Poor journalism: Framing poverty and welfare in the British press during the 'age of neoliberalism' 1985-2015

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy.

University of Sheffield, Department of Journalism Studies,

March 2017

Abstract

This thesis examines 4070 articles in the British press written between 1985 and 2015. This longitudinal approach captures a timeframe which has been described by scholars as the 'age of neoliberalism'. In order to understand how the neoliberal paradigm emerged, the thesis outlines a history of ideas about poverty in the UK national press which have developed across key periods characterised by individualism, collectivism, and a return to individualism. Individualism has been linked to neoliberal ideology, placing the individual consumer in the free market at the centre of political, social and economic decision making. This free market ideology undermines the case for the welfare state and is often used to criticise individuals experiencing poverty as failed capitalists or consumers rather than as victims of an unjust system.

This thesis examines the extent to which this neoliberal ideology has been reflected in news coverage of poverty and welfare by examining news, politics and ideology. It finds that the press have engaged in a process of institutionalised social exclusion of welfare recipients who they construct as an 'undeserving other' who threatens 'mainstream' values. In doing so, the press have largely ignored inequality and the risk that poverty presents to many people by constructing it as an issue which only affects 'others' with behavioural problems. This behavioural diagnosis of poverty was consolidated in the early days of the commercial press and was used to blame impoverished people for their own poverty. This thesis analyses how the British press have reinforced neoliberal ideology by repackaging a set of claims about poverty and welfare which are rooted in the historical concepts of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
ASA	Adam Smith Institute
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
CPS	Centre for Policy Studies
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLC	Greater London Council
GP	General Practitioner
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDS	Iain Duncan Smith
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
MOS	Mail on Sunday
MP	Member of Parliament
NHS	National Health Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics
SNP	Scottish National Party
TPA	TaxPayers' Alliance
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WWII	World War Two

Table 1: Abbreviations

1. Introduction

The UK national press[1] in Britain play an important role in mediating social policy issues such as poverty. As will be discussed below, a body of academic research into the social role of journalism has contradicted the normative claim that the mass media act as a 'fourth estate' (Petley, 2009). Broadly defined, this term is used as a short-hand for the claim that the media perform a watchdog function in society by holding powerful groups and individuals to account. This role is often characterised by the two maxims of 'speaking truth to power' and 'giving a voice to the voiceless'. There are few clearer examples of how the press fail to live up to these ideals than in their coverage of poverty and welfare. For many people with no direct experience of poverty, the mass media play a key role in defining these issues.

This thesis presents a systematic critical analysis of the how the British press have represented poverty and welfare for the last three decades. In doing so, it argues that within the wider context of neoliberalism, newspapers have framed the public issues of poverty and welfare as private troubles experienced by individuals and small groups, predominantly framing poverty and welfare from the perspective of elite actors. This framing ignores structural inequality and masks the risk of falling into poverty that many people face. Alongside glossing over the unequal distribution of income, wealth, resources and skills, this kind of framing also ignores the fundamentally unequal distribution of power throughout the United Kingdom.

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[1] Throughout this thesis references to the UK press or British press relate to the National press. Local and regional publications did not form part of the analysis.

From a historical perspective, media portrayals of poverty have gone through a series of shifting dynamics, but the one constant has been the construction of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. These concepts have a long history which is explored below to illuminate contemporary reporting of poverty and welfare. In today's context of neoliberalism, nearly all aspects of the public sphere are marketized, and even private life is subject to market based values. Baumann (2005:113) has observed that within this period there is no longer a role for either the poor or the welfare state.

This thesis explores these issues by placing neoliberalism within a historical context and examining its relationship to news coverage of poverty and welfare. In doing so, it focuses on journalistic norms and practices and the relationship between neoliberal ideology and the normative parameters of journalism. The thesis offers a unique insight into these issues because it traces news coverage of poverty and welfare over a thirty-year period. This approach offers a way of examining how the longstanding categories of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor have been redrawn throughout the neoliberal era. The thesis produces a set of findings which will be of interest to scholars of both journalism studies and sociology. It also contributes to building on a wide range of studies into neoliberalism and social exclusion in the media.

Ultimately, the aim of this thesis is to examine how and why the press criticise the poorest members of society in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the thesis investigates which actors shape how poverty appears in the press. Finally, it investigates how neoliberal ideology has affected news coverage of poverty. This is achieved through a rigorous content and framing analysis which offers some

key insights into how the press *construct* social issues of poverty and welfare into private troubles for specific demographics.

1.1 Research questions

Normative claims that the press act as a 'fourth estate' do not stand up to critical scrutiny (Petley, 2009). Nevertheless, the way that issues of poverty and welfare appear in the press do not just fall short of the 'fourth estate' ideal; they are systematically reported through a distorted lens. Indeed, in an inversion of 'fourth estate' claims, the press tend to amplify the voices of those in power and exclude the powerless and those without economic capital. To investigate this further the following questions will be addressed:

1.) How has news coverage of poverty represented the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor?
2.) How have changing periods of governance affected news coverage of poverty?
3.) What sources do journalists use to construct news stories about people experiencing poverty?
4.) How have changing periods of governance affected news coverage of the welfare state?
5.) What is the role of ideology in shaping news coverage of poverty and welfare?

All of these research questions will be examined in the context of the 'age of neoliberalism'. The chapter that follows will place neoliberalism within a historical context which is essential for understanding the changes and continuities that this period represents. However, before looking at this in detail it is necessary to

briefly outline some of the core issues that provide the structural scaffolding for this thesis.

1.2 Why study news coverage of poverty in the United Kingdom?

The study of the media is an important part of the study of society (Kitzinger & Miller, 1998:223). This is particularly evident when examining news coverage of poverty and welfare. During recession periods, the mass media not only *report* the crisis of welfare spending but are also responsible for *constructing* it as a problem caused by welfare recipients. This type of representation has been found in research into news coverage of a range of related topics including homelessness and unemployment (Franklin, 1999:2). In each of these cases, the press have played a key role in framing how these issues are understood.

To give two examples, the aftermath of the macroeconomic crisis in the 1970s led to a series of public spending cuts (Burk & Cairncross, 1992). These spending restrictions were accompanied by a backlash against welfare recipients whereby the press indicted societies poorest members for a crisis in the banking sector (Golding & Middleton, 1982). The global financial crisis in 2008 saw the emergence, once again, of the mainstream media framing welfare recipients in a negative light while welfare cuts were enacted through the Government's austerity programme (Briant et al., 2013).

Poverty is a highly contested issue in political terms and how poverty is defined, discussed and constructed plays a key role in the development of social policy (Lister, 2004:12). Newspapers are central to this construction, and despite the

long-term decline in fortunes of British print journalism, the national press still play a key role in setting the news and subsequent political agenda (McCombs, 2005:166). In this sense, the language and attitudes of newspapers reach into in policy development and political responses to social problems like poverty (Edelman, 1977:142).

Research has demonstrated that criticism of the 'undeserving poor' was a feature of tabloid journalism in the late 1970s (Golding & Middleton, 1982), and that the news values of these newspapers spread into other areas such as broadsheets and television news (Barnett et al., 2000; Bourdieu, 1998b:17; Franklin, 1997:4). More recently, the political editor of ITV News, Robert Peston, has described how the BBC was 'completely obsessed' with following the news agenda set by the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* (Peston, 2014). Newspapers are therefore influential in setting the terms of the debate about how poverty is understood. According to (Iyengar, 1996:36), this framing has 'important political consequences' with 'significant policy implications'.

1.2.1. The editorial position of the British press

Throughout this thesis, references are made to the conservative and liberal press. Clearly, the editorial positions of the British press are more complex than a simple binary formulation. However, it has been a useful distinction in terms of organising the analysis presented here. For the purposes of this thesis, five newspapers and their corresponding Sunday editions will be considered as 'conservative' publications: the *Sun/News of the World,* the *Times/Sunday Times,* the *Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday,* the *Daily Express/Sunday Express* and the *Telegraph* and

Sunday Telegraph (Newton, 1991; Sanders et al., 1993; Scammell & Harrop, 1997:156). This leaves three newspapers which are considered to be 'liberal' publications. These are the *Daily Mirror/Sunday Mirror,* the *Guardian/Observer* and the *Independent/Independent on Sunday*. This type of political distinction about the editorial position of different newspapers has been used in other similar studies (Goddard et al., 2008; Kaposi, 2014; Petley, 2009).

These distinctions are used as a guide because newspaper partisanship is a complex issue. Scholars have argued that press partisanship in Britain has turned into an 'essentially contested concept' (Brandenburg, 2006:176) with newspapers switching party loyalties. However, the British press have been predominantly supporters of the Conservative Party; the most notable exception to this was when some traditionally conservative newspapers supported New Labour leader Tony Blair. During this time newspapers that had previously been described as the 'Tory Press' were instead referred to as the 'Tony Press' (Wring, 2002). From the 2010 General Election onwards these newspapers returned to supporting the Conservative Party (Wring & Deacon, 2010). This may be explained by Blair's Labour Party shifting to the political centre and right, towards ground more acceptable to conservative publications. Alternatively, the close relationship between Tony Blair and the Murdoch press can be seen as an example of newspapers reflecting the opinions of the powerful. The following table highlights the brief period when the British press shifted allegiance away from the Conservative Party and towards the Labour Party (Wring & Deacon, 2010).

Dailies' endorsements by circulation (1992-2010)

[Figure: line chart with y-axis "circulation (millions)" ranging 0 to 10, x-axis years 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010. Lines for Labour, Cons, Lib Dem, Other.]
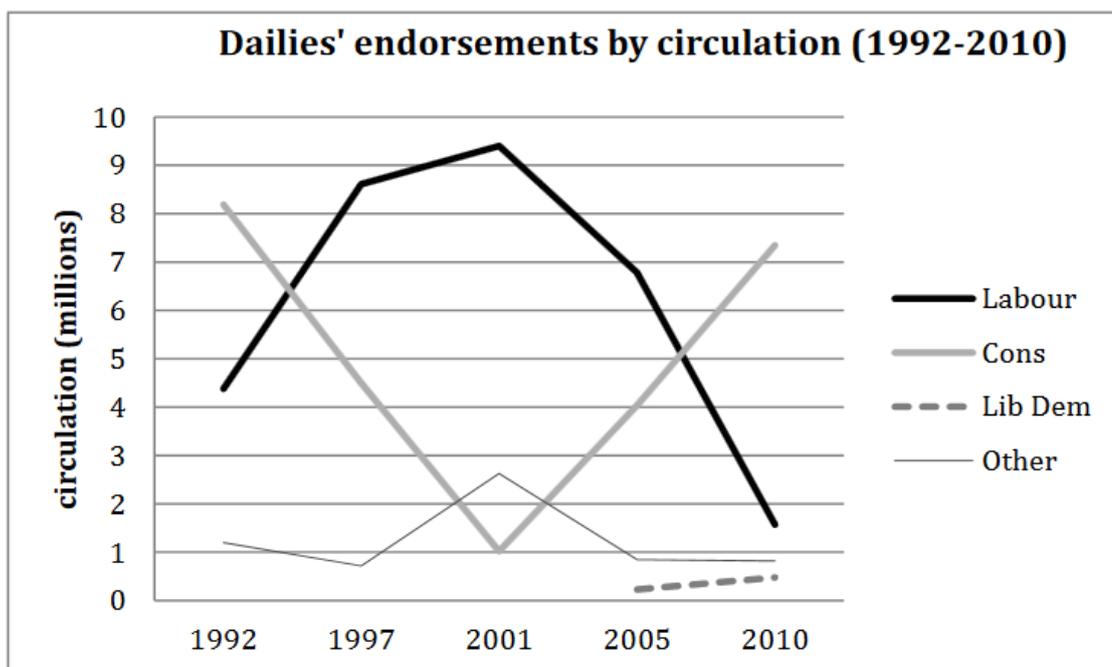
Figure 1: Newspaper endorsements from Wring & Deacon 2010

During the 1980s and 90s, the Labour Party made fundamental changes to their political aims. Writing on a similar pattern in the U.S. context, Dean (2009) has argued that the shift was indicative of wider political trends where the left have adopted many of their opponents' ideas:

> The left try to live up to, respond to, right wing versions of its failures. Avoiding the extremes, it puts itself in the middle. It isn't partisan, one-sided, or politically correct but fair and democratic, not a special interest group but in tune with mainstream American values. It isn't socialist (and really doesn't favour the welfare state) but is instead committed to economic growth and free markets (Dean, 2009:94).

This shift in values has also been evident in the liberal press with their lukewarm support for the welfare state and focus on behavioural rather than structural explanations for poverty. For this reason, the term liberal is used here, rather than

left or left-wing press. Categories of liberal and conservative newspapers have been based on a look at their historical commitment to political parties during general elections. The *Telegraph*, the *Daily Express,* and the *Daily Mail* are the clearest conservative newspapers because they have consistently favoured the Conservative Party in general elections. Likewise, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Guardian,* and the *Independent* have consistently supported either the Liberal Party, the Liberal Democrats or the Labour Party. Both the *Sun* and the *Times* have demonstrated shifting allegiances however they have both mainly been supporters of the Conservative Party during the period under investigation. The timeframe under investigation also coincides with both newspapers being purchased by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

1.3 Why the neoliberal time period?

This study focuses on the last 30 years, a period which has been defined by neoliberal dominance in political and economic policymaking (Harvey, 2005a; Klein, 2007). Neoliberalism has been defined as a system which uses the market as the guiding force for political and economic decision-making (Foucault, 2008:323). Previous research has argued that it stems from the ideas of Friedrich von Hayek being 'fully incorporated into the mainstream political debate' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:225), and it has been criticised as destroying 'the philosophical foundations of the welfare state' (Bourdieu, 1998a:7). Neoliberal ideas provided the intellectual base for the Conservative Government (1979-1990) to roll back the welfare state. Redden (2014:6) argues that the neoliberalization of Britain continued beyond the Conservative Government and into the period of New Labour governance (1997-2010) which saw further privatisation and

marketisation, along with the abandonment of wealth redistribution as a political aim.

Critics argue that neoliberalism has its own language which exists without old terms related to economic and structural struggle such as capitalism, class, exploitation, domination and inequality, but does have new terms like underclass, a word which removes groups of people from their social context (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001:2). The framing of welfare that has emerged in the neoliberal era has seen a shift in 'poverty discourse' which has led to the construction of 'poor people as a "menacing" other who threatens the rest of "us"' (Katz, 1990:185-186). Research has found that neoliberal ideology has underpinned news coverage of poverty and welfare in Britain since the late 1970s (Golding & Middleton, 1982; Redden, 2014). Therefore, in order to understand the connections between ideology, media and public perceptions about poverty and welfare, it is necessary to investigate breaks and continuities throughout this period and to also place it within a wider historical context.

Many of the features of contemporary news coverage about poverty, and particularly the construction of the 'undeserving poor' have a long history in the United Kingdom. The term was consolidated through Malthusian and Social Darwinist rationales in the Victorian era (Lugo-Ocando & Harkins, 2015), in a period described as the 'age of individualism' (Dicey, 1917). But these arguments faded through much of the 20th century as they no longer had resonance for many people who experienced poverty as a result of the Great Depression in 1929. The dominance of Keynesian collectivist policymaking emerged from the aftermath of the Second World War, ushering in an 'age of collectivism' (Diamond, 2016:78),

which itself broke down following the late 1970s financial crisis, leading to the emergence of a neoliberal paradigm in Britain.

Some scholars have argued that the welfare consensus was the result of a political compromise between communism and capitalism; in this view, neoliberalism emerged as the Soviet Union collapsed (Gamble, 2001:127; Klein, 2007:253). Without a belief that communism was a viable alternative to capitalism, a belief in Keynesian collectivism became weaker – despite people's experience of its successes just decades earlier.

1.4 Neoliberalism and inequality

Unwin (2013:11) argues that 'all poverty is relative and has to be seen in context'. However, the mass media rarely provide the context of writing about poverty in relation to wider inequality (Davies, 2009a:36), despite a growing body of research highlighting the negative social impact of wealth inequality in Britain (Dorling, 2011a). Today, a 'growing number' of people in the UK are reliant on emergency food aid donations in order to feed themselves and their families (Dowler, 2014:160). In the British winter, there are more deaths per capita than in much colder countries, despite its relatively mild climate compared with Russia and Canada (Boardman, 2010:168). High unemployment,[2] and the rise of job insecurity with low-wage, zero-hour contract jobs[3] have also contributed to a cost of living crisis which has driven rising levels of homelessness in recent years.[4]

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[2] Stewart, H. (2012). UK unemployment stuck at 17-year high as economy flatlines, *Guardian*, 15 February 2012.
[3] Roberts, Y. (2014). Low pay and zero-hours contracts rise dramatically, figures show, *Guardian*, 13 December 2014.
[4] Mason, R. (2013), 13 December 2013). Number of homeless in England has risen for 3 years in a row, report says, *Guardian*, 13 December 2013.

These markers of poverty have been observed following a long period of increasing wealth accumulation by the richest members of society, and the economic crisis of 2008 did not significantly slow the concentration of wealth. As of 2014, the top quintile of earners in Britain own 44% of the total aggregate wealth while 55% of households in the lowest income bracket have no property wealth at all (ONS, 2014).

While scholars have observed a sharp rise in inequality in the United Kingdom over the last 30 years, this was rarely reported by the media (Davies, 2009a:36). On the other hand, horror stories of the 'underclass' have been commonplace, blaming individuals for their own social circumstances. The way that the press have reported, or indeed ignored, rising inequality is worth investigating as part of this thesis.

1.5 Structure of the thesis
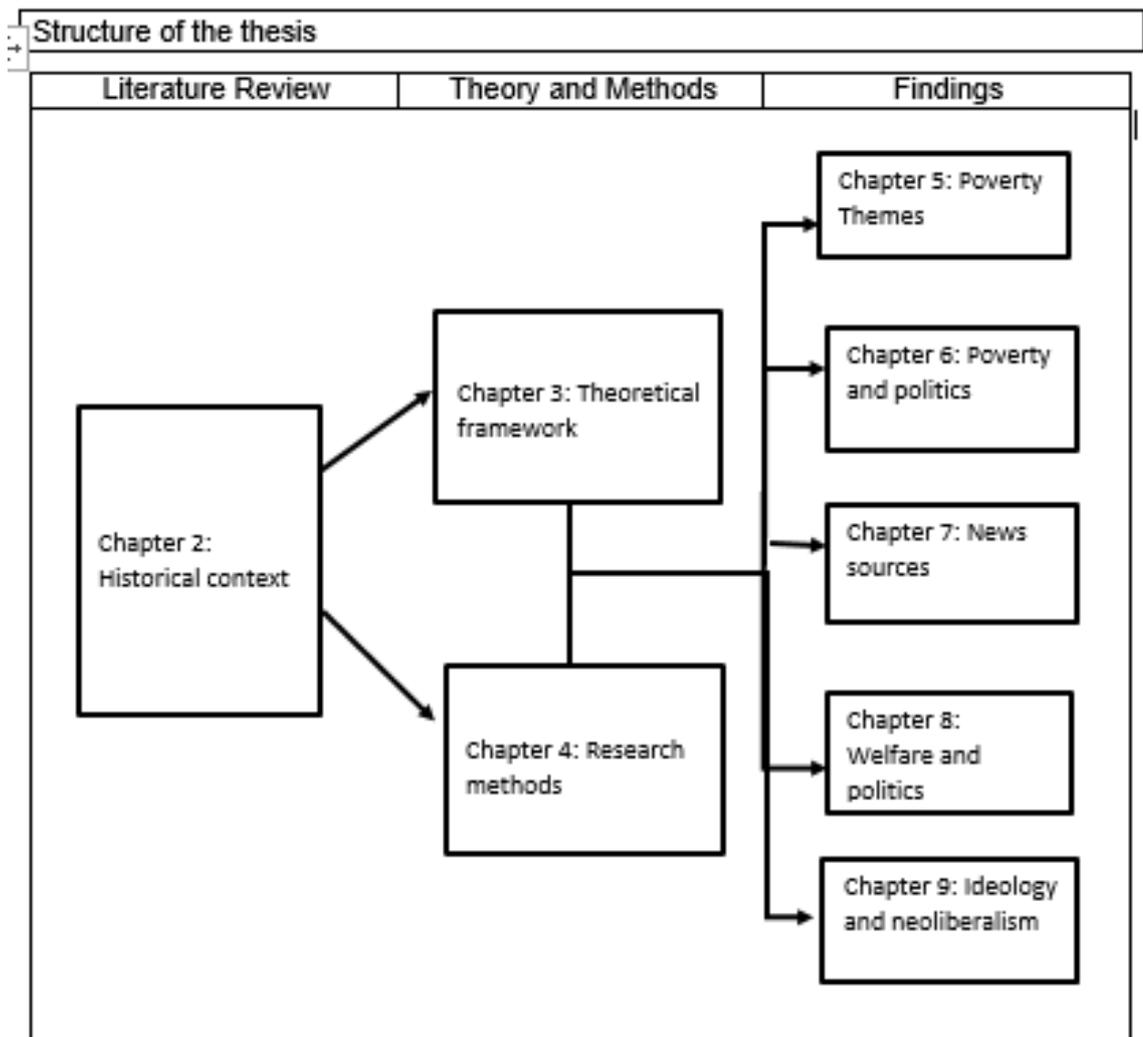
Figure 2: Structure of the thesis

In Chapter 2, a literature review places this project within a historical context, which is necessary to understand before embarking on any social study (Mills, 1970[1959]:143). This chapter contextualises the 'age of neoliberalism' and discusses the social, economic and political history that has shaped the way that poverty has been framed by the press.

Chapter 3 presents a theoretical framework, providing the analytical and conceptual grounding for the thesis. The chapter suggests that poverty and welfare are categories which have become synonymous with constructions of

'deservingness' and 'undeservingness' in the British press. It also critically questions the normative parameters of journalism and suggests an approach to further investigating how poverty and welfare have been constructed in the news. Finally, the chapter examines the effect that neoliberal ideology has on shaping how these issues are framed.

Chapter 4 discusses methodology and research methods in detail, dealing with questions of ontology, epistemology and the position of the researcher in relation to this thesis. In discussing the overall approach, a case is made for combining critical realism and social constructionism when examining the news media. Research methods for this project include content analysis and framing analysis, and these are discussed in detail before presenting a chapter by chapter breakdown of how each technique was operationalised.

Chapter 5 examines the main themes that journalists have chosen when writing about poverty, and questions how these themes reflect the concept of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. Using content analysis, it scrutinises a large sample[5] of news items from a cross-section of the British press. This sample[6] provides many of the overarching themes for the findings chapters which follow, along with evidence of the link between poverty and 'deservingness', and welfare and 'undeservingness'.

Chapter 6 explores the relationship between media representations of poverty and the conduct of parliamentary politics. The chapter traces news coverage of

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[5] Article sample 1.
[6] Article sample 1.

poverty over a thirty-year period and examines the way that coverage is affected by shifting political agendas and priorities. It offers a critical analysis of normative claims about the role of journalism, while also examining the relationship between party politics and the press.

A detailed content analysis of how journalists use sources is supplied in Chapter 7. This chapter examines journalists' use of sources to construct 'real poverty' narratives, focusing on pensioners' fuel poverty between 2004-2014 and the recent rise in food poverty and food banks. It argues that the news media present the perspective of powerful information sources and often exclude the people affected by social policy issues, even while constructing narratives about their lives.

Chapter 8 focuses on news coverage of the welfare state, examining the way people living in poverty are often constructed by print journalists as 'folk devils' and subsequently blamed for periodic crises in social policy. The chapter offers further evidence that welfare is framed by concepts of the 'undeserving' poor in the British press.

The role of ideology in shaping news narratives is the subject of Chapter 9, which examines constructions of the 'underclass' in the tabloid press. The chapter also looks at how inequality is invisibilised by the British press, who often focus on poverty in the past tense by emphasising success stories of wealthy individuals. These developments are examined within the context of neoliberal ideology which has seen the resurrection of key themes about poverty from the past.

The thesis concludes in Chapter 10 by explaining how these research findings make a contribution to knowledge in media studies, sociology and politics, and recommendations for further research are outlined. The concluding chapter also acknowledges the limitations of this project and provides answers to the research questions about news coverage of poverty in the age of neoliberalism.

2. Literature review

> The history of income and wealth is always deeply political, chaotic, and unpredictable. How this history plays out depends on how societies view inequalities and what kinds of policies and institutions they adopt to measure and transform them (Piketty, 2014:35).

Before examining the theoretical framework and methodological approach, this chapter provides a historical context for the research, orienting the study within existing literature. Although the thesis focuses on news coverage of poverty and welfare between 1985 and 2015, it is necessary to examine the development of this news coverage within a broader historical, social, political and economic framework. The chapter is broken into four overlapping sections which have been important in shaping ideas about poverty in the British press.

The first section traces the emergence of the 'age of individualism' from the Elizabethan Poor Laws (1597-1598) to the 'invention of journalism' (1855-1861) (Chalaby, 1998:32). The Elizabethan Poor Laws formally categorised people living in poverty as either 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of support, and cases were judged on an individual basis (Gans, 1994; Katz, 1990).

The second section explores Chalaby's (1998:9) argument that contemporary journalism is an invention of the mid-19th century, a period described as an 'age of individualism' (Skidelsky, 2013:455). Following the rise of the commercial press in the mid-19th century, Malthusian and Social Darwinist explanations of poverty dominated news coverage as well as influencing political thought from both conservative and liberal perspectives (Lugo-Ocando & Harkins, 2015:42).

Narratives about poverty continued to be framed from an individualist perspective throughout the Victorian era, reflecting the individualism of this time (Malchow, 1992:6), especially after the first 'Great Depression' in 1873 (Gourvish, 1988:2).

The third section looks at the emergence of collectivism and explores the extent to which this shift affected news coverage of poverty. The first half of the 20th century saw the emergence of Keynesian economic dominance, which presented a challenge to the dominance of classic liberalism. Central economic planning was implemented in response to the Great Depression (1929) and became a necessity for the nations involved in fighting WWII. This 'age of collectivism' (Bode, 2008:101) continued into the post-war period with the creation of the welfare state, and discussion of poverty shifted towards understanding it as a collective social issue rather than an individual problem.

Piketty (2014:398) argues that this was possible due to a period of unsustainably high economic growth, which came to an end following the macroeconomic crisis of the 1970s. This precipitated a further shift in news coverage of poverty and welfare outlined in Golding and Middleton's (1982) seminal work in the field, *Images of Welfare*.

The fourth section discusses the emergence of the 'age of neoliberalism' and the rise of market rationality. A sustained period of economic crisis in the late 1970s undermined Keynesianism, leading to criticism of the welfare state. This, in turn, created space for notions of the free market organising society more efficiently than the state (Foucault, 2008). The crisis led to the breakdown of the post-war compromise between capital and labour, deep public spending cuts, rising poverty and growing inequality (Redden, 2014:7). At the same time, British media

renewed their emphasis on the 'undeserving' poor, targeting an unprecedented level of criticism at poor individuals and the welfare state (Golding & Middleton, 1982:5). Indeed, neoliberalism has provided the research context for much of the recent literature on news coverage of poverty (Redden, 2014; Soss et al., 2011).

This chapter draws heavily on the approach to social research outlined by C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). Mills argued that the 'coordinate points' of social science research are the study of 'biography and history within society' (Mills, 1970[1959]:159). History is of particular importance to this thesis because the language used to describe poverty is informed by 'centuries of experience and imagery' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:6). The history of newspapers in Britain is a complex and varied topic, 'as much characterised by rupture as by continuity' (Conboy, 2004:2). This chapter largely draws on the 'radical narrative' of media history which suggests that the market and the state engage in a 'dual system of control' of the media (Curran, 2002:147). However, this narrative has been modified to allow some elements of liberal pluralist themes and a rejection of 'the totalizing, explanatory frameworks of Marxism' (Curran, 1990:157-158; Steel, 2009).

Recent research into news about poverty has focussed on neoliberalism as an explanatory framework for the nature of this coverage (Redden, 2014; Soss et al., 2011). While it is not the intention to produce a comprehensive history of poverty journalism here, it is important to trace the contours of the historical debate on poverty. Pickering suggests that the study of media history requires scholars to look at the 'context of social, cultural, economic and political history' (Pickering, 2015:16). This chapter provides a systematic account of these, in

order to trace the dominant ideas and trends informing how the media have approached the subject of poverty. The following section examines the development of key ideas from the Elizabethan era into the Victorian era, which has had an enduring legacy in modern society (Lugo-Ocando & Harkins, 2015:4). Victorian attitudes have been hugely influential in shaping modern journalism, as newspapers became 'part of the normal furniture of life' in Britain during that period (Brake et al., 1990:304; Hampton, 2005:25).

