (Patton, 2002); this was comprised of saturation/redundancy

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Raines, 2008), a perceived completeness in providing an overall sense of the concept (Schutt, 2008).

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

At the onset of the interview, the researcher provided each participant a copy of the consent form (Appendix B) before reading it aloud to them. Each participant was encouraged to ask questions for clarification and encouraged to read the form. Written consent was required by participants, and provided prior to beginning each interview. Additionally, within the consent form, participants were required to consent to being audio taped during the interview. Each participant was informed of the right to withdraw from the research process at any point during the interview. They were informed that, if they chose to withdraw from the study, the data they had contributed up to the time of withdrawal would be kept and used unless they requested it not be.

Confidentiality

Participants were informed the information provided would be securely stored and they would remain anonymous: at no time would their name or any identifying information appear in the data that is collected; the transcripts would have the identifying information removed by myself during the transcription process; the data would be reported in aggregate with no individual identifying information presented in any

documents/publications; and, any quotes used by the participants in the write-up would not be able to be connected with any individual. They were informed that a pseudonym would be used and given the opportunity to select their own, with only one individual choosing to do so. Participants were all given the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews, preliminary coding schemes, and the final results; they were given two weeks to provide revisions or feedback. While confidentiality was attempted, it could not be guaranteed due to the possibility that someone could read the findings and infer who the respondents are. While all identifying (e.g., name, congregation) and near identifying information (e.g., city, locale) was removed during transcription, the possibility of inferring respondents was unavoidable. Anonymity was, however, reasonably assured.

Data-Collection Methods

Access and Contact

Participants were recruited by telephone by contacting congregations noted as affiliates by the EFC and having a listed telephone number. The researcher then asked to speak with either the head or associate Pastor. Once contacted, the researcher introduced himself and provided an overview of the study before having asked respondents if they would like to continue (Appendix A). If so, a series of questions were asked, as outlined in the Telephone Script, to determine if the respondents met the criteria and were willing to participate. For those who did, a time and place convenient to them was arranged to conduct the interviews. Audio recordings were taken throughout the interview process. If

respondents did not meet the criteria for inclusion as per the telephone script, they were thanked for their time, not interviewed, and not included in the sample.

Semi-Structured/Open-Ended Interviews

Although documents can be a source of data, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection when the essence of the meaning of the experience is sought (Merriam & Associates, 2002). In attempting to uncover the essence of the beliefs related to attributions for poverty, the semi-structured interview guide has been selected to allow for key questions to be explored (i.e. doctrinal beliefs, attributions) while allowing individual experiences and perspectives to emerge (Monette et al., 2005; Patton, 2002) (Appendix C). It allowed me to probe, re-phrase questions, and take the questions in whatever order that best fit the particular interview (Monette et al., 2005).

The interview guide included broad themes, or categorical headings (i.e., what experiences or meanings are associated with attributions for poverty?), and a number of probes to elicit in-depth information (i.e., do you have a personal example; what is your biblical/philosophical belief about why poverty exists?). These themes or categories were developed through reviewing the existing literature and in an attempt to answer the research questions. It specifically encouraged respondents to consider ‘typifying’ people living in poverty and answer the questions in relation to these identified types. As the literature shows attributions to change according to poverty sub-types (Hunt, 1996; Reutter et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006), I had anticipated novel attributions based on the

typologies identified in the literature: single men; single-parent mothers; working low-income people; welfare recipients (Reutter et al., 2006); the homeless (Lee et al., 1990); migrant workers; and the 'generic' poor (Wilson, 1996). The interview guide also included questions intended to explore the rationale for selecting the various attributions. While the first interview was intended to act as a pilot-test for the interview guide, no revisions were suggested therefore the transcription was kept, included, and the guide remained relatively unaltered.

There are a number of strengths to using the interview approach in this study: first of all, compared to other approaches (i.e., mailed surveys) interviews have a high response rate; second, it also allowed me to interview participants where they are comfortable, promoting spontaneous answers (Gochros, 2007); third, this approach granted me flexibility in questioning, and an ability to explain questions; fourth, it gave me some degree of control over the environment, effectively decreasing the likelihood of participants being influenced by others; and fifth, as data is personal and/or controversial, it allowed me the option of using observational information to elicit unanticipated data by probing non-verbal cues (Gochros, 2007; Monette et al., 2005).

In this study, there were also disadvantages to using the interview approach, including: the potential for interviewer distortion (i.e., asking errors, probing errors, recording errors, variation in wording, and subtle interviewer influence); the possibility the intensity of the interview and fatigue lead to poor answers; and the potential for interviewer bias

(Gochros, 2007; Monette et al., 2005). The potential for interviewer bias was of concern being that the quality of the information obtained was largely dependent on myself as the interviewer (Patton, 2002). Therefore, ways of decreasing bias and establishing trustworthiness are further explored below.

In addition to the interview approach, there are strengths and weaknesses to using an interview guide opposed to an informal conversation interview. An advantage is that the guide allowed me to interview a number of people in a more systematic and comprehensive manner, and was the best use of available time (Patton, 2002). It also kept the interviews focused while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge. A potential drawback being that it may have inadvertently limited me, as the researcher, in exploring other questions (Patton, 2002).

Procedure

For this study, participants have been selected by contacting, through telephone, various denominations affiliated with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) (2007) in Southern Alberta. Potential participants were required to be ordained Pastors and asked to answer a series of questions in order to determine their subscription to evangelical beliefs. Individuals willing to participate and found to subscribe to evangelical beliefs were then interviewed face to face in a time and location convenient to them, by convenience this was primarily their offices. A semi-structured open-ended interview guide was used to elicit the respondent's attributions for poverty and related beliefs.

While the interviews typically took around an hour and a half in duration (Table 1), the only criterion for termination was completion of the interview guide and saturation/redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Raines, 2008). Once complete, all the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim with the identifying information omitted. Copies of the transcripts were then sent to the participants for additions, clarifications, or corrections; they were given a period of two weeks to respond, with no responses received by myself.

TABLE 1: Overview of Data Collection Interviews

Interview #	Date	Participant (Pseudonym)	Length of Interview
1	Aug. 21 / 08	Pete	0:51:10
2	Sept. 15 / 08	Jay	1:36:42
3	Sept. 17 / 08	Norman	1:32:16
4	Oct. 22 / 08	Drew	1:53: 46
5	Oct. 24 / 08	Phil	1:10:54
6	Oct. 29 / 08	Bart	1:19:02

Data-Analysis Methods

The data analysis methods used in this study have been primarily influenced by Tesch (1990), Creswell (2007, 2009), and most notably Colaizzi (1978). At the early conceptual stages of this research I derived a template for coding a Phenomenological study (Figure 1) that served to assist me in visualizing the process of Phenomenological data analysis. This template was largely a synthesis of basic Qualitative and Phenomenological

concepts as outlined by Creswell (2007), Merriam and Associates (2002), and Tesch (1990). As there was an emphasis on Bracketing and seeking Textural and Structural Description, I was cognizant of this in creating the interview guide; the interview guide sought to specifically elicit experiences and meaning from the participants regarding their beliefs regarding poverty. Notes were also recorded in a field journal to capture personal bias evident during all stages of this research. Interestingly enough, although this template was created largely as a visual tool and had been put aside, later reflection revealed that, while eventually following the processes of Colaizzi (1978) and Creswell (2009), I had adhered to it quite closely.

FIGURE 1: Template for coding a Phenomenological study

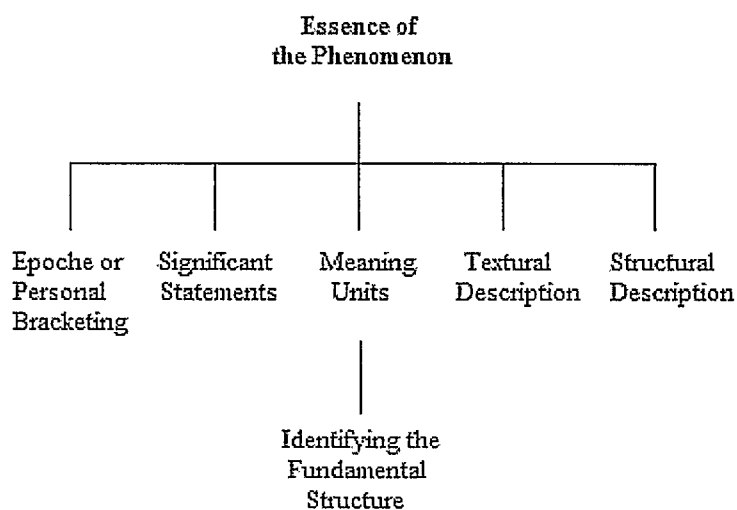


Figure 1 Template for Coding a Phenomenological Study

For this study, data analysis began as soon as the data collection. The process of simultaneously reducing and analyzing data, displaying data, and drawing conclusions (Monette et al., 2005), was important for gaining direction to inform additional data collection. This process was met with some success as interesting trends were discovered and further explored, primarily in relation to different experiences between Canadian and overseas poverty, and experiences of participants' living below the LICO. Upon sending the transcripts and preliminary coding scheme to participants (Appendix D), they were also specifically urged to respond to these findings.

Another method employed throughout the interview process was imaginative listening. This is a process where I, as the researcher, made significant attempts to be present to participants. Emphasized by Colaizzi (1978), this process acknowledges the participant is more than just a source of data; the richness of a person and their verbalized experiences can be contacted only when the researcher listens with more than just ears but a totality of being and entirety of personality. This was made much easier by a number of factors: my evangelical upbringing and familiarity with the language and concepts; the time spent engaging each participant in informal discussion prior to beginning the interview; my comfort with the topic (having discussed it informally for a number of years); my past experience implementing basic social work interview skills; and my relatively personable disposition. I feel I had done well in engaging with participants, possibly with the exception of interview #5 where, for whatever reason, I was somewhat low in energy. I do feel it is reflected in both the depth and duration of the interview data.

When interviews were completed I began working with the data. Although this research began with the idea of strictly following the template I had created (Figure 1), it was found not helpful; this was my first attempt at qualitative research and I needed more than a diagram to figure out what to do. As Creswell (2009) proposes an ideal situation is blending general steps with a specific research strategy (e.g., Phenomenological research), I used a combination of general steps and specific procedures as outlined by Creswell (2009) and Colaizzi (1978) respectively (Table 2). These steps and procedures were used exclusively and followed closely. While this process appears quite rigid and hierarchical, the various stages are interrelated with a large degree of movement across stages (primarily backwards).

TABLE 2: Data Analysis Steps and Procedures

	Creswell (2009)	Colaizzi (1978)
1	Organize and prepare data for analysis	
2	Read through all the data and get a general sense of the information and its meaning	Read all descriptions (protocols) and acquire a feeling or sense of them
3	Begin detailed analysis with a coding process	Extract significant statements from the protocols
		Formulate meanings from each significant statement

4	Use the coding to generate descriptions and themes	Organize the meanings and cluster into themes
5		Integrate the results into an exhaustive description
6	Advance how descriptions and themes will be represented in the narrative	
	Make an interpretation or meaning of the data	Formulate the exhaustive description in a statement identifying its fundamental structure
7		Return findings to participants for validation

In the beginning stages of analysis, the data was organized by transcribing the interviews, optically scanning the material for errors, and making decisions regarding syntactical usage and sentence structure to best capture and present the participants' responses. Unnecessary non-language utterances (i.e., "um," "ah") and fillers (i.e., "you know") were also omitted (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). The data was then sorted and arranged to correspond to the questions posed during the interview. On occasion, responses were given at a later, or earlier, stage and did not correspond neatly with the order of questioning. These responses were not artificially arranged, so as not to take them out of the proper context; they were retained in the original context however this made coding slightly more difficult. Overall, the interview transcriptions have been arranged to represent the interview exactly as it occurred.

During the analysis process the stages and procedures as outlined by Creswell (2009) and Colaizzi (1978) were used. Similarly, the term “Step” was also adopted to refer to the stage I was in. In the second step, the entire data set was read with the goal of becoming immersed in it, achieving a closeness and sense of its entirety. This was done to discover significant statements, important patterns, themes, and interrelationships (Patton, 2002); I began by broadly exploring then confirming, and was guided by analytical principles rather than rules with the intent of ending in creative synthesis. This process served to assist in describing the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007) and was pivotal in keeping the momentum of the study. Throughout the entire coding process standard Microsoft Word features like color-coded highlighting, track changes, and comment boxes were used.

In step three, the coding procedure began by reading through all the interviews carefully and taking note of emerging ideas and themes. When I felt satisfied the text had become accessible or well understood, I began developing significant statements from the text, grouping, or delineating ‘meaning units’ throughout the entire interview transcription and then deciding which ones were relevant to the research questions asked (Creswell, 2007; Tesch, 1990). A meaning unit was a part of the description whose phrases required each other to stand as distinguishable moments (Tesch, 1990). Throughout this process, the methodology of reduction, horizontalization, and imaginative variation was used (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Reduction included continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning in, and of, itself.

Horizontalization referred to laying out all the data and ascribing equal weight, or value,

during this stage. Imaginative variation involved an attempt to examine the data from various perspectives and frames of reference. By re-reading the interviews and deriving 'meaning units', I attempted to account for these methodologies by remaining as neutral as possible and ascribed no weighting to any specific statements. Efforts were also made to capture statements in their entirety, best reflecting their inner structure and context. During this process, specific statements capturing and highlighting my primary research questions, namely what are the attributions for poverty and the related beliefs, were emphasized.

The content or theme of each meaning unit was restated by summarizing it or transforming it into more professional, or abstract, language. If meaning units from one or more interview(s) showed similarities, they were clustered together. I constantly moved back and forth between the data and isolated themes in order to achieve the most revelatory wording. Essential non-redundant themes from each interview were then compiled in one document and scrutinized (Appendix D); this was essential to deriving the emergent codes that all the interviews would be examined by. Throughout the course of the coding procedure, notes and revisions to the emergent list of themes were continually made.

After compiling these meaning units, they were examined and compared in order to reduce the total list and group topics that related to each other, optimally seeking 4 -5 themes (Creswell, 2009). I found that, as the structure of the interview guide was largely designed to elicit specific codes, emerging themes were able to be subsumed and

expounded upon within these. Each code was given an abbreviation and corresponding ‘major’ and ‘unique/supporting’ themes were included in their respective places. Major themes were those of significant interest in relation to the research questions and those that were perceived to have occurred more often (Table 3). It was also found that themes often corresponded to more than one category, or code.

