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Challenging Images? Dominant, Residual and Emergent Meanings in On-Line Media Representations of Child Poverty

Janet Fink & Helen Lomax

1. Introduction

When Britain's Coalition government took office in May 2010, it pledged to continue the previous Labour government's commitment to end child poverty and to implement the Child Poverty Act 2010. However, and despite this commitment, concerns about child poverty have continued to escalate, becoming an increasingly visible feature in the British news media and its online and print reporting of the effects of the Coalition government's welfare reforms. Reports from campaigning groups and policy think tanks have similarly highlighted the growing incidence of child poverty with, for example, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (Brewer, Browne & Joyce 2011) forecasting that far from it being eradicated by 2020, on the coalition's present policies, it will have returned to close to its peak in the 1990s, wiping out the progress that has been made.

At the same time evidence from public attitude surveys and social media indicates a general hardening of attitudes towards poorer people who are increasingly constructed in policy and wider discourses as feckless and undeserving. The recent *British Attitudes Survey* (Park *et al*. 2012:ix) found only 28% of those surveyed supported the view that the government should spend more on welfare benefits compared to 58% in 1991, prompting the Survey's co-director Elizabeth Clery to suggest thatthere has been "a transformation in Britain's attitudes towards the creation of a more equal society, an aspiration that in part might be delivered through welfare benefits." A BBC Radio 4 Welfare Poll, conducted by ComRes (2012), found similarly that 64% of Britons believe the benefits system either does not work well or is failing, and 40% think that at least half of all benefit recipients are 'scroungers'. While data from Ipsos MORI's study, *21st Century Welfare* (Hall 2012), suggest that 84% of its respondents either agree or tend to agree with stricter work-capability tests for disabled people, and 78% are in accord with the idea that benefits should be docked if people turn down work that pays the same or more than they get in benefits. The same research points to 62% of respondents agreeing with the idea of benefits being capped if people choose to have more children, and 57% with the essential logic of capping housing benefit.

To some extent this shift in attitudes can be explained by findings from yet another poll, commissioned by the TUC from YouGov in 2012, which "found widespread ignorance about spending on welfare, the reality of unemployment, the generosity of benefits and the level of fraud" (TUC 2012). However, as Clery notes above, the shift also reflects a broader structure of feeling (Williams 1977) in contemporary Britain, in which there is a greater acceptance of social inequalities and a diminishment of belief in welfare support as a fundamental feature of the social contract between the state and its citizens, frequently reinforced by mediareporting and its stereotypical and often malign constructions of deprivation and disadvantage.

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (McKendrick et al 2008) has suggested that the influence of such reporting about poverty, in all its different contexts, has been crucially shaped by the burgeoning use of new technologies to disseminate information online and the transformation of the news media landscape, which has created continuous demands for more copy within even tighter deadlines. This work has also illustrated how the digital age has generated many more opportunities for greater public engagement with the meanings and experiences of poverty but, as we will argue, opportunities to understand their nuances and complexities have often correspondingly been reduced because of the narrow and frequently stigmatizing nature of media reportage. Our concern in this article is, then, with the ways in which images are drawn upon in this 'fast and furious' style of reporting in the British online news media and, more especially, with the very small number of images that dominate the portrayal of child poverty issues, irrespective of the very different political and ideological standpoints of that reporting. In this we have three aims. The first is to interrogate what such images 'stand for' in media reports; the second is to explore the extent to which they reinforce or unsettle discourses of disadvantage and deprivation; and the third is to consider how images are themselves mobilised in different debates about child poverty and in ways which elide its contested meanings and diverse experiences.

Our approach to achieving these aims is framed by two analytical lenses. The first is Raymond Williams' (1977) structure of feeling, a concept that seeks to capture a "sensibility or atmosphere associated with a specific period or generation" (Lewis & Fink 2004: 58). Williams' focus on mood gives access to the prevailing cultural narratives and dominant discourses which frame the interpretative process. This wider macro lens is paired with our interest in the image itself. Here our methodology seeks not only to access the grammar of images, drawing on the language and method of social semiotics (Jewitt & Oyama 2001; Lomax & Fink 2010) in order to articulate the ways in which images might suggest particular readings, but also to identify how images are always in internal dialogue with the texts in which they are embedded and an external dialogue with their times (Trachtenberg 1989).