2.1 The battle of ideas: poverty and journalism from the Elizabethan Poor Laws to the Industrial Revolution 1597-1815

In discussing the Elizabethan period, Habermas (1992:16) describes the emergence of a 'new domain of a public sphere whose decisive mark was the published word.' Although printed culture was increasingly important in the 16th century, it was a long way from journalism as it is understood today. Habermas (*ibid.,* 17) suggests: 'There was as yet no publication of commercially distributed news; the irregularly published reports of recent events were not comparable to the routine production of news.' Still, even before the development of journalism in a modern sense, the Elizabethan period presents an important context for conceptualising poverty.

If the 'European philosophical tradition' consists of 'footnotes to Plato' (Whitehead, 1978:39), then discussions on poverty can be understood as footnotes to the Elizabethan Poor Laws. Even before this period, the poor were disregarded in favour of the interests of the wealthy and powerful (Stern & Wennerlind, 2013:3). As early as 1349, England implemented laws which

branded the 'landless poor' as 'vagrants' (Alcock, 1997:10). Tudor Poor Laws originated in 1495 through legislation designed to punish 'vagrants' and in 1531 with an act that allowed 'deserving paupers' to be given a licence to beg (Slack, 1995:9). The impact of the state on the lives of the poor was extended in 1536 with an act based on the principle of 'work as well as punishment for the idle and able-bodied poor; cash payments to those who could not work; and, as a consequence, a ban on begging and casual almsgiving' (Slack, 1995:9). While these statutes were punitive towards able-bodied people whose poverty was seen as evidence of laziness, low intelligence or criminal intent, the legislation was more charitable towards supporting the sick and elderly (Alcock, 1997:10).

This early legislation sheds light on one of the most enduring ideas about poverty: the distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor (Golding & Middleton, 1982:6). This distinction was formalised towards the end of the Elizabethan period through implementation of the 'Poor Relief Act' (1601), which consolidated a range of legislation and led to England and Wales implementing one of the earliest systems of poor relief through taxation. The legislation created a system where local parishes were responsible for maintaining those unable to work and providing work for those who could (Daunton, 1995:447; Postan & Rich, 1967:76). These reforms aimed to create a system of 'work discipline', 'deterrence' and 'classification' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:11). Poor relief was necessary by 1601 due to the convergence of several economic pressures. In 1563, the government imposed maximum wage controls for labourers in order to control inflation (Palliser, 1992:174), and by the end of the 16th century, England was beset by 'poor harvests, bad weather and outbreaks of plague' (Cartwright, 2010:45). These factors reduced living standards and increased migration throughout the

British Isles. The Poor Laws were intended to stem a 'swelling tide of masterless and idle persons, who had taken to the roads in search of subsistence' (Hitchcock, 2013:2).

As early as 1620 Thomas Mun made the case for full employment as an essential feature of a prosperous country and a way of dealing with poverty (Postan & Rich, 1967:515), but religious views had a tangible effect on policy in the 17th century. While poverty was constructed as a natural and immutable part of society, Christian narratives of natural hierarchy had supported the existence of elites in Europe for centuries, and the 'divine right of Kings' doctrine gave political legitimacy to monarchies (Court, 2003:156-157). Christianity's concepts of God's 'design and benevolence' extended to the social world to justify poverty and inequality (Hilton, 2006:333). Even the Poor Law approach of correcting poverty through labour was seen by critics as the result of Puritans having too much influence on parliamentary affairs (Tyacke, 2001:64).[7]

Despite some of the earliest printed publications dating back to the 1600s (Leth, 1993:67), there is 'a paucity of detailed primary sources' examining the lives of the poor throughout this period (Hitchcock, 2013:2). Nevertheless, the concept of paying for poor relief through taxation was accepted in Thomas Hobbes's (1588-1679) classic 1651 thesis on the social contract, *Leviathan:*

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[7] Religion also influenced the early development of the press in England. Printing was banned by a Star Chamber Decree in 1586, but the English Civil War (1642-1651) led to a brief period of a 'relatively free press' (Steel, 2012:26-27). The Puritans took advantage of this freedom by printing *corantos* pamphlets criticising the Catholic Church (Raymond, 1999:34). The continuation of printing restrictions after the war led to Milton's defence of a free press, *Areopagitica* (1644), where he demands 'the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties' (Milton, 1998:46).

> And whereas many men, by accident inevitable, become unable to maintain themselves by their labour, they ought not to be left to the charity of private persons, but to be provided for, as far forth as the necessities of nature require, by the laws of the Commonwealth. For as it is uncharitableness in any man to neglect the impotent; so it is in the sovereign of a Commonwealth, to expose them to the hazard of such uncertain charity (Hobbes, 2005[1651]:258).

Hobbes held a pessimistic view of the 'state of nature' in early human society – a 'war of all against all' (*ibid.,* x) – which was informed by the violence and civil unrest throughout his lifetime. He understood society from the perspective of the rational individual, which became a core belief of classic liberalism. The Poor Law legislation was informed by the widespread belief that individual 'effort was duly rewarded and idleness the mark of the sinner' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:11). Combined with a fear of 'strangers' (Lees, 1998:47), labour became the best way to control migrants from other parishes.

Eventually, the concepts of righteous reward and idleness as sin became 'an obsession in a society with a free market and a labour shortage' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:11). Max Weber (1864-1920) argued that these ideas about labour, rooted in Protestant asceticism, influenced the development of 'a capitalistic way of life' (Weber, 2005[1905]:111). In this way, labour became the key consideration in separating the 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor' – those 'deserving' of assistance were deemed to be children and the elderly, while those 'undeserving' of help were the 'able-bodied yet idle' (Hitchcock, 2013:2). The increasing number of people migrating into parishes needing poor relief led to the creation of the 'law of settlement' or 'Poor Relief Act' (1662), which prevented the poor from moving between parishes (Townsend et al., 1971:75).

Meanwhile, in urban coffee houses a 'golden age' flourished between 1680 and 1730, where 'aristocrats and bourgeois intellectuals' discussed political matters; This period heralded the consolidation of what Habermas (1992:32) describes as the 'bourgeois public sphere.' Political debates were rarely mentioned in print because of licensing restrictions, but after a lapse in state licensing in 1695 the number of newspapers increased and their coverage was 'extended to political affairs' (Curran, 2002:136). In the same year, Francis Brewster (1674-1702) criticised the concept of poor relief:

> There is no nation I ever read of who by a compulsory law, raiseth so much money for the poor as England doth; that of Holland is voluntary…; but our charity is become a nuisance, and may be thought the greatest mistake of that blessed reign, in which that law passed, which is the idle and improvident man's charter (Brewster, 1704:58).

Brewster feared that poor relief removed people's incentive to work and encouraged laziness amongst people living in poverty (Daunton, 1995:447). John Locke (1632-1704) produced a similar critique when he argued that the root causes of poverty were 'the relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners' arguing that 'virtue and industry being as constant companions on the one side as vice and idleness are on the other' (Locke, 1697:1).

Views such as these were unlikely to be challenged in the early days of journalism. Survival for early journalists such as Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) for example, involved developing a close relationship with powerful political figures (Marr, 2004:9). While many of the features of modern journalism can be associated with pioneers such as Defoe (McKay, 2008), it was not until the early

19th century that the 'professional ideology' of journalism emerged (Keeble & Wheeler, 2007:9). Nevertheless, the concept of the 'undeserving poor' had been well established as a convenient trope which was employed by pioneering writers to paint the poor as a threat to civilised society. In particular, poverty and criminality were conflated: in the early days of the industrial revolution, a convenient 'moral condemnation of idleness' found 'new resonance' in Europe (Philip, 2004:216). This allowed for a moral justification of exploitative labour conditions, which helped to drive the industrial revolution forward, as noted by Foucault:

> In this first phase of the industrial world, labor did not seem linked to the problems it was to provoke; it was regarded, on the contrary, as a general solution, an infallible panacea, a remedy to all forms of poverty. Labor and poverty were located in a simple opposition, in inverse proportion to each other. As for that power, its special characteristic, of abolishing poverty, labor – according to the classical interpretation – possessed it not so much by its productive capacity as by a certain force of moral enchantment (Foucault, 1965:55).

A perfect illustration of these ideas can be observed in a series of prints from the artist William Hogarth (1697-1764) entitled *Industry and Idleness* (1747). Advertising the sale of the prints, the *General Evening Post* (1747) describes how they highlight the 'advantages' of industry and the 'miserable effects' of idleness.[8] The prints juxtapose the lives of two apprentices, Frances Goodchild and Tom Idle. Goodchild is portrayed as elegant and industrious; through hard work and piety he becomes the Mayor of London. In contrast, Idle is a scruffy and lazy

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[8] *General Evening Post* (1747), This day were published (Priced Twelve Shillings), designed and engraved by Mr. Hogarth, *General Evening Post*, 22 October 1747.

apprentice, drawn to a life of crime. Hogarth makes it clear that Tom Idle is to blame for his predicament: he is depicted with a gin-tankard and a controversial novel (Moll Flanders), gambling instead of going to church, and living with 'a common prostitute'. Ultimately, he is hanged for robbery and murder, with his execution overseen by Mayor Goodchild. The individualistic message of this morality tale is that anyone who works hard enough can become Mayor while poor lifestyle choices will lead to poverty and punishment. Put simply, the rich deserve their wealth because they gain it through hard work and piety, while the poor deserve their poverty because they are lazy, unskilled and prone to criminality. By the mid-18th century, these ideas were adopted by the British political classes who established 'labour discipline for the poor' as 'the keynote in policy' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:12).

However, these moralistic views about poverty were not universal amongst British intellectuals. In 1759, Adam Smith (1723-1790) produced an alternative account of the nature of poverty, which he linked to social exclusion:

> The poor man…is ashamed of his poverty. He feels that it either places him out of the sight of mankind, or, that if they take any notice of him, they have, however, scarce any fellow-feeling with the misery and distress which he suffers. […] To feel that we are taken no notice of, necessarily damps the most agreeable hope, and disappoints the most ardent desire, of human nature. The poor man goes out and comes in unheeded, and when in the midst of a crowd is in the same obscurity as if shut up in his own hovel (Smith, 2007[1759]:49).

Smith's position on the general principle of poor relief is unclear. However, he did oppose the law of settlement (1662) which he argued was poorly conceived

because it oppressed poor people by restraining their ability to move between parishes in search of work (Gilbert, 1997:286). Smith rejected the idea that it was necessary to restrict the movement of 'rogues and vagabonds' who were 'able in body' but 'refusing to work' (Daunton, 1995:460). On the other hand, Smith's contemporary David Ricardo (1772-1823) argued that the Poor Laws 'rendered restraint superfluous' and 'invited imprudence' (Ricardo, 2004:62).

This type of debate was more likely to enter the public consciousness after 1771, when newspapers were free to publish Parliament's political debates (Chalaby, 1998:27). Curran argues that this move 'made the system of government more open and accountable' and allowed the press to become a major political force (Curran, 2002:136). Political debates during this period regularly featured economic concerns about the rising cost of poor relief, which had trebled between 1784 and 1813 (Golding & Middleton, 1982:13). This coincided with the transformation of common land into private property. Between 1750 and 1850 much of the land in England was transferred to private ownership in a series of developments which eliminated 'rural self-sufficiency' for a large number of citizens (Ross, 1998:14). These political shifts in private property arrangements created widespread poverty amongst people who did not own land.

Building on existing notions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) formulated a system which constructed poverty as a natural phenomenon caused by overpopulation. He became one of the most influential voices in the debate, and his ideas shifted the blame for widespread poverty away from the unequal distribution of resources, onto the victims of this distribution. Examining Malthus's 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population,* critics argue that

his ideas shaped 'academic and popular thinking about the origins of poverty, to defend the interests of capital in the face of the enormous human misery which capitalism causes' (Ross, 1998:1). Malthus opposed poor relief for the able-bodied and argued that 'dependent poverty ought to be held disgraceful' (Malthus, 1982[1798]:98). In the second edition of his essay, Malthus denied that people living in poverty had any right to subsistence outside of their immediate family:

> A man who is born into a world already possessed, if he cannot get subsistence from his parents on who he has a just demand, and if the society do not want his labour, he has no right to the smallest portion of food, and, in fact, has no business to be where he is. At nature's mighty feast there is no vacant cover for him. She tells him to be gone (Malthus, 1803:531).

The ideas promoted by Malthus were criticised by parts of the radical press (Huzel, 2006:28); although not all editions of his essay were written in such strident terms as the above passage. The following shows how this idea appeared in his original essay:

> Those who were born after the division of property would come into a world already possessed. If their parents, from having too large a family, could not give them sufficient for their support, what are they to do in a world where everything is appropriated? (Malthus, 1982[1798]:142-143).

Even with a milder tone, Malthus gave a renewed intellectual credibility to the notion that poverty is natural. Echoing Ricardo, Malthus believed that provisions for the poor were destroying the work ethic of the population and encouraging them to have larger families:

If the Poor Laws had never existed in this country, though there might have been a few more instances of very severe distress, the aggregate mass of happiness among the common people would have been much greater than it is at present (Malthus, 1982[1798]:101).

Malthus's thesis was influenced by a defence of private property (Ross, 1998). In this way, his writing echoed the work of Edmund Burke (1729-1797) (Burke, 1800:2), who called the Poor Laws a 'most monstrous of all meddling on the part of authority.' In discussing the appropriate role of the state, he argued:

To provide for us in our necessities is not in the power of government. It would be a vain presumption in statesmen to think they can do it. The people maintain them and not they the people. It is in the power of government to prevent much evil; it can do very little positive good in this, or perhaps in anything else (Burke, 1800:2).

Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), became one of the most important texts in establishing conservative political philosophy. The French Revolution (1789-1799) had a profound effect on ideas about rights and equality, and led to the concept of equality as comprising of a 'visceral rejection of privilege' (Rosanvallon, 2013:12). In response to Burke's critique of the revolution, Thomas Paine produced his *Rights of Man* (1791) where he defended the principle of equality and equal rights on a global scale:

It is nevertheless true, that a great portion of mankind, in what are called civilised countries, are in a state of poverty and wretchedness, far below the condition of an Indian. I speak not of one country, but of all. It is so in England, it is so all over Europe. Let us enquire into the cause. It lies not in any natural defect in the principles of civilisation, but in preventing those

principles having a universal operation; the consequence of which is, a perpetual system of war and expense, that drains the country, and defeats the general felicity of which civilisation is capable (Paine, 2008[1791]:264).

Paine here can be seen as an early advocate of viewing poverty as a question of social justice and fundamental rights. Both Burke and Malthus were opposed to Paine's radical ideas in different ways. McNally argues that Burke's attempt to shock the elite with 'images of uncivilised hordes waiting to storm the citadels of property and privilege' was counterproductive (McNally, 2000:435). He suggests that:

> Rather than disarming the radicals, Burke enflamed them. So effusive was his contempt for the poor that he offered the radicals an ideal target. Burke's rhetoric was a polarizing one; it divided society into 'us' and 'them', civilized gentlemen and barbarian rabble. This very rhetoric, however, was susceptible to parodic inversion, to a dramatic reversal in which the 'swine' emerged as the heroic common people standing up against abusive power and privilege (McNally, 2000:435).

According to McNally, this gave Malthus a 'strategic advantage' over Burke because his thesis was presented as if he was an 'honest, dispassionate, scientific observer' (McNally, 2000:438). Material conditions also helped to popularise his thesis in the late 1790s: inflation increased prices by 20-30% causing an increase in the cost of poor relief (King, 2000:87). Famine and civil unrest in 1795 led to the creation of the 'Speenhamland' system whereby workhouse wage supplements were linked to the price of bread and number of dependent children (Evans, 2006:97). This was opposed by Malthus who argued that prices had risen precisely because of the Poor Law (Ross, 1998:17).

As land was enclosed as private property, common land became less available and an increasing number of people became 'dependent poor' (Ross, 1998:14). This strengthened Malthus's population theory and increased the credibility of his thesis, so the very concept of poor relief was placed under increasing scrutiny: 'All that remained of the idea that the poor had any right to subsistence was the old Poor Laws, and these were plainly in the sights of those proponents of Malthusian theory' (Ross, 1998:14). Even though the rising numbers who required poor relief resulted directly from political changes to land ownership, Malthus's theory focussed only on population and scarcity. In this way, it obscured and 'mystified the central role of capitalist relations of production' (Ross, 1998:16). Malthus's system also constructed poverty as an issue of 'individual responsibility', thereby offering a framework where victims could be blamed for the social injustice of the very system that had caused their poverty to begin with (Ross, 1998:21).

Many English journalists from the late 18th to the mid-19th centuries accepted Malthus's ideas, and regularly 'hymned the virtues of capitalism,'; these included 'Edward Baines of the *Leeds Mercury* (1774-1848), John Edward Taylor of the *Manchester Guardian* (1791-1844), Archibald Prentice of the *Manchester Times* (1792-1857), and Samuel Smiles (1812-1904)' who helped to lend 'intellectual certainty' to the benefits of capitalist expansion (Hobsbawm, 1996:186). Between 1832 and 1834 Harriet Martineau published a series of twenty-five *Illustrations of Political Economy*, many of which conveyed Malthusian themes (Huzel, 2006:4). However, this acceptance of Malthusianism and capitalism as 'natural progress' was not universally accepted. In the first half of the 19th century a radical press briefly flourished, inspired by intellectuals such as Thomas Paine to challenge the

Malthusian consensus on poverty (Chalaby, 1998:21). From the 1790s onwards, the British government engaged in a battle to 'manage the legitimate press so that it might avoid direct collision with respectable opinion, and to eradicate the illegitimate press, in the name of public order' (Hollis, 1970:26).

2.2 The Victorians: poverty and journalism in the 'age of individualism' 1815-1914

2.2.1 The Poor Laws and the radical press 1815-1855

Following the end of Britain's involvement in the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the central focus of working class protest became the price of bread. It had risen sharply between 1790-1814, and the Importation Act (Corn Laws) of 1815 kept grain prices high (Ross, 1998:15). Famine and chronic unemployment became a feature of life in early 19th century Britain, and the Corn Laws exacerbated these problems – but the laws were advantageous to land owners who also controlled the Parliament. The injustice of this led to widespread protest. In the same year, the government imposed stamp duty on the press in order to control the rising tide of working class protest and the emergence of the radical press (Hollis, 1970:i).

In 1819 the Manchester Patriotic Union held a meeting which was brutally suppressed by the British Army. Fifteen people were killed and between 400 and 700 were injured in an event which became known as the 'Peterloo Massacre' (Read, 1958). The government of the day arrested a number of journalists to prevent reporting of the event, including *Times* reporter John Tyas (Gardner, 2011:19). However, James Wroe of the *Manchester Observer* managed to report

what happened. The government's heavy-handed response highlighted the British establishment's panic over the threat of 'the collective behaviour of political crowds' (Lobban, 1990:308).

Following Peterloo, the British state engaged in the active censorship of the press. They created the 'Six Acts' or 'Gagging Acts' of 1819 to enable prosecution of newspapers for 'blasphemous or seditious libels' and hamper parts of the radical press which denounced the aristocracy, monopolies, taxes and corruption. (Barker, 2014:70) That year the government prosecuted 75 people in an effort to subdue the radical press (Lobban, 1990:327), but the strategy of prosecuting publishers for libel was abandoned because it effectively provided free advertising and greatly increased the circulation of unstamped publications (Curran & Seaton, 2003:6).

The Acts of 1819 also tightened the definition of what constituted a newspaper for tax purposes (Barker, 2014:70). In this context, the term radical press has been used to describe a range of publications, particularly illegal operations which avoided taxes and produced 'unstamped' newspapers (Hollis, 1970:i). Hollis (*ibid.,* 12) has outlined in great detail how half of the unstamped press produced articles that were acceptable to middle class radicals who saw the root causes of poverty and other social ills as a lack of education. The working class parts of the radical press criticised these liberal views and argued that the country's education system was 'controlled by middle-class radicals, infected by middle-class notions, and inspired by middle-class interests' (Hollis, 1970:20). Indeed, a range of 'radical' publications sought to 'educate' the 'lower orders' to the virtues of capitalism (Steel, 2009:232).

The working class radical press began criticising 'exploitation, property and power' in the 1830s and continued to gain popularity between 1830 and 1836 (Hollis, 1970:viii). The *Cosmopolite* newspaper launched in 1830 with the proclamation 'we begin this paper in a spirit of warfare' against the ruling classes (*ibid.,* 25). In the same year, political agitator Richard Carlile (1790-1843) was jailed for two years and heavily fined for publishing materials supporting agricultural labourers (Hollis, 1970:33). The government blamed agricultural riots and burnings in the 1830s on low wages but also on 'inflammatory publications' and a 'licentious press' (Hollis, 1970:40). Wiener argued that these working class publications served to 'arouse public consciousness and to challenge abuses' (Wiener, 1971:1). He describes how 'the growth and expansion of literacy and of the printed word as an effective mechanism of protest' can be traced to the development of Victorian journalism between 1815 and 1840 (Wiener, 1971:3).

The working class radical press that Wiener identifies turned their attention to the Poor Laws. Malthusian thinking had a tangible influence on the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act which led to a system of harsh conditions in the workhouse in order to deter people from seeking poor relief (Barr, 1993:16). The new workhouse system was based on the Malthusian principle of sexual abstinence for the working classes and in the workhouses the poor were gender segregated to 'curb their inevitable over-breeding' (Porter et al., 2008:118). The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 ignored patterns of 'cyclical unemployment' and critics argue that it 'marked the triumph of ideology over social reality' (Daunton, 1995:459). It was informed by an ambition to 'moralise' the poor and it reflected Malthus's fear that Poor Law provision undermined self-sufficiency.

The reforms were designed to produce a 'regeneration of the character of the poor through education, rational recreation, and thrift' (Daunton, 1995:471). E.P. Thompson described the Poor Laws as being 'perhaps the most sustained attempt to impose an ideological dogma, in defiance of the evidence of human need, in English history' (Thompson, 1963:295). The legislation has also been criticised as 'legislation based on selfishness and class interest' which 'left a *damnosa hereditas* [inheritance of damnation] for the next 100 years' (Henriques, 1968:371). More recently, Polanyi described the influence of the Poor Laws:

> If the French Revolution was indebted to the thought of Voltaire and Diderot, Quesnay and Rousseau, the Poor Law discussion formed the minds of Bentham and Burke, Godwin and Malthus, Ricardo and Marx, Robert Owen and John Stuart Mill, Darwin and Spencer, who shared with the French Revolution the spiritual parentage of nineteenth century civilization (Polanyi, 2001:88).

The Poor Law Amendment Act was implemented during a time when some radical newspapers criticised the capitalist system and denounced Malthus and his adherents (Hollis, 1970:viii). Criticisms of the Poor Law became criticisms of Malthus who was seen as the intellectual force behind their development. This was evident in a range of radical publications including the *Poor Man's Guardian*, the *True Sun*, the *Black Dwarf*, *the Gorgon* and *Penny Papers for the People* (Huzel, 2006:170-172). For example, an article in the *Black Dwarf* argued that reform of the Poor Law was overdue:

> Had such an alteration been made in the days of our vaunted national prosperity, when people had the means of saving something in a day of need, I presume there would have been more wisdom, and certainly more

humanity, than now, when the labouring classes are steeped in poverty to the lips, without employment, and without bread.[9]

Malthus's defence of private property came under scrutiny when critics argued that 'the propertyless remained outside the political community' (Hollis, 1970:5), and William Cobbett (1763-1835), who had initially supported Malthus, grew to dislike him:

> [Cobbett] could see that farmers were starving when they grew more food than they needed and that other members of the society produced no food at all, yet were living in luxury. To any doctrine which sanctioned such injustice he would not capitulate (Kegel, 1958:362).

Cobbett became one of the most prominent early critics of Malthus in his writing in the *Political Register* which was printed between 1802 and 1836. He argued against the effect of the Poor Laws on rural communities. He described the process of 'squeezing rents out of the bones of the labourer' as 'most monstrously absurd' and brought attention to the distribution of national resources:

> We hear loud outcries against the poor-rates; the enormous poor rates; the all-devouring poor-rates; but; what are the facts? Why, that, in Great Britain, six millions are paid in poor-rates, seven millions (or thereabouts) in tithes, and sixty millions to fund-people, the army, placemen and the rest. And yet, nothing of all of this seems to be thought of but the six millions (Cobbett, 2001[1830]:19).

Cobbett's writings are echoed in the views of modern critics, who argue that Malthus's theory focuses on the scarcity of resources instead of the unequal

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[9] Wooler, T.J. (1821), The Poor Laws and the price of bread, *Black Dwarf*, p. 381.

distribution of wealth (Avery, 1997:62; Daunton, 1995:447; Ross, 1998:2). Cobbett argued against unequal distribution by questioning the inequality produced by the economic system: 'Is a nation made rich by taking the food and clothing from those who create them, and giving them to those who do nothing of any use?'[10]

Considerable attention has been given here to the brief flourishing of the radical press because they explicitly rejected the emerging political consensus that the solution to poverty was to make life more difficult for the poor. Parts of the radical press blamed Malthus for the development of the Poor Law Amendment Act which they described as the 'Starvation Act', and they argued that repealing the act would 'arrest the arm of death'.[11] This radicalism has been described as an emerging 'new ideology' (Hollis, 1970:8) which advocated a fundamental redistribution of wealth as a solution to poverty. However, the emergence of these radical ideas in the press was put at risk from the imposition of government stamp duty, and publications such as the *Poor Man's Guardian* opposed stamp duty on the grounds that the working class was an excluded class (*ibid.,* 8).

Generally speaking, the debate was split into three distinct political camps: the conservatives, the middle classes and working class radicals (Hollis, 1970:9-10). Conservatives argued that the press was as free as was 'safe and useful', arguing that removing the tax would lead to 'seditious papers pandering to the basest passions of the mob' (Hollis, 1970:10). In contrast, sections of the working class press argued that property had been acquired by 'force or fraud' (*ibid.,* 11).

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[10] Cobbett, W. (1821), Rural ride: down the valley of Avon in Wiltshire, *Cobbett's Weekly Register*, 16 September 1826, p.735.
[11] O'Brien, J.B. (1835), *The Poor Man's Guardian*, 31 October 1835

Amongst middle-class reformers there was the 'educational ideal', which can be understood from James Mill's (1773-1836) attack on stamp duty:

> I am sure that it is not good policy to give the power of teaching the people exclusively to persons violating the law, and of such desperate character that neither the legal nor the moral sanction has sufficient hold upon them. The only effectual remedy is to remove the tax which gives them this deplorable power (Hollis, 1970:14).

In the 'educational ideal' belief system, the Victorian establishment assumed that 'education and information would keep the rising working class from revolution' (Marr, 2004:14). Political speeches from Parliament were reproduced in the press verbatim in order to educate the masses into elite modes of thinking (Hampton, 2005:130; Steel, 2009). Steel points out how publications in the utilitarian tradition were interested in using the radical press for 'socialising the working classes into passive acceptance' of their 'anti-democratic paternalism' (Steel, 2009:230). This approach was described by Joseph Kay in 1846:

> It is this which every true philanthropist should desire; to create virtue and providence among the poor, and to raise their character and increase their happiness by improving this foresight. By these means we may reasonably hope materially to diminish our number of criminals, to lessen the dangers of social convulsions, and to unite the different classes of society by bonds of common interests, mutual confidence and affection (Kay, 1846:xix).

Unsurprisingly, at a time when extensive child labour was common, parts of the Radical Press in the 1830s were very sceptical of this 'educational ideal'. Writing in 1834, James Bronterre O'Brien argued that 'the only knowledge which is of any service to working people is that which makes them more dissatisfied and makes

them worse slaves'.[12] The following passage highlights this scepticism: 'What the people needed was not lessons in the political economy of hydrostatics or any of the other topics featured in journals like Penny Magazine but explicit, factual knowledge about the ways in which the ruling classes were oppressing the poor' (Hampton, 2005:55).