TABLE 3: Coding Matrix

Abbreviation	Major Codes	Major Themes	Unique/Supporting Themes
TY	‘Type’ of people living in poverty		
			Generally uncomfortable with typifying
			Type: the ‘Anyman’ due to circumstances
		Strong relation to personal experiences	
AT	Attributions for poverty		
		Varies widely and consistently by type	
			Considerable differences between domestic and international attributions
			Addiction as a choice
			‘Welfare Mentality’
			Cultural/ Structural precursors to individual attributions
EP	Eliminating poverty (beliefs) and barriers		
		Disconnect in relation to attributions	

		Christian/church responsibility	
			Degree of compassion a marker of 'relationship' with God
			Lack of faith in Govt. vs. 'doing a good job'
		Cooperation between church and government in addressing poverty	
IN	Influences/ beliefs (in relation to attributions)		
		Scripture emphasis (Word vs. Spirit of words)	
			(Re)emergence of poverty awareness in the Evangelical world
			'Walking' in God's principles will often buffer against unintended poverty.
			Contentment in poverty
COE	Canadian and overseas experiences		
		Canadian poverty in comparison to overseas poverty	
			The LICO and 'real' poverty
			Participants' time spent under the LICO
		Determining legitimacy of need	
			Widows, Orphans, and transferable principles
		Differing responses to being taken advantage of (Spirit vs. Word?)	

			Stewardship of Resources (although limited, entrusted by God).
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Using the combination of predetermined codes and those that had emerged (Creswell, 2009), each interview was re-read and ascribed the abbreviated code prior to the text that it represented; after this was completed, the marked text segments from each interview were grouped beneath the established code heading in a separate document for easy comparison and analysis (as this process required 68 pages of text it is not included). By this ‘clustering of themes’, I was able to begin shaping a description, or detailed rendering of information about the participants (Creswell, 2009). Essential non-redundant themes from each interview were tied into a descriptive statement (i.e., on the specific level) and compared with descriptive statements from all the interviews. In order to establish the meaning and experience needed to comprise the essence of the phenomenon, a textural description (e.g., what happened) and a structural description (e.g., how the phenomenon was experienced) was sought (Creswell, 2007). In creating this general description I examined, and highlight, multiple perspectives from individuals supporting it with numerous quotations and specific evidence. It is presented in Chapter 4 as a detailed discussion of several themes and interconnecting themes.

The final step was the synthesis of textual and structural descriptions (i.e., the what and how) of the phenomenon (Merriam & Associates, 2002). By comparing all descriptive statements and leaving out the particulars, I was able to formulate the exhaustive description in a statement identifying the ‘fundamental structure’, or ‘essence’ of the

phenomenon and describing the ‘constituents’ that comprise the particular human experience being studied (Tesch, 1990). I then returned the findings with the interpretations/ description of the fundamental structure to the participants for validation Colaizzi (1978).

Profiles

In presenting the profiles of the participants a number of variables have been omitted for a variety of reasons: (1) As per the criteria for inclusion in the study, all individuals were Caucasian; (2) All were found to be currently married and therefore there were no differences worth noting in Table 4; (3) The ‘kinds of exposure to poverty’ was used in the analysis and too cumbersome, rendering the table unreadable. In addition, two disclaimers are also worth noting in presenting participant profiles: (1) although all supported conservative parties or ideologies, some emphasized a lack of partisanship and party loyalty. Many emphasized the point of voting “more candidate than party platform”, especially in relation to “what they stand for, what they support, do they embrace Biblical values, family values, those sorts of things”; (2) In regards to preferred denomination, many participants emphasized a general sense of ease or even camaraderie with other denominations (particularly evangelical).

Most had spent a considerable amount of time attending other evangelical denominations and the general sense of the interviews pointed to a lack of clear doctrinal/ theological differences but rather one of preference. The general sentiment could be seen by the

preclusion of qualifiers such as ‘typically’ or ‘generally’. One statement that captures the overall sense of the responses is, “My upbringing was in the Evangelical Free Church of Canada and I would be very comfortable there as well. I wouldn’t say there is one that rises head and shoulders above any others. There are any of a handful of evangelical denominations that I can feel comfortable in.” (Phil) Amongst some there did however, appear to be a slight aversion to Catholic beliefs. One example of this was given by Norman:

“I don’t idolize or think the poor are better than anyone else, I think in the Catholic Church that’s been a problem. You know poverty - I was just talking about money, sex, and power in a sermon. Well the Catholic Church has a cure you know: poverty, chastity, and obedience. You get rid of your money you stop, you downplay sex and obedience you join an order and do what they say. And I think that’s an exaggeration of those three areas.”

TABLE 4: Summary of Research Participants

#	Pseudonym	Age	Years practicing as a pastor	Political Affiliation (a. Local, b. Provincial, c. Federal)	Preferred denomination
1	Pete	51	About 23	Generally support conservative	Evangelical Free Church

2	Jay	46	25	Typically support Conservative Party	Church of God (Anderson Indiana)
3	Norman	52	25	Conservative	No Preference
4	Drew	43	18	Conservative	Pentecostal assemblies of Canada
5	Phil	49	15	small 'c' conservative; "I would vote for different parties but they would probably be again on the more conservative side".	Canadian Baptists of Western Canada; Evangelical Free Church of Canada; any of a handful of evangelical denominations

6	Bart	59	38	Conservative	Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
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Establishing Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability

Reliability

Throughout this study I have employed strategies to establish qualitative reliability, validity, and generalizability. There are numerous variations in the definition of these terms depending on the author, additional terms with similar meanings, and interchangeable methods for establishing them, therefore I have chosen to use those outlined by Creswell (2009). He defines the first, reliability, as means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. For this study I have read and re-read transcripts in order to ensure there are not obvious mistakes made during transcription. In addition, transcripts were sent to participants for verification of their accuracy. No responses were given however, at the completion of the exhaustive description and identification of the fundamental structure, findings were again sent to participants. This time responses were given and, as the findings include numerous quotations and participants noted having read through, any significant incongruities would likely have been noted. Additionally, one participant addressed having concerns regarding the grammar and punctuation used in the quotations, verifying their

examination. His concerns were noted and revisions were made, as addressed in the findings.

Another important method used to verify the reliability of this study was the use of cross-checking, or intercoder agreement. This was achieved by sending two transcripts with identifying and near-identifying information removed, to a research assistant to be coded independently and without seeing codes that I had derived from the transcriptions (see Appendix E). While no significant deviations were noted, this was found to be difficult to incorporate into my own findings for two reasons:

1. This study used a combination of pre-determined and derived thematic categories, or codes.
2. The categorical headings that the peer-reviewer derived for the codes. While the themes identified within each categorical heading were extremely synonymous with my own, they were presented in an order that did not correspond to the categories that the interview-guide followed and were often subsumed as sub-themes within my overall framework.

Validity

Validity is based on determining whether findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants, or the readers (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) outlines eight primary strategies used to assess, as well as convince readers, of the accuracy of the findings; recognizing there are varying degrees of difficulty implementing and frequency

used, he recommends incorporating multiple strategies. While, due to pragmatic and financial constraints, spending a prolonged time in the field and using an external auditor was not used, this study used all remaining strategies offered:

1. Triangulation was used by converging several perspectives from participants building a coherent justification of themes, as seen in the results narrative.
2. Member checking was used by contacting participants on two separate occasions to verify or disconfirm derived themes. While the first attempt garnered no response, in the second many comments were given; again presented and thoroughly expounded upon in the results.
3. This study also used rich, thick descriptions to convey the findings, presenting many different perspectives about a theme.
4. Researcher bias has been clarified through the use of bracketing. The methods used to do this have been further identified below in the section ‘making thematic connections’.
5. Negative or discrepant information is presented in the results narrative.
6. Peer debriefing has been used extensively though all stages of the research process with comments and suggestions given by my supervisor incorporated into the study.

Generalizability

As mentioned by Creswell (2009) and Sanders (2003), in her application of Colaizzi’s method, generalizability is a term that is limited in qualitative research; particularly as

participants are purposively selected. Both emphasize the importance of detailed information regarding participants, selection methods, context, data generation, and analysis methods in order for readers to decide how far and to whom the findings may be generalized. This study, therefore, includes all these elements.

Making Thematic Connections

The Researcher as Analyst/ Instrument

While I genuinely enjoyed meeting participants and the interview process, I remained keenly aware of my body language and made conscious attempts to appear neutral to their responses throughout the interview process. While I feel I confidently presented an interest in the participants' responses, I took measures to not respond more, or less, favourably based on the response or question posed. While questions were explored in more detail based on themes that were arising from previous interviews (i.e., exposure to poverty overseas, the desire to determine legitimacy of need), they were worded in a neutral fashion without leading participants. As noted in the results section, there was one instance where I felt my role as the interviewer negatively affected the response given. Identified by Colaizzi (1978), deriving descriptive data from dialogal interviews requires the method of imaginative listening. He explains this as 'being present in a special way' and, as I was fatigued on that occasion, I was not. In addition, throughout the process I kept a field journal to document any thoughts, considerations, or findings that had arisen. For example, one entry on September 02, 2008 highlighted difficulties I was having in the recruitment process, it stated:

“I will accept a belief that it is important to take passages literally when the reader is led to believe it was intended to be. I will accept all or some literal interpretation of the Bible.”

Bracketing

Describing the essence of a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants required that I explore my own experiences, viewpoints, and assumptions. These prejudices and assumptions were then *bracketed*, or set aside, so as not to influence the process (Creswell, 1998; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Tesch, 1990); this was completed by listing my presuppositions in writing. While I was only able to derive a handful of prejudices and assumptions, more emerged throughout the process. For instance, while I never noted an assumption that Evangelicals would easily, and automatically, adhere to my criteria for inclusion, namely literalism and a belief in the inerrancy of the bible, I was surprised by their responses. As explored further in the conclusion, most participants were uncomfortable with this, leading me to redefine my criteria. Additionally, although I never noted having considered the impact of overseas experiences, I was surprised to find it played a major role in the perceptions of poverty requiring further specification in the interview process. While I had a series of prejudices and assumptions noted in my field journal, I was, overall, able to recognize their emergence when emerging themes or responses were given contrary to my expectation. In addition, I found it useful to bracket the literature read (Heppner, & Heppner, 2004) as there were a number of articles that influenced my thinking and created expectations regarding responses. In my field journal I noted an assumption that respondents would primarily offer individualistic attributions. This became helpful during the coding process when I found individualistic attributions

to be prominent. Only after re-examining this assumption and the quotations in context did I examine the finding, identified in the results, that these attributions were often preceded by structural or cultural causes.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This section is divided into two parts. The first is an exhaustive description of the phenomenon being studied. The second identifies the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. Although too lengthy to be included (68 pages), both parts are derived from grouped statements categorized by the coding schemes (predetermined and emergent), the continuously revised theme list (see Appendix D), and the results of the two transcripts that had been independently peer-reviewed (see Appendix E). In addition to this, the exhaustive description and fundamental structure were sent to participants with responses, and discrepancies, incorporated and expounded upon within the text.

The exhaustive description is presented in narrative format outlining the responses to predetermined themes as well as the major emergent and/or unique themes; I support the identification of these themes by presenting multiple perspectives and numerous quotations. In presenting the responses to the themes, efforts are also made to portray their relevancy in relation to the current literature. The primary categories comprising the exhaustive description include (a) the types of people identified to be most likely to live in poverty, (b) the attributions for poverty, (c) the influences and beliefs around poverty, (d) the proposed solutions and barriers to eliminating poverty, and (e) the evolution of the participants' perspectives in relation to poverty; also included in this section are (f) the participants' responses to the reviewed text.

The second section identifies the fundamental structure of the phenomenon by incorporating both the experiences and meaning of the participants' responses in order to derive the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007); it is as unequivocal a statement of identification of its fundamental structure as possible (Colaizzi, 1978).

Exhaustive Description

The participants' responses to the questions asked in the semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C) are summarized here. While there are interesting areas of overlap, responses are presented only in relation to their category of 'best fit' in order to avoid monotony and unnecessary repetition. Under each code heading emergent themes, theme clusters, and formulated meanings are integrated to create its overall structure and ensure it contained all of the elements of the experience.

'Type' of People Living in Poverty

As requested in the interview guide, the participants identified a number of "types" of people most likely to be living in poverty. While doing so, most expressed significant discomfort in typifying people and held differing degrees of fear in relation to being presented as racist or stereotyping. While I suspected this and had written about this fear of being portrayed as a bigot to negatively influence the responses, after examining the exhaustive description one participant expressed this was not the case. His comments are included in the last section speaking to a desire, rather than fear, to refer to people with dignity and avoid sweeping generalizations. My interpretation of participants' discomfort

in 'typifying' people may have been based on previously having reviewed literature showing Evangelicals as commonly experiencing discrimination (Hodge, 2007).

Of the groups explicitly identified, people with addictions (often identified as drug/alcohol), people with mental illness, and First Nations were among the most commonly cited. To a lesser degree, a wide variety of groups were acknowledged including new immigrants, people who were second generation poverty, single mothers, seniors, people with other impairments (i.e., emotional/physical), students, the unemployed (often associated with addictions), the working poor, and the group I term 'the Anyman' (the average person who for whatever reason, just loses hope or fails to succeed economically).

A major code found, primarily through continuously examining transcripts and journaling was a connection between alleviation efforts and personal experiences on the types of people identified as likely to be living in poverty. This is similar to a study conducted by Wilson (1996) finding exposure, particularly types of exposure, to mediate attributions. In this study a good example was offered by Norman. He made numerous references and detailed his experiences with his adult daughter whose marriage had dissolved. Having worked with homeless populations, he identified other types of people although he was one of two respondents who identified single mothers. Furthermore this identification was strongly emphasized as a primary typology, with related attributions and solutions, throughout the course of the interview. When asked about what kind, or type of people are most likely to be living in poverty he stated:

“well most likely are single parents particularly women, because there’s hardly any, I think, proportionately males that are single parent and have no income. That’s been my experience is single mothers trying to get by.”

Additionally, he expressed living in a relatively white and affluent neighbourhood and was the only respondent to not identify First Nations individuals as more likely to be living in poverty.

Another example, while limited in its emphasis, can be found in the interviews with Drew and Bart. During the course of the interviews, both identified being located in close proximity and/or having provided food to post-secondary students. When asked about types, these were the only two respondents to acknowledge students as likely to be living in poverty.

Again, Drew and Bart were unique to the rest of the group in being the only respondents to identify seniors as a type. The reason for this is less clear; however both live in mid sized cities in close proximity to each other and appear to have some connection with this population. Drew expressed some informal efforts to assist people that may have contributed to his recognition:

“Whether it be a group of men going out once every month or whatever, to go out and help somebody in the community that needs help in some area whether its a senior who’s fence is falling apart so they’ll fix and repaint her fence and help her out in that way. Whether it’s... there’s another type, seniors.”

While throughout the course of the interview Bart emphasized the role of his congregation in the community and at 59, was the oldest participant. He stated:

“I don’t know that I’m not a prophet. I just have that kinda gut feeling that the church is going to need to be more involved with poverty in our nation. And that’s cause our seniors are going to be impacted, like people on fixed incomes, everything is... it ain’t going to change.”