2. Analysing Images of Childhood and Child Poverty

There is now an extensive literature in the sociology of childhood illustrating the shifting and contingent nature of childhood as a social phenomenon (Mayall 2002; Holloway & Valentine 2005; Prout 2005) together with richly detailed analyses by sociologists, historians and art historians of images of childhood (Bressey 2002; Grosvenor & Hall 2012; Higonnet 1998; Holland 2006). Together these have demonstrated how visual representations of the child can be interrogated to better understand the ideas, practices and beliefs that inform constructions of childhood at particular moments in time and in particular places. In addition there is a growing body of participatory research with children and young people in which visual methodologies are used to capture narratives, memories and understandings of childhood which extend beyond the range and scope of the purely logocentric. This work seeks to offer participants opportunities to present what they consider to be important in their lives and, in the case of child poverty, to extend, challenge and complicate understandings of poorer children's experiences of home, school and community. The methods used are varied (Holland *et al*. 2010; Lashua2010; Lomax *et al*. 2011), however the aims of such research often have many similarities, encompassing as they do a determination to use 'the

visual' as a resource through which children can craft their own stories and a belief that such visual accounts can be especially powerful and persuasive forms of evidence about everyday experiences of disadvantage.

Yet we would also want to argue that images *per se* do not provide proof of anything because, as Susan Sontag indicates in her now seminal text *On Photography* (1977) photographs are subject to multiple uses and abuses, thereby rendering unreliable their 'evidence' of social reality.

> 'Photographs that fiddle with the scale of the world, themselves get reduced, blown up, cropped, retouched, doctored, tricked out.[….] Newspapers and magazines feature them; cops alphabetize them; museums exhibit them; publishers compile them.' (Sontag, 1977: 4).

Moreover Sontag's concerns have become all the more pressing now that digital technologies to retouch and manipulate images are so readily available and photographs, themselves, are online commodities that we can post, exchange, collect and offer comment on within seconds. Nevertheless, while accepting these concerns, we would also suggest that images of poorer children are, like all images, products of the historical contexts in which they are produced as well as the dominant discourses that are at play in those contexts. Our analysis is, therefore, also informed by a determination to adopt a historically informed perspective towards the phenomenon of child poverty in order to bring the constantly shifting nature of poverty discourses more clearly into view and to identify changes and continuities in their constitution.

This approach can be illustrated through two powerful visual examples of child poverty from two very different points in Britain's history of welfare and social inequality, 1948 and 2011. The first example is Bert Hardy's iconic image, *Gorbals Boys[i]*, in which the photographer captures:

> '…two lads aged about ten, strolling arm-in-arm and glancing pertly at the camera. From their clothing and hairstyles, the rain washed pavement and tall buildings framing them, the casual spectator would conclude that they are working class, the period is sometime between 1930 and 1950, and the setting is an industrial city with a cool climate.' (Blaikie 2006: 47).

This image, as Blaikie (2006: 49) argues, cannot be understood independently of its historical context or the aims of the photographer, Hardy, who sought to be "the self- conscious voice of ordinary people, shocking readers by revealing the intimate worlds of society's meanest." Such a concern with context for the interpretative process echoes Trachtenberg's(1989) emphasis on the dialogues between image, text and context. And yet a photograph's iconic status also suggests something more about the ways in which some images capture particular meanings across time, although, as Pink (2001: 100) has indicated, these "may not obviously or directly form part of the visible content of the image". Thus the photograph of these seemingly carefree, smiling 'street urchins' has the capacity to tell different stories to different audiences at different historical moments (Rose 2001). For the 1948 viewer, for example, interpretations of the image and its 'Gorbals' related caption may well have been shaped by Glasgow's reputation for gang violence (cf. Samuel 1994: 365) and the notoriety of its slums. Yet to anxious risk-averse parents in the early decades of the twenty-first century (Kehily 2010), the image might be equally interpreted through a nostalgic lens of 'lost

childhoods' in which children confidently and playfully traversed their local neighbourhood arguably free from the dangers of traffic and the threatening public spaces of contemporary towns and cities (Holland 2006; Read 2011).