This was the task of the *Morning Chronicle,* which tried to 'take up the cause of the poor' arguing that 'we are no Christians in deed' while poverty goes unnoticed (Thompson & Yeo, 1973:24). Their reporter Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) had a 'dogged pre-occupation with employment and poverty', and set out to create profiles of people living in poverty (Thompson & Yeo, 1973:75). He produced 'the most impressive survey of Labour and of poverty' through his 'use of qualitative evidence' and 'sensitivity to sub-cultures amongst the poor' (Thompson & Yeo, 1973:24). Thompson and Yeo (1973:107) argued that his work 'surpassed [that of] both Booth and Rowntree'.

However, Mayhew subscribed to the ideological framework of the 'deserving and undeserving poor' (Englander, 1998:64). He described unemployed people as 'the dangerous classes of the metropolis', while also dedicating a section in his work to 'beggars and cheats'; he also described poor people with disabilities as being part of an 'immoral culture of mendacity' (Stoddard Holmes, 2003:109). Constructing the poor as 'undeserving' was evident across the political spectrum. Even the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), contains a passage where Marx and Engels describe the 'undeserving' as the 'dangerous class':

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[12] O'Brien, J.B. (1834), *Destructive*, 7 June 1834.

> The social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue (Marx & Engels, 2010[1848]:14).

Marx was writing at a time when the radical press was in rapid decline in Britain as stamp duty was finally removed from the newspapers in 1855. Some commentators argue that this 'freed the press' (Marr, 2004:13) from the interference of the state who had imposed a 'tax on knowledge' by taxing the newspapers. It was in this environment that the 'fourth estate' began being used as an explanation for the role of the press (Boyce et al., 1978:40; Curran & Seaton, 2003:346; Norris, 2008). Williams (2006:13) notes that Thomas Carlyle was the first to notice a 'new class of opinion formers in mid-nineteenth century Britain'. As well as journalists these intellectuals included 'commentators, novelists with a social message, and politicians with a talent for writing' (Williams, 2006:13). This group used mass communication – 'newspapers, journals, and pamphlets of an extended democracy' – 'in order to enlighten and control' (Williams, 2006:13).

The marketisation of the UK press in the 1850s heralded the creation of a commercial product which reflected the views and interests of the 'more affluent members of society' (Walker & Chase, 2013:268). The creation of the commercial press fundamentally affected the type of news produced in the UK (Briggs & Burke, 2009; Conboy, 2004; Curran, 2002). Newspapers of this period became 'subservient to a commercialised order dominated by large-scale media ownership and circulation which was fed by the advertising industry' (Hampton, 2005:30). Petley argues that this was the aim of many stamp duty critics:

> A commercially successful press firmly in capitalist hands would serve as the best possible antidote to the radical press and so could help to preserve and spread values that were supportive of the status quo (Petley, 2009:186).

The emergence of the commercial press made it very difficult for radical independent publications to survive; publishers needed to be wealthy in order to print newspapers:

> The low costs of newspaper publishing before 1850 enabled groups of workers and their allies to launch and control influential papers. However, the working class was increasingly excluded from publishing in the mass market by the rapid escalation of press costs that took place between 1850 and 1918. Radical publishing was further impeded by advertising prejudice, the development of press oligopoly, and the initial decline of the radical movement after the collapse of Chartism (Curran, 2002:147).

The high cost of production meant that newspapers were 'increasingly monopolised by conservative or liberal business people' which led to the marginalisation of 'radical perspectives' (Curran, 2002:147; Hampton, 2005:48).

Following the decline of the radical press, a 'political commitment to positive indoctrination of the lower orders' developed through 'a growing conviction that free trade and normative controls were a morally preferable and more efficient control system than direct controls administered by the state' (Curran & Seaton, 2003:21). The diminished power of radicalism was also affected by trade unions becoming 'inward looking, seeking to improve wages and working conditions rather than to restructure society' (Curran & Seaton, 2003:23). Nevertheless, Chalaby argues that the radical press 'contributed to the formation of a proper

working-class identity in Britain' (Chalaby, 1998:30). As the influence of the radical press diminished, the Malthusian individualist understanding of poverty dominated discussions in the Victorian press and amongst state policy makers.

2.2.2. Imperialism and the commercial press 1855-1914

The fading of radical perspectives and the rise of a Malthusian understanding of poverty in the press may explain why Friedrich Engels's book *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844) was kept out of British newspapers. Engels's research linked the industrial revolution with pauperisation and increased mortality rates amongst the working class in England (Lugo-Ocando & Harkins, 2015:42-43). He described how the working classes lived in cramped and damp housing and 'worked every day to the point of complete exhaustion of their mental and physical energies' (Engels, 1984[1844]:128). Echoing the moral ethos of Hogarth's prints, this new era relied on an ideology of 'individual self-improvement and the myth that anyone through his own efforts can be successful' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:30).

The commercial interests of the press were also important in understanding their operation. Chalaby describes how publications such as the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Manchester Times* 'ceaselessly advocated the political and economic interests of traders and manufacturers and defended their positions on every issue' (Chalaby, 1998:10). He argues that prior to the emergence of the 'journalistic field' in the late 19th century, the press were split between a bourgeois and a proletarian public sphere (Chalaby, 1998:33). Over time, these distinctions disappeared because the 'dynamic of economic competition created an

autonomous field of discursive production which increasingly followed its own immanent economic laws' (Chalaby, 1998:33).

The British press also adopted an increasingly nationalistic outlook which saw them criticise the wave of revolutions across Europe in 1848 (Rapport, 2009:ix). Robert Knox (1791-1862) foreshadowed the biological racism that would become so prominent in the mid-20th century by interpreting the revolutions as a 'race war' (Peters, 2013:10). The interests of the British Empire became of paramount importance to the national press, and Malthusian ideology became a useful tool for this purpose. Malthusian logic was used to blame famines in Ireland (1845-1852) and India (1876-1878) on the high population of people living in poverty in those two countries (Davis, 2000:35). These explanations ignored structural causes for the problem which were rooted in the persistence of social inequality (Lugo-Ocando, 2015:22), and indeed, both countries were exporting food to Britain during their famines (Ross, 1998:40). But Victorian newspapers obscured inconvenient facts by working within a context of Malthusian thinking.

Some newspapers continued to advocate for the poor beyond this period. For example, *Reynolds Newspaper* created a brand that highlighted 'the injustices afflicting the poorer classes of society and charted their descent into poverty and immorality' (Humpherys & James, 2008:100). However, portrayals of poverty were frequently sensationalised and linked to London's criminal underworld (Humpherys & James, 2008:149). The late Victorian period saw a shift towards the 'new journalism' which involved replacing 'views' with 'news' (Hampton, 2005:38). The rise of the social sciences and increasing professionalisation in journalism brought a positivist regime which glorified 'facts' (Hampton, 2005:76).

This development was linked to a growing pessimism about the ability of journalism to integrate the masses into a cohesive political consensus through education.

A spirit of scientific enquiry had a profound effect on journalism cultures which shifted away from a 'traditional ethic of avid partisanship' towards a 'professional code of objectivity' (Allan, 2010:25). This shift was informed by a developing 'cultivation of detachment' amongst journalists (Anderson, 2001:180), leading to the ideal of 'journalistic objectivity' (Maras, 2013:23). Chalaby argues that the 'norm of objectivity' is discursive rather than ideological:

> Journalists refrain from explicit value judgements and partisan discourse, [which does not mean] that journalists' discourse is void of ideological values. Even though news policies and journalists themselves often favour certain political parties, this favouritism remains very different to the partisanship displayed by publicists in the past. The norm of objectivity had a real impact on the press, and to acknowledge this fact is to understand aspects of the specificity of journalism as a discourse (Chalaby, 1998:140).

The norm of objectivity inflated the status of journalism to a profession making it appear respectable, akin to the field of science, which by the late 19th century was making breakthroughs that 'altered the way people might understand life or locate themselves in the universe' (Lightman, 1997:179). The publication of Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) *Origin of Species* in 1859 led social commentators to embrace evolutionary theory (Darwin, 2010). Darwin acknowledged the influence of Malthus on the development of his thinking:

In October 1838, that is, fifteen months after I had begun my systematic inquiry, I happened to read for amusement Malthus on Population, and being well prepared to appreciate the struggle for existence which everywhere goes on from long-continued observation of the habits of animals and plants, it at once struck me that under these circumstances favourable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavourable ones to be destroyed. The results of this would be the formation of a new species. Here, then I had at last got a theory by which to work (Darwin, 2010:82).

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), used Darwin's work to explain why some people were wealthy and others were poor, and why some societies succeeded while others failed. These factors were explained through a concept which became known as 'social Darwinism' (Marks, 2007:151). Spencer introduced the term 'survival of the fittest' in his book *Principles of Biology* (1864) and as a skilled networker and lobbyist, he was able to make his views prominent throughout the Victorian press (Lugo-Ocando & Harkins, 2015:45). Spencer's ideas took on an increased significance as a justification of the position of an increasingly insecure Victorian establishment, who were threatened by the growth of the working class movements increasing in the late 19th century (Silver, 2003:126). The concept of 'social degeneration' was a key trope in Spencer's thinking even before his engagement with Darwin's work; this idea supplied a pseudo-scientific veneer of respectability to the Malthusian concept of preventing the poor from having children. In his 1851 book *Social Statistics,* Spencer criticised Poor Law provision:

Blind to the fact, that under the natural order of things society is constantly excreting its unhealthy, imbecile, slow, vacillating, faithless, members, these unthinking, though well meaning, men advocate an interference which not only stops the purifying process, but even increases the vitiation […] And thus, in their eagerness to prevent the really salutary sufferings

that surround us, these sigh wise and groan foolish people bequeath to posterity a continually increasing curse (Spencer, 1851:323-4).

Emerging scientific justifications of poverty as a natural phenomenon overlapped significantly with religious justifications for the same concept. The biblical injunction that 'the poor will always be with us' was reworked in the classrooms of Victorian Britain through the hymn *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (1848):

> The rich man in his castle,
> The poor man at his gate,
> He made them high or lowly,
> And ordered their estate.[13]

Scientific and religious justifications were used to reach the same conclusion – that poverty was natural. Science played an important role in shaping Victorian society, and the rise of statistics during this era became a key component of the narratives journalists used to construct poverty. Francis Galton (1822-1911) provided statistics that lent elite ideas about poverty the necessary scientific 'rigour' in public debate (Lugo-Ocando & Harkins, 2015:45). Galton also highlighted the idea of degeneration in a letter to his half-cousin Charles Darwin, where he argued that natural selection 'seems to me to spoil and not enhance our breed' (Hodge & Radick, 2003:217). To stop 'the weak' from breeding Galton argued that they should be able to 'find a welcome and a refuge in celibate monasteries or sisterhoods' (Galton, 1892:348).

With an added racial dimension, these ideas were employed to justify the superiority of the English race over other their colonial subjects (Fischer-Tine &

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[13] Christiansen, R. (2007), The story behind the hymn. *Telegraph*, 22 September 2007.

Mann, 2004; Houghton, 1963:45; Moran, 2006). In the 1850s and 1860s, the British Empire suffered a series of shocks that highlighted military weaknesses across the Empire. One of these shocks, the Indian uprising in Kanpur (1857) prompted Charles Dickens (1812-1870) to advocate genocide as a response to a massacre of British citizens (Peters, 2013:109-110). Victorian intellectuals often juxtaposed the white 'civilised' English and non-white 'savages' (Peters, 2013:10-11). The development of photography was incorporated into these narratives:

> Ideological constructions of "natives" and "savages" [when] compared with modern civilized Europeans, occupied a far distant temporal elsewhere. Through mass-produced postcards, images of the exotic "Other" provided by photography were widely considered to reveal racial backwardness. In this way, photography was used to support evolutionist ideas of social development and eugenicist claims about racial difference (Murdock & Pickering, 2009:176).

Concepts of racial superiority were adapted to cast people living in poverty as the 'other'. This provided a framework to rationalise deep social inequality, while ignoring the role of education, wealth, status and opportunity in making wealthy individuals 'superior':

> There were a few great families which passed on superior abilities to their offspring and, in contrast, a residuum of inferior but similarly interbreeding humans who were much greater in number. Often these people, the residuum, came to rely on various Poor Laws for their survival and were labelled paupers (Dorling, 2011a:103).

The narrative that developed from these ideas has been criticised as a 'pseudo-scientific discourse that viewed criminals, and by extension the urban poor, as subnormal, degenerate or defective products of heredity or environment' (Bell,

2012:211-212). These ideas were used by intellectuals to make wide generalisations about gender, criminality and sexuality (Lombroso et al., 2004; Lombroso & Ferrero, 1898; Lombroso et al., 2006[1911]).

At the same time, the framework of social Darwinism was full of contradictions. The principle of 'survival of the fittest' was supposed to justify privilege, but it failed to explain the increasing population of the 'inferior' urban poor. Their increasing numbers led to fears that 'poverty and its environment' could lead to 'degeneration' (Peters, 2013:14). This theme was evident in the later work of Charles Dickens, who was concerned with what he saw as 'the clear linkage between neglected children, degeneration and savagery' (Peters, 2013:137).

In the late 1880s, eugenicists began to link working class organisation with the existence of 'reverse evolution' or degeneration. The establishment's fear of the working classes sharpened in response to the rise of 'new unionism' in the 1880s, which led to further enfranchisement of the working classes through the Reform Act (1884) (Berger, 2009:168). During this time, intellectuals were beginning to develop theories of crowd psychology (Borch, 2012:1), and fear of 'the mob' was emerging as a key consideration for elites.

The position of the British establishment had become even less secure with the military threat posed by German unification in 1871 and the 'Great Depression' of 1873 (Gourvish, 1988:2). The financial crisis lasted until the 1890s and a 'very different form of capitalism' emerged afterwards (Dumenil & Levy, 2004:11). These changes led to an aggressive promotion of the British Empire, which became a key propaganda tool in attempting to diminish radicalism and reduce

the threat of revolution. British Imperial mining magnate Cecil Rhodes described how 'we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands for settling the surplus population', adding 'if you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists' (Lenin, 2009[1917]:229). The Empire made 'good ideological cement' for the UK elite and served as a useful tool in convincing the working classes to ignore their own exploitation and identify with the imperial state (Hobsbawm, 1987:70). The pseudo-scientific arguments of intellectuals like Spencer and Galton fed into the frameworks of racial hierarchy that justified imperial expansion (Beasley, 2010; Calhoun, 2007:545; Carter, 2000:103).

The effects of imperialist propaganda were limited by the development of 'liberalism and strong anti-imperial, anti-military, anti-colonial or more generally anti-aristocratic traditions' (Hobsbawm, 1987:70). These traditions were reflected in news publications which targeted the expansion of the working class electorate in Britain. For example, T.P. O'Connor launched the *Star* in 1888, achieving fame through sensationalist coverage of Jack the Ripper when fear of mob violence from the urban poor had 'gripped the middle classes' (O'Neill, 2006:156). The *Star* was uncommon in the late Victorian period because it took a 'strong pro-union stance', it was critical of the conservative government, and it revealed the 'immense gap between London wealth and poverty' (Nelson O'Ceallaigh, 2012:103). This was particularly unusual because the last decades of the 19th century saw the rise of press conglomerates:

> By 1910, the three largest groups controlled, nation-wide, 66.9 per cent of the circulation of Mornings' and 82.6 per cent of Evenings' sales. Throughout the 20th century, the proportion of circulation controlled by the three top companies remained at a similar level (Chalaby, 1998:47).

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In the early 1900s, the 'muckrakers' in the United States were creating their own styles and news outlets (Schiffrin, 2014; Serrin & Serrin, 2002). One of these journalists, Jack London, visited Britain in 1902 and produced his book on poverty, *The People of the Abyss,* in 1903. London's book was part of a style of 'low life-reporting' which emerged with an 'under-disciplined curiosity' combined with an 'over-developed theatricality' (Thompson & Yeo, 1973:73-74). Chalaby describes this type of reporting was simply the 'exploitation of misery for commercial ends' (Chalaby, 1998:143). London's intention was to 'shock his readers' (Bashevkin, 2002a:18), and his work heavily reflected the social Darwinist ideology of the age. For example, he describes the violence of the East End:

> They possess neither conscience nor sentiment, and they will kill for a half-sovereign, without fear or favour, if they are given but half a chance. They are a new species, a breed of city savages. The streets and houses, alleys and courts, are their hunting grounds. As valley and mountain are to the natural savage, street and building are valley and mountain to them. The slum is their jungle, and they live and prey in the jungle (London, 2007:118).

London's work reflected some of the key continuities in the portrayal of people living in poverty. Indeed, alongside the social Darwinist notion of degeneration, the language here bears remarkable similarity to contemporary discussions about an 'underclass'.

The link between theories of racial science and degeneration were also evident in the writing of Karl Pearson (1857-1936), who argued that the 'Aryan race' was

the 'physically and mentally fitter race' (Pearson, 1905:19-20). In a letter to the *Times*, Pearson claims that since 1875, statistics show 'a definite fall in the birth-rate when measured in a proper manner upon the number of married women of reproductive ages in this country'. He adds:

> I think that the smallness of families is unfortunately largely correlated with good social status, by which I understand that the better citizens, in health, ability and craftsmanship, have to-day fewer children than the weak, dull and improvident.[14]

These concepts were evident across the political spectrum, and socialists readily subscribed to social Darwinism and eugenics. Socialist playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) argued that 'what we must fight for is freedom to breed the race without being hampered by the mass of irrelevant conditions implied by the institution of marriage' (Griffith, 1993:179). Another socialist intellectual, Sydney Webb (1859-1947), argued:

> In Great Britain at this moment, when half, or perhaps two-thirds, of all the married people are regulating families, children are being freely born to the Irish Roman Catholics and the Polish, Russian and German Jews, on the one hand, and to the thriftless and irresponsible-largely the casual labourers and the other denizens of the one roomed tenements of our great cities – on the other […] this can hardly result in anything but national deterioration; or, as an alternative, in this country gradually falling to the Irish and the Jews.[15]

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[14] Pearson, K. (1906), The decline of the birth rate, *Times*, 01 November 1906.
[15] Webb, S. (1906), Physical degeneracy or race suicide, *Times*, 16 October 1906.

What the eugenicists interpreted as 'degeneration' is likely to have been the effect of widespread poverty across Britain. Joseph Rowntree's work in York helped to raise awareness of the living conditions of people in poverty (Laybourn, 1999:11), and during the Boer War (1899-1902), the consequences of these conditions became apparent to the political classes: over 60% of military volunteers were rejected on medical grounds (Bashevkin, 2002a:17). The subsequent inquiry found that the UK infant mortality rate was higher in 1900 than it had been in 1859 (Bashevkin, 2002a:18). There was little criticism of this situation in the press, because 'virtually all of the quality papers presented the views only of the Conservative Party' (Hampton, 2005:86). However, despite a lack of representation in the press, the Boer War inquiry revelations about public health influenced the Liberal welfare reforms of the early 20th century (1906-1914). These reforms represented a break from liberal individualism by tackling poverty and public health issues through the intervention of the state.

The early 20th century saw a political shift to the left amongst the working classes, influenced by the Russian Revolution and the rise of socialism in Europe, alongside the emergence of British socialism in the shape of the Labour Party (Laybourn, 1999:11). The growth of trade unions was also a key element of the political momentum building the case for a more interventionist form of government. In the early 1900s Britain's first think-tank, the Fabian Society, lobbied for the creation of a welfare state and a collectivist approach to economics (McBriar, 1966:270-271). This was part of a political shift that saw a 66% increase in union membership between 1910-1914, when over four million citizens joined a union (Halperin, 2004:182; Pugh, 2011:34). Following implementation of the Representation of the People Act in 1918, many on the left predicted that Labour

Party rule was inevitable. When this dominance failed to materialise, critics on the left blamed the commercial press for creating a 'false consciousness' amongst the electorate (Hampton, 2005:132).

The commercial press were also accused of being too close to the centres of political power. For example, the *Spectator* highlighted a 'series of coincidences' between the arguments of newspapers and the policy of the government, and press Baron Lord Northcliffe was criticised for his role in ending the Asquith government in 1915 (Hampton, 2005:138-140). Meanwhile, social researchers sought to keep poverty on the political agenda. Charles Booth's (1840-1916) survey of London poverty set out to demonstrate that the extent of poverty in London had been exaggerated: reports suggested that 20% of Londoners lived in poverty, but after 17 years of data collection, he found that the real figure was closer to 30% (Smith et al., 2001:107). Booth's survey was based on a taxonomy of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' individuals with the lowest order of society represented on his map as the 'vicious and semi-criminal' classes[16]:

> The lowest class […] consists of some occasional labourers, street sellers, loafers, criminals and semi-criminals. Their life is the life of savages, with vicissitudes of extreme hardship and their only luxury is drink (Booth, 1902:38).

This 'undeserving' categorisation would survive a series of major political, social and economic changes in the United Kingdom. The First World War had a massive impact on British society, and in the aftermath of the war there was a 'tremendous demand' for goods that had been previously unavailable (Rees,

[16] Booth, C. (1899), Map descriptive of London poverty, Sheet 5: East central district, London School of Economics, Available from: http://booth.lse.ac.uk/learn-more/download-maps/sheet5, Accessed 24 January 2016.

2001:104). Following a brief period of prosperity, the British economy soon 'collapsed into depression' and by 1921, two million people were unemployed (Rees, 2001:104). Still, this period saw a huge rise in the circulation of the daily press, alongside a considerable reduction in the number of overall news titles.

The commercial press had unprecedented power throughout the inter-war period as newspapers transformed from the 'normal furniture of life' to the 'most important means of mass communication' (Hampton, 2005:39-43). Hampton argues that press barons were able to co-opt the 'representational ideal' that had 'become so pervasive' before the Great War (1914-1918) (Hampton, 2005:132). The BBC followed the lead of the commercial press by supporting business interests over the working classes: 'during the General Strike of 1926, the BBC refused to allow representatives of the trade union movement, or even the official Labour Party […] access to the airwaves' (McNair, 2009:54). Without a popular critical analysis in the press, eugenics 'had become almost a religion in the 1920s' (Dorling, 2011a:111). Intellectuals from both the left and right of the political spectrum accepted as 'an article of faith' that 'some were more able than others and that those differences were strongly influenced by some form of inherited acumen' (Dorling, 2011a:111).

Following the rise of the commercial press, poverty was predominantly explained as an issue of 'individual responsibility' (Steinbach, 2012:35). The idea that poor people deserved to be poor through moral or genetic failings proved as popular in the 19th century as it had been in the 17th and 18th, and the poor were constructed as a threat by the press and politicians. This period was marked by the development of a close relationship between political parties and journalists,

and the news media were seen as an extension of the political system from the late 19th century onwards (Petley, 2009:189). This was the state of affairs during the last days of the 'age of individualism' which was soon to be replaced by an 'age of collectivism' (Skidelsky, 2013:455).

2.3 The Cold War: poverty and journalism in the 'age of collectivism' 1917-1975

2.3.1 Poverty in the 'age of collectivism' 1917-1970

The Russian Revolution (1917-1919) had a tremendous impact on working class politics all over the world (Carr, 1966; Read, 2008). The creation of a socialist state created a belief in the possibility of a system less exploitative than capitalism among the British left. This belief gained credence just as the capitalist system faced its greatest crisis. In 1920, the British state implemented a Housing Act designed to provide housing for returning soldiers: 'homes fit for heroes to live in' (Harrison, 2009:244). Support for the armed forces following the war broke the Malthusian convention of criticising 'able bodied' men who needed state support as these considerations were trumped by national interest.

Support for people living in poverty increased further following the global economic chaos at the end of the 1920s. The Wall Street crash of 1929 exacerbated the domestic financial crisis in Britain, halving the amount of exported goods and creating an unemployment level of over three million people (Rees, 2001:105). This led to a 'widespread experience of poverty' throughout Britain, marking the beginning of a political shift towards planning and collectivism

through Keynesian economic policy; the narrative of poverty as an individual failing had lost popularity (Redden, 2014:2).

Still, fears in the press about the rise of socialism were widespread in the early 1930s. For example, the *Daily Mirror* published a front-page picture of emaciated Russian children as a warning to British people not to vote for the Socialist Party in the 1931 election.[17] The 1930s and 40s saw a period of crisis for classic liberal thinking, especially following the Second World War, when Fabianism and Keynesianism rose to prominence in official policy circles (Cockett, 1995). The 'representational ideal' of the press had gained 'legitimacy by the rise of political polling', although many polls were used 'merely to gain support for the paper's own policy' (Hampton, 2005:132-133).

The widespread existence of poverty was documented by authors working outside of the mainstream media; George Orwell was perhaps the most notable example. Inspired by Jack London, Orwell set out to investigate poverty, and he produced *Down and Out in Paris and London* in 1933, followed by *The Road to Wigan Pier* in 1937. Orwell's political outlook was driven by a concern to promote the decency and values of the 'common people' over those of the establishment, which meant giving a 'voice to the voiceless' (Ingle, 2006:182). However, the framework of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor' are still evident in his work alongside the social Darwinist concept of degeneration (Singh, 1987:43). He described how 'the evil of poverty is not so much that it makes a man suffer as that it rots him physically and spiritually' (Orwell, 1989:206-207). Orwell also used

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[17] *Daily Mirror.* (1931), Bolshevism run mad, *Daily Mirror*, 26 October 1931.

the framework of 'deserving' versus 'undeserving poor' by juxtaposing idleness and hard work amongst the mining communities in the North of England. The miners in Orwell's account are described as 'a sort of caryatid upon whose shoulders nearly everything that is not grimy is supported' (Orwell, 2001:18), while in stark contrast:

> Mrs Brooker, our landlady, lay permanently ill, festooned in grimy blankets. She had a big, pale yellow, anxious face. No one knew for certain what was the matter with her; I suspect that her only real trouble was over-eating (Orwell, 2001:5).

Narratives of poverty were not prominent in the mainstream British press during this period because the news agenda was dominated by the prospect of another war. Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, there were concerns in Britain about the failure of the commercial press to criticise the rise of Hitler and fascism in Germany (Hampton, 2005:140). Across the Atlantic, political criticism was painted with a broad brush. For example, American journalist and media critic Walter Lippmann (1889-1974) lamented the rise of collectivist thinking:

> Throughout the world, in the name of progress, men who call themselves communists, socialists, fascists, nationalists, progressives, and even liberals, are unanimous in holding that government with its instruments of coercion must by commanding the people how they shall live, direct the course of civilization and fix the shape of things to come. […] Unless he is authoritarian and collectivist, he is a mossback, a reactionary, at best an amiable eccentric swimming hopelessly against the tide. It is a strong tide (Lippmann, 1944:4).

Economist Friedrich von Hayek (1899-1992) criticised the ability of propaganda to capture the allegiance of the masses, arguing that the intellectual elite who

were able to 'resist intellectual conformity had little hope' (Von Hayek, 2001[1944]:152).

After the war, classical liberal economics fell out of favour (Cockett, 1995; Harvey, 2005a). The arguments put forward by the Fabian Society's 'ideas factory' became a political and economic reality in Britain (Levine, 1988:121), partly in response to rising levels of poverty. Britain created a welfare state through a series of legislation based on the Beveridge report of 1942, including the Butler Act (1944) which contained a commitment to full employment; the Family Allowance Act (1945); the National Insurance Act (1946); and the National Health Act (1948) (Redden, 2014:2).

The Keynes-Beveridge welfare system was based on collectivist economic policy, a continuation of wartime economic planning, and the 'universalist' principle. It was linked to Fordism and mass production, and its goal was full male employment (Chamberlayne, 1991:6; Keane & Owens, 1987:6). However, little had changed in the way people thought about poverty: two of the five 'giants' that Beveridge sought to tackle were 'want' and 'idleness', echoing familiar ideas of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor.

Meanwhile, tackling poverty at a global level also became a top priority, and this goal was discussed at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944:

> We are to concern ourselves here with essential steps in the creation of a dynamic world economy in which the people of every nation will be able to realize their potentialities in peace; will be able, through their industry, their inventiveness, their thrift, to raise their own standards of living and enjoy,

increasingly, the fruits of material progress on an earth infinitely blessed with natural riches. This is the indispensable cornerstone of freedom and security. All else must be built upon this. For freedom of opportunity is the foundation for all other freedoms.[18]

From these discussions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were created to stabilise the global economy. Drowning out the echoes of earlier ideologies, collectivist economic thinking began to affect how poverty was understood following the war:

> After 1945, the task of governments was to make poverty useful by fixing it to the apparatus of production that planning sought to deploy. A completely utilitarian and functional conception of poverty emerged, linked inextricably to questions of labour and production (Escobar, 1995:89).