Additionally, Jay had identified seniors, however it was not explicit and the identification of this group being poor is unclear:

“Again looking at those LICO numbers I have understood that then, by virtue of the fact that, for instance, some single elderly ladies in our church who were living in a relatively decent house, because of their fixed income they were technically at or very close to the LICO numbers of being in poverty. Yet you would never know that by looking at them... so some of it is just income levels, so people living on a fixed income or period of time. So a lady who is 80 years old who’s husband maybe died when they were 60. So she’s now living at a fixed income level at maybe 20 years ago that was perhaps middle of the road in a city like Calgary. But now 20 years later she is still at that same income level but now it has dropped significantly to very close or perhaps even below the LICO but she has no debts. She knows to live within her means and the cost of feeding herself and her electricity is very manageable with her income.”

While these examples are better suited for portraying this finding, there are many others that could also have been used to support this claim. Some brief highlights of this could include (a) by Jay, television programming and identification of abuses by the Canadian Government towards first Nations people, (b) by Drew, his Wife’s employment experiences with people with mental disabilities as well as having a child with a developmental disability leading to an awareness of mental health issues (c) by Phil, a recognition of the influence of media on awareness, and (d) and by Bart, the influence of reading and documentaries on ways of thinking about people who are poor.

Poverty alleviation efforts, exposure, and the ability to recognize types of people appear to be interconnected although a conflicting example was given by Drew. While he

identified people who have newly immigrated to Canada as being likely to be living in poverty he stated:

"I guess from my own personal experience I haven't had a lot to do with those people... as far as immigration, or people that are immigrant type people, we haven't had a whole lot of connection or know how to do that, we don't run ESL or anything like that."

However, important to note is a later disclaimer offered by him:

"I guess I just talked about that and then I gave in just a couple of examples of stuff. I'm trying to give you more but sometimes I feel like I'm reaching to find it for you."

Another important finding, although limited to only two respondents, was the inclusion of the type I have termed the 'Anyman'. This was a type of person likely to be living in poverty that was not explicitly associated with second generational poverty, poor choices, unemployment, or high cost of living which is later addressed as attributions. This could potentially have been influenced by the many participants apprehension identifying types of people. An example of the Anyman could be:

"from my own experience as a Pastor and through observation, there are a lot of people who, through no real fault of their own, are unable to get the kind of occupation or vocation that they can provide for themselves. So there may be people that come from good, well established, relatively affluent families who find themselves in circumstances where they can't provide for their own needs... some of those kinds of groups but that's where you get into that stereotypical mould and it's not just 'they', its not just the drug abusers, it's not just the alcoholics that fall into poverty... almost as individualized as each person." - Phil

Another example that I have included as typifying the Anyman was presented by Drew.

While this is also identified as a theological attribution later on, my suspicions were pointed to popular theology rather than doctrinal as being a primary influence; having a degree of familiarity with current evangelical trends, I suspected he was strongly

influenced by the hugely popular “The Purpose Driven Life” written by Rick Warren.

When interviewing Drew he clearly, and eagerly, offered his perspectives in relation to his role as a Pastor, stating early on:

“well, you’re asking me as a pastor so of course my primary cause would be... main thing theologically I guess would be people don’t see any purpose in life they don’t have any ambitions, no goals, no reason to achieve... and the other that I have noticed are those that for some reason or other have just lost hope in life. I know one guy in particular who I’d spoken with, he was very, in the worlds terms he would be seen as very successful; he was middle management. Was making you know decent money, had a good family, had a good home, had a nervous breakdown from all the extra work that he was doing and basically walked away from his family, walked away from his job, walked away from it all. Because there was in my, what I could tell from it anyway was that he had no ulterior purpose, no ultimate purpose for doing that and to work himself into such a place where he would just give it all up it seems that he’d lost hope because there was no hope, there was no purpose.”

Attributions for poverty

Examining the attributions, or cause explanations, for poverty revealed varied and interesting themes. This is presented, and was first explored in relation to poverty ‘in general’ and then in relation to different ‘types’ of people identified as likely to be living in poverty. Although this presentation of findings is not based on an attempt to quantify results, recognition of the frequency of key identified types is interesting to note. For example, all respondents identified people with addictions, all but one identified people with mental illness, and all but two identified First Nations individuals as likely to be living in poverty.

Some important themes found, as illustrated below, included the differences in attributions for different types of people living in poverty; these specific attributions were

quite consistent across all participants. Some notable and/or surprising themes that had emerged included the identification of precursors to many attributions that may have appeared straightforward, differences between domestic and international attributions, and a strong belief in a ‘welfare mentality’ as a contributor to poverty.

Attributions for Poverty in General

Before asking respondents to identify attributions based on the types of people they had identified, they were asked “In general, what do you believe is the cause/causes of poverty amongst Canadians?” Responses to this question were consistently encompassing and broad. The respondents as a whole identified a variety of attributions ranging from internal (i.e., individual) to external (i.e., cultural, structural, fatalistic). The variation in responses begs the question of whether or not attributions for poverty can be ascertained in regards to a generalized poverty. While having posed the question prior to exploring for identifications of types of people living in poverty, responses were already geared for specificity. Additionally, those that may have appeared to be a direct link to apriori attributions (i.e., bad financial decisions as internal attributions) were found to be more complex. This is interesting, and corresponds to the findings of Reutter et al., (2006) showing interview participants to volunteer other individualistic reasons for poverty not captured by their survey in attempts to link individual reasons with structural and socio-cultural (i.e., learned) causes. In this study, examples of this can be found in a number of the responses:

“Choices, I think just sometimes just knowing, or not knowing, maybe not spending properly. Not looking for sale items and things like that. If they’re buying on credit and

getting stuck in that and a lot of these things, just bad financial decisions. Those come to mind first. I think it's just hard to break that cycle sometimes. People are born into poverty, sometimes it's hard to get out of it." - Pete

"I guess regardless of race the welfare-type system typically demotivates people and there's a whole lot of issues as to why that would be." – Jay

"I think that the answer is very complex. For some, because we have some social safety nets like welfare, we have already had that long enough to get into some multi-generational kinds of effects of a welfare mentality. There not being the emotional drive for example to go out and get work of a sufficient nature to provide for yourself or your family. They saw their father and maybe their grandfather, or mother and grandmother before them rely on the social safety nets and so that's what's been modelled for them, they don't have the same kind of concept of a work ethic in getting out and driving to get what you need for your own subsistence or existence. That's part of it." - Phil

While the effects of a welfare mentality appeared prominent as a general attribution, many other factors were also recognized. These included employment availability and personal fit, addictions, individual choices, distribution of wealth, government policies, as well as a wealth of external attributions (i.e., economic systems, greed). While these were identified in relation to poverty 'in general' the responses to identified typologies were more specified and consistent across respondents.

Attributions for Specific Types of People Living in Poverty

In response to a call for research exploring attributions in relation to poverty sub-types (Hunt, 1996; Reutter et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006) this study found participants to have different causal attributions for different low-income populations. For people with addictions including alcohol, drug, and gambling, the attributions were difficult to

ascertain. Most respondents identified the cost of the addiction as being significant however the collateral impact on employment and attention (to things other than the addiction) seemed to be recognized as far more influential on becoming poor. While many identified the addiction as the cause of the poverty, its emphasis was limited and other precursors were often recognized in place of a choice element. One example showing the limited emphasis on addictions can be found in Phil's response:

"You know we could talk about addictive behaviours, drug and alcohol, particularly drugs that sap whatever available income is there, even more dramatically than something like alcohol does, those sorts of things as well." – Phil

While the response from Bart highlighted the choice element as being more prominent, it was later qualified in a similar fashion to the other respondents:

"the addict, that's personal choice it's like, and they give me... because, by the very nature of the word, the title addict, their choices are not their own anymore they're just out of control and so it started as personal choice but ends up beyond that... that's because of the hopelessness of their situation and trying to feel good for a moment and just that's one the negative things about poverty is it leads to hopelessness and it just kind of treats that cycle of hopelessness and despair and poverty and more poverty and can't seem to break through that... well I was talking about the clinics and care centres that have helped but the concern was for, again, people who relocate and the people who don't follow through on that. It's, and that the majority of the poor with addictions, they choose to live in their addictions." – Bart

Other precursors to addictions are also recognized by participants:

"usually those things too stem from broken home units as well... the population has grown up from a broken home and their dad has left or they hate their father for one reason or another and there is a vacuum inside that is empty and you just try to fill it or medicate it and addictions are always sort of the same thing it is emptiness that you have to fill. It could be alcohol it could be some form of drugs, it could be gambling, could be working, there's a whole pile of addictions... to fill the vacuum that I think God's love can fill." – Norman

“So people then get hooked into those addictions and of course it just sucks the life out of you because that’s what the Devil does. He comes only to kill, steal, and destroy.” - Drew

For people with mental illness, there appears to be a general consensus amongst respondents that it can be difficult to function in our society, hold a job, or find opportunities for employment. It is also recognized that the types of employment are often low-paying, temporary or seasonal, and difficult to survive on. Government support systems are also recognized as inadequately supportive and difficult to access for variety of reasons:

“about mental illness issues that people aren’t provided for and they’re not looking and that’s a whole ‘nother issue mental illnesses. Person’s mentally ill, can’t hold a job can’t function in the world as it’s designed and their level of support keeps them at a level that’s probably right around poverty, maybe under poverty... in terms of people with mental illness, causes there, that’s just a tough one because again a couple layers there issues of insurance and government provisions how do people define mental illness and there would be people who take advantage of those systems and so they create the systems in such way to try to, insurance companies and that kind of thing to protect themselves from being taken advantage of therefore legitimate people end up not getting what they need. There’s issues of family not caring for family and why is that, again there’s layers of rationale reason why they wouldn’t take care of each other ranging from they’re just cold hearted to where the mentally ill person may have taken advantage of them at some point and they say I’m never going to let that happen again or I helped my family member with mental illness and by paying for a place to live and they did something to wreck it and so I’m not going to help them anymore.” – Jay

“pretty basic for today’s costs and life’s needs... there’s some that are mentally ill that will fall through the cracks just because of their transient lifestyle, they will go to a warmer climate when its cold and so they have no fixed address and all of a sudden they get missed by social services, AISH, government benefits.” - Bart

Additionally, while most respondents identified systemic barriers and inadequate support as the cause of poverty for people with mental illness, one respondent identified a precursor to mental illness:

“mentally ill people. Well that another way of escaping reality right, so you don't like the way things are at home... to one degree or another an inability to face reality. You may have the middle over here. And the wacky, you know the bell curves... so the wacky, wacky person way over here can't cope and so they are Norman Bates or this girl, split personality. Somebody else doesn't like the reality they see so they medicate themselves and they take drugs, and somebody else doesn't like the way it is so they just switch partners and go get another one, let's change this. So they all sort of come from that human desire to, well there love destroyed because someone else abused it.” - Norman

For First Nations individuals, nearly all respondents acknowledged systemic attributions (i.e., stereotypes, racism, discrimination, historical and contemporary abuses by the government). At the same time, it appears that cultural elements (particularly negative peer pressure and the welfare mentality) were identified as important, potentially taking precedent:

*“I think it's possible to identify some of the factors, for example, if you take first nations people, there are very strong stereotypes and discrimination that exists in Canada to the point where many people don't believe that they are capable of holding down a good job or being a productive member of society so for some that's just simply extremely hard to find work and a career path that would enable them to go. It seems those who are able to break out of those factors seem to be rare and seems to be those who have personal ambition and drive and will fight through those stereotypes that tend to hold them back. Peer pressure, I know I've spoken with many First Nations people who, you know, everybody else is just sinking into debt for flashy car and spending their weekend partying and whatever source it comes from is always gone and they are almost mocked if they want to make more of themselves than that and try to resist that types of lifestyle.”
– Phil*

“Well, start with First Nations I suppose. I think a big cause of it is the hand out mentality that the government has given them through the way that, however they work all that I don't know, but I think that people when they're; they get into a mindset that this is all I can achieve, this is all I get, this is what I make, I don't have to do anything for it so I'll just survive on this. It has hurt them, a majority of First Nations anyways... those that are trying to get ahead are at a definite loss because they've got, right away, the negative stereotype, they've got those within their own community; those who would normally be their support and infrastructure for them, their encouragement, aren't doing that. Their saying no you're trying to be like them and so their getting attacked from both sides so it's making it way harder for them to get ahead even though that's their desire

and their working and striving to do just that and so I think it's difficult for them." - Drew

Although not overtly acknowledged, the interview with Drew, with its overall emphasis on purpose and meaning garnered through the Christian faith, appeared to hold an additional attribution based on theological beliefs:

"Ya, I think the most obvious people you'd notice in () would be the Aboriginal people, First Nations. The ones that I've dealt with that have had, in my own personal experience dealt with, have gone back to their faith and spiritism and that, and yet aren't finding help there so their coming to the church. Obviously they recognize the church as being able to provide for them and wanting to provide for them because of our stance and our faith and belief in helping those that can't help themselves and in some cases, I don't know if it's good to say wont help themselves and not specifically dealing with the Natives because there's a whole long history that needs healing and reconciliation for them to come out of that and start stepping ahead and those that have done that. I have a few friends from back in Edmonton that have done very well in their lives, but of course they've come to faith as well so their outlook and perspective is different."

The attributions regarding these three select types of people have been presented, at the same time a number of other types were identified with their corresponding attributions. They have not been elaborated upon as thoroughly as many were only recognized by one or two respondents limiting the breadth and comprehensiveness of the presentable responses. Additionally, these less frequent responses were found to hold much less value for examining the religious beliefs that influenced them; they were largely pragmatic observations with little room for exploration. Of interest however, is the degree to which these less observed responses adhered to structural attributions. For example, new immigrants to Canada have been recognized to face a number of structural barriers

including discrimination, having their credentials acknowledged, and lack of social supports:

“there’s already a lot going against them when they come over because you a got the workforce being mad, ‘well they’re coming to steal jobs’, you got the Government that has no equal way of evaluating their credentials, I guess if that’s the best way to put it. And then you got the people themselves coming into a brand new culture, a brand new place. They’re leaving everything they’ve known behind and everything’s brand new so that can be difficult too.” – Drew

“New immigrants regardless of if they’re fluently able to speak English. If you don’t have any kind of support network, family and friends, and acquaintances, the sorts of networking kinds of connections that enable them to reach into a community wherever they find themselves and say, ‘well I know so and so has a job that you could do’.” – Phil

Single mothers were also identified to be primarily up against structural barriers:

“I think with single mothers it’s just a real challenge. You have to work and you’ve got kids and you can’t share babysitting so babysitting comes out of that or the job is decided by, work around the kids and so forth. And sometimes single mothers for example can’t pursue further education. There’s just all these things that can’t be done when you’re the only parent raising, I should say single parent, only parent raising a child.” – Pete

While Norman identified family and marriage breakdown as an important issue causing women to be left unassisted, structural causes were again noted:

“single mothers... they just can’t get enough, can’t quite make it so they go around to food banks and churches trying to fill in the gaps, and we do that, we are more of a gap filler ministry here... like this person I just mentioned, single mother, income is 900 a month with maternity unemployment and her rent’s 500 so you gotta live, pay all the other bills, 400 a month for food, clothes, transportation... and if she makes any more she has to give it in. So I don’t quite understand that. Her income is less than 1200 a month but on the other hand she qualifies for subsidized housing instead of paying 1200 a month she’s getting it for five. Which is good, she just couldn’t live any other way. But I know students working part time and make more than that. Anyway some of it is perplexing.”