Although there are different temporalities of and spatial emphases in these interpretations, they do not position the children as 'victim' despite the signifiers of dirty knees, ragged clothes and cropped hair. By the 2000s, however, visual narratives of poorer children's lives were increasingly composed through a particular realist lens which tended to emphasize 'victimhood', especially through a focus on their experiences of blighted urban landscapes and, unlike the *Gorbals Boys,* a concern with their vulnerability and social exclusion (Holland 2006; O'Dell 2008). Some consideration of photographs related to the *Poor Kids* documentary, first shown on BBC1 in June 2011, helps demonstrate the dynamics of this trend as well as the narrow sets of discourses and visual tropes that are now drawn upon to portray 'deprived' communities (Fink & Lomax 2012)[ii].2 A series of four portraits of children who feature in *Poor Kids* appeared in a newspaper article by Scott-Clark and Levy (2011) about the programme. Each portrait is of a solitary morose child, situated in the barren landscapes of their home or neighbourhood, thereby presenting a starkly bleak narrative of their lives. This is reinforced further in the text which runs under each of the images and which highlights their everyday experiences of cold, hunger and violence as well as the social and territorial stigma that spoils, manipulates and mediates their personal lives and social relationships (cf. Wacquant 2008). As one of the children comments: "What I hate about the flats is you feel that you want to be sick when you have visitors. I don't like having pals in my house, in case they bully me" (Scott-Clark & Levy 2011: 27). Such visual and textual exposés of the experiences of children living in extreme poverty offer invaluable evidence of the nature of social inequality in contemporary Britain but, as part of that process of exposure, these four children become 'othered', not least because the photographs and text present such a one dimensional view of their lives. The narrowness of the children's aspirations, for example, is used to emphasize how deprivation and disadvantage construct layers of 'difference' between children, but what emerges as a result is a failure by the authors to acknowledge not only that there might be similarities of childhood experience beyond those of inequality but also that accounts of child poverty cannot be reduced to the experiences of individual children (Jenkins 2000). As George Orwell wrote in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933): "[poverty] is all so utterly and prosaically different. You thought it would be quite simple; it is extraordinarily complicated" (13).

3. Online Reporting of Child Poverty and the Uses of Imagery

To illustrate further the ways in which media accounts of poorer children's lives draw upon a very narrow selection of discourses and signifiers of poverty, our analysis will now turn to the period between 2008 and 2013 and a set of photographs which have become ubiquitous in online reporting about child poverty. These photographs are of two young boys (possibly brothers), taken in Govan, Glasgow in 2008 by the Scottish photographer Jeff J Mitchell to coincide with the release of figures on child poverty in the UK by the Child Poverty Action Group[iii]. Three of the images are of the slightly older boy playing football; of these, two are close-ups of a graffiti covered doorway into which the boy is kicking his ball, while the third is a wider-angled shot which brings the location of the child's game into clearer view. This situates the child alongside an abandoned shopping trolley, the boarded-up ground floor windows of a block of flats, untended grass verges and a litter-strewn

street. The angle of the fourth photograph shows that all three stories of the flats have boarded-up windows, but its composition crops the figure of older boy in the foreground so that only his legs and lower body are in shot. As such he appears to be keeping guard over the younger boy at the centre of the scene. The fifth photograph, see Figure 1 below, shows the two boys running towards the doorway of the abandoned, graffiti-covered flats along a path overgrown with weeds. The sixth is a shot of the two boys playing inside the flats' dark doorway with its crumbling steps, and the seventh photograph captures the shadowy silhouettes of the two boys as they clamber up a metal-link fence adjacent to this building.

Figure 1

Original caption: GLASGOW, UNITED KINGDOM - SEPTEMBER 30: Two young boys play in a rundown street with boarded up houses, September 30, 2008 in the Govan area of Glasgow, Scotland. A report by the Campaign to End Child Poverty suggests that millions of children in the UK are living in households surviving under £10 per person per day.

Credit: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images News

During the five years in which these photographs have been available to the media, they have featured in more than 700 online reports about child poverty with the third, fourth and fifth photographs (as described above) being included most regularly.[iv] They have been used to represent and reinforce a range of different political and policy positions on child poverty, appearing in online versions of *The Guardian, The Independent, The Telegraph* and *The Daily Mail*, the BBC's online news pages, and reporting by smaller regional, specialist and also activist web-sites. The Google Images search engine was used to identify online news media articles in which one of the

Govan photographs was used. Articles were selected for analysis in order to span the period from 2009 to 2013 and to represent a range of broadsheet and tabloid sources, from the centre left (*The Guardian*) to the centre right *(Mail Online)*.[v]In addition to online news media articles, the search strategy revealed the use of Mitchell's images on a number of online spaces including activist, campaigning and consumer websites such as *Save Britain Money*; *Inclusion Scotland*; *Shifting Ground*s: Politics for the Common Good; *Third Force News*, *Left Foot Forward* included in articles about the incidence of child poverty (not only in Britain but also England, Scotland and Wales), its relationship to welfare reform ,its impact on children's life chances and the importance of parental responsibility. However these foci reflect the ways in which the features were themselves predominantly written in response to policy initiatives, welfare reforms and the release of reports into child poverty by government and third sector organizations, thereby illustrating the influence of news media in disseminating ideas, concerns and evidence about poverty (Redden 2011). Nevertheless, and despite this plethora of media reportage, it is worth noting findings from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's study of the media, poverty and public opinion, which state "poverty does not appear as a news item for its own sake, but in relation to other more 'newsworthy' issues, such as politics" (McKendrick *et al.* 2008: 31).