Following the 1945 settlement, 'modernisation theory' underpinned propaganda efforts to thwart the rise of communism in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, by arguing for global development through 'embracing Western manufacturing technology, political structures, values, and systems of mass communication' (Shah, 2011:21). News coverage of poverty in this period took on a global dimension, and in 1949 US President Harry Truman's inaugural address proposed a programme of international aid to countries with high levels of poverty:

> Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people.[19]

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[18] Morgenthau-Jr., H. (1944). *Inaugural address.* Paper presented at the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference: Bretton Woods, Bretton Woods: New Hampshire.
[19] Truman, H. (1949), Truman's inaugural address, *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum*, available from: https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm, accessed 24 January 2016.

The US perspective was of global importance because they had dominated control over global financial liquidity in the 1950s and 60s, and 'the IMF and the World Bank played little or no role in the regulation of world money' which was dominated by the US Federal Reserve (Arrighi, 1994:68-72).

In Britain, the creation of the welfare state by the post-war Labour administration meant it was not in the government's interest to highlight domestic poverty, and their agenda was more likely to focus on poverty as a global issue. The political impetus was therefore removed from poverty as a domestic issue and the news agenda shifted towards global development. Between 1948 and 1965 poverty was not mentioned in a single debate in the British Parliament.[20] By 1956, British politicians were arguing that Keynesianism had successfully brought the capitalist system under control:

> Capitalism had been reformed out of all recognition. Despite occasional minor recessions and balance of payments crises, full employment and at least a tolerable degree of stability are likely to be maintained (Hobsbawm, 1995:268).

The welfare state was perceived by newspapers as having eradicated poverty, through the principle of a universal right to real income regardless of each individual's 'market value' (Marshall, 2009:153). This was the aim of 'Keynesian regulatory policies' which were 'designed to stabilize capitalism and protect citizens from its worst excesses' (Dean, 2009:52). So, the welfare state saw poverty largely removed from the UK news agenda for almost two decades.

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[20] *Guardian*, (1989), Leading article: poverty stricken, *Guardian*, 13 May 1989.

However, in 1962 an Italian journalist reported on poverty in the UK in the *Corriere Della Serra*. He argued that 'real poverty and hardship exist on the British scene', under the headline 'In London it is unfashionable to talk about poverty'.[21]

Despite British poverty's absence from newspapers, the creation of social welfare programmes was not politically uncontroversial:

> One of the keys to the controversy of our time over the merits or defects of the "welfare state" is the fact that the very idea affronts the traditions of a great many men and women who were raised, if not upon the specific tenets of social Darwinism, at least upon the moral imperatives that it expressed (Hofstadter, 1955:11).

As individualist explanations for poverty receded, radical critiques of this type of framing emerged:

> When, in a city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual (Mills, 1970[1959]:15).

Mills's critical position on power structures was reflected in the work of Daniel Bell and J.K. Galbraith, who criticised the influence of corporations over US labour unions in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Lichtenstein, 2002:167). In Britain, a shift in the way poverty was covered in the news was evident from the support that the media gave to the concept of social security. In 1966 the *Daily Mirror*

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[21] *Times*. (1962), Italian critic of British 'slums', *Times*, 12 April 1962.

printed a front page story celebrating a policy shift from National Assistance to Social Security, under the headline 'Now – aid without shame for the needy'. The increased security of welfare provision was welcomed by MPs of a range of political parties in the article.[22]

By the 1960s, individual responsibility was explicitly rejected in some British newspapers as an explanation for poverty. For example, an article in the *Times* from 1967 urged government action on child poverty because 'it cannot be escaped by blaming the laziness or irresponsibility of the children's parents'.[23] However, poverty in Britain had not been eliminated by the welfare state. Photographer Nick Hedges documented poverty in Britain between 1969-1972 and found 'families who slept with the lights blazing to keep the rats away' and 'children sleeping on wet floors'.[24] Domestic news stories that captured this type of extreme poverty were rare, perhaps because interest in poverty waned as it dropped off the political agenda. Social policy innovations throughout this period led to reductions in inequality of income, health and wealth (Dorling, 2011a:193). The concept of greater social justice and equality was given renewed academic interest through the work of John Rawls (1921-2002), in *A Theory of Justice*:

> All social primary goods – liberty and opportunity, income, wealth, and the bases of self-respect – are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured (Rawls, 1973:303).

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[22] Preece, H. (1966), Now – aid without shame for the needy, *Daily Mirror*, 24 February 1966.
[23] *Times*. (1967), Britain's poor, *Times*.
[24] Hedges, N. (2014), Below the poverty line: slum Britain in the 1960s – in pictures. *Guardian*, 30 October 2014.

According to Rawls, injustice exists where a system of inequalities fails to improve the prospects of the least well off; in particular wealth and income were should be more evenly distributed (Amdur, 1977:442). However, belief in egalitarian philosophy would diminish following another financial crisis.

A series of problems in the 1960s challenged the economic dominance of the US, which was supported throughout by the willingness of European central banks. This situation was abandoned in 1971, and the international payments system was no longer controlled by any single national economy (Hobsbawm, 1995:243). Following this, the Bretton Woods organisations rose to prominence, particularly the IMF (Arrighi, 1994:68). A global financial crisis developed between 1973-75, triggered by the Yom Kippur War and the subsequent oil embargo and energy crisis of 1973. This led to deep public spending cuts in the UK, marking the end of broad political consensus around the welfare state in Britain (Burk & Cairncross, 1992).

The UK government subsequently approached the IMF for a loan of $3.9 billion in September 1976, and the IMF negotiators demanded further heavy cuts in public expenditure and the budget deficit (Burk & Cairncross, 1992; Redden, 2014:4). As a result, UK state policy moved away from providing full employment and social welfare, towards the control of inflation and expenditure.[25] The public spending cuts marked the beginning of an 'economic counter-revolution' against Keynesian policies which attempted to return to classic liberal economic policy

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[25] Cabinet Papers, (2014), Sterling devalued and the IMF loan. *The National Archives*, URL: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/sterling-devalued-imf-loan.htm, accessed 5 October 2014.

development (Cockett, 1995; Walker et al., 2011:158). These were ideas that had been promoted throughout the 'age of collectivism' but were largely ignored in policy circles until the financial crisis in the late 1970s.

2.3.2 Thinking the unthinkable: the roots of neoliberalism 1930-1975

For much of the mid-20th century, those who did not believe in collectivism were ostracised by mainstream intellectual opinion; economic liberalism was not seen as a viable political option (Lippmann, 1944:4). In this context, it is remarkable how dominant neoliberal ideas would become in just four decades:

> In 1945 or 1950, if you had seriously proposed any of the ideas and policies in today's standard neo-liberal toolkit, you would have been laughed off the stage at or sent off to the insane asylum. At least in the Western countries, at that time, everyone was a Keynesian, a social democrat or a social-Christian democrat or some shade of Marxist. The idea that the market should be allowed to make major social and political decisions; the idea that the State should voluntarily reduce its role in the economy, or that corporations should be given total freedom, that trade unions should be curbed and citizens given much less rather than more social protection – such ideas were utterly foreign to the spirit of the time. Even if someone actually agreed with these ideas, he or she would have hesitated to take such a position in public and would have had a hard time finding an audience (George, 1999:1).

The term neoliberalism began appearing in various contexts in the 1930s before becoming associated with a 'new intellectual/political movement' (Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009:12). In 1938 a group of intellectuals met in Paris under the banner of the 'Colloque Walter Lippmann'. The intellectuals, most notably Hayek (1899-1992), discussed Lippmann's book *The Good Society*, published in 1937 and

written in favour of 'the market economy over state intervention' (Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009:13). In his writing, Lippmann anticipated 'not only some principles but also elements of Hayek's long term strategy' (Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009:13). The group associated with the Colloque did not meet again until 1947, under the banner of Hayek's 'Mont Pèlerin Society' (Burgin, 2012; Cockett, 1995:57). At a time when Keynesian economic thinking was dominant, Hayek published *The Road to Serfdom* in 1944. The book was 'written in some haste' following the publication of the Beveridge report in December the previous year (Cockett, 1995:79), and it argued against state intervention in economic matters:

> The guiding principle, that a policy of freedom for the individual is the only truly progressive policy, remains as true to-day as it was in the nineteenth century (Von Hayek, 2001[1944]:246).

Other Mont Pèlerin economists such as Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973) constructed the state as a tyrannical and oppressive force that interferes with the liberty of free individuals (Hall, 1995:11).

The Mont Pèlerin meetings led to the beginning of a neoliberal movement which sought to challenge the hegemony of the state and move away from central economic planning towards an approach which favours the expansion of the free market. Sklair argues that the neoliberal movement led to an elite 'transnational capitalist class' after the extension of political franchise caused the wealthy members of the establishment to adopt a 'siege mentality' (Carey & Lohrey, 1995; Sklair, 2001:23). Davies argues that neoliberalism was about advancing corporate interests, he describes how:

At every stage of the development of American conservatism and neo-liberal thinking, an interested party was bankrolling the project. The Volcker Fund supplied the funding for the Chicago School's Free Market Study and paid for Hayek to travel from London and tour America. Conservative think tanks collected donations from corporations, to convert their anti-government instincts into credible research (Davies, 2009b:91).

The ideas of the Mont Pèlerin Society were largely ignored in the press until after the financial crisis of the 1970s (Cockett, 1995; Harvey, 2005a). Part of the intellectual development of these groups involved linking free enterprise 'with free speech, free press, and free religion as integral parts of democracy' (Dinan & Miller, 2007:57). In the 1970s, academic research also supported a renewal of classic liberalism. As a direct response to Rawls, Robert Nozick made the case for an 'entitlement conception of justice' and a minimal state (Heywood, 2007:94; Wolff, 1991:10). Echoing the arguments of Malthus, Nozick argued that the very existence of the welfare state hindered philanthropic activity (Wolff, 1991:13). Nozick opposed the concept of social welfare:

A minimal state limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and so on, is justified. A more extensive state will violate persons' rights not to be forced to do certain things, and is unjustified (Nozick, 1974:ix).

Nozick's argument was rooted in a belief in individual rights over collective outcomes:

There are only individual people, different individual people, with their own individual lives. Using one of these people for the benefit of others, uses him and benefits the others. Nothing more. What happens is that something is done to him for the sake of others (Nozick, 1974:32-33).

This type of argument was supported by research from free market think tanks in the 1970s, central to the expansion of neoliberalism and influencing ideas about poverty and the poor (Gans, 1995:49-50). The development of neoliberal policymaking in the UK was the result of a 'long march' propaganda campaign funded by corporations and advanced by think tanks (Cockett, 1995; Harvey, 2005a; Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009).

The most significant development in the history of UK neoliberal thinking was the creation of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in 1955 (Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009:88). Its founder, Anthony Fisher, was described by Milton Friedman as the 'single most important person in the development of Thatcherism' (Cockett, 1995:122). In setting up the IEA, he harnessed the ideas of Hayek and the Mont Pèlerin society to 'avowedly practical ends' (Cockett, 1995:122). The IEA lobbied to apply 'the laws of the free market' to the welfare state, which meant cutting public expenditure and inviting the private sector to play a greater role in its operation (Cockett, 1995:147). On becoming leader of the Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher 'relied on the IEA for detailed economic analysis of the welfare state' (Cockett, 1995:169).

The IEA's initial success led the creation of more free market think tanks joining the political scene in a process reminiscent of ever shrinking Russian dolls:

> Think tanks developed their own next layer of protective shell, often in the guise of specialised think tanks poised to get quick and timely position papers out to the friendly politicians or to provide talking heads for various news media and opinion periodicals. Further outer shells have been innovated as we get closer to the present for instance, 'Astroturfed' organisations consisting of supposedly local grassroots members,

frequently organized around religious or single-issue campaigns (Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009:431).

The Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) was created in 1974 to 'convert the Tory party' to economic liberalism, and the Adam Smith Institute (ASI) followed in 1978 (Cockett, 1995:237). This trio of think tanks – the IES, CPS and ASI – created the core policies of the Thatcher government (Cockett, 1995:322), and each enjoyed a close relationship with the media.

After joining the IEA in 1964, Keith Joseph was invited to write a series of articles in the *Times* making the case for economic liberalism (Cockett, 1995:169). Founder Madsen Pirie described how the ASI was 'helped very much in our early days' by 'people in the media who broadly shared our agenda' (Pirie, 2012:51). ASI articles were regularly printed by the *Daily Mail* and the paper's editor and features editor helped the think tank to develop their research papers. The *Daily Mail* and *Now* magazine both paid the ASI 'particularly well' for producing articles, and Pirie worked part-time as a relief leader writer for the *Daily Mail* while developing the ASI (Pirie, 2012:52).

These think tanks also worked closely with their counterparts in the US, including the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation. According to critics, these organisations 'propagate the idea that poverty is largely the fault of the poor' (Gans, 1995:49-50). In this way, think tanks were used to represent the interests of large corporations and wealthy individuals (Harvey, 2007:31). The economic crisis of 1973-1975 created a backlash against Keynesian economics, creating fertile ground for the adoption of neoliberal ideas which ultimately became mainstream thinking in UK political circles (Harvey, 2005a:22). The

financial crisis ended a long period of economic growth in Britain, and this was the key driver behind neoliberalism:

> One condition of the post-war settlement […] was that the economic power of the upper classes be restrained and that labour be accorded a much larger share of the economic pie […] While growth was strong this restraint seemed not to matter. To have a stable share of an increasing pie is one thing. But when growth collapsed in the 1970s […] the upper classes everywhere felt threatened […] The upper classes had to move decisively if they were to protect themselves from political and economic annihilation (Harvey, 2005a:11).

Harvey argues that the political shift towards neoliberalism was a 'huge success for the upper classes' because they were able to 'redistribute wealth and income either from the mass of the population towards the upper classes or from vulnerable to richer countries' (Harvey, 2005b:32). This transfer – and the ideology behind it – would have a profound effect on news coverage of poverty.

Following IMF-mandated public sector cuts, neoliberalism's key political changes were 'privatisation, deregulation and cuts to government services', with many of the cuts targeted at the welfare state as the free market came to dominate political decision-making (Hutton, 1996; Klein, 2007:444). A programme of deep public spending cuts transformed a project which had been in gestation for over 40 years from 'abstract intellectualism' to a 'state-authored restructuring project' (Cockett, 1995; Harvey, 2005a; Klein, 2007; Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009; Peck & Tickell, 2002).

This political shift marked the end of the 'golden age of capitalism' and the post-war compromise between capital and labour (Dumenil & Levy, 2004; Marglin &

Schor, 1990). According to Hall, the 'principal target' of neoliberalism in Britain was to cut back the 'social-democratic welfare state', seen as the 'arch enemy of freedom' for interfering with the 'natural' mechanisms of the market (Hall, 2012:10-11). Libertarian theorists argued that in order to preserve individual freedom, institutions like the welfare state must be cut back or removed altogether (Nozick, 1974). Neoliberal theory offered a rationality whereby the market was a better guarantor of individual freedom than the state because it was a 'site of veridiction' (Foucault, 2008:31), unlike the state which was cast as the enemy of individual freedom.

From the start, public spending cuts and neoliberal reforms disproportionately affected the poorest people in the UK, who suffered from 'deleterious social consequences' as inequality rose sharply (Wacquant, 1999:323). The idea of the free market became the 'sole organising principle of economy and society' (Hutton, 1996:169), and the 'main driving force shaping media policy' (Steel, 2012:167). Journalism had already been co-opted by commercial interests from the 1850s onwards, so neoliberalism did not affect journalism as radically or profoundly as other areas of society. But there was a tangible shift in media coverage of poverty during the 1973-75 financial crisis as neoliberalism became 'defining political economic paradigm of our time' (Freedman, 2008:37).

2.4 Poverty, politics and journalism in the 'age of neoliberalism' 1974-1984
2.4.1 Poverty, politics and news coverage 1974-1984

Neoliberal policymaking in the UK has been traced to the macroeconomic crisis of the 1970s. Key features of this period were political attempts to roll back the

state, coupled with the emergence of a news and political consensus underpinned by individualism and criticising the welfare state. Some scholars have argued that the welfare consensus was the result of a political compromise between communism and capitalism. In this view, neoliberalism emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it the belief that socialism was a viable alternative political system (Gamble, 2001:127; Klein, 2007:253).

There were clear signs of a shift away from collectivism from the mid-1970s onwards. In 1974, Keith Joseph, one of the architects of the neoliberal 'counterrevolution' resurrected the language of the late 19th century when he argued that 'our human stock is threatened' because of women 'in social classes 4 and 5' having children:

> Many of these girls are unmarried, many are deserted or divorced or soon will be. Some are of low intelligence, most of low educational attainment […] the rejection of self-discipline, is not progress – it is degeneration.[26]

Joseph's arguments were repeated by the British press as they constructed welfare recipients as 'scroungers' and set the tone for the future reporting of poverty and welfare in the British press (Franklin, 1999:147). Golding and Middleton's study of media coverage of poverty described this pattern of 'blitzes' as a 'welfare backlash of cruel and massive proportions' which fostered a culture of 'indicting welfare and convicting the poor for the crisis of economic fortune' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:3). The 70s 'scroungerphobia' backlash set the

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[26] Joseph, Keith (1974), Speech by the Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph MP, Conservative Spokesman on home affairs, speaking at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham, 19 October 1974.

'rhetoric and vocabulary' for future reporting of welfare stories (Golding, 1999:147).

Media campaigns against welfare were used as 'the occasion for a social derision of the poor so punitive in its impact' that it was to 'threaten the very props of the modern welfare state' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:5). As the welfare system came under attack, 'the mass media were to play a significant part in identifying targets and amplifying public indignation in a deep cutting and highly effective welfare backlash' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:4). One result was a shift from a war on poverty to a war on the poor (Gans, 1995; Katz, 1990; Redden, 2014:8). The news coverage during this period presented sustained criticism of welfare recipients and their lifestyle choices (Deacon, 1978:1). Despite this, official government investigations 'unearthed virtually no abuse' of the welfare system, and 'the costs of one inquiry into fraudulent claims […] were eight times the amount discovered in over-payments' (Deacon, 1973:346).

The election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 was a significant moment in the shift towards neoliberalism (Redden, 2014:4). Following the 1979 election, the Conservative government embarked on a programme of 'rolling back the state' which involved the 'active destruction and discreditation of Keynesian-welfarist and social-collectivist institutions' (Peck & Tickell, 2002:384). In practical terms, the first phase of the project took place between 1979-1986. It involved welfare cuts, restrictions in public spending, privatisation of services such as social housing, pension provision, and residential care, and it culminated with the deregulation of the City of London (Hills, 1998:2; Scott-Samuel et al., 2014:54).

This was the context in which the news agenda was transformed by the arrival of Rupert Murdoch on the UK news landscape. While the majority of the British press supported the Thatcher government regardless of their own target market (McNair, 2009:146), Murdoch's acquisition of the *Times*, the *Sunday Times,* the *Sun* and the *News of the World* saw each of those publications take a dramatic 'shift to the right of the political spectrum' (Conboy, 2011:54). Notably, it was the Thatcher government that approved Murdoch's bid to purchase the *Times* in 1981 (Watson & Hickman, 2012). Andrew Neil was the editor of the *Sunday Times* during this period, and he felt that 'Thatcher's battles were our battles' (Davies, 2009a:305). In the late 1970s, the *Sun* aligned with the new neoliberal political outlook:

> [They] synchronised with the aspirations and identities of the classes which had been credited with the swing to Thatcher in the 1979 election. This represented an astute mapping of the newspaper's idiom onto the hegemonic shift to the ideological project of the Conservative Party in government. Its effect was contagious to many areas of the press, with its rabid anti-union stance becoming a perspective maintained by most of the national newspaper press (Conboy & Steel, 2010:503).

There was a certain irony that the people harmed most by public spending cuts – the poorest members of society – were the people subsequently criticised by the British press (Cohen, 2011:xi-xxi; Critcher, 2003:64). Media campaigns focussed on the individual behaviour of unemployed people and morphed into a 'campaign against scroungers' (Campbell, 1984:20). Franklin (Franklin, 1999:2) argues that media attacks on 'scroungers' served to 'transform the social problem of unemployment into a public crisis, if not moral panic, about welfare scroungers'. In the following years, the media subjected unemployed people in

Britain to 'more blitzes than the Luftwaffe could ever have imagined possible' (Golding, 1999:147).

In 1983 Margaret Thatcher called for a return to 'Victorian values', and there is evidence of a shift to these values in the newsrooms of the neoliberal period (Dennis, 2008:30). This is the development which this thesis seeks to explore in more detail. Research examining media coverage of poverty from the onset of the 1973-75 financial crisis through to the early period of the Thatcher government found that poverty was constructed by the press as an issue affecting a small group of deviant individuals (Cohen, 2011; Critcher, 2003; Franklin, 1999; Golding & Middleton, 1982). This coincided with the beginning of sustained increases in economic inequality across the United Kingdom (Dorling, 2011a; 2011b:156).

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has shown how the news media have historically framed issues of poverty and welfare by blaming the victims of injustice for their own poverty. There have been exceptions to this, especially in some parts of the radical press where writers critiqued inequality and its relationship to poverty. There was also a brief period where much of the British press supported the aims of the welfare state, although more research into this period is required. Baumann points out that the welfare state was far from a radical institution, and was part of the liberal conception of the good society (Bauman, 2005:47-48). News narratives

supportive of the welfare state also appeared in times of abnormally high economic growth (Piketty, 2014:398).

The end of this growth period ended as the age of neoliberalism began, and arguments that favoured redistribution of power and wealth as a solution to poverty were largely confined to the working class elements of the radical press. Chalaby argues that these publications were not part of the 'journalistic field' that emerged in the mid-19th century:

> The journalistic field is above all an industrial field, a field where the most powerful agents are corporations and where economic capital, material stakes, economic profit, and economic struggles prevail over other species of capital, profit or struggles. The latter do not disappear from industrial fields, but, in those fields, the rules of the game are predominantly defined by the economy (Chalaby, 1998:35).

Chalaby also notes that poverty in itself is not a 'newsworthy fact' (Chalaby, 1998:42). This raises the question of why newspapers write about poverty at all, especially in such a marketised environment? One potential answer lies in the fact that newspapers report on poverty when it is discussed in the political sphere – and the period when newspapers wrote least about poverty coincided with a lack of discussion of poverty in Parliament. This relationship between news coverage of poverty and politics requires further investigation.

On the surface, news coverage of the welfare state appears to be a more simple issue to investigate. The return to low growth led to public spending cuts and a renewed critique of people living in poverty, which was outlined by the *Images of Welfare* study (Golding & Middleton, 1982). This study captures the beginning of

neoliberalism as the dominant social, political and economic paradigm. Two key developments in this period were the increase in levels of economic inequality and the demonization of welfare recipients by the British press. These developments raise questions about how neoliberalism has shaped news framing of poverty and welfare. Put simply, how have categories of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor been redrawn throughout the period in question? Before looking at these questions in more detail it is necessary to offer some conceptual grounding for the study which is provided in the following chapter.

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter provides the analytical and conceptual grounding that underpins this thesis. It highlights the specific characteristics of neoliberalism and its relationship with and to journalistic norms and practices, particularly those emphasising the 'fourth estate' role of the press. Exploring the relationship between neoliberal ideology and the normative parameters of journalism, also presented in ideological terms, paves the way for a rigorous critical analysis of contemporary journalism's representation of poverty and welfare through content and framing analyses. It also looks at how the ideological parameters of journalism and its practices and products have shaped the debate about poverty in the news.

3.1 Constructing the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor in the news

As discussed in the literature review, media constructions of poverty are often based on a dichotomy between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' individuals (Devereux, 1998; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Redden, 2011). Studies which examine media coverage of poverty often focus on particular manifestations such as race-related poverty (Clawson & Trice, 2000; Gilens, 1996a; Kim et al., 2010), child poverty (Barnett et al., 2007), and homelessness (Hodgetts et al., 2006; Hodgetts et al., 2007; Hodgetts, Stolte, et al., 2008; Schneider, 2012; Schneider & Remillard, 2013). Some studies have produced cross-national comparisons on news coverage of topics including welfare (Larsen & Dejgaard, 2013) and poverty amongst immigrants (Redden, 2011).

A critical review of texts on poverty and welfare reveals that studies which examine news coverage of 'welfare' tend to yield different results to those that focus on manifestations such as child poverty. The *Images of Welfare* study which used a sample of 'welfare and social security news' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:67) found that news coverage consistently focussed on the 'undeserving poor' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:48). These results are indicative of a type of framing that links certain types of welfare benefits with the construction of 'undeserving' individuals and groups. Alternatively, when news articles are sampled using the search term 'poverty' they are more likely to focus on 'deserving' individuals and groups.

Further evidence for this can be found in Redden's 2010 study which focussed on news coverage of poverty by examining child poverty as associated with the 'deserving poor' and immigration as associated with the 'undeserving poor'. Immigration proved to be a more problematic research topic than child poverty in relation to poverty:

> Given the fact that immigrants and migrants are disproportionately affected by poverty and the previous research demonstrating negative coverage, it was expected my sample would provide numerous articles explicitly connecting immigration and immigrants to poverty. However, my results proved more complicated. Connections between poverty and immigration were more implicit than explicit. More common was a view of migrants in terms of economic value or cost to British or Canadian society (Redden, 2010:39-40).

This suggests that use of the term 'poverty' is associated with reporting news about people who 'deserve' some form of help and support. Therefore, when journalists write about 'undeserving' demographics such as welfare recipients

and immigrants they do not tend to link these discussions to 'poverty'. This distinction has featured in public attitudes research into these labels:

> Overall the term "welfare" obviously carries more negative connotations than does "poor." If we think of a continuum in which the least favorable descriptor might be "loafers and bums" and the most favourable terms might be the "truly needy" or "widows and orphans," it would appear that "welfare" would fall nearer the loafer end (maybe rather close to it) while "poor" would be towards the "truly needy" (Smith, 1987:82).

This study found that the public in the United States were in favour of helping 'poor people' or the 'unemployed' but opposed to helping 'welfare recipients' (Smith, 1987:77). This is an important consideration in studying news coverage of poverty. Groups experiencing poverty, such as welfare recipients, homeless people, and immigrants may not be identified as such by the news media because they are not deemed to be 'deserving' of help or support. Noam Chomsky has discussed this paradox between poverty as a 'deserving' label and welfare as an 'undeserving' label:

> Overwhelmingly the population thinks that the government, meaning the organised public, has a responsibility to provide people with minimal standards of living, health and so on. On the other hand, they are opposed to welfare, which does exactly that. The reason: the image of welfare is a rich, black mother having children over and over again so that we'll pay for them, riding in a Cadillac to the welfare office to pick up her check (Chomsky, 2005:219).

Research into poverty and welfare often reflects these distinctions. For example, research into negative media constructions of race in the United States often links to discussions about welfare (Clawson & Trice, 2000; Gilens, 1996a; Kim et al., 2010). These negative constructions of welfare recipients have been found

repeatedly in research carried out in the last three decades where neoliberalism had provided the underlying context for the mass media.

3.2 Poverty and welfare in the age of neoliberalism

It is necessary to adopt a critical approach when discussing the term 'neoliberalism'. It has been described as a 'problematic rhetorical device', this is because it 'bundles together a proliferation of eclectic and contradictory concepts' (Venugopal, 2015:183). The phrase 'age of neoliberalism' appears in 1,078 Google Scholar entries from the late 1980s onwards.[27] Foucault's work on neoliberalism linked several strands of thought including German ordoliberalism and Chicago School free market fundamentalism into a discourse of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 2008). This work pre-empted much of the research on the topic which casts neoliberalism as the dominant ideology of the contemporary age (Holborow, 2007; Plehwe et al., 2005). However, critiques of neoliberalism have been rendered in so many different forms with separate theoretical underpinnings that 'scholars cannot be sure that they are even discussing the same thing' (Springer, 2012:144).

The theoretical and methodological differences in studying the phenomenon raise the possibility that 'there is no such thing as neoliberalism' (Barnett, 2005:10), and eclectic usage of 'neoliberalism' highlights the need for a working definition of the term. This thesis rejects the idea that neoliberalism is not a tangible phenomenon with observable results. As discussed in the literature review above,

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[27] A search in Google Scholar on the 22nd July 2015 using the term "the age of neoliberalism" returned 1,078 entries.

neoliberalism emerged from the end of a thirty-year period of political and economic consensus around the ideas of Beveridge and Keynes, particularly around support for the welfare state between 1945 and 1975. As an ideology, neoliberalism has been part of a 'great reversal' which has seen the gradual erosion of collectivist institutions such as trade unions and the welfare state (Palley, 2005:21). Harvey lends support to the idea that neoliberalism was a reversal of Keynesianism and offers a useful definition of the term:

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, healthcare, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit (Harvey, 2005a:2).