Seniors were also recognized as being likely to be living in poverty almost exclusively due to their fixed incomes not sufficing due to inflation:

“Again looking at those LICO numbers I have understood that then, by virtue of the fact that, for instance, some single elderly ladies in our church who were living in a relatively decent house, because of their fixed income they were technically at or very close to the LICO numbers of being in poverty.” – Jay

“in the cities like Edmonton and Calgary I know there’s a... especially with this last bit with rents going up so much that a lot of them are suffering a lot more cause their on a fixed income obviously... what they had before that inflation hit, is what they have after it. So there hasn’t been a whole big gain with inflation and this bubble that we seem to be in this last couple of years here, I think its hurt a lot of our seniors that are pretty much... even if they were doing fine before then, it really hit them, the increase in rents, the increase in food prices and fuel prices, both heat and automobile and all this type of stuff.” – Drew

The last type I will briefly address is, as noted above, ‘the Anyman’ who has been identified as succumbing to a fatalistic attribution for poverty, simply through circumstances out of their own control. However, as will be addressed below, the resiliency of this person has been identified as relating to a higher purpose or faith in God:

“I think that there are other things like factors beyond your control, whether it is bankruptcy, underemployment, you know the employment factors right now in Western Canada are changing dramatically” – Phil

“You have those who are poor by their personal choices, by choices and you have those who are poor just simply because of their circumstances that have come upon them.” – Bart

Within the identified attributions for poverty in general or the attributions for poverty in relation to specific types of people it appears that overall, the findings suggest a dominant ideology to reflect a structural understanding as similar to those found by Reutter et al.,

(2006). Two important themes that have emerged, namely differences between domestic and international poverty and the emphasis on the welfare mentality will be discussed here however a statement by Bart seems to encapsulate the general sentiment of the participants of this study:

“Sometimes there are more things than choices that affect their poverty.”

The distinction between attributions for poverty domestically and internationally was never expected to become so prominent at the outset. This clearly reflects the influence overseas missionary experiences have in shaping beliefs about the causes of poverty:

“In our context those are the ones I think of but then you go to the more worldwide scenario there’s people who are living in unjust political systems where the political leaders are taking everything for themselves... so now when you start talking beyond, and start talking about third world nations the issues of causes are poverty are different there.” – Jay

“it’s more of an emergency room approach although we are not doing that in the Dominican cause we think there we can find a long term sustainable thing to help alleviate poverty. It’s a lack of work. Here poverty comes from what, not a lack of work, there’s piles of jobs.” – Norman

Additionally, while barriers are addressed, many participants juxtaposed new immigrants becoming economically successful in Canada with Canadian-born citizens who are living in poverty:

“within ten years of immigrating to Canada with nothing he was living on an acreage on the outskirts of Calgary that a lot of us would look at that acreage and would assume and say, ‘they got some money’. So here he starts with nothing and by working hard and making certain choices he gets to a place that economically they’d say ‘this guy’s not in poverty’, he’s doing well and living on an acreage on the outskirts of Calgary. Here’s another family that because it’s third generation living on the welfare system like, ‘it’s not worth it’.” – Jay

While all respondents identified the effect of intergenerational cycles, not all emphasized the ‘welfare (or handout) mentality’ as responsible for causing poverty. In addition, there were other closely related themes that were not subsumed under this category but were evident in the responses, primarily the choice element as well as abuse (system/program) limiting the ability to address legitimate needs. However, interesting combinations of learned and systemic effects appear to be attributed to causing the welfare mentality:

“she was third generation living on the welfare system and she, on a couple of occasions took some training to learn a career. As soon as she got her entry level job she lost out on her social service income. She had three other children living with her and her entry level was below what she was making on social services, welfare. Ok, so her choice was, the easy choice for her was, I’m just not going to work because I make less working than I am making with welfare. And not understanding that she would have got a job and stuck with it and over time she would... make more. But her need was now... there is a choice factor there but the way the system was designed. And I guess the bottom line is still a choice issue. That the way the system was designed, at least at the time was it was demotivating to make a better choice, there was penalty for making a better choice, initially.” - Jay

“I know two people in our congregation that are on social assistance and if they make and more money they have to give some back it seemed to be demotivating, I just don’t understand the reason for that.” - Norman

“I think a big cause of it is the hand out mentality that the government has given them through the way that, however they work all that I don’t know, but I think that people when their... they get into a mindset that this is all I can achieve, this is all I get, this is what I make, I don’t have to do anything for it so I’ll just survive on this.” – Drew

Eliminating Poverty: Solutions and Barriers

Having now presented the types of people identified as likely to be living in poverty, the attributions for poverty in general, the attributions for poverty in relation to specific types

of people, and major themes that have arisen, this section reveals the major themes found in relation to proposed solutions and barriers to addressing poverty.

Overall, while the role of Christians/ the church was emphasized, it appeared that respondents identified solutions to be implemented primarily through government agencies. While there was strong support for meeting immediate needs (performed “with excellence” by Christian non-profit agencies like the Mustard Seed and Inn From the Cold) ‘throwing money at the problem’ was often offered in a negative light. Of importance was the emphasis on having solutions geared towards the causes and government services to be more responsive:

“Broadly, I think the needs have to be addressed. So if they need food, give them, they need to be given food. If they need shelter, so that’s one thing that has to be addressed. So places like Mustard Seed in Calgary for example, Inn From The Cold, I am not sure if you are familiar with that, are doing a good job meeting those needs, you know food banks and so forth. Then I think the causes need to be addressed. If there is an obvious reason for the poverty, that needs to be addressed.” – Pete

“The reasons for poverty have to drive what we do to alleviate it. “ – Phil

“Throwing money at them is not the solution obviously... I hate more government agencies but something where they would actually delve in a little bit more than just ‘oh no you don’t meet our criteria your out of here’, when they may only need an English course or whatever.” – Drew

“If you just throw money at a problem you don’t necessarily resolve the underlying causes. If you can use that kind of money in a way that enables them to begin to earn their own keep, to make their own way, to provide for them... the kinds of skills that are necessary for them to provide for themselves; that is a far more valuable way of addressing poverty than simply to open up more soup kitchens or provide more flop houses or hostels or whatever.” - Phil

In contrast to the often mentioned skill training, ‘make work projects’ were only explicitly identified as a solution by one respondent. Ironically enough, another respondent expressed a belief that, within Canada, Evangelicals were unlikely to endorse this:

“It’s not... like a social conservative he might say the poor are that way because the liberals keep them that way by giving them handouts and they should be forced to work. That might be associated more with evangelicalism in the States. But I think you can be a social conservative and still be compassionate toward the poor in Canada.” - Norman

Similar concerns, particularly the de-humanizing effect of charity were often recognized:

“It’s just so undignified to just receive and I think sometimes it wounds the spirit you know, ‘I am just unable to make my own way’. It hurts you to just receive, receive, and then the do-gooders want to do good and just give. I don’t want to be a Christian do-gooder that just throws money out at situations or does good things so you feel good about yourself it’s nice to know it will last. So providing work, job training.” – Norman

One of the most notable themes was the desire to see increased cooperation and collaboration between, not only individuals, organizations, communities, and different levels of government, but specifically between the government and churches:

“Ok. I think it’s not an individual solution I think the government should address some. I think churches, other organizations should be involved. I think individuals should be involved as well.” - Pete

“I think it is a cooperative venture at every level. All the levels of government from federal, provincial, municipal, regional and... probably, you know when you start to talk about evangelical beliefs, Christians who believe in the bible... we may have foisted our responsibility onto the government because the government starting taking that kind of responsibility on and churches haven’t taken on providing for the widows and orphans.” - Phil

“I’m not sure it’s the best way but it is one way, or one of the better ways of addressing poverty in Canada. I know there’s a lot of people that believe in the separation of

religion and state; they just want to draw that line, keep government out of the church and church out of the government. But if there could be some connect that could work together I could see that being a, one of the better ways to, the connection of government and church that would be able to serve a community.” – Bart

“I think it is out of the hands of the government to respond, to resolve poverty. And you have to bring, theres gotta be levels of involvement here, boy I’m just thinking off the top of my head. You gotta have philanthropists, you have to have, you certainly have to have a level of involvement with the government even in terms of taxable benefits and all that kind of stuff for people who are willing to give to others. There has to be some sort of level of involvement in that way. Theres got to be some sort of political involvement, theres got to be an educational involvement in terms of teaching people how to live, how to become independent and self supporting. There has to be involvement of the church I think in terms of we are people who have been given instructions in the Word that to share, teachings on the kingdom of God.” – Jay

While, on an individual level most recognized the role of apathy, NIMBYism, and lack of family support in contributing to poverty, it did not appear to be identified as a primary barrier. Some major themes identified included a concern for determining legitimacy and the difficulties this causes people who do ‘legitimately’ have needs, an overall sense of fatalism regarding the ability to end poverty, and a lack of faith in the political process, or governments to address poverty:

“I don’t know that it can, unfortunately. But I mean it has to be addressed it’s just that for every solution there is somebody who’s an exception to the solution. For every solution there is someone there who sees the hoop they can jump through, the loop, I can’t think of the term right now... the loophole, that’s the word. They find the loophole in it how to take advantage for their own benefit.” – Jay

“We need to determine what a real necessary standard of living is and some of the problems are so big, so systemic, so societal, that I’m not sure we can address all of them.” – Phil

“And then frankly, we’re going to an election. We have people in our political process that instead of cooperating to come up with the best case scenario, oppose each others

proposals... and so our political process doesn't encourage synergistic sharing of ideas and problem solving... I think that's one of the barriers, sure. And then there's just good old fashioned human greed and self satisfaction... there will always be people who are unwilling to share, and therefore there will always be people in poverty. And it's kind of a hopeless feel of human nature but I think it's part of the reality of human nature." - Jay

Worth noting is the identification of one respondent in losing faith in the government to address the issue and subsequently moving towards the political right in regards to social issues:

"Frankly, when I was young like high school and even in college, I was much more politically socialistic in my view of things... and just, over the years I have become, I just don't trust the government process to respond to them... and so one of the neat things that I've heard about is entrepreneurs going to third world situations to help the people in poverty learn how to become entrepreneurial to develop, to create an economic system by which, and that's unfortunately the best case that I've seen is capitalism seems to be the best scenario for helping people in poverty." – Jay

Overall, the majority of respondents identified primary responsibility for addressing poverty to reside with the government nonetheless there appeared to be feelings of inadequacy with current efforts. This did not however appear to translate into a desire to see additional funding but rather more specified supports for the individual as well as support and increased collaboration with community and non-governmental organizations. While a link to increasing welfare incomes and dependency, complacency, and abuse was not overtly identified, these findings support existing research suggesting Canadians may not support increasing welfare incomes (Reutter et al., 2002).

Influences and Beliefs

Central to an exploration of this topic was, not only the attributions for poverty held by this group, but the beliefs and influences that shaped their responses. While the semi-structured interview guide primarily sought to elicit beliefs, efforts were made to remain flexible allowing themes to emerge. There was no previous research suggesting beliefs to be the primary influence on cause explanations for poverty amongst Evangelicals; of major importance for this study was the finding that religious beliefs did not appear to have significant influence. While influences on attributions were quite varied, religious beliefs played a minor role although clearly influenced the response.

This section is presented in two parts. The first explores the identified influences on attributions for poverty. While these were quite diverse and varied between respondents some themes had emerged. Although not necessarily a direct influence on attributions, a notable theme that emerged was the influence of personal experiences within Canada as well as overseas on the respondents' definitions of poverty. Some additional themes worth noting include the fatalistic belief that poverty is a result of sin, greed, and human nature, that 'Walking' in God's principles will often buffer against unintended poverty, and that contentment should be sought in all circumstances. The second explores the influences on the response to poverty. While the Bible (also called scriptures or the Word) was clearly identified as a primary source of teaching its interpretation showed incredible variation; possibly eliciting the most interesting finding of this study. Other significant influences were also identified, most notably the (re)emergence of poverty

awareness in the evangelical world, the response to having been taken advantage of, and the importance of determining legitimacy of need.

Influences on Attributions

One easily recognizable theme was the impact that personal experiences had on the respondents' definitions of poverty. This appeared to be comprised almost entirely by overseas missionary experiences and the respondents' time living below the LICO. While there were differing levels of concern, validation, and empathy regarding people living in poverty in Canada, there was an overall sense that 'real' poverty is absolute:

Overseas poverty was often identified as more 'real' or devastating than Canadian poverty therefore poverty in Canada was often attributed secondary importance and more, relatively speaking, individualistic attributions:

"Poverty in some respects is kind of a relative thing. I guess we need to confine our understanding to what it means in Canada but having been to a number of African countries I've have seen real poverty in great contentment there. So it's a little bit different than what we would find in Canada... I suppose as a definition poverty would be not having regular predictable access to the necessities of life; shelter, food, financial where withal to provide those things for yourself." – Phil

However, for one participant in particular this exposure has served to increase not only awareness, but empathy regarding the hopelessness that poverty causes:

"So you face poverty everywhere you look and I've done mission trips to Mexico, Rwanda, and India, and so I've really worked with poor... that impacts you when you come back. You begin to see the poor around you more easily and always; that they're everywhere." – Bart

When asked about the impact of overseas mission experiences:

"I think a dual impact. The first impact is that when you see joy in the poor people, simple things bring joy. Simple acts of love and we need so much more to bring us peace and happiness, so you see that amongst the poor people but then along with that, so many you see hopelessness and despair and that's the hurtful thing, that hopelessness... when you see the hopelessness in the people here you want to do something to break that cycle of hopelessness and give hope because without hope there is no life." - Bart

Accounting for the various types of experience the participants have had, the use of the LICO as an operational definition for poverty quickly became antiquated. While all respondents indicated domestic poverty to exist, there was clearly a belief that it was comparatively insignificant. Observations and personal experiences living under the LICO, and lack of support for it, was an important and unexpected theme that emerged:

"I wasn't getting paid badly but I was below the poverty line and our kids said 'are we below the poverty line'? And the poverty line in Canada just seems was different than the poverty line when we think of the word poverty. That was several years ago and just the way that it wasn't nearly as bad as it seemed but that's what it was called. I guess I would define poverty as not having the basic needs of life." - Pete

"At that time my income was below the poverty level but I don't believe I was living in poverty, true poverty. Because we got by, we had the support of our church, we had the support of family. All of them contributed, we had food in the freezer given to us. We constantly had stuff given to us so, no, I can't say we were living in poverty." - Drew

"looking at those LICO numbers I have understood that then, by virtue of the fact that, for instance, some single elderly ladies in our church who were living in a relatively decent house, because of their fixed income they were technically at or very close to the LICO numbers of being in poverty... she knows to live within her means and the cost of feeding herself and her electricity is very manageable with her income." - Jay