Headlines of online media reportage in which the Govan photographs feature illustrate this very persuasively. Two 2011 examples from *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian* demonstrate respectively how child poverty is used as way of underscoring party political criticisms of policymaking, with Prince making claims about the ineffectiveness of the previous Labour government's attempts to reduce child poverty and Clark arguing that the Conservative party's fiscal policies have adversely affected the lives of children in low income families:

> Labour spent £100,000 per child but poverty gap still grew (Prince 2011)

> Child poverty is accelerating – don't buy the Tory line (Clark 2011).

And similarly the political dynamics of measuring child poverty and the development of new approaches to non-income indicators of poverty can be read through the headlines to articles in *The Guardian* and *Mail Online*:

> Tories move child poverty target (Wintour 2012).

> Why we should dump new child poverty figures in nearest black hole (Doughty 2012)

Headlines in *The Telegraph, Mail Online* and *The Independent* also signal the 'politics of poverty' in features which, in different ways, critique and support welfare reforms being introduced by the Coalition government:

> Osborne's cuts could have "catastrophic" effect on children, warns UNICEF (Bingham 2012)

> Child poverty is as much about broken homes as it is about money, insists IDS: Troubled families "need more than cash hand outs" (Chapman 2012)

> Majority of British children will soon be growing up in families struggling "below the breadline", Government warned (Morris, 2013).

In the texts which run underneath the latter three headlines and the accompanying Govan photographs, there are diverse and competing sets of discourses about child poverty. The report by Chapman in *Mail Online* draws extensively on a speech by Ian Duncan Smith, the Work and Pensions Secretary, in which the punitive nature of the Coalition government's welfare reforms are subsumed within a critique of poorer families' lives.

> He [Duncan Smith] said that a few extra pounds a week in benefits would not help families who were not only poor but also afflicted by "worklessness, educational failure, family breakdown, problem debt and poor health." (Chapman 2012).

Here families on low incomes are constituted through discourses of blame, which not only hold them responsible for their failure to 'manage' the demands of everyday life but which also, as importantly, validate welfare reforms while ignoring poverty's structural factors as well as its impact on health and well-being (Marmot 2010). The apportioning of personal responsibility to parents and families in these discourses elides, similarly, the more particular stigmatising and isolating effects of poverty upon children's lives (Ridge 2011; Sutton 2009) and is reinforced by pathologization of poorer families as 'problem families'. As such the nature of this blame resonates with residual meanings (Williams 1977) of poverty in a contemporary structure of feeling around social inequalities. These meanings include, for example, a 'cycle of deprivation' which was promulgated in the early 1970s by Sir Keith Joseph, the Conservative Secretary of State for Health and Social Services (Jordan 1974), and through which, like contemporary policy initiatives, the role played by parenting was selectively stressed while the significance of low income was downplayed (cf. Welshman 2002: 204).

The inclusion of the Govan photographs within Chapman's piece, and those with similar emphases on the causes of poverty and the effects of welfare and welfare dependency, means that their interpretation is shaped through their dialogue with these discourses of blame and those that constitute poorer neighbourhoods as dangerous places (Mooney2009). The photographs are also in dialogue with the wider social and cultural contexts in which, as the discussion of recent public surveys indicated, there is a decline in sympathy for families on low incomes. As a result the semiology of the images with their tropes of disorder, urban decay and solitary children can be read as standing for the 'risky' child and, more broadly, the failings of their families, thereby reinforcing the article's claims about the need for welfare reform.

Other online reports of poverty refuse this emphasis on blame and draw upon different discourses which construct the poorer child as 'victim' of the social and moral failures of society generally and neoliberalism in particular. Nigel Morris in *The Independent* quotes from a statement by Frances O'Grady, the TUC general secretary, who said: "By the 2015 election, the majority of children in Britain will be living below the breadline. For any civilised society, that should be shaming" (Morris2013).