Harvey's practical definition of neoliberalism outlines a philosophy which has guided political decision making in the United Kingdom for the last three decades. This began with Thatcherism and continued throughout the New Labour period of governance, albeit with some weak modifications towards social democracy

(Bashevkin, 2002b:134; Hall & O'Shea, 2013). One of the key political changes of this period has been the abandonment of wealth redistribution and full employment as political aims, casting aside the egalitarian aspirations of the state (Redden, 2014:6). Alongside the rise of consumer culture, this has raised questions about the role of the poor in contemporary society and the utility of the welfare state (Bauman, 2005:113).

By casting aside the egalitarian aspirations of the state in this way 'neoliberalism' has been criticised as a dominant philosophy which aims to destroy 'the philosophical foundations of the welfare state' (Bourdieu, 1998a:7). It is also a system which places the market as the guiding force for political and economic decision-making (Foucault, 2008:323; Sandel, 2012:6-7). Critics argue that 'neoliberalism' has its own language which exists without old terms such as 'capitalism', 'class', 'exploitation', 'domination' and 'inequality' but does have new terms such as 'underclass' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001:2). An important part of this process has been to shape the output of the news media for the last three decades (Dean, 2009:52). Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, news coverage of the welfare state has been characterised by criticism of the 'undeserving' poor (Bauman, 2005; Gans, 1995; Golding & Middleton, 1982; Katz, 1990, 1995). Meanwhile, welfare cuts have been presented as being necessary and in the public interest (Gans, 1995:1). In the framework of Cohen (2011:xi-xxi), a 'moral panic' was created around 'welfare scroungers' and 'dole cheats' as the state attempted to cut back on welfare provision during times of high unemployment.

News framing of the British housing crisis in the 1980s focussed on the menace of 'squatters' (Platt, 1999:106-107), and news coverage of welfare reform framed

it as an issue of dealing with a deviant 'underclass' (Golding, 1999:155). Central to this 'underclass' framing is a narrative which casts lone parents as a threat to the rest of society by causing crime and creating an economic burden (Duncan et al., 1999). These issues were misrepresented by blaming the victims of social policy failures instead of tackling their causes (Campbell, 1984; Franklin, 1999:2). The news media have de-contextualised the topics of poverty and welfare by removing questions of wealth, taxation, and redistribution. By focussing on the behaviour of individuals and groups, scholars have argued that news coverage has therefore supported and propagated neoliberal framing of poverty (De Goede, 1996:352).

3.3. Poverty, politics and the 'fourth estate'

Negrine argues that there is a symbiotic relationship between the British press and the political party system, with political parties relying on newspapers to advertise their policy programme and communicate their identity (Negrine, 1996:40). More broadly, the UK press play an important role in helping the public to understand a range of social issues (Negrine, 1996:3-4) by communicating topics through a series of 'discursive clusters' of 'facts and opinions' (Lewis, 2001:117). Poverty is a topic widely understood to have a political solution, and the shape of any potential solution is influenced by the way the topic is framed (Iyengar, 1996:69). News coverage of poverty is significant because newspapers shape how people understand poverty: those who do not directly experience poverty derive 'knowledge and insight' on the topic through 'mediated experience' (Power, 1999:79).

The relationship between the news media and centres of political power is worth examining in this respect. The press are normatively constructed as a watchdog over powerful interests on behalf of marginalised groups (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009:213; Williams, 2003:50), giving a 'voice to the voiceless' (Freeman et al., 2011:590). The 'fourth estate' is essentially a set of idealistic claims (Conboy, 2004:110), and this understanding of the role of the press is common, particularly amongst members of the press themselves (Petley, 2009:185). For example, journalists and editors defended their role on public interest grounds throughout the 2011-12 Leveson inquiry into press standards.[28] In the most idealistic understanding of the fourth estate, journalists' expected role in writing about poverty would be:

> [To] evoke a public awareness of the conditions of the poor and, as direct corollary, public sympathy. And in the longer run public sympathy will prove a serviceable platform for political action (Ingle, 2002:37).

This explanation is important to the liberal theory of the press, as it offers a rationale which justifies the activities of the commercial press as an essential part of the democratic process. However, media scholars have pointed out that this idea deserves some critical scrutiny:

> Liberal theory assumes tacitly that press freedom is a property right exercised by publishers on behalf of society. According to this approach, publishers should be free to direct personally their newspapers, or delegate authority to others, as they see fit. What they do is consistent, ultimately, with the public interest since their actions are regulated by the free market. This ensures, in liberal theory, that the press is free diverse and representative (Curran & Seaton, 2003-347).

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[28] Dacre, P., (2011). Paul Dacre's speech at the Leveson inquiry - full text, *Guardian*. 12 October 2011.

Claims that the press perform this function have rarely been supported by evidence from either a historical (Conboy, 2004:110) or contemporary perspective (Petley, 2009:195). Instead of acting as a fourth estate the news media are more likely to reflect the world from an elite perspective:

> News values and considerations of newsworthiness also prioritize events and they describe, establish, and reinforce images and relationships of order and power in our society. The prominence accorded to certain political actors, institutions, and practices is not simply an outcome of judgements of what is, or is not, somehow intrinsically important (Negrine, 1996:4).

As other scholars have noted, the structure of the news media causes them to reflect the interests of those in authority (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001:278; Herman & Chomsky, 1994), especially because journalism and politics are very closely related fields.

Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural fields offers a useful way of examining the relationship between journalism and politics (Bourdieu & Johnson, 1993:68). Bourdieu argues that competing cultural fields are shaped by the tension between incumbents who defend their field of interest through consensus and outsiders who 'break the silence of the doxa and call into question the unproblematic taken-for-granted worldview of the dominant groups' (Bourdieu & Johnson, 1993:83). When some scholars have attempted to use field theory to understand the role of the media they have conceptualised its role as a 'journalistic-political field' because both politicians and journalists constantly react to events which 'they have largely constructed' (Couldry, 2012:138). To give one example of how these two fields have a symbiotic relationship:

It is not a matter of news media, as an independent variable, affecting the cognitive processes and behaviours of political elites. Nor is it simply a matter of political elites adapting their thinking and behavior to accommodate the requirements of journalists and news production. Instead journalists and politicians regularly have some sort of combined role in the identification and selection of issues and their solutions (Davis, 2007:100).

The view that the news media reflect the position of elite groups and individuals is most often reflected in the work of media scholars working broadly in the Marxist tradition. To summarise:

Power is centralised within a handful of institutions – sometimes collectively referred to as "the state" – and those with economic and political power – a ruling class – guard it jealously and use whatever mechanism is available, including the mass media, to retain their power and to ensure their continued monopolisation of power. Those without economic or political power – the working class – are, therefore, excluded from sharing in, amongst other things, the economic wealth of a country (Negrine, 1996:17).

The idea that the news media reflect elite interests has dominated discussions of their role since the 1970s, where a sustained critique of the liberal pluralist model of the media emerged. Marxist thinking was reinvigorated by the existence of widespread 'industrial unrest and political conflict' and media scholars produced an analysis which 'pitted pluralism against Marxism' (Williams, 2003:52). Newspapers were criticised for their hostility towards left-wing ideas, even 'the milder forms of social democracy' (Miliband, 1973:198).

Bourdieu argues that the mass media favour 'those cultural producers most susceptible to the seductions of economic and political powers' (Bourdieu, 1998b:70). The operation of the mass media as conduits for elite opinion was the subject of Herman and Chomsky's study, *Manufacturing Consent,* where they argue that a 'propaganda model' filters out opinions that are critical of elite power (Herman & Chomsky, 1994). Herman describes how the US media 'depend heavily and uncritically on elite information sources and participate in propaganda campaigns helpful to elite interests' (Herman, 2000:101). These critical approaches rely on an institutional view of the media:

> In trying to explain why media perform in this way we looked to structural factors as the only possible root of the systematic patterns of media behaviour and performance (Herman, 2000:101).

Negrine gives an example of this when he describes why the British press tend to favour the perspective of the Conservative Party:

> The Conservative Party continues to enjoy the favours of those newspaper owners who are embedded in the present structures of power and wealth generation. One immediate, short-term outcome of the disproportionate distribution of political support is that political parties which propose radical, particularly left-wing, change will find it increasingly difficult to argue their case in public. This problem does not seem to afflict the radical right in the same way; the Thatcher governments of the 1980s were able to implement radical change without alienating newspaper support (Negrine, 1996:55).

The close relationship between political actors and news coverage of poverty makes up an important part of this thesis. It is largely because political elites discuss poverty and campaigns to alleviate it that poverty becomes a newsworthy phenomenon. However, this is problematic because it means that news coverage

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of poverty is likely to adopt the frames, definitions and narrow parameters of a discussion on poverty held amongst the political establishment. Evidence of this would support the view that the fourth estate only exists as a 'political myth' (Boyce et al., 1978:40). Nevertheless, if the media are just a conduit for the views of the political establishment, then it is important to take account of the agency of political actors in the news creation process.

3.3.1. The importance of news sources

This thesis relies on a broadly institutional and structural view of the press. Nevertheless, some element of agency needs to be analysed to account for the activities of vested political and business interests in manipulating the news, especially through their position as favoured elite sources (Schlesinger, 2009:3). Recent studies have shown that the quality and independence of British news deteriorated when it was 'significantly affected by its increasing reliance on public relations and news agency material' (Lewis et al., 2008:18). The material used most often by the media was public relations material from government and corporations with enough resources to affect news coverage (Lewis et al., 2008:18). These issues have been compounded by cutbacks to the resources of journalists, who are unable to invest as much time in producing quality news content:

> [Employers have] cut editorial staffing while increasing editorial output; slashed the old supply lines which used to feed up raw information from the ground; and, with the advent of news websites, added the new imperative of speed. Working in a news factory, without the time to check, without the chance to go out and make contacts and find leads, reporters are reduced to churnalism, to the passive processing of material which

overwhelmingly tends to be supplied for them by outsiders (Davies, 2009a:73).

The ability of newspapers to resist this type of public relations activity has been fundamentally weakened because they are 'caught up in a desperate struggle to remain financially viable under severe, seemingly inexorable market pressures' (Kaplan, 2010:8). Cottle describes how the media are locked into 'structural and institutional linkages between the mass media and other centres of power' (Cottle, 1998:18). Two decades earlier, Hall expressed similar sentiments:

> The practical pressures of constantly working against the clock and the professional demands of impartiality and objectivity combine to produce a systematically structured over-accessing to the media of those in powerful and privileged institutional positions (Hall, 1978:58).

Elite sources, according to Schlesinger, are capable of 'successful strategic action in an imperfectly competitive field' (Schlesinger, 1990:77). Reliance on official sources is also one of the key filters in Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, where the media 'are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information' (Herman & Chomsky, 1994:18). The media relies heavily on sources from the government and corporations, and these elite groups are prominent in 'shaping the supply of experts' (Herman & Chomsky, 1994:23). As Sigal put it, 'news is not reality, but a sampling of sources portrayal of reality, mediated by news organizations' (Sigal, 1973:189). Therefore, critically examining news sources becomes important in terms of understanding their 'strategic activities', along with how the British press mediate poverty (Cottle, 2000:436).

3.4. Neoliberalism as ideology in the British press

It would need an entire thesis to fully unpack all of the 'theoretical confusion' (van Dijk, 1998a:1) involved in historical debates on ideology. Nevertheless, some theoretical discussions will help to underpin discussions about the ideological nature of news coverage of poverty.

Ideology is commonly used to signify a 'system of wrong, false, distorted or otherwise misguided beliefs, typically associated with our political opponents' (van Dijk, 1998a:2). This notion is often linked to the Marxist concept of false consciousness which was used by the Frankfurt School to understand 'the distorted beliefs and activities of the German working class' (Eyerman, 1981:55). Emerging from the Marxist tradition, this understanding of ideology was firmly linked to power relations between classes, with the working classes irrationally assuming that their interests were the same as the interests of the ruling class (Thompson, 2015:459).

Although the idea of 'false consciousness' is often described as the Marxist contribution to ideology, it was more closely related to the work of Georg Lukacs, who argued that the capitalist system had 'devastating and degrading effects' on 'class consciousness' (Lukacs, 1972:80). Marx (1818-1883) argued that ideology emerged within the superstructure of a society which was determined by its economic base:

> The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be

determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic - in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production (Marx, 2013[1859]:395).

While critics argue that Marx's base-superstructure dichotomy was too reductive and deterministic, he did capture the idea that it was difficult for people to think beyond their experiences. He described how 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness' (Marx, 2013[1859]:395). Louis Althusser (1918-1990) developed this idea further when he defined ideology as the 'representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals with the real conditions of their existence' (Althusser, 1977:153). He distinguished between the repressive state apparatus, which included the military, police and penal system, and the ideological state apparatus, which operates by enforcing the ruling class ideology (Althusser, 1977:145). Althusser argued that ideology is often latent in society because it reflects what seem like obvious truths (Althusser, 1977:163).

Along similar lines, Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci discussed how hegemony relies on the production of 'common sense' for the media to serve the interests of the ruling class. Gramsci's theory of hegemony explains how 'organic' intellectuals emerge to speak for the interests of a particular class, and the media offer a forum for these intellectuals to express their views. This is often framed as representing 'good sense' or 'common sense' as a form of practical philosophy

(Gramsci, 1971:328). According to Gramsci, the tension between different groups of intellectuals is coordinated through a process of reconciling dominant interests with 'the general interests of subordinate groups' (Gramsci, 1971:328). In this way, the ideas of organic intellectuals shape perceptions of institutions and wider society according to the dominant culture. This framing presents the interests of dominant groups as the interests of wider society, giving an impression that decisions taken by elites were 'based on the consent of the majority' as expressed through the media (Gramsci, 1971:80).

While the collapse of socialism dampened enthusiasm for Marxist and neo-Marxist explanations of ideology, these ideas were kept alive through cultural studies (van Dijk, 1998a:3). Building on Gramsci's concept of a 'crisis of hegemony' where the ideas of the ruling elite are challenged, Stuart Hall argued that the post-war period of hegemony was a 'Labourist variant' of consent rooted in 'the social-democratic repertoire' (Hall et al., 1982:219). He defined ideology as:

> The mental framework -the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, the systems of representation which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works (Hall, 1986:29).

Hall examined news coverage of a new type of crime, 'mugging', and argued that this 'moral panic' was symptomatic of a 'rupture of ruling class hegemony' (Hall et al., 1982:219). In the periodic creation of moral panics, a 'condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests' – with the targeted individuals or groups held up as 'folk

devils' (Cohen, 2011:9). Key features of Cohen's 'cycle of moral panic' can be found in news coverage of welfare (Cohen, 2011:24).

The framing of the poor as folk devils resulted in further 'pressures to cut welfare and state benefits that had provided a safety net for the victims of economic change' (Critcher, 2003:64). An example of this pattern can be found in the stigmatisation of lone parents as the 'singular cause of all social ills':

> Are taxes too high? It is because the state has to support unemployed single mothers! Is there too much juvenile delinquency? It is because single mothers, lacking firm parental authority, cannot provide proper moral education. (Zizek, 2006:41).

Hall has recently argued that the lack of dissent at this type of narrative highlights how 'after forty years of a concerted neo-liberal ideological assault, this new version of common sense is fast becoming the dominant one' (Hall & O'Shea, 2013:4). More than fifty years ago, Anderson argued that hegemony in England is 'not articulated in any systematic major ideology, but is rather diffused in a miasma of commonplace prejudices and taboos' (Anderson, 1964:31). These operate on a combination of 'traditionalism' and 'empiricism' which has no basis in 'social or historical reality' (*op. cit.*). In this sense, ideology is a complex phenomenon, and it cannot be reduced to a simplistic explanation of a single dominant ideology:

> The argument for the dominant ideology hypothesis is not very persuasive, but in many situations and under specific conditions it does hold true (van Dijk, 1998a:185).

Ideology, according to van Dijk, should be analysed through a multidisciplinary approach examining the 'triangle' of 'social cognition, society and discourse' (van Dijk, 1998a:313). Other scholars have made the connection between ideology and language by stressing the important role it plays in constructing the social world (Conboy, 2007:118; Wodak & Meyer, 2009:88). When van Dijk used this approach to study racism in the press he argued that news was 'the main source of people's knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, both of other elites and of citizens' (van Dijk, 2000:41). This is an important consideration when looking at news framing of poverty. However, pinning down where ideology lies in this process is a difficult task:

> The term ideology has a wide range of historical meanings, all the way from the unworkably broad sense of the social determination of thought to the suspiciously narrow idea of the deployment of false ideas in the direct interests of the ruling class (Eagleton, 2007:221).

The idea of a single ruling class or elite is complex; when it comes to news coverage of poverty, which ruling class interests do the newspapers reflect? The historical outline in the previous chapter shows occasions where newspapers promoted the interests of the British Empire and its continuing expansion. On other occasions, there was a direct link between news coverage and the interests of the political party in government. More generally, the age of neoliberalism has been a period where the free market dominates all other concerns. However, each of these positions may promote a range of different causes and solutions to poverty. Which of these are most likely to be reproduced in the news?

> Dominant ideologies, and occasionally oppositional ones, often employ such devices as unification, spurious identification, naturalization, deception, self-deception, universalization, rationalization. But they do not

do so universally; indeed it is doubtful that one can ascribe to ideology any invariable characteristics at all. We are dealing less with some essence of ideology than with an overlapping network of "family resemblances" between different styles of signification (Eagleton, 2007:222).

The market, the nation state and the political party in government represent three examples of the types of overlapping elite interests that have been served by newspapers in their coverage of poverty. If there has been an identifiable dominant ideology informing news reporting and political responses to poverty, then it begins with constructions of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor (Golding & Middleton, 1982; Katz, 1990; Lister, 2004; Lugo-Ocando & Harkins, 2015). According to Amartya Sen (1981), the concept of shame is central to the establishment of poverty. By instigating moral panics about people living in poverty, the media have been able to project a sense of shame onto vulnerable groups like asylum seekers or benefit recipients, who are constructed by the media as an 'underclass' (Chase, 2013; Walker & Chase, 2013).

The way that newspapers use language is important to building this ideological outlook, and the house style of particular newspapers can function as a form of control:

> The precepts of style form a body of received ideas, receding endlessly into the past without ever appearing to reach any ultimate source (Cameron, 1995:33).

Style is an important aspect of a newspaper's identity and reporters must write in a way that is 'recognizable and consistent' to satisfy the demands of the market (Cameron, 1995:45). However, the imposition of particular house styles can create 'covert working of common sense professional judgements and widely-

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held stereotypes, which naturalise the particular understandings of news events' (Cameron, 1996:315). According to Cameron, newspaper styles are intrinsically ideological:

> Stylistic values are not timeless and neutral, but have a history and a politics. They play a role in constructing a relationship with a specific imagined audience, and also in sustaining a particular ideology of news reporting (Cameron, 1996:316).

Journalists may be unaware of the ideological significance of the styles imposed on them by particular newspapers (Cameron, 1996:331). Selecting which elements of a news story are the most salient often has 'little to do with individual agency or conscious thought':

> The seasoned reporter is on autopilot or because of his or her over-familiarity with the topic or situation, or because the chronology of the often-pedestrian event...gets in the way of locating the most important element or the news item with the most impact or relevance (Cotter, 2010:74).

This suggests that studying newspapers from an institutional standpoint is a better approach than assuming a great degree of agency from individual journalists. Language is also connected to power structures because 'what the powerful say can often be "right" because it is said by the powerful' (Kress & Hodge, 1979:122). So a distinction must be made between whether a particular claim is rooted in knowledge or power, and these two categories are not easy to separate (Kress & Hodge, 1979:122). The language of newspapers is also important to this study. Kress and Hodge have argued that language is 'an absolute precondition of all social life, and…the medium in which most organised

thought and communication proceed' (Kress & Hodge, 1979:1). Meanwhile, language can also be used to limit the understanding of a particular issue:

> Language fixes a world that is so much more stable and coherent than what we actually see that it takes its place in our consciousness and becomes what we think we have seen. And since normal perception works by constant feedback, the gap between the real world and the socially constructed world is constantly being reduced, so that what we do "see" tends to become what we can say (Kress & Hodge, 1979:5).

The relationship between ideology and language is complicated but the recurring theme in this discussion has been the power relationships underlying the construction of poverty and welfare. In this sense, the press can be understood as operating within a framework of hegemony. Therefore, this thesis adopts a critical approach rooted in the concept of hegemony. In doing so, it rejects some of the core principles rooted in the liberal theory of the press. As Curran points out, a weakness of liberal pluralist theory is the assumption that the media are working in 'everyone's interest' (Curran, 2002a:137). This assumption ignores power relations and conflicting interests:

> Winners and losers do not have the same investment in the social order [and] the media's projection of an idealized social cohesion may serve to conceal fundamental differences of interest its effect can be to repress latent conflict, and weaken support for progressive change (Curran, 2002a:137).

Many features of neoliberalism may be considered as part of an ideology. One of the defining features of the last three decades has been the large increase in economic inequality and the accumulation of vast amounts of wealth by the richest members of society. Outside of the press, there has been a large body of

research which highlights the negative effects of rising economic inequality (Chang, 2002, 2010; Dorling & Regan, 2005; Harvey, 2005a; Krugman, 2008, 2012; Piketty, 2014; Rosanvallon, 2013; Sandel, 2009, 2012; Stiglitz, 2012; Wacquant, 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Some proponents of neoliberalism have argued that 'the accumulation of wealth by the rich is good for the poor since some of the increased wealth of the rich trickles down to the poor' (Aghion & Bolton, 1997:151). However, the trickle-down theory has been widely shown as a myth: of all the differing schools of post-war economic thought, 'none of them assumed a trickle-down process' (Arndt, 1983:8). A critical view of how and why the press ignore rising inequality is worthwhile because the way that they ignore evidence appears to be ideological.

The construction of 'us' and 'them' is also worth discussing in terms of ideology. According to Katz, the number of people considered 'undeserving' has increased because citizens are now judged by their 'ability to produce wealth' (Katz, 1990:7). Bauman links this to the rise of consumer culture, arguing that an individual's contribution to society is measured in their consumption of goods (Bauman, 2005). In the United Kingdom, the state has undergone a shift away from state responsibility for people living in poverty to a system of individual responsibility (Gilbert, 2002), where those unable to avoid poverty are constructed as 'the other' (Lister, 2004). At the other end of the spectrum, the construction of national identity has been used to reinforce notions of racial superiority, and this has been evident in studies of the press (Gilroy, 2002; van Dijk, 1993). Benedict Anderson developed the concept of the nation state as an 'imagined community', arguing that the concept of nationhood was socially constructed:

> Because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson, 2006[1983]:6).

According to Anderson, the press plays a key role in this process, fostering a sense of 'horizontal comradeship' which exists 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation' in each nation (Anderson, 2006[1983]:7). While nation states and newspaper readerships are not synonymous, they are subject to a similar process of construction. The press engage in the creation of an 'idealised version of the ordinary people', (Conboy, 2002:2) and the boundaries between this 'imagined community' and others is constantly reinforced through the 'representation of outsiders to the community' (Conboy, 2006:94). In the neoliberal era, these communities are not necessarily traditional nation states:

> The International Monetary Fund, in loaning funds to hard pressed governments, will often insist that those governments reduce public expenditure on welfare programmes and devalue their currency. Nation-states may still exist in this global world but their sovereignty is compromised (Billig, 1995:131).

This idea of a financial elite ruling over the traditional nation state opens up the suggestion that the ruling class ideology in the age of neoliberalism is represented by a trans-national class. Nevertheless, the concept of the nation state should not be ignored entirely:

> The narrative elements which the tabloids choose to emphasise in constructing a continuity in the representation of the nation are an important part of the ideological cohesion which they present to readers (Conboy, 2006:92).

Conboy uses the concept of the imagined community to describe the relationship between British tabloid newspapers and their audiences:

> The cohesion of the imagined community of nation within the tabloid newspaper is not only established and reinforced by reference to insiders and indigenous narratives of nation but also by a consistent patterning within the representation of outsiders to the community […] they may be geographical outsiders, ethnic outsiders or those placed for other social or economic reasons beyond the parameters of the implied normal readership of the tabloids (Conboy, 2006:94).

In this sense, the ideological construction of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' is one key to understanding which groups are included and excluded by the British press when they report news about poverty and welfare.

3.5.   Chapter summary

This aim of this chapter has been to provide analytical grounding for the material which follows. The key theoretical elements outlined here have been contemporary constructions of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor and how this relates to neoliberalism. A critical examination of the role of the press as a 'fourth estate' finds this normative discussion of their role as an idealistic construct, so the news media's relationship with market forces, party politics and the nation state at large require further investigation. This chapter has also outlined a Marxist approach to ideology drawing on the work of Althusser, Gramsci and others to argue that news framing of poverty and welfare is likely to reflect elite interests. This theoretical base allows for the selection of an appropriate methodological approach which will be outlined in the following chapter.

4. Methods and methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology and research methods used in this thesis. The discussion of methodology deals with epistemological assumptions and begins by examining the role of the researcher in relation to the research process. The quest for 'objective' research is outlined before moving on to look at issues of ontology and outlining the position adopted in producing this research. A combination of both social constructionism and critical realism are utilised and this approach is outlined in detail before looking at how this research fits within the disciplinary framework of framing research.

The chapter then moves on to look at the specific research methods used for data gathering and analysis: content analysis and framing analysis. The way that these techniques were used is outlined in detail in the second part of this chapter, which also includes a discussion on the generation and verification of frames and how this part of the research was operationalised. The operationalisation of framing analysis is broken down and described on a chapter by chapter basis. However, before discussing how specific research methods were employed it is important to consider methodology and the position of the researcher in relation to the thesis.

4.1. Methodology
4.1.1. Objectivity and the position of the researcher

This discussion about methodology begins by focussing on the position of the researcher in relation to the project and the goal of producing 'objective' research:

An arduous, fatiguing business, which in the end only the virtuous can attain. Only those with patience, honesty, courage and persistence can delve through the dense layers of self-deception which prevent us from seeing the situation as it really is (Eagleton, 2003:131).

While Eagleton suggests that producing 'objective' research is possible he sets a very high bar as to how it may be achieved. Researchers who fail to meet this standard will need to find strategies for acknowledging the influence of their own subjectivity. Max Weber (1864-1920) warned that 'whenever the man of science introduces his personal value judgment, a full understanding of the facts ceases' (Weber, 2009[1919]:146). Weber's formula constructs values as a contaminant to the ultimate goal of achieving 'objective' research. However, as with Eagleton, this is a potentially idealistic claim which has been subjected to criticism.

One of the central problems with pursuing 'objectivity' is the question of how a researcher can abstain from value judgements throughout the research process, particularly when their values have likely been central to the choice of a research topic (Benton & Craib, 2001:81; Momin, 1972:2197; Reckling, 2001:153). According to Weber, the key to producing 'value-free' research was the ability to recognise 'inconvenient facts' – facts that ran counter to the researcher's own political beliefs (Weber, 2009[1919]:147). Weber argued that this difficult process would begin with a separation of 'facts' from 'values', however it is not a straightforward exercise. Leo Strauss (1899-1973) made the striking observation that 'Weber never explained what he understood by values' (Strauss, 1953:59). He argued that the social sciences have failed to find an acceptable form of value-freedom in the manner of the natural sciences:

After having been modified by utilitarianism, evolutionism, and neo-Kantianism, it has abandoned completely Comte's hope that a social science modelled on natural science would be able to overcome the intellectual anarchy of modern society (Strauss, 1959:18).

A range of theorists have rejected the possibility of value-free social research, converging on a belief that research is impossible to conduct without bringing a certain level of ontological assumption to the process (Cresswell, 2012:15; Molotch, 1994:234). But if there is no way to produce value-free research, it is important to consider a researcher's values, especially because our perspective is affected by our social position.

Alvin Gouldner (1920-1980) rejected Weber's notion of value-free social science as a 'myth', arguing that if sociologists in educational roles kept their personal values hidden then their students were subject to the unconscious influence of these values (Gouldner, 1962:212). Instead, he insists that scholars should follow and be clear about their values:

The only choice is between an expression of one's values, as open and honest as it can be, this side of the psychoanalytical couch, and a vain ritual of moral neutrality which, because it invites men to ignore the vulnerability of reason to bias, leaves it at the mercy of irrationality (Gouldner, 1962:212).