"I think I have a lower view of what people need than maybe the government does. I define it by a certain amount of income per household." - Norman

When addressed primarily at a theological level, respondents generally identified a belief that poverty is a result of sin, greed, or human nature and therefore, will always exist:

“there will always be greedy people, there will always be people who are unwilling to share, and therefore there will always be people in poverty. And it’s kind of a hopeless feel of human nature but I think it’s part of the reality of human nature.” – Jay

“Ok, poverty exists because sin exists. Poverty, the level of your income level is not an indication of how sinful or sincere you are. And so those are separate issues.” – Jay

“Well it’s good old fashioned Sin. I mean it’s Sin, it’s missing the mark, replacing the good for something you think is just as good... social ills come because there is something wrong in everybody’s heart. And I think that’s the story of the Bible, is no matter what position your in whether it’s the Garden of Eden where everything’s just fine to camping in Palestine or wherever you live, they’re going to go sour every time because there’s something wrong with people. It’s our hearts, you have to work with individual hearts, transform that way.” – Norman

In addition, while respondents clearly did not adhere to a belief that right living equalled prosperity, many outlined a variety of scriptures suggesting a life lived in faith, or in obedience to pragmatic biblical principles may in fact buffer against unintended poverty:

“I think in Proverbs 6: ‘a little closing of the eyes, folding the hands to rest and poverty will come on you’. I think there are just some principles. There are economic principles that if you follow them they do help, if you neglect it’s to your detriment. You know Ant, ‘consider the ant: it stores up food for the winter’ and if you spend your paycheque on payday you’re not going to get very much money in the process. So I think there are some things, direct scriptures that say there are financial principles and if you break them, you lose. And then other side of that is how we respond to them.” – Pete

“People just get it in their heads, because they don’t have that faith, that there’s really nothing that this life has to offer them and, to be honest, apart from having faith in God there isn’t... you know following biblical principles would probably alleviate a lot of the problems.” – Drew

While it was identified that sinfulness doesn't automatically cause poverty for the individual, some expressed the belief that a righteous life will be economically honoured and supported by God:

"well there's a number of different things we've put them together like the one I mentioned already, all men are created equal. So we all have the same opportunity and potential, God says in Deuteronomy 8:18 as well that those who follow him, 'he gives the opportunity'... or not the opportunity, 'the power' to basically earn a living, is what it says. He doesn't promise us prosperity so to speak, but he promises us the ability to be prosperous in whatever and so the ability he gives us to do that." – Drew

"No I'd say basically too... the main changes that is the whole person transformation that is the gospel, the good news about Jesus is thorough, it involves forgiveness of sin, yes but it helps a person with their dignity, with their ability to work. I think you are made in God's image to work. You're not made to be unemployed." – Norman

By one participant this concept was expanded to include our prosperity as a nation:

"As a nation I'm thinking. And those outside of them... people in general I guess I'm trying to say. Not just governing body, obviously that would be great 'cause the Bible does say the nation that honours God, God will honour and prosper." – Drew

The last theme I will address in regards to influences on attributions includes a belief in the virtue of contentment regardless of economic circumstances:

"I look at the scriptures and I see, for example, one verse that means a lot to me is 'seek first his kingdom', it's Matthew 6:33, 'and his righteousness and all these things will be given you as well' and I see what he is talking about here is needs, I say not greed's. I don't believe that its God's will for everybody to be driving around in the fanciest cars living in the fanciest house, and a lot of people preach that and I just don't agree with that at all. And some say they are following Jesus to do that and he didn't have a home, okay. So I think we have to, that shapes I think, what do I need in my own life which hasn't been poverty? I see over and over again that he has met my needs, not a bunch of trips here and there and everywhere but he has met my needs over and over." - Pete

"We are always wanting more and more, and that's all of us, not just the working poor or the homeless. But we all want something more so learning satisfaction with what you

have and not always wanting to have that something more. And then, so that's the one part of it because there is joy in poverty and people can learn to be satisfied." – Bart

"We understood we could live with an awful lot less than Canadians typically think is a necessary standard of living." – Phil

Influences in Response to Poverty

This section explores the influences or beliefs that affect the response to poverty alleviation efforts. While the respondents influences were evident throughout all responses, a direct link to religious beliefs was most prominent in regards to this section. Again, while not emphasizing frequency, it is worth noting the most commonly cited passage in relation to caring for the poor from the Gospel according to Matthew, it states:

"³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." (Matthew 25 New International Version)

All respondents identified, regardless of their emotions and attitudes, a commandment to provide care for the poor (presented primarily as direct care):

"I think it's Deuteronomy 15:11 or something, 'the poor you will always have with you so I command you to be open-hand toward them', and Jesus in Luke 14 says 'when you have a banquet don't invite your friends and relatives and all those who can repay you, invite the poor, and the blind and lame'. So our response has to be generous toward them... I could probably find reasons why I could blame them. I could find reasons, you're hungry its your own fault, you're thirsty your own fault, you're in jail for something you did and the attitude of that is not to try and figure out why I shouldn't help them, but to help them. If that makes sense." – Pete

"Jesus says the poor will always be with you, yes they will always be with us but at the same time we have an obligation as our fellow man to help them according to the scriptures as well." - Drew

“As Jesus said the poor you will always have with you. And I don’t think it’s our mission to... well its our mission to give and help the poor, its part of our mission statement here at our church to help the poor, remember the poor, it’s written right in it.” – Norman

“I take that scripture and I realize I need Christ in my life, I need to honour him, to worship him, to be exorbitant in my worship towards him but at the same time I can never forget the poor, never neglect the poor. I need to be involved in their lives as best as I can. And even in the words in Matthew 25 where Jesus said ‘when you’ve done it to the least of them you’ve done it to me’. That is a pretty powerful scripture because he is talking about the homeless, the people who are naked, the people who are hungry and people in prison. When you do anything for them you are doing it for the Lord. I think that’s impacted my beliefs.” - Bart

Important to note however was an expressed concern with forgetting about the Gospel and attending too much on physical needs to the detriment of spiritual:

“It’s in the Bible, there more talk about poverty in the Bible than I was ever aware of growing up that’s part of the evolution of the joining of the social action and the converting gospel, that’s where there’s real power it’s loving in word and deed. Not just in deeds... my experiences have been that people rampantly involved in social action, social justice, have lost sight of the spiritual life.” – Norman

In addition to this emphasis on helping the poor, participants often identified a changing evangelical world; this is recognized to be driven by societal expectations as well as pioneer evangelical speakers and authors emphasizing poverty awareness and social action:

“I would say when I was younger I, you know it just wasn’t even on my radar as an Evangelical maybe twenty five years ago so I would see, that’s been the big change... my friend’s church, they cancelled their Sunday morning worship to help in the Terry Fox run for cancer and that whole congregation volunteered, did food and everything and they just cancelled church. That would be unheard of twenty years ago.” – Norman

“The voice for the issue comes more from, not the mainstream educational process and institutional process of the evangelical church, its more voices outside of that. They’re still in the camp, or most of these are still in the camp of the evangelical part of

Christianity, but it's not the institutional part... as the post-moderns or whatever other terms you want to give people that are after the baby-boom years, there's a little more awareness and sense of desperation to meet some of these needs as opposed to just get richer and richer... I think there is a shift that is taking place." – Jay

It appears the holistic approach that has been fostering this increased awareness and social action has been driven by a desire to evangelize; the identified change appears to have occurred in order to meet societal expectations:

"There's no organizations that just do evangelism anymore. Because people don't care what you believe if you don't show love in practical ways. It doesn't work anymore, I think the world has changed... that's maybe why we're changing, because we have to, no one will listen, they don't care about heaven or hell anymore or judgement or God or whatever, they just don't care. So how do you earn the right to be heard, you gotta love, and then you find out well this is what we're called to in the first place." - Norman

"But certainly there is people who are less than thirty years of age who are saying, 'I will believe, I will buy into your religion if I see it lived out in practical ways like taking care of the poor'." - Jay

A prominent and immediately recognizable theme amongst participants was the shared experience of being taken advantage of. This however was never clearly linked to having influenced attributions for poverty and is therefore presented in relation to its influence on the response to poverty. While having been taken advantage of is not a surprising finding, the responses of participants are quite consistent. Having been taken advantage of multiple times, many respondents continued to financially support efforts to alleviate poverty. This however, most often took a less direct approach through supporting already existing organizations:

"I mentioned the vouchers. We are no longer doing that we now have a different plan in place where what we do is try and help people find social agencies that are in place already that can help them meet their need. And so we've turned our attention to helping

them find other agencies that are designed to help people as opposed to us trying to help. And then we give our resources to those agencies.” – Jay

“We have gone away from just handing cash out simply because there are too many ways that can just be blown or facilitate risky behaviours, it just doesn’t make sense to go that route... what is institutionalized is usually in cooperation with Salvation Army and funnelled through their set up at variety of levels that deal with it a little more effectively than we as individual churches or individual people.” – Phil

“We used to have a food bank but we ended up getting the same people over and over again so what we’ve began [is] to make donations to the food bank and we found they could administer it easier than we could.” – Bart

Commonly acknowledged, and I believe universally accepted, by participants was the idea that all resources available to them were God’s and they were merely stewards of it.

Expressed in relation to this belief was the idea that being taken advantage of was between the abuser and God instead of the abuser and the respondent:

“You know like I read a verse, I don’t know where it’s found, I think it’s in Proverbs, ‘he who lends to the poor lends to the Lord, he’ll be repaid’. So I know giving not expecting to get back but realizing the God can repay me and if a person needs it good or their stringing me along then that’s between them and God.” – Pete

While proper stewardship of resources was clearly a concern, there also appeared to be a component of efficacy and a desire to not contribute to harm:

“Our attitude has to be, we are willing to help but not we are willing to hand over to anybody that asks because we might not be helping them in the process. If I give \$20 dollars to this person then I can’t give \$20 to this person.” – Pete

“I want to make sure the money I am using is going to fill a valuable and viable need and not wasted. My intent may be really good and depending on your belief system, I may feel in my heart that I have accomplished some good and for altruistic reasons or religious beliefs feel like I have contributed and been obedient to God’s voice in some way. If it’s just, you know, as soon as I turn my back there’s money that been wasted in a variety of ways then, ya I may get a good feeling but I really haven’t addressed much.” – Phil

Part of this desire to be good stewards making the best use of God's resources included an expressed need to 'gatekeep' or determine legitimacy of expressed need:

"We try to, we have a system in place to try and help them, especially with food, but also to screen so that we are not supporting habits. The benevolent fund is for not just church members. It has been used in and we have a benevolent committee so it is not my decision but if a person comes and knocks on the door they want help that it often when it is used. Sometimes we will just give them food; they fill out a little form, information. Sometimes there is a fellow we call, a retired policeman who comes and just talks and decides whether they are telling the truth or not. You know, we want to help people that are sincerely in need of help without lying through the teeth to us in that sense. So we want to do that... I think we ought to differentiate between the can-nots, I mean you're crippled you can't work, the can-nots, the have-nots, and the will-nots. And I think we have to really especially help the can-nots and the have-nots." – Pete

"I'm sure there were a whole bunch of people that have legitimate needs and used the grocery voucher to legitimately help themselves get through, but we also tracked our database long enough to know there were people who were regular callers." - Jay

"And even there it becomes important to determine, or discern, is this a legitimate and valid need, or does this person got a five year old (presho?) parked around the corner that he's going to climb into later on? So that experience already began to build in me the desire, I felt the need to, to do what I can to determine or discern what real poverty was and what real needs were." – Phil

While determining legitimacy of need was a noted concern by nearly all participants, after reviewing the exhaustive description and fundamental structure, one participant highlighted an important element I had overlooked. He identified his concern for legitimizing need to be subservient to the responsibility, given by God, to show compassion and care for the poor. While his important feedback is presented below, this was a theme that was overlooked and, upon revisiting the transcripts, was highlighted in a similar fashion by other participants. While other participants never explicitly identified

compassion as the primary concern, the obligation to assist clearly took precedent over the desire to judge legitimacy of need:

“we are not always a good judge of who is who and so I tend to err, hopefully anyways, on the side of I will help everybody, and anybody that might ask because God is a better judge that I am of who can not and who will not.” - Drew

“I try not to judge but probably deep down we all do in some ways, if we were really honest, we do judge. Like I said, my belief system would tell me not to judge, especially talking about addicts and angry homeless people that make it really difficult to love them back.” - Bart

A final theme worth mentioning in regards to the expressed desire to determine legitimacy of need is transferable principles. Certain groups, namely widows and orphans, have been identified by respondents as explicitly identified as needing to be supported in the Bible. In addition to this however, some participants expressed attempts to ‘glean’ transferable principles within this teaching, effectively modernizing it to include other groups clearly destitute:

“James 1:27 says ‘religion that is pure and genuine in the sight of God the father will show itself by such things as visiting orphans and widows in their distress’. So there are a variety of scriptures that address who are the identifiable people in need and admittedly there are more scriptures that talk about widows and orphans than any other particular identifiable group. Certainly it did not identify some of the groups that we’ve talked of that exists in Canadian society because our societies are so different. In that case, the transferable principles are what I try and glean. One of those being, is there somebody here that does not have any other capacity, any other network, and other relationship that can help them?” – Phil

Evolving Beliefs in Relation to Poverty

Throughout the interview, questions were used to explore the evolution of the participants thinking regarding poverty issues. One question asking if they ever thought differently

about poverty issues may have been the most interesting, garnering varied responses.

Most identified an evolution in thought or perspective towards an increased obligation to help and decreased emphasis on deservedness:

“Maybe the thing I described before when I told you Matthew 25 you know I don’t always have to, you don’t have to deserve help. You know that was kind of a revelation to me in some ways.” - Pete

“I think Jesus’ words early on when I was younger he said ‘the poor you will always have with you’ and I thought oh fine they’re here so what that means they’re never going to go away so why put my life into something that can’t be fixed and so that was pathetic but that’s one way of hearing that.” - Norman

“I don’t make the judgements that I used to make when I was young and foolish because you don’t always know the circumstances and the situations and the person. And so as far as the different, well I’ve already told you the different things I guess my own view, or views of those. I think my opinions and views have just changed that I don’t judge people as quickly I guess. I mean we still probably, there are still those things that pop up because its been so embedded in you and you like ‘no’ I have to step back, no you know what, I don’t know this person, I don’t know this situation. Let’s help them get back ‘cause it could be me in that situation. Say for the grace of God that could be me.” - Drew

The last respondent expressed having come to think about poverty in more absolute terms:

“So my first trip to Africa in 1985 probably did a considerable amount to redefine how I understand poverty and how relative it is. In North America we live in a land of plenty, and even those we consider poor have much... so some of those things profoundly affected what I realize is truly poor, or real poverty.” – Phil

While all respondents identified and emphasized the importance of Christian scripture in their lives some appeared to interpret it’s teachings in very different ways. The most notable being the differing responses to being taken advantage of:

"The scriptures aren't just the standard of conduct or the code by what we need to live by, but the scriptures reveal God. That is the primary purpose for scriptures, not to give us this code of ethics by which to live but God has revealed himself and his character, his nature through those scriptures... so what the scriptures say reveal to me how God feels about it and often indicates the kind of heart I need to develop as I grow in my relationship... it talks about it being the responsibility of the body of believers, or the church, to take care of the orphans and widows. And even there for example, scripture, the apostle Paul it was I believe, talked about it being something that you need to determine what is actual need." – Phil

"There was time in my life when I would allow that resentment and judgment to affect the way I helped others and began to look at everyone as an abuser of the system... I had to leave that to God, I had to come; that was a journey for me because I really didn't like God's money to be abused. I was able to come to a place where I was able to release that and if we help someone, probably seven times of ten it is going to be misused. I'm able to let go of that, I'm not going to judge them. I'm not going to beat myself up for being taken advantage of, I'm just going to say we did it unto God, whatever happens happens, and that's a journey, for me anyways.