And Tom Clark in *The Guardian* uses a particularly powerful visual metaphor in his discussion of the growing levels of children's hardship: "It would be a brave optimist indeed who would currently want to bet on[the macroeconomy] working to float children up and out of penury, as opposed to drowning still more of them in poverty" (Clark 2011).

This metaphor reinforces Clark's broader argument that benefit reforms are set to increase the demands placed upon poorer families, especially around making "basic things like heating and eating harder to do." However, it also constructs the child as 'at risk' with the result that the Govan photograph, included in this piece, enters into a dialogue with text and context in ways which are fundamentally different from the dialogue in Chapman's piece described above. Here, and in the *Independent* article by Morris (2013), the journalists call upon and reinforce discourses of childhood innocence and dependency, which have their origins in a nineteenth-century Romantic idealization of the child. As with the texts in which they are contained, however, the photographs work to 'puncture' (Barthes 2000) that ideal by reminding the viewer how, like the shopping trolley, some children have been abandoned by the state in dangerous urban spaces and how, as a result, their childhood innocence is at risk. Such a reading is suggested in the grammar of the image: the boarded-up windows, graffiti and unkempt pavements signifying urban dereliction which is reinforced by the placement of the children in the photograph's composition. Unlike Bert Hardy's *Gorbals Boys* who gaze confidently at us, invoking a sense of belonging and attachment to their surroundings, the Govan children are engrossed in their play to such an extent that a certain obliviousness to their surroundings and the photographer is intimated. Our inability to see their facial expressions and to interpret what this experience of being photographed means for them reinforces their vulnerability as well as the power of the articles' arguments that poor children will be rendered even more vulnerable because of the Coalition government's withdrawal of support to their families and communities.

Analysis of the Govan photographs and the purpose of their inclusion in different politically inflected accounts of child poverty demonstrate show, as Connor has argued (2012), images can be used to shape alliances and antagonisms in ways which make visual representations appear to be natural and self-evident descriptions and a response to social phenomena. Interpretations of their meanings and dialogues with text and context can thus be understood as intensely fluid, shifting between residual romantic constructions of childhood and dominant ones of childhood in crisis; between the 'risky' child and the abject child 'at risk'; and between the state's responsibility to protect the child and that of the parent. Nevertheless, and arguably because they cannot be "trapped within a simple interpretation", the photographs of these two Govan children have taken on "a life of their own" (cf. Trachtenberg 1989: xv) in online reporting of child poverty while the children themselves have become iconic figures in its representation.

Concluding Discussion: Emergent Ways of Seeing?

In this paper we have elaborated a theoretical and methodological approach to understanding images of child poverty, which not only encompasses the wider cultural and political viewing contexts but also frames how images might be understood by their audiences. In so doing we have suggested that these understandings are conferred by a complex and fluid intersection between the visual grammar of the image, the text which accompanies it and wider ideological and normative meanings of childhood family life and poverty. As a result we have brought consumers of online media firmly into our analysis, pointing to what viewers themselves might bring to the interpretive process and how this can be influenced by the residual, dominant and emergent values and understandings that are embedded in a structure of feeling around child poverty in a particular

period of time. Unpacking the content of the image, its tropes and signifiers, together with the contradictory and competing nature of discourses that constitute poor children and impoverished childhoods, illustrates the analytical importance of attending to the structure of feeling in which photographs are produced and viewed when developing semiotically informed 'readings' of their content. Without such an integration of approaches, we would argue, it is not possible to make sense of how and why images of child poverty are deployed in online media; how they might simultaneously reinforce and unsettle poverty discourses; and how they can appear to depict children as equally deserving and undeserving.

In this way, we suggest the power of images is not contained within the image itself but rather that images are generated through particular structures of feeling and, in turn, become repositories for our own anxieties and those of society more broadly. Theorising meaning in this way, as both shaping and being shaped by audiences, enables us to move beyond the notion that images (and the media) are all-powerful determiners of subjectivity and audiences are mere cultural dupes (Gill 2008). It also allows a consideration of how viewers might bring their own meanings and, fuelled by the opportunities afforded by visual digital technology and social media, challenge analyses offered in print and on-line news media. There is growing evidence to suggest that those depicted visually and in print are themselves making use of the possibilities afforded by media and technology to contest how they, their families and their communities are represented.