Along similar lines, Howard Becker argued that 'there is no position from which sociological research can be done that is not biased in one or another way' (Becker, 1966b:245). He observed that most sociologists are politically liberal, so tend to – and indeed should – take the side of the underdog (Becker, 1966b:244).

Gouldner rejected 'underdog sociology' as overly proscriptive, but other scholars have also encouraged researchers to follow particular sets of values.

Noam Chomsky argued that all intellectuals have the responsibility to 'speak the truth and to expose lies' (Chomsky, 1967:2). This view reflects the enlightenment position that the pursuit of knowledge itself is conducive to good results. For Mills, a researcher must 'relate himself to the value of truth in political struggle' (Mills & Horowitz, 1967:299). Michel Foucault (1926-1984) discussed the link between truth and power by arguing that 'we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth' (Foucault, 1980). Bourdieu echoes this sentiment in describing the role of the social scientist:

> Engage in a permanent critique of all the abuses of power or authority committed in the name of intellectual authority or, if you prefer, in a relentless critique of the use of intellectual authority as a political weapon within the intellectual field (Bourdieu, 2003:19).

Further emphasising the role of the intellectual in public life, some scholars have highlighted participation in civil society as a key aim for social researchers (Burawoy, 2005:314; Flyvbjerg, 1998:229).

With this in mind, during the production of this thesis the researcher has taken part in discussions with anti-poverty organisations such as the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), including the latter's anti-poverty communications group which challenges negative media representations of poverty. Although this was not a formal part of the research project, engagement with these organisations has helped the author to clarify the values which underpin this thesis. These include advocating for people living in

poverty and receiving welfare benefits and a belief that people affected by these issues are unfairly treated by the news media.

In common with the JRF and CPAG, the author takes the position that poverty in Britain is a social issue which needs to be tackled more effectively. One of the value-based assumptions at the root of this project is that poverty and welfare are constructed by newspapers in a way that makes effective political solutions less likely to happen. As outlined by Gouldner, researchers should acknowledge their own values because value-freedom is a worthy but overly ambitious goal (Gouldner, 1962). This represents a value judgement about 'objectivity' which makes it essential to adopt a research paradigm which finds strategies to allow for robust research despite the acknowledgement of particular value positions. Corson suggests that this can be achieved through a process of eliminating 'prejudices, errors, unsupported claims and philosophical false trails' (Corson, 1991:232). He links this to a discussion of Bhaskar's critical realism which outlines social constructionism as the research paradigm adopted in this thesis.

4.1.2. Social constructionism and critical realism as a research paradigm

This research examines media representations of poverty in the British press through the dual conceptual lenses of social constructionism and critical realism. Social constructionism is a critical research paradigm because it is based on the core assumption that there is not an objective and unbiased way to view the world (Burr, 2015:2). Within this system, knowledge is not a reflection of reality; it is constructed through society and shared culture (Burr, 2015:9). Language is central to how this reality is constructed, therefore social constructionism offers a useful paradigm for the study of newspapers (Burr, 2015:10). Within a paradigm

of social constructionism, the language of the news is understood as being a product of 'culture and history' (Burr, 2015:3).

One commonly used way of studying the news is to look for signs of 'bias' (Williams, 2003:123). However, this type of research has declined in favour of approaches which look for structural and ideological explanations for news coverage (Hackett, 1984:255). This is because arguing that 'bias' occurs is based on an assumption that journalists can stray from the path of 'impartiality' by failing to adequately distinguish 'facts' from 'values' (Allan, 2004:22). This underlines a core assumption that journalism can be objective and reflect the truth. According to Tuchman, journalists describe their work as objective and part of a 'strategic ritual' designed to 'protect the professional from mistakes and from his critics' (Tuchman, 1972:678). For Manning, these 'strategic rituals' are enacted in order to help news organisations 'exercise social control over their own journalists', particularly through reliance on 'official' sources of information (Manning, 2001:69). This is one example of how journalists produce a 'socially defined' version of reality in their articles (Berger & Luckmann, 1991:135). Therefore, in order to understand a socially constructed 'reality':

> It is essential to keep pushing questions about the historically available conceptualizations of reality from the abstract 'What?' to the sociologically concrete 'Says who?' (Berger & Luckmann, 1991:135).

This raises questions about how best to study such a phenomenon, Molotch and Lester make a convincing case for interpreting the news by thinking about possible alternatives:

One approach to mass media is to look not for reality, but for purposes which underlie the strategies of creating one reality instead of another (Molotch & Lester, 1974:111).

Therefore, it is important to understand how the media frequently portray people living in poverty through the use of negative stereotypes. This concept is useful in understanding media scholars' approach to studying representation. The term 'stereotype' in news representations is most often used as a pejorative label to describe criticism of minority groups (Dyer, 2002:11), or 'false or misleading associations between a group and an attribute that are held by their subjects in a rigid manner, resistant to counterevidence' (Blum, 2004:288). For Walter Lippmann, who introduced the term stereotypes, they were not necessarily negative but were a shorthand way of understanding the world:

> The subtlest and most pervasive of all influences are those which create and maintain the repertory of stereotypes. We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception (Lippmann, 2012:49).

Previous media research into news coverage of poverty has focussed on how negative stereotypes are used to blame individuals living in poverty for causing their own condition (Bauman, 2005; Gans, 1995; Katz, 1990). Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) studied the rise of television and mass culture and his conclusions echoed Lippmann's ideas about how stereotypes were used to understand the world. However, Adorno was more negative about the effect of this type of stereotyping:

> The more stereotypes become reified and rigid in the present setup of cultural industry, the less people are likely to change their preconceived

ideas with the progress of their experience. The more opaque and complicated modern life becomes, the more people are tempted to cling desperately to clichés which seem to bring some order into the otherwise un-understandable. Thus, people may not only lose true insight into reality, but ultimately their very capacity for life experience may be dulled by the constant wearing of blue and pink spectacles (Adorno, 1954-230).

Adorno's dichotomy of 'stereotypes' and 'reality' raises the problem of assuming that what the media produce could, in some way, achieve an 'objective' or 'real' standard. The problems associated with studying 'bias' are therefore also evident in the study of 'stereotypes'. However, media coverage of poverty and inequality in the UK does rely on the deployment of a range of negative stereotypes, so the concept is useful when analysing this media coverage.

Stereotypes occur as socially constructed phenomena, rather than deviation from an objective reality or truth. This opens another problem: if news is socially constructed, how can it be critiqued or evaluated? Critical realism offers a potential solution. A core assumption of critical realism is that a social world exists independently of our knowledge of it (Sayer, 2000:2). The way that theories of the world are constantly confounded and contradicted by events is an example of this existence beyond our knowledge:

> [Realism is] a fallibilist philosophy and one which must be wary of simple correspondence concepts of truth. It must acknowledge that the world can only be known under particular descriptions, in terms of available discourses, though it does not follow from this that no description or explanation is better than any other (Sayer, 2000:2).

Critical realism is a school of thought most commonly associated with Roy Bhaskar (1944-2014), who describes the process of uncovering the causal mechanisms behind social phenomena:

> the production of the knowledge of the mechanism of the production of, some identified phenomenon will involve the building of a model, utilizing such cognitive materials and operating under the control of something like a logic of analogy and metaphor, of a mechanism, which if it were to exist and act in the postulated way would account for the phenomenon in question (Bhaskar, 1998:13).

According to Bhaskar, this world exists regardless of our perceptions of it. It can not, therefore, be reduced simply to existing knowledge and theories of it. To make this case Bhaskar divides the world into three overlapping domains of reality: the real, the actual and the empirical (Bhaskar, 1978:56). The domain of the real is where causal mechanisms are found which explain events. The domain of the actual deals with those events which have occurred as a result of the causal mechanisms found at the level of the real. Finally, the domain of the empirical relates to empirical, observable experiences. Simply examining the world at the level of the empirical is insufficient in terms of understanding the causal mechanisms that lie behind that empirical data (Danermark et al., 2001:22).

At the same time, the availability of empirical evidence is one way of attempting to limit subjective influences to the research project. Therefore, this thesis has been produced using a package of ontological assumptions rooted in both social constructionism and critical realism. Elder-Vass urges researchers to combine these two approaches by arguing for a realist interpretation of social constructionism:

> Social constructionism's potential is best realised by separating it from the anti-realist baggage it has often been expected to carry, and linking it instead to an explicitly realist ontology of the social world: the philosophy of critical realism, developed originally by Roy Bhaskar and adopted by a range of sociologists and indeed other social scientists (Elder-Vass, 2012:9).

This approach is useful for studying news coverage because newspaper articles contain elements which are socially constructed as well as empirically testable data. These elements are examined by using a combination of content analysis and framing analysis. In a broad sense, content analysis is used to capture the more empirically testable data, while framing analysis is used to investigate how particular frames convey a set of messages about poverty and welfare. There is some overlap between these two techniques, influenced by other scholars who have adapted them to examine news coverage of poverty (Redden, 2010, 2014; Schneider, 2012).

4.1.3. Sociology and media studies

This thesis contributes primarily to the fields of sociology and media studies, two disciplines which share a close relationship. Using sociological theory to study journalism is an interesting prospect because there are some overlaps between the two fields. Robert Ezra Park, himself a former journalist, was instrumental in developing the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1940s. He described the sociologist as 'a kind of super-reporter' who focussed on 'the long-term trends which recorded what is actually going on, rather than what, on the surface of things, merely seems to be going on' (Park, 1950:viii-ix). The idea of linking

surface events to wider developments was described a decade earlier in Curtis MacDougall's 1938 book, *Interpretive Reporting*:

> [Journalists should] be aware of the fact that an item of news is not an isolated incident but one inevitably linked to a chain of important events...The interpreter of the news must see reasons where ordinary individuals observe only overt happenings (MacDougall, 1977:12).

Social research as a form of investigative journalism was also outlined by Meyer, who used the term 'precision journalism':

> [Both investigative journalism and social research] rely heavily on observation and interpretation, collecting our observations from public records, from interviews, from direct participation, and then spinning out our interpretations (Meyer, 1979:3).

For Molotch, there is an important link between sociology and journalism. He describes how sociologists have the advantage of not being tied to the creation of ephemeral journalism, so they 'have the time and inclination to reflect on how the game itself is conducted' – he describes this as type of research as 'deep journalism' (Molotch, 1994:223). Molotch argues that sociological research can have a real tangible impact on the outside world:

> [By listening to sociologists,] the nation could learn why its antidrug repression will not work, why more cops will not stop crime, or why tax breaks for industries will not improve communities or build the commonwealth (Molotch, 1994:224).

For Mills, sociology was about linking 'private troubles' with 'public issues'. He described how the lives of individuals were subject to external events beyond their control:

When a society is industrialised, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both (Mills, 1970[1959]:9).

Research has shown that this kind of wider context is often missing from news coverage of poverty, which is often constructed without exploring who might be responsible for the existence of poverty or what possible solutions might exist (Bullock et al., 2001; Kensicki, 2004; McKendrick et al., 2008). When journalists do discuss responsibility for poverty, they most often blame the people experiencing poverty by focussing on family breakdown and promiscuity (Kim et al., 2010:575).

This thesis examines news coverage of poverty between 1985 and 2015, a thirty-year period which has been described as an era of neoliberal hegemony (Harvey, 2005a; Klein, 2007). Although the original research is specific to this timescale, it is important to have some understanding of the historical context that has informed the framing of poverty, especially considering that understanding culture and society is central to social constructionist theory (Burr, 2015:9). Mills emphasised the importance of placing social science research within its historical context by arguing that history is 'the shank of social study':

Without the use of history and without a historical sense of psychological matters, the social scientist cannot adequately state the kinds of problems

that ought now to be the orienting points of his studies (Mills, 1970[1959]:159).

Social research, according to Mills, 'requires a historical scope of conception and a full use of historical materials' (Mills, 1970[1959]:162). Chapter Two outlined a historical background to contextualise the age of neoliberalism. This historical view informs the creation of the specific research questions tackled in this thesis. These questions are addressed through research methods compatible with the social constructionist and critical realist tradition, and within the discipline of sociology and media studies.

4.2 Research methods

4.2.1 Content analysis

The research began with a close reading of several news articles on the topic of poverty and welfare. Attempting to trace news coverage of poverty and welfare over a considerable period of time, the project uses content analysis at the starting point. At its most basic level, content analysis counts the amount of something (Berger, 1991:25; Williams, 2003:158-159). This makes it a useful technique for bringing a semblance of order to a large dataset – in this case, news articles about poverty written over a thirty-year period. Content analysis has also been defined as the 'systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods' (Riffe et al., 2013:18).

There are two types of content analysis: manifest analysis which is a quantitative technique focussing on counting data that are physically present and countable;

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and latent content analysis, which focuses on qualitative data that may have a meaning hidden within a text. This thesis makes use of manifest content analysis throughout by focussing only on units of analysis which are clearly visible in the texts (Krippendorff, 2013:29). Although content analysis cannot be used to gain a deep contextual understanding of the way that news articles are produced (Neuendorf, 2002:10), the number of articles written about child poverty compared with those on poverty amongst pensioners or poverty in other countries raises an interesting question: what do journalists most often write about when they write about poverty? Poverty itself is rarely the main topic of a news article unless linked to another story such as a political campaign or a financial crisis (Bullock et al., 2001; Franklin, 1999).

4.2.1.1 Operationalising content analysis in Chapter 5

To gain a better understanding of which topics are most closely related to news coverage of poverty in Britain, and to develop some empirical results through a deeper familiarisation with the data, content analysis was used to analyse a sample of articles written about poverty between 1985 and 2014.[29] These dates were chosen as representative of 'the age of neoliberalism'. To produce a manageable collection of news articles, the study used relevance sampling, a technique which involves 'selecting all textual units that contribute to answering given research questions' by 'following a conceptual hierarchy, systematically lowering the number of units that need to be considered for analysis' (Krippendorff, 2013:120; Schrafraad et al., 2006).

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[29] This part of the research was carried out in 2014

This was achieved by reducing the initial sample to four national newspapers and their corresponding Sunday editions: the *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Mirror*, the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*, the *Times* and *Sunday Times* and the *Guardian* and the *Observer*. These publications were selected for two reasons: they represent both the tabloid and broadsheet press, and they reflect different ideological stances within the political spectrum. This typology has been used in other media content studies (Henderson et al., 2000). In longitudinal terms, these were also the newspapers offering good access to their archives. Nexis was used, as in other studies, because of its usefulness in 'tracking, discovery, exploration, and emergence of key themes' (Altheide & Devriese, 2007:384).

This research examined articles where the term 'poverty' appeared in the headline. Analysis of 'headline mentions' is considered part of a content analysis 'best practice' checklist because of how prominent headline terms are (Macnamara, 2005:10). This technique raises issues about the omission of potentially relevant material which will be discussed later in the chapter. As poverty is used in a huge range of contexts, the Nexis database function was used to select articles where the word was repeated 3 times or more in the news article to ensure that it was a major theme. The articles selected from the relevance sampling exercise were then exported into text files using Microsoft Word.

Each article was scrutinised using the first set of the inclusion criteria: letters to the editor, television guides and review articles were omitted, while news articles, editorials and comment pieces were included. Editorial content is important for

understanding the institutional and ideological approach to poverty and welfare taken by British newspapers:

> The editorial and op-ed (opposite-editorial) pages are central to a newspaper's identity. They are the only place where journalists are authorized to express opinion, often guided by the political leanings of the newspaper. It is in editorials that newspapers speak both for and to their audience, creating a distinctive voice for the newspaper that is otherwise buried under the conventions of objective journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008:70).

Columns and opinion pieces were also analysed as part of the dataset for two reasons. Their presence has increased exponentially in modern journalism because they are much cheaper to source and produce than investigative journalism or news reporting (McNair, 2008:118), and they have also become increasingly political in nature:

> [The growth in comment pieces was partly] attributable to the increasingly packaged, intensively managed nature of democratic politics, and the rise of something called spin (public relations, but much more scientific and professionalised than ever before), which seemed to require a journalistic response in the form of 'process' journalism – commentary on the presentation and meaning of political discourse, as opposed to the validity or otherwise of its substance (McNair, 2008:118).

Therefore, columnists are 'a key ingredient of a newspaper's marketing pitch' – and the time period under investigation coincides with newspapers shifting from news gathering towards commentary (McNair, 2008:118). These developments have blurred the distinction between fact and opinion and have increased further with the emergence of online platforms (McNair, 2008:118-120). Therefore, 'hard' news, columns, and opinion pieces formed the dataset for analysis as essential

components in understanding the institutional makeup of each newspaper and their ideological stance.

Once materials that did not fit the inclusion criteria had been removed, the study identified 3,431 articles for further analysis. These articles were then examined to determine whether they were primarily about poverty in the United Kingdom or overseas. Their geographical area was logged using three categories: 'poverty overseas', 'global poverty' and 'poverty in Britain'. The breakdown of these articles can be seen in the following table:

Poverty overseas	Global poverty	Poverty in Britain	Total
648	569	2,214	3,431

Table 2: Geographical breakdown of content analysis

Focussing on news articles about poverty in Britain, a coding frame was developed to examine the main themes, using a system utilised in similar content analysis studies (Hilton et al., 2012:1690). The coding frame (Appendix A) was developed by using 'manifest content analysis', which as discussed above, examines 'that which is explicitly stated, and draws on the objective and replicable qualities of quantitative methods' (Hilton et al., 2012:1690).

The coding frame developed for this research was based on identifying key themes. A close reading of the articles made clear the existence of different 'genres' within news coverage of poverty. This type of thematic analysis is difficult:

Thematic units may have to rely on textual features that are distributed throughout a text, even carefully trained coders can easily be led in different directions, making reliability difficult to achieve (Krippendorff, 2013:109).

However, in order to address the question of what journalists most often write about when they write about poverty, it is necessary to acknowledge the risk of subjective interpretations and code the articles according to their major thematic categories, a technique that has been used more commonly in public health research (Hilton et al., 2012; Nicholls, 2011; Slopen et al., 2007). The results of this thematic analysis, outlined in Chapter Five, were used to inform much of the rest of the analysis. By moving this content analysis forward and coding articles in terms of 'themes' the research had started to move away from quantitative content analysis and towards an approach more commonly found in framing analysis (Pan & Kosicki, 1993:60). Indeed, some scholars working in framing analysis argue that a theme can also be called a frame:

[Frames are] structurally located lexical choices of codes constructed by following certain shared rules and conventions. They have varying functions in signification. They function as framing devices because they are recognizable and thus can be experienced, can be conceptualized into concrete elements of a discourse, can be arranged or manipulated by newsmakers, and can be communicated in the "transportation" sense of communications (Pan & Kosicki, 1993:59).

This raises questions about the boundaries between content analysis and framing analysis, highlighting the need to discuss the features of framing analysis, and how these techniques have been operationalised.

4.2.2 Framing analysis

Framing analysis has seen an increased usage in communications research in recent years (Bryant & Miron, 2004:693). It has been used in this thesis because content analysis can only take the research so far; as Reese points out 'the most important frame may not be the most frequent' (Reese et al., 2001:8). Framing analysis has been used in a range of fields including communication, sociology, and political science (Reese et al., 2001:7). Some scholars have argued that framing analysis should be understood as an extension of, or indeed the next level of, agenda setting research (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). Framing has also been used within the paradigm of media effects research (Entman, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Scheufele, 1999).

News has become the 'most prominent discursive site in which communication researchers strive to understand what framing is and how framing works' (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010:1). According to Goffman, a frame is part of a 'schemata of interpretation' linked to 'some prior or "original" interpretation' which lends meaning to a particular 'scene' (Goffman, 1974:21). Gitlin and Entman provide similar definitions:

> [Frames are the result of] persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion. [Frames] enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely [and to] package the information for efficient relay to their audiences (Gitlin, 1980:7).

> [Framing is to] select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a

particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993:52).

Other scholars have argued that frames consist of the 'central organising idea or story line that provides meaning' (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989:143). This meaning is linked to a wider set of issues which include 'various public policy positions' which are communicated through 'metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images' (Pan & Kosicki, 1993:56). This thesis uses frame analysis linked closely to the social constructionist research paradigm outlined earlier, an approach that has been advocated by other scholars (Van Gorp, 2007).

Newspapers frame articles in ways that use a range of different influences including news sources and public opinion, as well as using their 'own frames' (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989:3). Therefore, journalists use frames for 'making sense of relevant events' and suggesting which events are important (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989:3). Power is a central aspect which shapes the framing process and determines which frames are used most often (Carragee & Roefs, 2004:215; Entman, 1993:53). Framing analysis is used throughout this thesis to understand how political problems such as poverty are defined and how political solutions are outlined and explained (Iyengar, 1991, 1996; Tuchman, 1978). Frames are of interest in the reporting of poverty because political reforms most often 'make life worse for the disadvantaged and benefit those who already enjoy the most of what there is to get':

> It is not hard to understand why political language reflects and reinforces that inherent bias. We are socialized into the dominant ideology from infancy on: trained in subtle and explicit ways to admire the successful and

become suspicious of the abilities and integrity of the disadvantaged, even if we are disadvantaged ourselves (Edelman, 1993:241).

Research into news framing of poverty in the United States has shown that journalists focus on negative aspects that blame people living in poverty for their problems by focussing on issues such as race, individualism and moral failings (Nisbet, 2010:60). The selection of these particular frames suggests a rejection of alternative frames. Some scholars have argued that these choices must be understood in terms of 'frame sponsorship', examining 'an issue culture in terms of frames that influence or fail to influence reportage' (Carragee & Roefs, 2004:220). Frame sponsors are able to understand the language and routines used by journalists and adapt their messages accordingly (Sigal, 1973:75). These sponsors can often be part of advocacy groups such as think tanks or public relations firms, and they use sophisticated techniques to influence journalists and news organisations to reproduce their favoured frames:

> Sponsorship is more than merely advocacy, involving such tangible activities as speech making, interviews with journalists, advertising, article and pamphlet writing, and the filing of legal briefs to promote a preferred package. These sponsors are usually organizations, employing professional specialists whose daily jobs bring them into contact with journalists. Their jobs breed sophistication about the news needs of the media and the norms and habits of working journalists (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989:6).

In terms of news coverage of poverty, van Gorp argues that news frames are 'culturally embedded' because they are rooted in commonly recognisable 'themes' (Gorp, 2010:86). The use of 'archetypes' such as 'villain, victim and tragic hero' function as news frames:

If the archetype of the villain is used, then poverty can be viewed as the result of certain individuals who make use of, or abuse the social welfare system to which they do not financially contribute. The poor lack the will to work and that is why they live in poor conditions. A more positive usage of this frame results in the stereotypical portrayal of the jolly vagabond who feels strongly about complete freedom and opts for voluntary poverty. Next, poor people can be portrayed as victims of a demanding socioeconomic system. Some succeed in beating the system and becoming heroes when they combat poverty. Other poor people do not succeed, because they try to change what is unalterable and fight in vain in a pitiless and demanding society (Gorp, 2010:86).

These frames were identified in van Gorp's ongoing study of television news about poverty in Belgium, and he argues that the frames were influenced by 'organisational factors, external conditions, and journalistic sources' (Gorp, 2010:86). For van Gorp, the most important reasoning device in terms of framing poverty relates to the question of who is responsible:

The heart of a framing analysis is to identify the framing and reasoning devices and to relate them to a condensing symbol, which is part of a shared culture. The frame molds the frame package to an internally consistent whole (Gorp, 2010:92).

This thesis helps to better understand the process of framing news about poverty by examining the role of frame sponsors and their links to centres of power. Carragee and Roefs have criticised previous framing studies for failing to 'consider political and social power':

They reduce frames to story topics, attributes, and issue positions, and neglect frame sponsorship and the asymmetries in power that influence the ability of sponsors to shape the news agenda. They also isolate frames

as content features to study their influence and thereby neglect why particular frames dominate news discourse (Carragee & Roefs, 2004:227).

Carragee and Roefs argue that examining the role of power in the framing process involves 'exploring the interaction between the news media and social movements' (Carragee & Roefs, 2004:228). They argue that this approach is consistent with Goffman's research which focuses on the role of framing in the production of meaning (Goffman, 1974). It reflects social constructionism because news frames are influenced by external activity from social groups engaged in promoting their own interpretation of events. This has been described as the 'site on which various social groups, institutions, and ideologies struggle over the definition and construction of social reality' (Gamson et al., 1992:385).

Previous studies have suggested that newspapers frequently use frames that favour the views of political elites (Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). Therefore, power is central to investigating the framing process, and it is important to understand and identify the relationship between powerful elites and particular news frames:

> What power relationships and institutional arrangements support certain routine and persistent ways of making sense of the social world, as found through specific and significant frames, influential information organizing principles that are manifested in identifiable moments of structured meaning and become especially important to the extent they find their way into the media discourse, and are thus available to guide public life (Reese et al., 2001:19).

One of the key challenges in operationalising a framing analysis is to ensure that frames are generated, verified and identified in a way that is replicable for other

researchers. This returns to the question of research objectivity because according to van Gorp it is impossible to completely remove subjectivity from framing analysis (Gorp, 2010:90). Some advocates of framing analysis have argued that 'manifest frames are part of a much bigger picture and what we don't see can be very important' (Reese et al., 2001:17). Selecting frames which are not present in the text has been seen by some critics as being too subjective. This has led to a wide range of approaches to framing analysis which prompted Entman to describe it as a 'fractured paradigm':

> Nowhere is there a general statement of framing theory that shows exactly how frames become embedded within and make themselves manifest in a text, or how framing influences thinking. Analysis of this concept suggests how the discipline of communication might contribute something unique: synthesizing a key concept's disparate uses, showing how they invariably involve communication, and constructing a coherent theory from them (Entman, 1993:51).

Entman argues that the casual definition of terms such as 'frames', 'framing' and 'framework' in academia have led problems which can be resolved through the creation of a 'more precise and universal understanding' of these terms (Entman, 1993:52). However, other scholars have suggested that a diversity of approaches within framing analysis indicates strength rather than weakness. For example, D'Angelo argues that the wide range of approaches within framing analysis have helped to develop a more multifaceted and comprehensive understanding of the framing process, which would not have emerged under a more prescriptive application of framing definitions. He argues that:

> Knowledge about framing has accumulated because the research program encourages researchers to employ and refine many theories about the framing process under the guidance of distinct paradigmatic

perspectives on the relationship between frames and framing effects. Theoretical and paradigmatic diversity has led to a comprehensive view of the framing process, not fragmented findings in isolated research agendas (D'Angelo, 2002:871).

D'Angelo describes how framing research has been created within three paradigms: cognitive, critical and constructionist. Researchers working within the cognitive paradigm are 'interested in detecting thoughts that mirror propositions encoded in frames' (D'Angelo, 2002:876). This thesis has examined the content of news articles without attempting to study audience reactions, so the cognitive paradigm has limited influence on the study. The critical paradigm proposes that 'frames are the outcome of newsgathering routines by which journalists convey information about issues and events from the perspective of values held by political and economic elites' (D'Angelo, 2002:876). The approach of this thesis is influenced by the critical paradigm, however it also draws from the constructionist paradigm:

> Journalists are information processors who create 'interpretive packages' of the positions of politically invested 'sponsors' (*e.g.,* sources) in order to both reflect and add to the 'issue culture' of the topic (D'Angelo, 2002:877).

Scholars working within the critical paradigm argue that the persistent selection of elite sources is an example of hegemony in action. In contrast, constructionists may counter that these sources have been selected as examples of 'credible sponsors' on a particular topic (D'Angelo, 2002:877). Contrary to Entman's call to repair the fractured paradigm, D'Angelo argues that the rich diversity in approaches to framing analysis allows for a better understanding of the framing process. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to resolve these contrasting views on whether framing analysis should be unified or diverse. When it comes to

mediating politically contested issues such as poverty, some scholars have argued that framing is an essential part of the process:

> Framing an issue is to participate in public deliberation strategically, both for one's own sense making and for contesting the frames of others (Pan & Kosicki, 2001:39).

Therefore, framing is to take part in an 'ideological contest' over political issues including 'who is responsible and who is affected, which ideological principles or enduring values are relevant, and where the issue should be addressed' (Pan & Kosicki, 2001:40). Political actors are described as 'frame sponsors' because they are able to use their resources to promote a particular way of framing an issue (Pan & Kosicki, 2001:46). Understanding how political issues are framed requires 'a broader and longer view' because 'strategic framing' requires the building of a 'discursive community' (Pan & Kosicki, 2001:61). In this context, considering the framing of politically contested issues in the media is important:

> News framing can eliminate voices and weaken arguments, that the media can frame issues in ways that favor a particular side without showing an explicit bias, and that defining the terms of a debate takes one a long way towards winning it (Tankard Jr., 2001:96).