Interviewer: So what made you turn that corner?

I think just personal prayer, reading the scriptures, just taking some extra time with God and him just reminding me of how important people are. It's so easy to place people and say they aren't important, they don't matter, but everybody matters to God; the street person, the homeless, they're all important to God and to get that through I guess just a humble realization and just conviction, just probably growing up, I don't know." – Bart

The last major theme identified, that I again believe is universally accepted, was the belief that the degree of compassion shown towards people living in poverty was representative of the individual's relationship to God:

"1st John 3 or something, 'If you have material possessions and you see someone who doesn't', I can't think exact, 'and you don't help them how can the love of God be in you?'" – Pete

"having just read the book I read recently it is very much in the forefront of my thinking lately of how do we respond to this because it is throughout scripture and part of the

mandate to love other people and to love God is to meet the needs of those who are less fortunate in a sense.” – Jay

“that should be really who we are as believers, so we should care about people. First and foremost their eternal destiny, but as well part of caring for people is what they are going through right now in life, whether it’s good or bad. Bible says we grieve together and we mourn together and we celebrate together.” – Drew

“If as an indicator I don’t grow more compassionate as I live in my relationship with God, then maybe my relationship with God isn’t touching me as deeply as it needs to.” – Phil

“I realize I need Christ in my life, I need to honour him, to worship him, to be exorbitant in my worship towards him but at the same time I can never forget the poor, never neglect the poor. I need to be involved in their lives as best as I can.” – Bart

Participant’s Responses to the Reviewed Text

As no responses concerning revisions to the identified fundamental structure were posed, the participants responses to the exhaustive description and overall findings are presented here. After compiling the two sections, results were sent to participants requesting feedback. To assist in responding to the findings two questions, as suggested by Colaizzi (1978), were asked:

1. How do my descriptions compare with your experiences?
2. What aspects of your experience or of your existence have I omitted?

Of the six participants included in the study, five responded to the request for feedback.

Three gave brief responses in support of the findings:

“Hi Jordan,

I've been out of the office till this morning so I hope that I am not responding too late, but I looked over the material and it looks accurate and well done." – Pete

*"Hi Jordan,
You have done a good job. Thanks"* – Bart

*"Hi Jordan,
Been away the past two weeks. Just got your note. Looks okay (Did I really say those things? Just kiddin). Hope things go well for you. Peace,"* - Drew

One reiterated his emphasis on family breakdown as an attribution for poverty:

*"Hi Jordan
I read through the material (albeit quite rapidly!), but I did read it. Your descriptions seem to have captured my opinions accurately. I felt that family breakdown was the primary cause of poverty - in that it produces huge financial strains, for the single parents, for the split households, can often create hostile and unloving environments that produce addictions and alienation etc. I think you communicated my views clearly and fairly. Thanks"* – Norman

The last respondent offered a more thorough response. He commented on grammar and punctuation within the transcript quotations and the potential for quotations to be misinterpreted. To address these concerns, all quotations presented were revisited in an attempt to ensure the meaning was being captured as accurately as possible. In some instances, periods were inserted, additional non-language utterances were removed, and grammatical errors were corrected (i.e., they're, their, there) to address his concerns. In addition, he expressed concerns regarding (a) my assumption that an element of fear regarding being presented as discriminatory or stereotyping was evident and reduced the quality of responses, and (b) my presentation of respondent's concerns regarding the importance of determining legitimacy of need. For both of these concerns, the transcripts were again revisited to determine if these were overlooked and important themes and

additional notations were made in the above presentation. While the participant's response was thorough, lengthy, and greatly appreciated, for brevity only a portion is included here:

"Hi Jordan

Thanks for forwarding these on to me. I have reviewed this file and the previous two. There are a few things on which I would comment.

First of all, I think you did a great job! Compiling and summarizing qualitative research is extremely difficult (it is the route I chose for my thesis). You did well. Your own writing style shows careful thought and polish, and I think you tied the research together with literature and your own observations quite well. I think you represented the gist of things, at least from my perspective, quite accurately.... regarding a comment you made about my fearing being cast as a bigot, thereby reducing the quality of my answers: I am not wildly in favour of "politically correct" speech but do believe in speaking respectfully of all people. While there is sometimes a very subtle difference, I would suggest I speak carefully not for fear of being believed to be a bigot but because I want to refer to all people with dignity and respect. Utilizing stereotypes tends to make sweeping generalizations about people or groups, and can characterize them unfairly.

I don't recall speaking of this specifically, and I haven't the time to comb over the transcript in that fine detail, but I believe (even if I didn't indicate this to you in the interview) that while we are cautious about handing out aid (especially money), I would rather face God one day admitting to having been taken a few times than to face an assessment of lack of compassion. Therefore, I would characterize my beliefs and my actions as being cautious but wanting to err on the side of grace rather than lack of compassion. I am not sure I would say of myself that I want to err on the side of caution, as that reflects a more protective mentality than one characterized by willingness to share out of compassion for the needy. I would rather risk being "taken" occasionally and show compassion than to never be "taken" but never have done good with the resources with which God has entrusted me - either personal or those of the church's over which we have oversight." – Phil

Identification of the Fundamental Structure

The fundamental structure of these findings is an attempt synthesis the textual and structural descriptions (i.e., the what and how) of the phenomenon (Merriam & Associates, 2002) to reveal its essence. As stated in the presentation of the methodology,

it is as unequivocal a statement of identification of its fundamental structure as possible.

Presented here is an attempt to answer the primary research question, 'What are the beliefs of Evangelicals in relation to their attributions for poverty in Canada':

For this group, poverty has been gaining momentum as a recognized issue. Domestically it is extremely complicated and comparatively less severe, leaving it much more feasible to emphasize overseas efforts. While domestic poverty requires specialized and individualized solutions its roots in Sin and greed need also be addressed to be truly effective; as the responsibility for poverty lies on many different levels, so too must be efforts to eliminate it. In this, Christians have an important role to play, and in fact are commanded to meet the needs of the poor; in doing so, they will likely be taken advantage of but as they are merely stewards of God's resources, that is for Him to address. Developing in a relationship with God will foster the needed compassion and responsibility to address poverty.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the implications of the results presented above. It begins by highlighting the relationship of the findings to previous research, identifying how it supports, contradicts, and extends that scholarship; questions emerging as possibilities for future study are also presented. Following this are the identified limitations of the study. A discussion regarding potential implications of the findings in relation to Social Work practice is then presented. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of important findings and some thoughts relating to my own personal journey and experiences conducting this research.

Relationship to Previous Research

This study revealed a number of important findings confirming and diverging from previous studies as well as answering a number of previously posed questions. In addition, it contributes to the current attribution literature by pointing to new areas for further research. These findings are discussed in this section, emphasizing those found to be of primary importance in relation to the existing attribution literature.

Regarding the ‘types’ of people identified as most likely to be living in poverty, there were two major findings to be related to the current literature. The first was the apparent relationship between personal exposure or experiences and the types of people identified. While two studies by Wilson (1991, 1996) show various types of exposure to have a mediating effect on attributions, exploration into exposure mediating the types of people identified is lacking. This study contributes significantly in this respect offering evidence

that, even before determining cause explanations, awareness of people, or groups of people, living in poverty is influenced by personal experiences and exposure to poverty. At the same time, this study also supports Wilson's (1996) findings that type of exposure to the poor is an important way in which poverty causation is constructed. He provides evidence that exposure can produce both individualistic or structural causal beliefs; more specifically, having been panhandled by the poor and engaging in informal discussions about the poor are conducive to developing individualistic beliefs while exposure-friendship and access to formal television and radio presentations is associated with structural. While this study does not quantifiably make this link, it was identified by respondents that, at least domestically, exposure through literature, television programs, or direct service increases compassion. At the same time, respondents identified having had to resist the negative effects of having been taken advantage of. While compassion is not directly synonymous with structural attributions, in this study they appeared at least to coincide with external attributions (i.e., cultural, fatalistic, structural).

The second important finding, regarding the 'types' of people identified, was the identification of the 'anyman'. Nearly all previous research used qualitative methodologies focusing on either the 'generic' poor or using pre-assigned typologies within their scales. As this study specifically sought emergent typologies, it contributes to the current literature by identifying this potentially unexplored area within attribution literature. While often studies will examine the attributions for different types of low-income populations, the identification of groups may hold significant meaning revealing those that have caught people's attention. The identification of the Anyman may point to

a distinct category not yet explored and subsumed within the previously used ‘generic’ poor.

When examining the participants’ attributions for poverty, a number of major findings emerged with significant implications on the existing literature. The first was the lack of support for the influence of religion on attributions. The second was an inability to make generalizations as attributions were found to be dependent on the type of person identified. The third highlighted the importance of a qualitative methodology as precursors were found to exist in relation to a variety of attributions.

As noted in chapter 4, religious or theological beliefs were not identified as having significant influence on respondents’ attributions for poverty. The exploration and focus on the effect of religious affiliation was an attempt to address a stated need in the literature; Hunt (2002) identified a further need to examine possible implications of denominational variation, particularly the ‘fundamentalist/modernist’ dimension among Protestants. While some respondents’ identified a possibility of economic benefits gained through following Biblical principles or having a sense of purpose (from Christian faith and hope), overall this was not emphasized. In addition, when religious variables were identified as precursors to attributions it was simply as a generalized ‘sin’ influencing external factors as much as individual.

While this area can be explored more fully, as identified in the limitations section below, these preliminary findings show considerable deviation from previous literature. Previous

research largely uses survey data, without the cultural attribution, finding support for an increased likelihood that Protestants hold individualistic attributions (Emerson, Smith, and Sikkink, 1999; Feagin, 1975; Hunt, 2002; Kluegel, & Smith, 1986; Robinson, 2006). Two possible explanations for this divergence could include the use of a qualitative methodology as well as the religious underdog thesis identified by Hunt (2002).

Literature regarding attributions for poverty is quite limited as well the use of qualitative methodologies and research specifically on Canadian populations. The findings of Reutter et al., (2006) highlight the usefulness of qualitative data in establishing structural precursors to what may initially appear as individualistic attributions. This may explain in part the significant deviation from previous findings which are not only largely comprised of scales, but exclude the cultural attribution often found in this study. Another, possibly more significant, explanation may lie in the religious-underdog thesis (Hunt, 2002). The basic picture painted by past research is that individualistic beliefs are most popular among individuals subscribing to the two dominant traditions (Catholic and Protestant). The religious-underdog thesis views religion as status where followers of historically dominant religious will be more likely to endorse ideological beliefs supportive of the status quo (and reject challenges to it) than will followers of minority religious traditions and non-affiliates (Hunt, 2002). While Catholics and Protestants still currently make up the majority of the Canadian religious landscape (Statistics Canada, 2003) the possibility that the lack of cultural support for Christianity in Canada (Reimer, 2003) or perceptions of 'us vs. them (referring to the broader society)', as identified in this study, may be pushing this group towards accepting the stance of the religious-

underdog; selecting attributions that endorse the system-challenging, structuralist view of poverty.

The second major finding showed attributions to be dependent on the type of person identified. Seeking attributions for poverty 'in general' showed considerable variation however, when explored in relation to specific 'types' of people identified by the respondents there was consistency based on poverty sub-type, or type of person identified as likely to be living in poverty. Attribution researchers have recognized a need to create a more inclusive set of variables for examining attributions, particularly in relation to the growing awareness that attributions are dependent on multiple factors and change according to poverty sub-types (Hunt, 1996; Reutter et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006). This finding supports past research showing attributions to change based on poverty sub-type (Lee et al., 1990; Robinson, 2006; Wilson, 1996). In addition, Reutter et al., (2006) also found the dominant ideology in Canada to reflect structural attributions, however with large variation in public understanding regarding the causes of poverty.

The third major finding emphasized the importance of using a qualitative methodology. As noted above, precursors were found to exist in relation to a variety of attributions. This is, again, similar to the Canadian findings of Reutter et al., (2006) showing individual attributions as often qualified using structural and socio-cultural (i.e., learned) causes. The identification and significance of the cultural or socio-cultural category as incorporated into the identified attribution typologies was originally developed by Feagin (1975). While this category was only later included in attribution studies (Bullock, 1999;

Bullock et al., 2003; Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Reutter et al., 2006; Smith & Stone 1989), it reflects the perception that people are trapped in a subculture of poverty over which they have little control (Bullock et al., 2003; Reutter et al., 2006). This was found repeatedly throughout this study, primarily in reference to the frequently identified First Nations typology and the effects of the 'welfare mentality' on poverty; again in support of the findings of Reutter et al., (2006) showing over half of their survey respondents (56%) to endorse the belief that there is constancy in poverty across generations.

Using in-depth descriptive analysis also yielded additional insight into the role of the 'welfare mentality'. While all respondents identified intergenerational cycles, not all emphasized the 'welfare mentality' and, amongst those who did, interesting combinations of learned and systemic effects are found. This supports the concept of 'compromise explanations' as identified by Lee et al., (1990). This pattern of combining different types of belief is understood to reflect the strength of individualism as a pervasive ideology alongside culturally available challenges to individualism (e.g., structuralist beliefs); these are more responsive than individualism to factors such as group memberships, personal experiences, and the prevailing social, political, and economic climate. These structuralist beliefs are typically thought to be 'layered' onto rather than replacing individualism (Kluegel & Smith, 1986). Interesting to note is the identification by Hunt (2002) that compromise explanations may be especially critical in the experiences of minority groups, whose structural locations and distinct experiences generate a frame of reference different from that of the majority group. While Canadians ascribe to structural

attributions with large variation (Reutter et al., 2006) the compromise explanations found in this study may still point to a distinct factor existing within Canadian evangelicalism.

Another finding of importance was the identified lack of faith in the Government to address poverty coupled with the desire to see poverty addressed on multiple levels. This confirms the sentiments expressed by Bonnycastle (2004), explored more fully in relation to Social Work practice below. Similar to the findings of this study, he identifies a diminishing trust in the welfare state having come from the political and religious right. With this is an identification of two emergent discourses; a move towards increasing democratic engagement and a move from engagement towards supportive communities. This research provides evidence that, amongst the group of respondents being studied, there is a move towards the latter. While some respondents' identified a need for more specialized services that do not just 'throw money at the problem', a commonly identified desire was to see an increased role of the church in supporting their own and the broader community.