This was illustrated recently in Alison Critchley's (2012) piece for *The Guardian*, which criticised the BBC Panorama documentary, *Trouble on the Estate* and its 'Shameless'-like portrayal of the Shadsworth estate where she lived. In this, she claimed that "most residents felt a sense of betrayal, outrage and disappointment" towards the programme, not least because:

> Twin Valley Homes, which owns the majority of housing on the estate, has a tremendous input at community level, and, along with local charity Healthy Living, which provides a mobile fruit and vegetable co-op, was instrumental in saving the health and wellbeing centre. Local children are queuing up to join Brownies and Cub scouts at the parish church, which also supports vulnerable people through its pastoral care group[vi].

Critchley's challenge of the documentary's "blatant prejudice" towards Shadsworth residents was widely circulated in on-line news media, blogs and forums[vii] and illustrates how "people are not just addressed or summoned by dominant discourses – but also 'answer back'" (Clarke *et al*.2007: 142). Such a phenomenon can be traced in the ways in which victims of illegal phone tapping, 'ordinary' people as well as celebrities, continue to lobby for stricter regulation of press reporting (Leveson 2012) and 'talk back to' the media. It is also present in the burgeoning numbers of 'DIY' neighbourhood websites (Tucker & Arnot 2010) and their use of photographs not only to portray the concerns and views of residents living in 'disadvantaged' communities but also to lobby for improved services. And, more especially, participatory and creative visual research and methods in such neighbourhoods have offered poorer people opportunities to express more nuanced and often positive accounts of their everyday lives through a visual 'gaze' (Lomax 2012; Sharp 2011), which compels the viewer to look at, see and feel the diversity of their experiences(Fink 2012). Such a gaze refuses, equally, any pathologization of these experiences, powerfully illustrated by, for example, Miranda Sharp's film, *I Love Basildon*, the photographic essay by Vicky Lamburn, *Impression Milton*

Keynes (2011), and the work with Southampton residents, *City Portraits,* conducted by artist Laura Hensser in collaboration with sociologist Paul Sweetman. Moreover the availability of such images online enables the development of further challenges to popular assumptions about the widespread breakdown of social and moral order in 'disadvantaged' communities and the nature of social inequality in contemporary Britain. In these diverse arenas, then, it is possible to trace emergent meanings and discourses in a structure of feeling around poverty, which refuse the stigmatising and labelling of poorer people and which seek to reduce the social distance between communities, families and individuals. hese refusals of stereotyping discourses of poorer lives and neighbourhoods give hope to Redden's (2011) view that peripheral and digital news spaces might, in the future, also come to act as resources in which making and changing the news on poverty might be revitalized and transformed.

Acknowledgements

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[i] All the photographs taken by Jeff J Mitchell in Govan and which feature the two boys can be viewed by typing 'Jeff J Mitchell' 'Govan' 'children' and 'poverty' in the search facility at http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/

[ii] Different methodologies are required to analyse TV documentaries and these fall outside the scope of this article. For a useful theoretical and methodological elaboration of the ways in which TV is experienced, understood and given meaning by contemporary audiences see the work of feminist media scholars such as Skeggs & Wood (2012) and Jensen & Ringrose (2013). The latter's analysis of the UK primetime series *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* provides a compelling analysis of the ways in which audiences make use of on-line forums to produce and sustain particular representations of class. In so doing, their work makes visible the psychosocial and subjective complexities of the viewer as active media consumer/producer rather than passive recipient of media effects.

[iii] All the photographs taken by Jeff J Mitchell in Govan and which feature the two boys can be viewed at: http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/Search/Search.aspx?contractUrl=2&language=enGB&family=editorial&assetType=image&mt=photography&p=govan+children+poverty

[iv] The Google Images search engine was used to identify online news media articles in which one of the Govan photographs was used. Articles were selected for analysis in order to span the period from 2009 to 2013 and to represent a range of broadsheet and tabloid sources, from the centre left (*The Guardian*) to the centre right *(Mail Online)*.

[v] In addition to online news media articles, the search strategy revealed the use of Mitchell's images on a number of online spaces including activist, campaigning and consumer websites such as *Save Britain Money*; *Inclusion Scotland*; *Shifting Ground*s: Politics for the Common Good; *Third Force News, Left Foot Forward and Political Rant. Analyses of these suggest that the images are largely used tore-circulate arguments made in on-line media about, for example, the impact of welfare cuts on child poverty and indeed, frequently contain hyperlinks to these media sources.*

[vi] Alison Critchley's full critique can be found at: http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/oct/02/residents-estate-panorama-programme-blatantly-prejudiced

[vii] These included national and local news media, including *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Blackburn Citizen* and *The Lancashire Telegraph* and Community blogs such as *The Big Local* and *Church Action on Poverty*.