Research into news framing of political issues in the United States lends support to the theory of media hegemony. News framing played a part in fostering public support for tax cuts which would increase inequality:

> Equality is a sociotropic, non-self-regarding value, and Americans pride themselves on their belief in it, albeit in somewhat contradictory and confused fashion. The media provide only part of the explanation for Americans' blurry thinking on taxation and equality. Nonetheless, we believe, analyzing the media's contributions helps us understand the

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actual process by which Americans are discouraged from prioritizing either their individual economic interests or the collective value of economic equality (Bell & Entman, 2011:565).

Entman points out that the media consistently frame issues in a way that promotes capitalism and therefore opposes the reduction of inequality. This (Entman, 2007:170). Tankard argues that framing can be used to provide empirical evidence that supports the theory of media hegemony, but a rigorous approach must be adopted to frame identification:

> An unsystematic approach to defining frames could mean that the set of possible frames is not exhaustive, or that the frame categories are not mutually exclusive. Also, without a systematic approach to defining possible frames researchers may tend to find frames they are consciously or unconsciously looking for (Tankard Jr., 2001:98).

Tankard advocates avoiding these problems with subjectivity through adopting an empirical approach to frame analysis. One way of doing this is to produce a 'frame package': a paragraph of the 'keywords and common language that would help identify a particular frame', made from 'paraphrased material and direct quotes from a number of sources' (Tankard Jr., 2001:99).

According to Reese, frames are 'organising principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world' (Reese et al., 2001:11). This thesis adopts an interpretive and qualitative approach to framing, a position also used by Reese which involves examining the 'cultural and political content of news frames and how they draw upon a shared store of social meanings' (Reese, 2010:18). The operationalisation

of this framing analysis is outlined further on a chapter by chapter basis in the following discussion.

4.2.2.1. Operationalising framing analysis in Chapter 6

> Many issues and events that citizens encounter in the news have been framed by political actors, particularly government officials, but sometimes other political actors such as interest group leaders, academic experts and grassroots movement spokespersons. Quite often these frames have political purposes – they are intended to influence public perceptions and guide public discourse (Lawrence, 2010:265).

Chapter Six focuses on the political dimension of news coverage of poverty. The chapter attempts to outline the macro frames which show how poverty has been reported in the news as a political topic. Reese's framing research on the War on Terror found that macro frames could only be identified through a 'qualitative and interpretive' approach which is useful when 'definite categories are not immediately presenting themselves and no easy coding scheme into which textual units can be sorted is evident' (Reese, 2010:37).

One of the key questions in the framing literature about the political framing of news relates to whether news organisations reflect or resist political frames (Lawrence, 2010:266). The idea that news coverage is constrained by the narrow parameters of official political debates has been described as the 'indexing hypothesis' (Bennett, 1990). This theory is described as follows:

> Mass media news professionals, from the boardroom to the beat, tend to 'index' the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials

according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic (Bennett, 1990:106).

Previous research has found that news organisations are more likely to reflect the framing of the political elite rather than challenge those frames (Entman, 2007; Gitlin, 1980; Pan & Kosicki, 2001; Zaller & Chiu, 1996). On a more detailed reading, it was clear that four of the themes identified in the content analysis exercise were related to political discussions about poverty.

Party politics in Britain play a key role in how poverty is understood and defined, and the most common theme identified in the content analysis exercise was 'politics'. Articles in this category often discussed poverty within a party political context or reported the views and debates of prominent actors within the UK political system. For example:

Headline: War on poverty is Labour's acid test; Mandelson's bold pledge to reduce social inequality

Peter Mandelson yesterday announced the creation of a task force to reduce social inequality. Based in the Cabinet Office and answerable to Tony Blair the team of outside specialists and senior civil servants will tackle the long-term effects of poverty and unemployment.[30]

This type of article describes the actions of key political parties or actors in relation to poverty. This is the most common theme found in the exercise from Chapter Five. However, three of the other themes identified in this exercise share

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[30] Brogan, B. (1997), War on poverty is Labour's acid test, *Daily Mail*, 15 August 1997.

very similar features. For example, these articles only quote political actors as sources and their focus on poverty rarely extends beyond discussions and definitions from Westminster.

The second most common theme was 'child poverty'. A closer reading of the articles based on this theme shows a similar link with Westminster politics, particularly focussed on efforts by the Labour Party to alleviate child poverty. For example:

Headline: We're failing in our war on child poverty, ministers will admit

LABOUR will today be forced to admit that it is not on track to meet its flagship pledge to halve child poverty by 2010. Ministers will unveil figures showing that they have made little or no progress over the last year, and in the year before that the number of children in poverty-stricken households actually rose.[31]

The final two themes were 'poverty is rising' and 'poverty is exaggerated'. To give an example of a typical article from each:

Headline: Quarter of households now living 'in poverty'

Britain has seen a sharp increase in poverty, according to a major study that measures how far people on low incomes can afford the basic necessities of life. The report, Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain, shows that the proportion of households regarded as living in poverty rose from 14 to 24 percent between 1983 and 1999. It also provides a snapshot of how a rise in living standards for the majority of the population has been reflected in the items now considered to be necessities, such as telephones and freezers.[32]

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[31] Martin D, (2008), We're failing in our war on child poverty, ministers will admit, *Daily Mail*, 10 June 2008.
[32] Frean, A. (2000), Quarter of households now living 'in poverty', *Times*, 11 September 2000.

Headline: Poverty, 2000: Central heating, satellite TV and a home computer

ONCE it featured only in the houses of the wealthy but now, astonishingly, more than eight out of ten of Britain's poorest homes have central heating. And many household goods still seen as luxuries in some middle-class families are commonplace among the most deprived. According to official figures out yesterday, they include washing machines, owned by more than seven out of ten of the poorest families, computers (one in seven) and satellite TV which features in one in eight of the poorest homes.[33]

These four themes have been analysed together in Chapter Six which presents a framing analysis of the 954 articles in each theme. The number of articles by each newspaper on each theme is broken down in the following table:

	Politics	Child Poverty	Poverty is Rising	Poverty is Exaggerated
Daily Mail & *Mail on Sunday*	32	35	3	21
Guardian & *Observer*	241	175	36	7
Times & *Sunday Times*	93	96	22	19
Daily Mirror & *Sunday Mirror*	45	102	27	0
Total	411	408	88	47

Table 3: Politics articles analysed in Chapter 6

This study applied the same analysis to hard news items, features, editorials and comment pieces because these were representative of the overall output of the newspapers. This approach was warranted because, for example, a hard news

[33] Doughty, S. (2000), Poverty, 2000: Central heating, satellite TV and a home computer, *Daily Mail*, 30 November 2000.

item discussing how relative poverty has increased may be accompanied by a series of editorial or comment pieces which argue that relative poverty is a meaningless concept. Therefore, it is important to examine the output of the newspaper in a holistic fashion with the exception of the less relevant articles removed during the thematic content analysis process.

Previous framing research into news coverage of poverty has identified particular meta-frames that news articles can be grouped under. Nisbet's research outlines two key elements in this framing: 'responsible economic planning' and 'sympathy for the poor' (Nisbet, 2010:69). Redden outlines three types of frames in news coverage of poverty: 'rationalising', 'individualisation' and 'social justice' (Redden, 2014-33). This last example relied on generating frames through a close reading of the available texts from that study's research sample (Redden, 2014:31). The framing analysis in this thesis is slightly different because it looks at a subset of news coverage of poverty which is anchored around political debates on poverty.

The articles were subjected to a close reading and an examination of how often people living in poverty were quoted compared to political actors, specifically focussing on the MPs responsible for work and pensions policy. The name of each Minister for Work and Pensions during this period was entered into the website Journalisted.com, which tracks articles written by specific journalists.

The political context of framing research in this thesis focuses on news about social issues in domestic policy. This type of research has its own unique set of 'institutional and cultural features' (Lawrence, 2010:267), and as some scholars have highlighted:

Mainstream news generally stays within the sphere of official consensus and conflict displayed in the public statements of the key government officials who manage the policy areas and decision-making processes that make the news' (Bennett et al., 2007:49).

This process of elite voices dominating debates has been described by scholars as 'indexing' (Bennett, 1990), although it does not necessarily apply to news coverage of poverty. A study of the social security debate in the United States found that journalists moved beyond the parameters of reflecting elite views through misleading rhetoric whereby journalists 'helped promote the myth that the [social security] system would go bankrupt' by omitting key information from elite discussions (Jerit & Barabas, 2006:295). However, the idea that the favoured frames of powerful elites are reproduced in the news is supported by a range of studies (Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978). In terms of framing research the concept of 'indexing' reflects this idea, but the main difference is the observation that 'as political power changes hands the predominant news stories are likely to shift as well' (Lawrence, 2010:277).

Chapter Six attempts to trace political shifts in news coverage by mapping how often newspapers reflect the position of the government or official opposition, while also being open to instances where the newspapers apply their own frames. In order to test these frames, the articles were read chronologically. They were integrated into a discussion outlining the key features of the political debate on poverty, focussing on shifts between governing political parties. The key periods under consideration are split into three different administrations: the Conservative Party (1985-1997), the Labour Party (1997-2010), Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition (2010-2014).

The chapter uses a close reading of the news articles in each of these three periods with an interpretive approach to determine whether the articles reflect 'indexing' that reflects the position of political elites, or whether the media use their own frames that challenge these political frames. This was operationalised in two ways. Firstly, to provide a qualitative element, the primary 'frame sponsor' for each article was logged. For example, if an article reported a speech made by an MP then his or her political party would be considered the primary frame sponsor. If an academic study was reported criticising government policy, then the academic institution would be the primary frame sponsor. These primary frame sponsors were quoted in the headline or lead paragraph of the article. As well as logging the existence of primary sponsors the articles were subjected to a close reading which examined them in relation to the wider political context that informed their production.

The chapter also outlines a case study examining a United Nations (UN) report on how one of the government's welfare reforms – the spare room subsidy – was reported by UK newspapers. The case study applied the same frame analysis technique to examine 88 articles across the British national press.
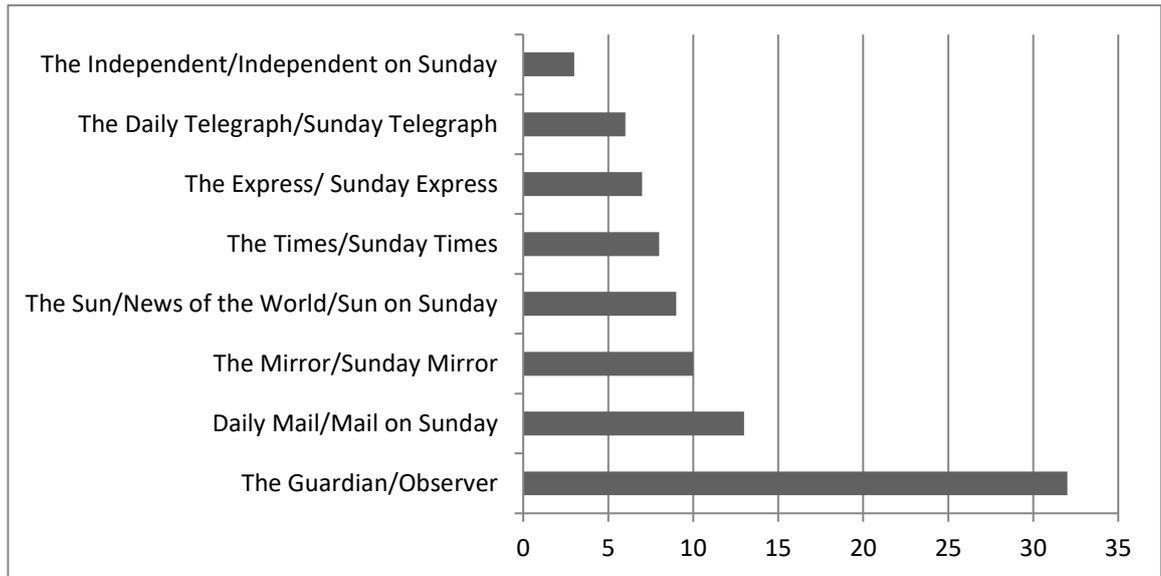
Figure 3: Articles about Raquel Rolnik's UN Report in the British press Sept 2013 to Feb 2014 Source: Nexis Database.

The articles appeared in all eight national newspapers examined in this thesis. The content of these articles was evenly split between newspapers who accepted the preferred framing from the UN report and those who accepted the British Government's framing of the issue. The UN report attempted to highlight issues related to some of the most vulnerable people in Britain who were suffering from poverty.

4.2.2.2. Operationalising framing analysis in Chapter 7

Chapter Seven examined newspapers' use of sources in detail. This approach was inspired by Schneider's (2012) research which developed a framework for analysing news coverage of homelessness. Schneider examined news sources by sorting them into the three distinct categories of 'experts, citizens and homeless people' (Schneider, 2012:73). These categories were decided by adapting the work of Martin (1997), who created a three-tier hierarchy of news

sources. The first tier consists of 'experts', corresponding with Hall's concept of 'primary definers' including 'expert' voices from politics, business, and non-governmental organisations who speak from a position of authority or expertise (Hall, 1978:651). The second tier consists of 'citizens' – secondary sources who 'express personal opinions or talk only about how they feel about a situation or event' (Schneider, 2012:73). The third and final tier describes people who 'are excluded altogether from the news even though the event or issue may impinge on them in some way' (Schneider, 2012:73).

For the purposes of this thesis, the latter category is reserved for people who use food banks. A separate category has also been set aside for food bank volunteers because their perspective gives them a unique insight into the issue of food poverty, separating them from the detached spectatorship of the 'expert' and 'citizen' categories. Chapter Seven examines one year of newspaper coverage of food poverty and food banks in Britain, and ten years of news coverage of fuel poverty. These two issues were identified in the thematic content analysis outlined in Chapter Five. The thesis examines the same eight national newspapers and their corresponding Sunday editions used elsewhere.

The timescale used to analyse these topics was drawn from the sample of articles outlined in Chapter Five. This exercise indicated a large spike in the number of food poverty articles in recent years. One of the years with the highest number of these articles – between 20th May 2012 and 20th May 2013 – was selected for further analysis.

Food Poverty Articles 1985-2014
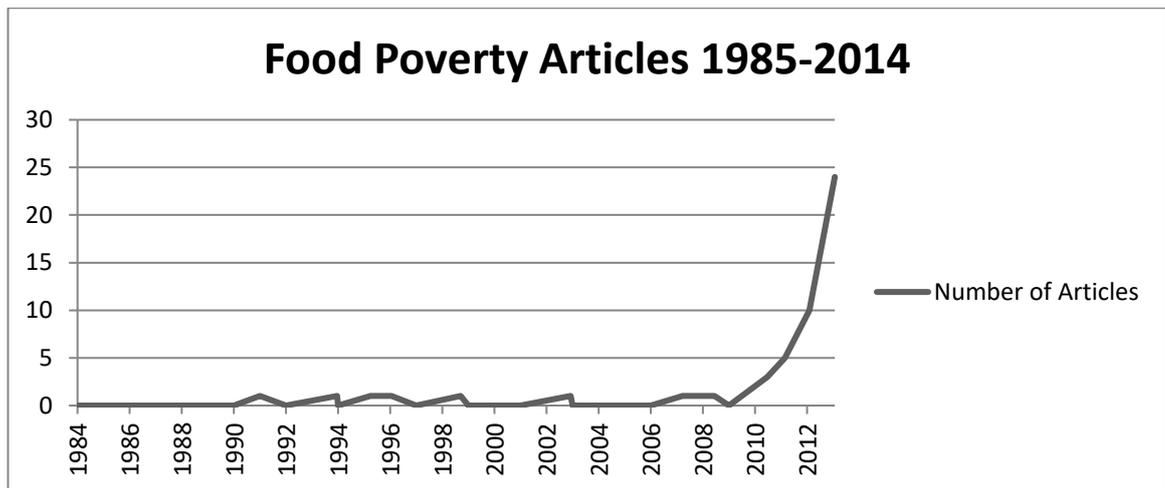
Figure 4: Food poverty articles timeline

The eight newspapers were selected to give an overall impression of how the British press cover the issue of food banks and food poverty. Each newspaper was subject to a search in Nexis which used the terms 'food poverty', 'food banks' and 'foodbanks'. The search picked up any item where any of these terms was used in the headline, or where any combination of them was used three times or more in the article text. This resulted in 264 articles being selected for analysis:

Newspaper	Number of food poverty articles analysed
Daily Mirror & *Sunday Mirror*	67
Guardian & *Observer*	58
Independent & *Independent on Sunday*	47
Times & *Sunday Times*	27
Daily Mail & *Mail on Sunday*	22
Sun & *News of the World*	18
Telegraph & *Sunday Telegraph*	16
Daily Express & *Sunday Express*	9
Total	**264**

Table 4: Food poverty articles analysed

The final sample of 264 articles was comprised of 151,762 words and 854 separate sources were identified. Quotations from these sources comprised 39,280 words.

A coding frame was developed which logged the newspaper, date, headline and byline of each article. The articles were then analysed by counting the number of quoted sources in each, and these sources were logged in three categories: how the source was referred to in the article, whether the source was an 'expert', 'citizen', 'food bank user' or 'food bank volunteer', and if an expert, the type, *i.e.* 'political', 'business', 'charity/NGO', etc.

Articles on fuel poverty used the same technique to find a suitable timescale for analysis. This was more difficult for these articles because fuel poverty has been in the news for longer. This led to fuel poverty being examined over a ten-year period between 2004 and 2014.
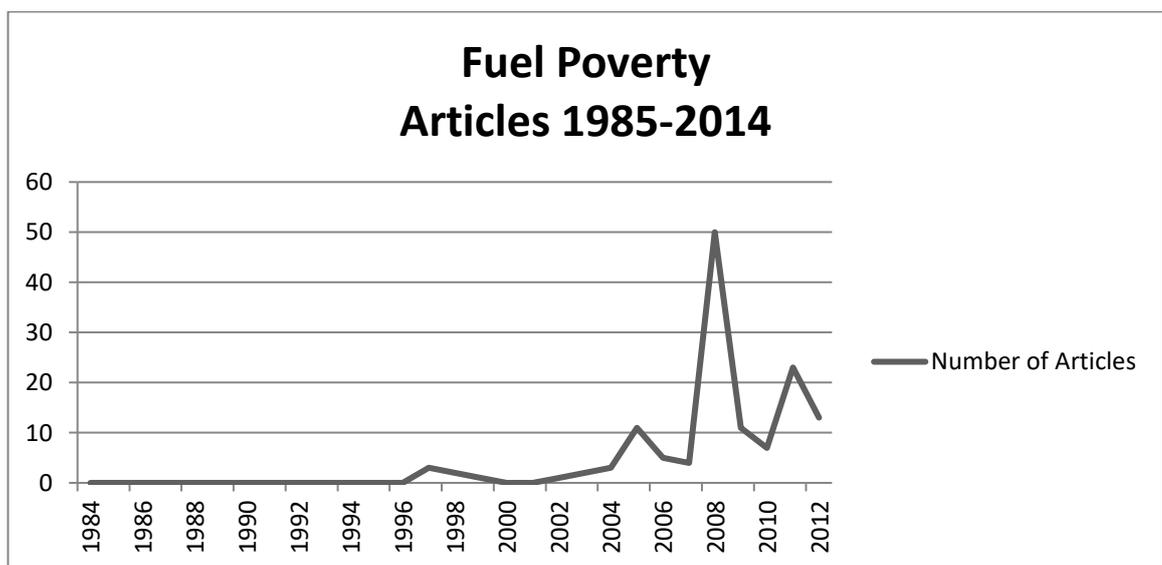
Figure 5: Fuel poverty articles timeline

The Nexis database was used to search for articles in this time period where the term 'fuel poverty' appeared in the headline and where it had a frequency of three or more mentions in each article. This led to a sample of 468 articles where a total of 1070 sources which were used by journalists.

Newspaper	Number of fuel poverty articles analysed
Guardian & *Observer*	92
Times & *Sunday Times*	79
Daily Mirror & *Sunday Mirror*	67
Independent & *Independent on Sunday*	59
Telegraph & *Sunday Telegraph*	57
Daily Mail & *Mail on Sunday*	48
Daily Express & *Sunday Express*	36
Sun & *News of the World*	30
Total	**468**

Table 5: Fuel poverty articles analysed

4.2.2.3. Operationalising framing analysis in Chapter 8

Chapter Eight uses the same methodological outline as Chapter Six with a few slight differences. This chapter looks at a sample of articles on the welfare state, identified using the sampling technique discussed above for the term 'welfare state'. This search was applied to the *Sun/News of the World,* the *Daily Mirror/Sunday Mirror,* the *Guardian/Observer,* the *Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph,* the *Times/Sunday Times,* the *Daily Express/Sunday Express,* the *Daily Mail/Mail*

on Sunday and the *Independent/Independent on Sunday.* The search was for articles written between 1985 and 2015 and it returned the following number of articles:

Newspaper	Number of Articles
Times & *Sunday Times*	220
Guardian & *Observer*	152
Daily Mail & *Sunday Mail*	151
Telegraph & *Sunday Telegraph*	70
Daily Express & *Sunday Express*	68
Independent & *Independent on Sunday*	55
Sun & *News of the World*	25
Daily Mirror & *Sunday Mirror*	10
Total	**751**

Figure 6: 'Welfare state' articles for analysis in Chapter 8

As with Chapter Six, this chapter used the framing theory of 'indexing' to test the extent to which news coverage of the welfare state reflected the official positions of the ruling UK political party and their opposition. While Chapter Six also examined causes of and solutions to poverty, Chapter Eight examines articles through the frames of 'them' and 'us'. It focuses on 'formal structures' which can be used to 'emphasize or de-emphasize information or opinions about 'us' and 'them', and are usually 'organized in a polarized way […] as Us vs. Them':

> This polarization is at the basis of much ideological discourse, that is, as the strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Since ideologies involve values, they typically surface as evaluative beliefs or opinions. Find all opinions in the text that enact such polarized evaluation of Us and Them *(van Dijk, 1998b:62-63).*

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This chapter adapts this concept and uses it in a framing analysis to examine how the news on poverty and welfare is framed in terms of 'us' and 'them'. This chapter is also underpinned by the 'indexing hypothesis' in terms of trying to understand whether the welfare recipient 'others' who are singled out for criticism follow a framework set by political elites or whether the news media go beyond political discussions in terms of framing welfare recipients.

4.2.2.4. Operationalising framing analysis in Chapter 9

Chapter Nine uses framing analysis to examine the role of ideology in informing narratives of poverty in the British press. The chapter looks at how the dominant form of representing poverty throughout history has been evident throughout news coverage of poverty in the last thirty years, segregating those experiencing poverty into a binary system of deserving and undeserving individuals. These constructions contrast sharply with narratives about those who have overcome poverty, portrayed as deserving through a narrative of 'rags to riches'. The narrative focuses on how wealthy and successful individuals deserve their wealth because they have worked hard despite being poor and 'starting with nothing'. Dominant representations are examined alongside news articles which tackle the issue of structural inequality, and the chapter also examines how the concepts of deserving and undeserving poor allow journalists to create narratives which legitimise structural inequality.

The chapter examines the 'rags to riches' stories identified in Chapter Five alongside the articles on the topics of 'inequality' and articles on 'crime and the underclass'. These articles were selected because they each have a powerful ideological element and intersect with an understanding of poverty that has persisted for over 200 years. This is particularly true in tabloid journalism articles on the 'underclass' and a larger sample of these articles was examined. Using the Nexis database, articles containing the word 'underclass' were identified during a five-year period between 9th August 2007 and 9th August 2012. The starting date was chosen because it represented the beginning of the 'credit crunch'.[34] A five-year period was selected because it allows study of the transition between New Labour (1997 to 2010) and the Conservative Liberal Democrat coalition (2010 to 2015). The sample comprises 285 articles which were selected for a close reading to examine how the concept of the 'underclass' fits into the wider ideology of the newsroom.

The main reason for focussing on tabloid newspapers in this research is because these media outlets play a pivotal role in shaping both the news agenda and public opinion in Great Britain, particularly in regards to popular culture (Conboy, 2002) and worldviews on poverty. Indeed, as some authors have pointed out, British tabloids have been able to extend their influence beyond the boundaries of print, creating imagined communities across their audiences where people see the world in terms of 'outsiders' and 'insiders' (Conboy, 2006). In the context of framing the underclass, tabloids have historically played one of the most important roles in telling people what to think about. For example, research has

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[34] *Observer*. (2012), Five years ago, the credit crunch began; today it's worse. How long will it last?, *Observer*, 5 August 2012.

highlighted the role of tabloids in perpetuating notions such as the 'underclass' by using perjorative words like 'chav' to reinforce historical social classifications (Hayward & Yar, 2006:9). This double role of being agenda shapers and public opinion definers is why tabloids were chosen for this analysis. The following table shows the way these articles were spread across different tabloid platforms:

Newspaper	Number of Articles
Daily Mail & *Mail on Sunday*	135
Daily & *Sunday Express*	77
Sun, News of the World & *Sunday Sun*	54
Daily Mirror & *Sunday Mirror*	19
Total	**285**

Figure 7: 'Underclass' articles

Van Dijk argues that researchers must be aware of historical, political, socio-economic and cultural power relations when analysing the mediation of racism (van Dijk, 1989:202). The same argument can be made for the mediation of poverty – another topic shaped by power relations between different social groups. Framing analysis is used here to attempt to understand how 'social power, abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted' (Schiffrin et al., 2001:352). For van Dijk, discourse that displays these power relations is 'ideological discourse' and he uses an 'ideological square' to help interpret 'discursive group polarization', identifying ways that the text seeks to 'de/emphasize good/bad things about Us/Them' (van Dijk, 2006:374).

Building on the discussion about the neoliberal ideology presented in Chapter Three, van Dijk's outline is used to help to identify the groups who are included

and excluded by the British press. As discussed above, a range of articles in different news genres are analysed, including 'hard news' as well as editorials, op-ed pieces and articles from the opinion section:

> Editorials and op-ed articles in the press are generally expected to express opinions. (Op-ed articles are opinion pieces published on the page opposite the editorials.) Depending on the type and the stance of the newspaper, these opinions may vary considerably in their ideological presuppositions. This rather common formulation seems to imply that the ideologies of journalists somehow influence their opinions, which in turn influence the discourse structures of the opinion articles *(van Dijk, 1998b:21).*

The spread of articles on the subject of the 'underclass' suggests that it is more likely to be employed by the conservative tabloid newspapers. The sole liberal tabloid in this sample is the *Daily Mirror,* which employs underclass framing less often than the other three newspapers. The volume of underclass articles in the *Daily Mail* also suggests that the concept is a key part of its ideology. This analysis looked at who the news media define as the 'underclass' and questioned how this related to wider neoliberal ideology. These articles were also subjected to a close reading in order to understand the solutions expressed by the news media to solve the 'underclass' problem in the context of the ideology of the newsroom.

4.3 Sampling

The thesis used a range of different samples of articles which are broken down in the following table:

Sample Number	Subject	Newspapers	Search terms	# of articles
1	Poverty	• *Daily Mail* & *Mail on Sunday* • *Times* & *Sunday Times* • *Daily Mirror* & *Sunday Mirror* • *Guardian* & *Observer*	'Poverty'	2214
2	Raquel Rolnik (UN) case study	• *Daily Mail* & *Mail on Sunday* • *Times* & *Sunday Times* • *Daily Mirror* & *Sunday Mirror* • *Guardian* & *Observer* • *Independent* & *Independent on Sunday* • *Telegraph* & *Sunday Telegraph* • *Daily Express* & *Sunday Express* • *Sun* & *News of the World*	'Raquel Rolnik'	88
3	Food poverty	• *Daily Mail* & *Mail on Sunday* • *Times* & *Sunday Times* • *Daily Mirror* & *Sunday Mirror* • *Guardian* & *Observer* • *Independent* & *Independent on Sunday* • *Telegraph* & *Sunday Telegraph* • *Daily Express* & *Sunday Express* • *Sun* & *News of the World*	'Food poverty'	264
4	Fuel Poverty	• *Daily Mail* & *Mail on Sunday* • *Times* & *Sunday Times* • *Daily Mirror* & *Sunday Mirror* • *Guardian* & *Observer* • *Independent* & *Independent on Sunday* • *Telegraph* & *Sunday Telegraph* • *Daily Express* & *Sunday Express* • *Sun* & *News of the World*	'Fuel poverty'	468
5	Welfare state	• *Daily Mail* & *Mail on Sunday* • *Times* & *Sunday Times* • *Daily Mirror* & *Sunday Mirror* • *Guardian* & *Observer* • *Independent* & *Independent on Sunday* • *Telegraph* & *Sunday Telegraph* • *Daily Express* & *Sunday Express* • *Sun* & *News of the World*	'Welfare state'	751
6	Underclass	• *Daily Mail* & *Mail on Sunday* • *Times* & *Sunday Times*	'Underclass'	285

		• *Daily Mirror* & *Sunday Mirror* • *Guardian* & *Observer*		

Table 6: Article samples

This table shows how the 4070 articles analysed throughout this thesis were broken down in terms of sampling and search terms.