This is similar to the unexpected and emergent emphasis on overseas experiences and efforts as being influential in determining beliefs about poverty. Particularly the emphasis on missionary experiences supports the claims put forth by Jenkins (2004); he attributes the global spread of evangelical and Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity to the success of extensive efforts by missionaries from the north. It was clear within this population that international missionary work was emphasized as most, if not all, respondents' had significant overseas missionary experiences.

The relationship (i.e., similarities and differences) between American and Canadian Evangelicals is the last significant contribution of this study. Similar to Evangelicals in the U.S., all the participants in this study supported conservative political parties (Guth, & Fraser, 2001). While this is the case, the respondents' appeared to largely hold structural and cultural attributions for poverty similar to the findings of Reutter et al., (2006) in the general Canadian population. While not a comparative study, this points to significant differences in attributions between Canadians and Americans. These differences may possibly be more pronounced than the similarities as noted by Kaufman et al., (2006). Interestingly enough, one respondent even identified that, unlike Evangelicals in the States, "you can be a social conservative and still be compassionate toward the poor in Canada". Similar to the findings of Stackhouse (1993) showing Canadian Evangelicals to be remarkably similar to other Canadians, there is room for speculation regarding the distinctly Canadian elements that appear to supersede the evangelical sub-culture.

Questions for Future Research

Throughout the course of this study a number of questions emerged. To be expected, a comparative analysis was often thought to be of interest as previous studies either examine Canadian populations, American populations, or American Evangelicals and never in combination. In addition to this, comparative research focusing on the differences or similarities between Canadian Evangelicals and the general Canadian

population would be of particular interest in determining the boundaries, and strength, of the Canadian identity in relation to the transnational evangelical sub-culture as identified by Kaufman et al., (2006). Also of interest would be further exploration into the factors that appear to differentiate this population from its American counterpart. The specific questions that emerged from the responses appear to be pivotal to adequately understanding the beliefs of Canadian Evangelicals in relation to poverty, and yet could not have been anticipated prior to conducting this study:

1. What are the drivers encouraging a primarily individual-focused response and how is compassion perceived in relation to a structural response?
2. What are the factors precipitating the evolution of Evangelical thought towards, what I would identify as more spirit driven as opposed to dogmatic (i.e., the identified increased obligation to help and decreased emphasis on deservedness/ judgement)?
3. As respondents were actively involved with the poor, does their direct exposure mediate and/or compensate for other variables that may predispose them to hold individualistic attributions?

Limitations

This study has a number of limitations. The first being definitional limitations based on difficulties defining the concept of literalism and inerrancy in relation to interpretation of the Bible. While still effectively defining the boundaries of the population included (one potential respondent did not meet the criteria for inclusion) most respondents expressed

difficulty with the concepts. Because of this, the definition for a 'literal' interpretation of the Bible was redefined as "accepting a belief that it is important to take passages literally when the reader is led to believe it was intended to be", and "all or some literal interpretation of the Bible". Inerrancy was redefined as "without mistakes in the original autographs" (recognizing none currently exist). These definitional difficulties required the participant selection to be much more inclusive than originally intended, possibly limiting the studies transferability, or generalizability.

Another limitation was the number of socio-demographic factors left unexamined (i.e., income, education, upbringing) leaving unidentified their potential relationship to responses. While the population was selected to be relatively homogenous (see Appendix A) this also presents as a limitation to eliciting a variety of findings opposed to the intended depth regarding specific beliefs. There were also limitations to using the interview guide as it was quite comprehensive, lengthy, and adhered to closely, possibly limiting the potential for additional novel findings to emerge. One potential limitation of the procedure was the candidacy of the responses; all participants expressed not having thought about this issue extensively prior to the interview often searching for responses. This may inadvertently have led to poorer and less comprehensive responses than had I offered the interview guide beforehand. Additionally, more exploration into attributions could have been sought. In hindsight, there is an assumption that religious variables identified as relating to poverty causation for other people are related to religious beliefs that influence the respondents' beliefs about poverty causation. The last identified assumption is the unavoidable effects of the economic downturn that occurred mid-study.

This is of significant importance as there is research on poverty beliefs suggesting structural challenges to individualism actually predominate during times of social or economic strain (Hunt, 1996).

Important Findings

While this study sought to identify the essence, or fundamental structure, of the phenomenon in question, a summary of the key findings is presented here to assist in compartmentalizing the findings of pre-ascribed and emergent themes. These are presented in their respective categories (similar to chapter 4) before concluding this section with a discussion of their relationship to the intended purpose of the study and initial questions.

In the first category, ‘type’ of people identified as living in poverty was explored. The major themes that emerged included the relationship between types identified and personal experiences or exposure to poverty. The other major theme that emerged within this category was the identification of the ‘anyman’ category. This was the person who, for no specific reason was unable to cope with life’s challenges and just gave up hope.

In the second category, attributions for poverty were explored. Major themes that emerged include the finding that attributions relating to poverty in general could not be sought but instead varied widely and consistently between respondents’ based on the type of person identified. Differences between attributions for poverty domestically and

internationally was another major theme within this category finding international attributions to be near completely structuralistic. The respondents identified domestic poverty to be extremely complicated and comparatively less severe, leaving it much more feasible to emphasize overseas efforts. The last major theme within this category included the identification of precursors to individualistic attributions; these most often took the form of cultural attributions (i.e., intergenerational cycles, welfare mentality, and learned behaviours) or structural attributions (i.e., government systems and/or abuses).

The third category, eliminating poverty (beliefs and barriers) found a wealth of emerging themes. The most notable being the unanimous belief in Christian responsibility towards the poor (often actualized through direct service) and identification of compassion as a marker of degree of relationship to God. Within this theme was the identification that respondents' were merely stewards of God's resources and, when legitimacy of need was questionable, compassion through giving was to take precedent. Also identified was a lack of faith in the Government's ability to address poverty sufficiently as well as a desire to see increased support for Churches, and non-profit agencies, by the Government.

In the fourth category, influences and/beliefs relating to the identified attributions for poverty were explored. The most significant finding in this category was that religious variables did not seem to have a major effect on cause explanations. While this was clearly predominant in relation to eliminating poverty, it could not be established that religious drivers were influencing beliefs relating to poverty. Of interest was the identification of a renewed awareness in the evangelical world regarding poverty issues.

Most, if not all, participants recognized poverty awareness to have been gaining momentum although this appeared to be driven largely by a desire to evangelize and international in emphasis.

The fifth and last category explored the impact of Canadian and overseas experiences on perceptions of, and attributions for, poverty. While the interview guide specifically sought to elicit the impact of experiences on poverty attributions, the predominance of distinct influences based on overseas experiences emerged establishing this as a separate category. Within this category, an important theme that emerged was the respondents' dissatisfaction with the LICO and belief that 'real' poverty is largely a construct that exists overseas. While there was some recognition of significant Canadian poverty (primarily amongst First Nations territories), it was even qualified in relation to its similarity to poverty overseas. Domestically, all participants had experienced being taken advantage of. Because of this experience, there appeared to be an increased desire to determine legitimacy of need in order to, not only act as responsible stewards of God's resources, but to not contribute to an individual's self harm.

As identified in the first chapter, the primary objective of this study was to understand the attributions Evangelical Pastors held regarding the poor and how they were reinforced by their beliefs. The answer to whether this purpose was achieved is tentative as the findings revealed interesting insight into the question. What was found is the question, 'what are the beliefs of Evangelicals in relation to attributions for poverty?' cannot be answered in broad generalizations. Even more important is the finding that religious beliefs, while

clearly mediating response to poverty, may not significantly influence attributions amongst Canadian Evangelicals in comparison to other factors.

Relevance for Social Work Practice

Exploring the attributions for poverty amongst Canadian Evangelicals and the beliefs that support them is of great importance to the Social Work profession. Not only are conservative Evangelical denominations rapidly increasing and become more politically active (Kaufman et al., 2006) but there are concerns regarding the influence of the American religious right on Canadian social policy (Reimer, 2003); cross border connections can be found within the former Reform/Canadian Alliance Party and publications such as *The Report* (formerly the *Alberta Report*) (Bonnycastle, 2004). In addition, while not thoroughly explored in this study, Evangelicals have been found to prefer political solutions that reward individual virtue and punish individual vice as opposed to mainline Protestants who have a tradition of 'social gospel' teachings about social justice and collective responsibility (Kaufman et al., 2006).

While there appears to be little doubt that conservative Christian sects are growing both domestically (Perrin et al., 1997) and globally (Jenkins, 2002; Robbins, 2004), Canadian researchers have been slow to analyze the contemporary role spirituality, in its religious or institutional frame, is having on society (Bonnycastle, 2004). Therefore, the relation to Bonnycastle's (2004) examination of communitarian discourses regarding the diminished trust in the welfare state is where this study finds its primary importance. He is critical of

current moves towards a culture of charity while identifying a potential for religion to be the hope for emancipation. He also identifies common discourses within the Canadian religious community that largely promote this culture. Some common sentiments are identified, and are synonymous with the responses identified in Chapter 4; most notable are the beliefs in a need for a strong public and voluntary sector working together as well as having the poor served by caring volunteers, rather than those in a career. Additionally, the findings in Chapter 4 also show support for the identified predominance of benevolent personal and voluntary acts of charity in substitution for collective democratic engagement; in fact, no democratic engagement or similar discourses were noted in any of the responses. Bonnycastle's (2004) concerns are generally expressed in relation to effecting a decreased emphasis on entitlement, government responsibility, and systemic issues of poverty and injustice; he points to the propensity for the culture of charity to provide false hope in place of emancipation. He finishes stating: "Much more work is needed to verify whether this variation [identified as congregations actively challenging a move towards a culture of charity] has what it takes to be the source of a progressive shared understanding needed to reshape social welfare in the twenty-first century." From the responses presented in Chapter 4, this variation is not present within the sampled congregations.

Personal Journey and Experiences

The desire to conduct this research evolved out of feelings and observations that were difficult to reconcile. As identified early in this study, resistance to meaningful discussion

regarding inequality and morally perplexing prioritization of energies led me to seek an explanation for their existence. This of course is my own critical interpretation with evident biases. However I have found, through the course of this study, my disenfranchisement with what I saw as the “insurmountable contradiction” has waned.

This ‘contradiction’ was based on the belief that Evangelicals were largely unconcerned with issues of poverty or inequality while over-emphasizing moral issues in the broader society. While only exploring one side of this equation, the beliefs and responses to poverty, I have found my initial assumptions to be overly-critical. Similar to the respondents, I believe there is a lot of room for improvement, however what appeared as a lack of concern for the poor may rather have been my under acknowledgement of the vast overseas efforts. Identifying this, a wealth of emerging concerns exist however it does not appear this group is as apathetic or resistant as originally thought.

Responding to my series of questions identified in the first chapter, I have found within this group there was not an ignorance of the poor. While possibly not holding similar beliefs as my own regarding the negative effects of relative disparity or importance of structural inequality, the lack of emphasis domestically does not appear to be out of ignorance or apathy; instead it appears to be largely a pragmatic prioritization that discourages efforts domestically. Most respondents seemed to adhere to a belief that international efforts are both quantitatively (more poor people) and qualitatively prudent (people are poorer). Not to be overlooked however is the role of proselytizing potential in this decision.

Important to acknowledge is while various degrees of apathy and inaction exist, (as I suspect it would in the general population), there is a unanimous recognition of a higher standard in regards to caring for the poor. Believing this standard was orthodox and irrefutable has led me to this research. In this respect, this research has impacted my confidence in the Christian faith with the confirmation that what I have subscribed to is irrefutably what is intended.

While this confirmation has solidified my faith as I have understood it, the participants' responses to having been taken advantage of were the most meaningful. At the end of this study I was forced to conclude that my participants were not 'moral sluggards' in relation to poverty but rather sought to balance competing priorities. I was able to make this determination based on the consistent efforts put forth by this group; while they all had been taken advantage of, often multiple times, they all continued to believe and act on the call to help others. They are admirable in their obedience, persistence, and compassion.

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APPENDIX A

Telephone Script for enlisting participants:

Hello, my name is Jordan Gail. I am a Master's Student in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary with Dr. John Graham as my supervisor. I am currently conducting a research project titled 'Evangelical beliefs and attributions for poverty'; it seeks to explore in-depth the beliefs of Evangelical Protestants related to their cause explanations, or attributions, for poverty in Canada. More specifically, I will be interviewing approximately six to ten Evangelical Pastors from Urban and Rural Southern Alberta. If you are eligible and agree to participate, you will be interviewed on your perspectives about attributions, or cause explanations for poverty, in relation to your religious beliefs. The questions that will be asked are open-ended, so you will be allowed to elaborate on your responses as much as you'd like. The interview is expected to take approximately 1- 2 hours of your time. After the interviews are completed you will be given the option of reviewing your responses to make revisions ensuring the information accurately reflects your perspectives. This study has been approved by the University of Calgary's Conjoint Research Ethics Board.

For this study, I have a number of criteria that must be met for participants to be included. Would you be interested in answering six questions to determine your eligibility in this study?

(If yes) The questions are: (1) are you an ordained pastor/minister and employed by a congregation; (2) are you male; (3) are you Caucasian; (4) are you between the ages of 30 and 60; (5) do you believe in/agree to the following statements:

- (a) Belief that in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God provides the way for the forgiveness of one's sins; (b) Belief that the Bible is the word of God, and is reliable and trustworthy; (c) you have committed your life to Jesus Christ and self-identify as a "converted Christian"; (d) the bible is inerrant (i.e., the Scriptures are errorless in the original autographs); and (e) The bible is the inspired word of god and should be taken literally.

(6) Do you disagree with the following statements: (a) that the concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in these modern times; and (b) that Jesus Christ was not the divine son of God.

(If no) Thank you very much for your time. If you change your mind or want more information regarding the proposed study please feel free to call me at (403) 452-6988. Have a good day. Good-bye.

Would you be interested and have the time to participate? If so, I would be pleased to arrange a time to meet you at your convenience. *(Wait for response)*

(If they agree to participate) Thank you very much for your time and volunteering to

participate in this study. Your involvement is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns prior to the interview, please do not hesitate to contact me at (403) 452-6988. Have a good day. Goodbye.

OR

(If they do not agree to participate) Thank you very much for your time. If you change your mind or want more information regarding the proposed study please feel free to call me at (403) 453-6988. Have a good day. Good-bye.

APPENDIX B



Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

Jordan Gail; Faculty of Social Work; 452-6988; jpgail@ucalgary.ca

Supervisor: Dr. John Graham; Faculty of Social Work; 220-6156; jrgraham@ucalgary.ca

Title of Project:

Evangelical Beliefs and Attributions for Poverty in Southern Alberta

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to explore the religious beliefs of Evangelical Pastors in relation to their understandings about the causes of poverty. This information will be collected through individual interviews with approximately six to ten Head or Affiliate Pastors in Southern Alberta. The goal of this research is twofold: (1) to meet the requirements needed for the completion of my Master's of Social Work Degree; and (2) to increase understanding for policy-makers and poverty activists regarding the values and beliefs of this cohort. For this proposed project, the central research question is: what are the attributions for poverty amongst Evangelicals in Southern Alberta and how do they relate to Evangelical beliefs? You were selected to be a participant in this study because you are an Ordained and practicing Pastor, and having a degree of knowledge of Evangelical beliefs, I would like you to participate.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to answer 24 open-ended interview questions that will take approximately one to two hours to complete. The interview topics will cover three main areas: (1) attributions (e.g., cause explanations) for poverty relating to various 'types' of people living in poverty (i.e., Why are people poor? Are some people more likely to be poor than others?); (2) religious beliefs in relation to poverty (i.e., What shapes, or influences, your religious beliefs? How does that affect your attributions for poverty?); and (3) demographic information (i.e., age, ethnicity, years practicing, types of exposure to poverty, etc). The interviews will be conducted at a time and location convenient to you. All interviews will be audio taped.

After data collection is complete and the audio tapes are transcribed, you will be given an opportunity to read and revise your statements to ensure the information accurately represents your perspectives. You will be informed that, after receiving the material, two weeks will be given to contact me with any suggested changes; a lack of response within that time will indicate your approval of the material as is. A summary of the results of the study will be offered and, if accepted, your contact information will be required in order for it to be sent. Additionally, you will be asked if I would be able to follow-up with you if needed in order to ask additional questions or find clarification on some of the information you provided today.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your name, age, marital status, ethnic identity, political affiliation (e.g., local, provincial, federal), preferred denomination (i.e., affiliate with), number of years you have been a practicing Pastor, and a description of the kinds of exposure to poverty you have had (i.e., media, professional, personal, interpersonal, etc...). This information will only be used to describe the types of individuals who provided information to me. You will be asked to provide your name and contact information only for the purpose of conducting a follow-up interview (which individuals can decline to partake in if they so chose) or mailing a summary of the results of the research. Your name or any identifying information will not be recorded in any reports. Any data used will be presented mostly in aggregate with direct quotes masked through the use of a pseudonym. If you so choose, feel free to select a pseudonym to be used in any reports. If you choose to not pursue this option, the researcher will select a pseudonym on your behalf.

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

I do not anticipate any risks to you during your participation in the study. If some of the questions are upsetting to you, you may stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with.

The questions are about your religious beliefs and perspectives regarding the causes of poverty. The only perceivable benefit to you is that the information you provide will be used to increase understanding regarding your beliefs. Your participation will also benefit me as a student researcher. In addition policy makers and/or poverty activists may also benefit from an increased understanding of Evangelical beliefs related to poverty.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Throughout this study, your identity will be protected. Never at any time will your name or any identifying information appear on the information we collect. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to refuse to participate at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study the information you have provided up to that point will be kept and used unless, at the time of your withdrawal, you request that it not be.

After the interview, the information you provided will be entered into a computer and transcribed. At this point a numeric identifier, not your name, will be associated with your responses. To ensure confidentiality, all contact information you provide will be stored in a different location from your questionnaire responses. Your name and that of your congregation will NOT appear in any write-up or presentation of the results. The electronic data will be stored for five years and will be accessible only to myself.

I want you to respond to the questions according to how you think and feel, and not be concerned about what others may think about you. All information collected will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office at the researcher's residence. Only I will have access to the information collected. All information collected will be destroyed five years from the time it is first collected.

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Mr. Jordan Gail,
Faculty of Social Work
(403) 452-6988, jpgail@ucalgary.ca
And Dr. John Graham,
Faculty of Social Work,
(403) 220-6156
jrgraham@ucalgary.ca

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact Bonnie Scherrer, Associate Director, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-3782; email: blwebber@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions:

During the course this interview, I will ask you a series of questions. Please provide as much information as you would like, the more the better. If needed, follow-up questions will be asked to help clarify or expand on what you mean. We would very much like to hear concrete examples and stories of your experience.

I would like to tape this interview to facilitate the transcription of your responses and speed up the interview process. The tapes will be transcribed and stored in a locked file cabinet for a period of five years before being destroyed. Is this all right with you? (*If yes, then start tape, if no then do not*):

1. How do you define and experience Poverty in Canada? (Probes: what factors contribute, how does it affect you?) (NB: If needed, provide sample definitions of LICO from Stats. Can.)

The next series of questions will concern your attributions, or cause explanations, for poverty amongst various 'types' of people living in poverty:

2. In general, do you think some Canadians are poor? (Probes: can you give examples, who, what, where, when, why, how? In the past? Currently? In the future? Definition of poverty used is Statistics Canada low-income cut-offs (LICO). "The LICOs, are income levels at which Canadians, differentiated by family size and the population of their community of residence, spend 20% more of their income on basic needs than the average proportion spent by Canadians. Currently, families who spend more than 54.7% of their income on basic needs are living below the LICO".)
3. (If respondent believes some people are poor) In general, what do you believe is the cause/causes of poverty amongst Canadians? (Probes: i.e., personal versus social causes?)
4. What 'kind' or 'type' of people do you think are most likely to be living in poverty? (Probes: Why? What makes them more likely than the other types? What makes them more likely than the general population?)
5. For each 'kind' or 'type' you mentioned, what do you believe are the causes of their poverty? (Probes: i.e., bad luck, lazy, immoral, alcohol/drug use, capitalism, systemic discrimination, cultural, bad decisions, etc... Why?)
6. For each 'type' you mentioned, do you think poverty can/should be actively addressed in Canada? (Probes: How? - e.g., relationally, physically, spiritually, public policy, by individuals, by the church, etc...)
7. In general, how do you think poverty should be addressed in Canada?

8. Can you tell me how, for each 'type' mentioned, you, or your congregation, have addressed issues relating to poverty? (Probes: Why? Why some over others? Was it effective?)
9. From your personal life, please provide/describe an example of a time when you felt differently about poverty issues. (Probes: who was involved? What were the key components? Where were you? When was this? How did it impact your life?) (NB: If a catalytic moment or major transition is identified by the participant, then follow-up with questions regarding: How did the change/transition occur? What was affected? What were the key components?)

The next series of questions concern your religious beliefs in relation to poverty:

10. What do you think is the primary influence on your religious beliefs about poverty in general? (Probes: bible, religious education, church community, media, exposure)
11. Of the primary influences you mentioned, what specific aspect has most shaped your views? (Probes: Why? i.e., scripture verse, etc...)
12. What do you think is the primary influence on your religious beliefs regarding the different 'types' of poor you mentioned above? (Probes: does the influence change by type?)
13. Has this always been the primary influence or have other factors historically played a more prominent role in shaping your religious beliefs about poverty?
14. Are there other aspects that affect your beliefs about the causes of poverty I have not covered that you would like to express?

Finally, I would like to obtain some demographic information to describe our sample of interviewees:

15. How long have you been a practicing Pastor? (Follow up with any information about their credentials – where/when obtained)
16. What kinds of exposure to poverty have you had (i.e., media, professional, personal, interpersonal, etc...)?
17. What is your age?
18. Marital status?
19. Ethnic identity?
20. Political Affiliation (e.g., local, provincial, federal)?

21. Preferred Denomination (i.e., affiliate with)?
22. Would you like a summary of the results of this study? If so where should they be sent?
23. We may have additional questions or require clarification on some of the information you provided today. Would we be able to follow-up with you if needed?
24. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you very much for your time.

Interviewer notes:

Date of interview:

Name of interviewee:

Time interview took:

Location of interview:

Whether interview was Face-to-face or telephone:

APPENDIX D

Data Analysis and Interpretation: Significant Statements (Step 2)

General ideas and Themes

1. Poverty is not having enough (primarily money) to provide for basic needs - Some reference to appearance, bad housing, and relative poverty.
2. Predominating belief that Canadian poverty line (LICO), whether sufficient or not, is not REAL poverty; based on brief experiences living under LICO or from Missions experiences in undeveloped countries. **Overall sentiment of 'Canadian poor being comparatively better off'.**
3. Overall the government does address poverty in Canada but it can't/shouldn't be alleviated exclusively in the Political realm. Front line should be family and (some discrepancy between either church or Government).
4. **Government systems and other services (i.e., food banks, Christmas gifts, hampers) often demotivate, create dependency, and support a welfare mentality. A more genteel work for wage often promoted as having merit or needing to be reexamined ;** (More flexible work opportunities for people of different abilities and needs).
5. Social services were better preformed by Christian agencies before Government takeover/handoff.
6. **Agencies like Mustard Seed, Streets Alive, United Way, or food banks effectively address poverty on a small scale.**
7. **There are a lot of people who will abuse so you need to screen in some way. With the belief that all the resources are God's property comes the belief that getting taken advantage of is between the abuser and God (and claim to err on the side of caution).**
8. **All participants have been taken advantage of (with varied future responses and reasons for offence). Gate keeping to ensure need is legitimate is responsible Christian stewardship of resources (with some exceptions or opposition to this idea).**
9. DIFFICULTY, and necessity for, determining legitimacy of need; most would rather government or poverty agencies do this work. Preference for avoiding 'hand outs'.
10. **There are a variety of attributions and no one cause, however there is some consistency of 'types' of people identified as most likely to be living in poverty and the attributions within these types. In addition, while structural (i.e., stereotypes, racism, supports, opportunities), fatalistic (i.e., severe disability, unfortunate circumstances), cultural (i.e., modeling, discouragement from within culture) and individualistic attributions are noted, there appears to be an emphasis on choice or other individualistic elements not only in attributions but in proposed solutions, current approaches taken by the participant or congregation, and as an element existing synonymously with the other attributions.**

11. Most 'types' identified (with the exception of First Nations individuals) appear to be directly related to participants' own life experience. **** SIGNIFICANT*** (especially in relation to overseas experience and perception of Canadian poverty)
12. An increased emphasis on poverty in the evangelical world appears to be driven largely by the broader society with the evangelical world catching up. There also appears to be some degree of fatalism regarding the ability to eliminate poverty (Jesus said you will always have the poor). An important component of addressing poverty is proselytism; addressing physical needs of poverty has become required by the public and potential converts - holistic. - -- Termed the "Missional" movement.
13. The church needs to help meet immediate need for legitimate cases. It is a Christian duty to help the poor because God cares about them. When a Christian helps the poor it is like giving to God (i.e., Matthew 25).
14. All participants began using vouchers and similar direct responses until witnessing its abuse. Many moved towards supporting existing organizations, other types of support, or increased screening.
15. Current efforts at poverty alleviation appear to be primarily individual focused (i.e., ESL, skill training, paying overdue bills, food hampers). Overseas it appears to be more often community focused (with political corruption often acknowledged).
16. Evangelical culture is becoming more concerned about poverty (with an emphasis on third world poverty). Variation as to the change drivers (i.e., pioneers, young people, societal shift in attention, emerging requirement for successful proselytism); this is a new trend with participants noting it having been completely unrecognized in education and discourse since the beginning of their careers. The historically exclusive focus on spiritual needs was a response to concerns with the social gospel 'weakening' the Christian message. Some participants still concerned about becoming too social gospel/action focused and forgetting spiritual elements.
17. There are few formal/institutional poverty efforts by the participants' congregations. Primarily all poverty work is informal with the exception of funding other organizations/missions teams for overseas work.
18. It is a Christian duty to approach the person holistically; not prudent to meet physical needs without addressing spiritual.
19. Poverty needs to be addressed collaboratively (politically, business, philanthropy, church, individual). Separate from any sentiments regarding the coupling of Church and State, many desire increased collaboration between Government and Church in administering services or supporting new ventures (keen recognition of government/public concerns with this idea).
20. Human nature is to apathy and self-centeredness (NIMBY) within or outside of church; general sentiments of disappointment with church members' lack of genuine commitment (follow through) and isolationism (middle class bubble) and levels of NIMBYism.

21. A belief that people following biblical principles are less likely to be in poverty (either through guidelines themselves, or God's favor/reward will buffer against), unless by their own overt choosing (i.e., vows of poverty, Franciscans). Christians have a responsibility to care for people in poverty, primarily those deemed 'unable' to, not get out but, have avoided it (i.e., WIDOWS, ORPHANS, or unidentified modern equivalent). At the same time, some recognition that Godliness does not automatically mean the believer will be wealthy.
22. Primary religious driver in relation to poverty appears to be a combination of personal scripture reading (everyone quoted Matthew 25), individual relationship with God, and life experiences. (some mention of preachers, teachers, writers, and other evangelical sub-cultural influences).
23. Theological explanations all over the map [i.e., sin, family break up, purpose seems to be popular (thirty days of Purpose?).
24. All respondents are WASPs and politically conservative-leaning. In interesting connection between compassion and social conservatism.

APPENDIX E

Themes from “Evangelical Beliefs and Attributions for Poverty in Southern Alberta” Interview Transcripts

Types of Poverty

Hidden

Visible (Indicators of Poverty):

- Homelessness
- Appearance
 - Individual
 - Residence
- Location
 - Geographical (developed, developing countries)
 - Neighbourhood

Definition of Poverty

Income Indicator

Ratio of Income to Number of Residing Family Members

Standard of Living Comparison

Absence of Support Networks

Causes of Poverty

Structural

- Economy/Capitalist society
- Governmental policies
- Political corruptness of Global Governments
- Labour Wages
- Presence of social welfare systems – reinforce current situations, create dependencies and misuse of the system
- No available leadership in First Nations Communities

Individual

- Choose to Be Poor – substance abuse/addictions, spending habits, family history, no motivation
- No Choice – dependants (seniors, mentally ill, physically disabled), innocents who are affected by those who sin

Discrimination, Stereotypes & Prejudice

- Immigrants
- First Nations Communities – to them and against each other
- NIMBY (Not in my back yard)

Religious

- Absence of spiritual guidance
- Lack of higher purpose
- Abandonment of faith/church
- Absence of responsibility to God

Human Nature

- Greed
- Competitiveness
- Fear

At-Risk Populations

First Nations

Immigrants

Mentally ill

Physically/Intellectual Impairment

Elderly

Types of Helping (by Pastor or Church)

Formal

- creation of programs based on need
- participation in treatment services
- fostering families
- creation of support groups

Informal

- support community resources
- transitional support of individuals or families

Process of Change in Beliefs

- Understanding of the God's word (scriptures, bible)
- Experiential Learning – application of God's word, life experience
- Intolerance for the current state of individuals

Areas of Future Change

Political

- rebuilding church's involvement (formal societal operations)
- reinforcing social responsibility
- policy changes
- public education

Spiritual/Community

- rebuilding presence of the church (addressing mistrust, and encouraging individual involvement)

- fostering social networks and relationships
- reinforcement of individual work and contribution.

Economical

- addressing income disparities

Systematic

- co-operation amongst all levels

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