5. The 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor in the 'age of neoliberalism'

This chapter presents a content analysis of articles written between 1985 and 2015 on the subject of poverty. The data presented here support the idea suggested in the theoretical framework that news coverage of poverty is connected to constructions of the 'deserving' poor. These constructions are also closely linked to discussions about definitions and solutions for poverty within official political circles. The chapter presents a thematic content analysis of 2,214 articles about poverty across four British national newspapers and their corresponding Sunday editions. It uses the first tranche of data collection and analysis in this thesis to make the argument that journalists have continued to use the historic precedent of distinguishing between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor.

These categories have been redrawn throughout the age of neoliberalism in a way that links poverty with the 'deserving' poor and welfare with the 'undeserving' poor. This means that children and pensioners are constructed as being 'deserving' groups and insiders to the wider community. They feature prominently in this dataset, likely in part a result of using 'poverty' as a search term. To give a breakdown of the articles in this chapter:.

Newspaper	Total number of articles analysed
Daily Mail & *Mail on Sunday*	268
Guardian & *Observer*	1062
Daily Mirror & *Sunday Mirror*	409
Times & *Sunday Times*	475
All newspapers	**2214**

Table 7: Total articles analysed

5.1 Poverty and politics

The most common theme dominating news coverage of poverty is politics. Political discussions about definitions of poverty and political campaigns to reduce poverty dominate this category. There are also many news reports of political discussions about poverty which reflect divisions along party lines within the British political system. The figure below shows the most common categories identified in the thematic content analysis exercise. It includes any category with more than 40 news articles.

Number of Articles

Theme	Number of Articles
Extent of poverty is exaggerated	47
Poverty and Inequality	48
Rags to Riches Stories	49
Poverty in Popular Culture	54
Food Poverty and Hunger	57
Low pay and the working poor	61
Crime and the 'Underclass'	74
Public Health and Poverty	74
Rising Poverty	86
Welfare and Benefits	134
Fuel Poverty	158
Pensioners and the elderly in Poverty	165
Child Poverty	408
Politics	411

Figure 8: Content analysis themes on 'poverty' 1985-2015

This dataset suggests that the main context that poverty appears in the British press as part of their coverage of party politics, which reflects how political activity and media have become closely intertwined. Bennett and Entman argue that governance and opinion formation 'could not occur in their present form without various uses of media' (Bennett & Entman, 2010:1). The relationship between politics and the media is as important as it is complex. Contemporary scholars have pointed out that the media have a transformative effect on the way politics is conducted (Castells, 1997; Dahlgren, 2009). However, this does not translate to the media directly shaping policy:

> Increasingly, politicians, political parties, corporations and other large organizations, including unions, are making use of the media to further their own particular interests. Thus, while the media serve as resources for a majority of the population in their roles as audiences, they have increasingly become a resource, or more aptly, a tool, for powerful social actors (Dahlgren, 2000:81).

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This also means that political actors tailor their messages in ways that almost always have the media in mind as an essential component of governance, a way of shaping their image or attempting to shift public opinion, but also as a way of launching major initiatives or managing crises (Dahlgren, 2000:84). Articles on the theme of 'politics' and other related categories are examined in far more detail in Chapter Six which looks at the relationship between news coverage of poverty in the context of British politics.

'Child poverty' was the second most common category, and many of its articles have also been generated by 'frame sponsors' working within party politics. For example, there was a demonstrable increase in articles focussed on child poverty following its implementation as a flagship policy initiative by the Labour Party.
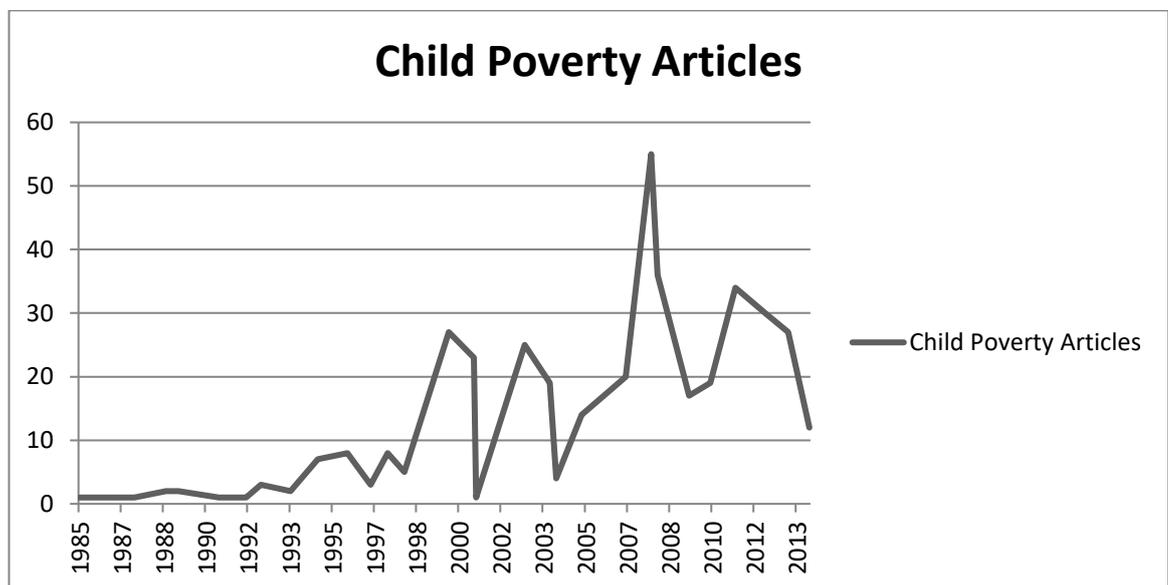
Figure 9: Child poverty articles 1985-2014

The above figure shows that child poverty was much more prominent as a news item following campaigns by New Labour on the issue. Reducing child poverty was a key policy aim for the Labour Party which held power between 1997 and

2010, and it has remained on the political agenda ever since. Many of the most common themes picked up in this exercise were focussed on 'deserving' groups such as children.

Newspaper	Number of child poverty articles analysed
Daily Mail & *Mail on Sunday*	36
Guardian & *Observer*	174
Daily Mirror & *Sunday Mirror*	102
Times & *Sunday Times*	96
All newspapers	**408**

Table 8: Child poverty articles

5.2 The 'deserving' poor

The overall list of topics that journalists write about in news stories about poverty is strongly represented by groups considered by journalists to be 'deserving' of help and support. Children are considered to be a vulnerable group and are therefore often categorised as 'worthy' of charity or state support in the news, which secures their position as a 'deserving' demographic (Barnett et al., 2007; Males, 1996). The large number of articles on child poverty are an example of how news coverage of the 'deserving' poor tends to frame poverty as a problem for particular demographic groups rather than examining the overall effect of poverty on society as a whole (Lugo-Ocando, 2015; Redden, 2014). Research has shown that framing the issue of poverty as relating to specific groups such as children can be counterproductive because this framing can weaken public support for broader anti-poverty programmes (Iyengar, 1990:36). In the historical

review presented in Chapter Two, it was argued that the ability to work was central to constructions of deservingness. Therefore, children, people with disabilities and elderly individuals make up the 'deserving' category.

Outlining child poverty as a distinct category in political and media circles is problematic because if the parents of those children are able to work they are more likely to be constructed as 'undeserving'. One example can be seen in the way that the New Labour Government focussed on 'troubled families' and the 'problem behaviours of parents' rather than looking at poverty as a structural problem (Simpson et al., 2015:97). Critics have argued that these policies were informed by neoliberal ideology and constructed child poverty as a condition that could be solved 'through practitioners intervening in the lives of parents and children in poverty to help them improve their human capital, dispositions and behaviours' (Simpson et al., 2015:106).

This highlights one of the key problems with news coverage of poverty. Child poverty is constructed as a social problem worthy of political action, while at the same time the parents of those children are constructed as 'undeserving'. Therefore, they constitute a different type of problem which requires a different political solution. The distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' individuals is most often linked to whether the individuals and groups are constructed as welfare recipients.

In this respect, child poverty is a tricky subject because while the 'deserving' children are not welfare recipients their parents often are. In this context, New Labour's child poverty strategy was frequently discussed by politicians and the

press as a mission to lift children out of poverty. The British press were largely supportive of this policy programme, but its paternalistic nature was explicitly criticised in the following article from the *Times* which criticises Prime Minister Gordon Brown for missing child poverty targets:

> Does he think we are stupid? Of course he does. He may present himself as the man who wants to right wrongs, lift children out of poverty and feed Africa, but he treats the British public as if they were a very long way beneath him. The Blair Government has often been accused of having a "nanny knows best" approach, taking decisions for us because it believes that we are incapable of taking them ourselves. Yet despite the occasional horror story about a nanny who turns out to be more like the wicked witch than Mary Poppins, the breed as a whole tend to be interested in their charges and what they think and feel. That is not the attitude of this Government.[35]

A paternalistic approach masked the necessity, in order to help 'deserving' children out of poverty, to support their 'undeserving', welfare-recipient parents. There is a similar difficulty when examining poverty amongst the older people, who are the other key 'deserving' demographic, and the thematic content analysis exercise picked up many articles on poverty relating to 'pensioners and elderly people' and 'fuel poverty'. Elderly people living in fuel poverty are considered newsworthy because they are a vulnerable group who are considered 'deserving' of help and support, as in the case of child poverty.

Articles in both categories intersect with the most popular theme in the content analysis which is politics, and the overall dominance of politics within the sample is especially evident in the articles about elder poverty. Older people are an

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[35] Wheatcroft, P. (2005), Gordon waves two fingers, *Times*, 22 July 2005.

important demographic for political action: they are more likely to vote than any other age group (Goerres, 2009; Quintelier, 2007), and they are also far more likely to buy a printed newspaper (Yougov, 2013). Poverty amongst elderly people who struggle to heat their homes is covered by both liberal and conservative newspapers; interestingly this is one of the few manifestations of poverty that conservative newspapers do not attempt to discredit.[36,37]

As with child poverty, reporting elderly people living in poverty as a 'deserving' group is complicated for the press. They are exempted from critical narratives about welfare recipients, but this ignores that the largest single element of welfare expenditure is the state pension.

Benefits and Tax Credits
Spending on benefits (including the state pension) and tax credits, 2015/16

Unemployment benefits (£2.4bn)
Pension Credit (£6.5bn)
Child Benefit
Other £14.5bn
£11.7bn
Housing Benefit £26.0bn
£217bn
State Pension £92.1
Child and working tax credits £29.9bn
£36.7bn
Disability benefits
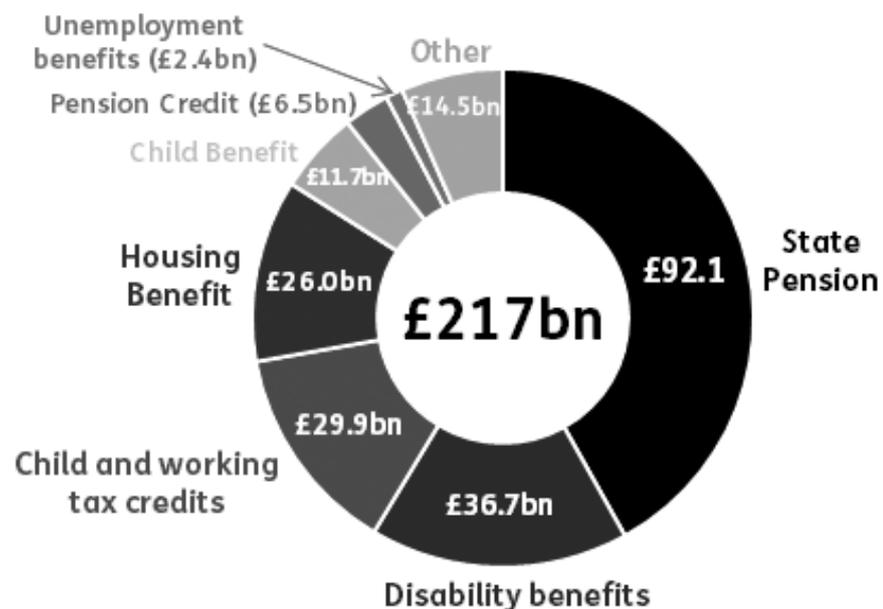
Figure 10: Benefits expenditure: Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies

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[36] Poulter, S. (2008), Millions more plunged into fuel poverty, *Daily Mail*, 03 October 2008.
[37] Webster, B. (2010), 2.5m extra families living in fuel poverty, *Times*, 15 October 2010.

The above figure shows how constructions of poverty in the press can follow a particularly counterintuitive set of rules. In terms of state expenditure, more money is spent on pensioners in the United Kingdom than any other group. However, the construction of pensioners as part of a 'deserving' demographic means that they are most likely to appear in news articles about poverty and not welfare. Poverty amongst pensioners is examined in far more detail in Chapter Seven, but it is interesting at this stage to note that pensioners rarely feature as part of the news framing of welfare because they are constructed as having 'earned' their contributions from the state. This distinction is also evident in news stories about child poverty which rarely acknowledge that the children's parents may also receive welfare benefits. If the above chart on welfare expenditure is redrawn in terms of money being spent on 'deserving' and 'undeserving' groups then the following picture emerges.

Welfare expenditure on 'deserving' and 'undeserving' groups.

Undeserving
£2.4 Billion

Neither Category
£40.5 Billion

Deserving
£176.9 Billion
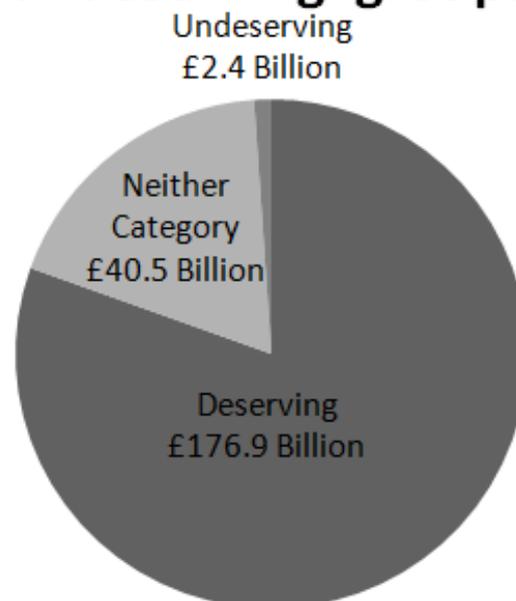
Figure 11: Welfare expenditure on 'deserving' and 'undeserving' groups 2015/2016

This above figure suggests that the British press distorts the reporting of poverty and welfare by writing about poverty amongst 'deserving' groups in a way that eliminates welfare expenditure from the discussion. Welfare is framed by the press in a way that focuses on the economic burden that 'undeserving' groups and individuals place on state expenditure. This is despite the relatively small amount of the welfare budget spent on 'undeserving' groups. The majority of state expenditure goes to 'deserving' groups such as pensioners, the working poor, child benefits, child tax credits and disability benefits.

As discussed in Chapter Two, distinctions between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' groups saw the sick, elderly and children as deserving because of their inability to fully integrate into the labour force. Adults who are able to work are considered undeserving of support regardless of wider structural considerations. By constructing poverty amongst pensioners within a 'deserving' framework, the news media tacitly acknowledge that some welfare recipients are 'deserving' of state support. They deal with this issue through a discursive separation which does not acknowledge pensioners as welfare recipients. The articles used to identify the themes and categories for this chapter were skewed towards news reporting of 'deserving' cases because poverty is commonly associated with these groups in the media.

5.3 The 'undeserving' poor

The historical outline presented in Chapter Two showed the longstanding construction of the lower classes as an 'undeserving' group who posed a danger

to wider society. The stigma and shame attached to these groups has been maintained and modified throughout the age of neoliberalism. One of the key features marking groups out 'undeserving' is their receipt of welfare payments:

> The ideology of the new austere welfare state is premised on a number of myths; that 'skivers' don't want to work and are encouraged to remain workless by a perverse system that rewards them; that full employment is possible in a fully marketised neoliberal economy; that paid work is always the best route out of poverty. All three myths are rampant across the new commonsense of welfare (Jensen, 2014:1).

Welfare recipients are constructed within this 'undeserving' narrative as dependent on welfare because of 'lifestyle choices' which allow them to 'live the life of Riley, which often includes taking drugs, drinking alcohol and generally having a great time' (Savage, 2015:354). But a body of research into the lives of the poorest citizens in Britain has found that the available types of work keep them living in poverty, while moving between work and welfare benefits and vice-versa caused 'additional hardships' for these individuals (Shildrick et al., 2012:195). The thematic content analysis found 134 articles on 'welfare and benefits' and 74 on the theme of 'crime and the underclass':

Newspaper	Number of welfare and underclass articles analysed
Daily Mail & *Mail on Sunday*	31
Guardian & *Observer*	107
Daily Mirror & *Sunday Mirror*	25
Times & *Sunday Times*	45
All newspapers	**208**

Table 9: 'Welfare and benefits' and the 'underclass' articles

Not all of these articles fit the 'undeserving' framing discussed here. Some report criticism of the government's position on welfare from third sector organisations such as the Child Poverty Action Group or the Church of England's Children's Society.[38] [39] These hard news articles in the *Guardian* are presented in objective terms, and the criticism is 'balanced' with an account from political actors. This type of framing is rare and welfare is more likely to be presented as a ticking time-bomb waiting to ruin the British economy. For example, an article in the *Guardian* on the challenges faced by the welfare state makes the urgent case for political reform:

> The Conservatives, fearful of a popular backlash, have merely tinkered with the welfare state while real spending on social security has gone relentlessly up, underlining the fact that welfare simply isn't working. […] Politicians of all hues have recognised, at least privately, the need to bite some of the bullets that litter the welfare field. But one wonders what, short of another war, will create the popular climate and political will to act before it is too late.[40]

Welfare is often described as representing a 'poverty trap', which critics argue echoes the neoliberal 'culture of dependency' argument (Pautz, 2012:60). This type of language and framing is evident throughout the *Guardian* articles in this sample,[41,42,43,44] and can be understood as a reflection of the 'anti-welfare' rhetoric which has emerged as a key feature of neoliberal ideology (Hartman, 2005:70; Harvey, 2005a:76; Wacquant, 2010). Most studies in this area have

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[38] Hencke, D. (1985), Government 'disregards research on benefits' / Child Poverty Action Group claims findings ignored, *Guardian*, 2 September 1985.
[39] Hencke, D. (1985), A family portrait of life on welfare, *Guardian*, 23 September 1985.
[40] Thomas, R. (1995), Why welfare simply isn't working, *Guardian*, 26 July 1995.
[41] Hencke, D., Dean M. & Wainright M. (1985), Plan to avoid poverty trap, *Guardian*, 04 June 1985.
[42] Clouston, E. (1991), Furnishing piles of proof on Liverpool poverty trap, *Guardian*, 02 July 1991.
[43] Gregory, I. (1992), Little Help, Little Hope; Tomorrow's Autumn statement revelations on benefits could push even more people into the poverty trap, *Guardian*, 11 November 1992.
[44] Brindle, D. (1998), New poverty trap 'may swamp welfare to work policies'; income gap between rich and poor narrows but ministers warned on value of benefits, *Guardian*, 30 March 1998.

found a disproportionate amount of coverage connecting welfare with the 'undeserving poor' (Golding, 1999; Golding & Middleton, 1982). In the context of this research, it is notable that in the 'poverty' articles sampled, news coverage of welfare was not the most prominent finding.

Indeed, poverty and welfare are usually only discursively linked by journalists in a way which denies that welfare recipients experience poverty. For example, journalists often make the case that the existence of the welfare state causes poverty. One such article from the *Daily Mail* cites a report arguing that people living in poverty in Easterhouse, Glasgow are worse off than people living in Gudalur in India because the welfare state leaves 'whole communities isolated and demoralised'.[45] Welfare is also described in the *Times* as being a 'poverty trap', citing free-market think tank research from the the Institute of Economic Affairs as evidence of this claim.[46] Other articles about welfare focus on the high cost of benefit fraud[47] and blame poverty on the 'welfare circus' which promotes amoral behaviour amongst individuals.[48]

One interview in the *Times* with Charles Murray describes how anti-poverty initiatives are like 'putting icing on a mouldy cake' because people living in poverty lack intelligence and therefore policy solutions 'must concentrate on preventing the underclass from breeding'.[49] This particular article is balanced with testimony from Bob Holman, a poverty activist based in Easterhouse who argues that

[45] Houston, S., & Gill, K., (1995), Eastern hope or Easterhouse; How welfare has created a poverty trap that rivals the subcontinent, *Daily Mail*, 10 March 1995.
[46] *Times*, (1995), Families' poverty trap, *Times*, 4 September 1995.
[47] Doughty, S. (1998), Benefits fraud is no accident, field lectures poverty group, Daily Mail, 23 June 1998.
[48] Phillips, M. (2007), The great poverty myth; drinking, fecklessness, gambling... the social evils that blight society haven't changed much in a Century. This week a report blamed the wealth gap between rich and poor. But there's a much more insidious cause..., *Daily Mail*, 21 July 2007.
[49] White, L. (1994), Is low IQ really the cause of poverty?, *Sunday Times*, 28 August 1994.

Murray attempts 'to blame the poor for poverty'. He argues that the underclass concept 'lets the New Right off the hook' because 'it came in 1979 promising solutions which it has not delivered'.[50] As mentioned above, it is striking that these articles, while picked up as part of a sample looking for 'poverty', rarely acknowledge that welfare recipients suffer from poverty.

More broadly, the concept of the 'poverty trap' used to undermine the notion of social welfare, alongside other strategies. For example, the *Times* repeatedly makes the case that the existence of poverty is political spin from a dishonest 'poverty lobby' which undermines efforts to reduce welfare spending.[51,52,53,54] The small sample of articles in the *Daily Mail* all had variations of this type of framing, and none of them acknowledged the existence of poverty beyond a critique of welfare expenditure. There were some hard news articles in the *Times* which linked benefit cuts through welfare reform with poverty, and this type of framing was more common in the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*. However, the small sample of articles from this dataset that discussed welfare and the 'undeserving' poor did so in a way that predominantly denied the existence of poverty or argued that it was the result of an over-generous welfare system.

Even though this dataset was based on 'poverty' as a keyword, the articles on welfare tilted towards constructions of 'undeserving' individuals. Hills argues that this simple narrative is used to divide social classes in Britain:

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[50] *White, L. (1994), Is low IQ really the cause of poverty?, Sunday Times*, 28 August 1994
[51] West, E. (2014), The Church can wail, but few are listening: the bishops complaining about poverty were silent when Labour spent money we didn't have, *Times*, 21 February 2014.
[52] Cavendish, C. (2013), Our welfare bill has run wildly out of control: we need more honesty from the poverty lobby, *Times*, 17 January 2013.
[53] Sandbrook, D. (2010), Thank you, sir William, but we've moved on: universal child benefit was right in the 1940s, a time of poverty and malnutrition, *Times*, 5 October 2010.
[54] Lawson, D. (2010), To cut poverty we must cut welfare, *Sunday Times*, 13 June 2010.

It's skivers against strivers; dishonest scroungers against honest taxpayers; families where three generations have never worked against hard-working families; people with their curtains still drawn mid-morning against alarm-clock Britain; 'Benefits Street' against the rest of the country; undeserving and deserving. It's them against us. We are always in work, pay our taxes and get nothing from the state. They are a welfare-dependent underclass, pay nothing to the taxman, and get everything from the state (Hills, 2015:1).

These issues will be examined in more detail in Chapter Eight, which looks at the way the 'welfare state' has been reported in the press throughout the age of neoliberalism.

In the last thirty years, news constructions of the 'undeserving' poor have been inextricably linked to their receipt of welfare benefits. These narratives of 'deserving' victims of misfortune and 'undeserving' people abusing the system are necessary because they construct poverty as a problem for specific groups and individuals. This allows the British press to ignore poverty as a symptom of structural failures with the market economy. One outcome of this has been the creation of a 'core perception' that a 'lack of real poverty or hardship exists' (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, et al., 2008:52).

6. The politics of poverty and the poverty of politics

Solutions to poverty depend on a set of assumptions about how poverty is defined and understood. When it comes to the mediation of poverty as a social policy issue, the process of framing is crucial. The previous chapter suggested that news about party politics was the dominant context within which articles about poverty appeared in the British press. This chapter presents a framing analysis that looks at the mediation of poverty and politics in more detail. The analysis is split into three periods: Conservative Party Government (1985-1997), Labour Party Government (1997-2010), and Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015). The chapter also presents a case study which examines the way that a critical report into the 'spare room subsidy' was framed by the press. Before examining these specific examples in more detail, it is necessary to discuss why the mediation of political debates is so important in shaping perceptions about poverty.

Audience focussed research has suggested that news audiences accord political importance to events that feature prominently in news coverage (Iyengar, 1996:69; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The media are also the 'principle political arena' where issues of social policy are contested (Deacon & Golding, 1994:197). Iyengar (Iyengar, 1996:70) suggests that news framing shapes the way that political debates are understood by media audiences:

> The context in which political issues appear is critical to how people think about these issues. When poverty is expressed as a collective outcome, it is understood quite differently than when it appears in the form of a specific poor person (Iyengar, 1990:35).

By presenting poverty as a problem for specific individuals or groups, media reports present a narrow set of 'available political alternatives' for action (Tuchman, 1978:156), especially since the British press predominantly frames discussions about poverty from the perspective of official political actors. This counters liberal conceptions of the press as a 'diffuse and competitive' forum where 'all the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stage in the process of decision' (Stanworth & Giddens, 1974:196). This is how the role of the press in a democratic system is normatively described:

> The existence of a unfettered and independent press within each nation is essential in the process of democratization, by contributing towards the right of freedom of expression, thought and conscience, strengthening the responsiveness and accountability of governments to all citizens, and providing a pluralist platform and channel of political expression for a multiplicity of groups and interests (Norris, 2008:186).

The notion of pluralism is important in underpinning the claims of the news media's 'fourth estate' ideal. The first of these claims is that the press should provide a 'voice to the voiceless' to represent the interests of marginalised groups (Freeman *et al.*, 2011:590). The second emphasises the heroic role of journalists as the 'public's watchdog', representing the public by 'telling truth to power' (Conboy & Eldridge, 2014:566) – even though this ideal is rarely supported by evidence (Conboy, 2004:110).

Research into the role of the news media often suggests that they reflect rather than challenge discourses of power (Eldridge et al., 1997:65; van Dijk, 1993). Petley (2009: 186) has argued that the media attempt to manage public opinion

on behalf of elite interests rather than expressing their views. Along these lines, this chapter discusses how political debates about poverty have been mediated through representatives of the two leading UK political parties. The data presented here demonstrate a clear example of the 'hierarchy of access' (Atton, 2002:495) within news coverage, whereby journalists are more likely to source quotations from elite fields such as official party politics (Lewis *et al.*, 2008:18). There is a clear imbalance in the number of news articles citing politicians rather than people actually living in poverty. This occurs not just in terms of quotations from experts, but also in credited authors of comment and opinion pieces, which play a key role in framing the news:

> [The press] have the power to set the *dominant* political agenda, as elaborated over weeks, months and years, in editorials, columns and other forms of pro-active, opinionated journalism (McNair, 2000:30).

The opinion pages of the British press are often aimed a reinforcing the positions of particular newspapers (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004:62). This is based on a 'top-down and professionalised vision of public debate' where access to the news is unequal (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004:68). This can be seen by how often British politicians write articles in the press, where they are given access to the news space as commentators.
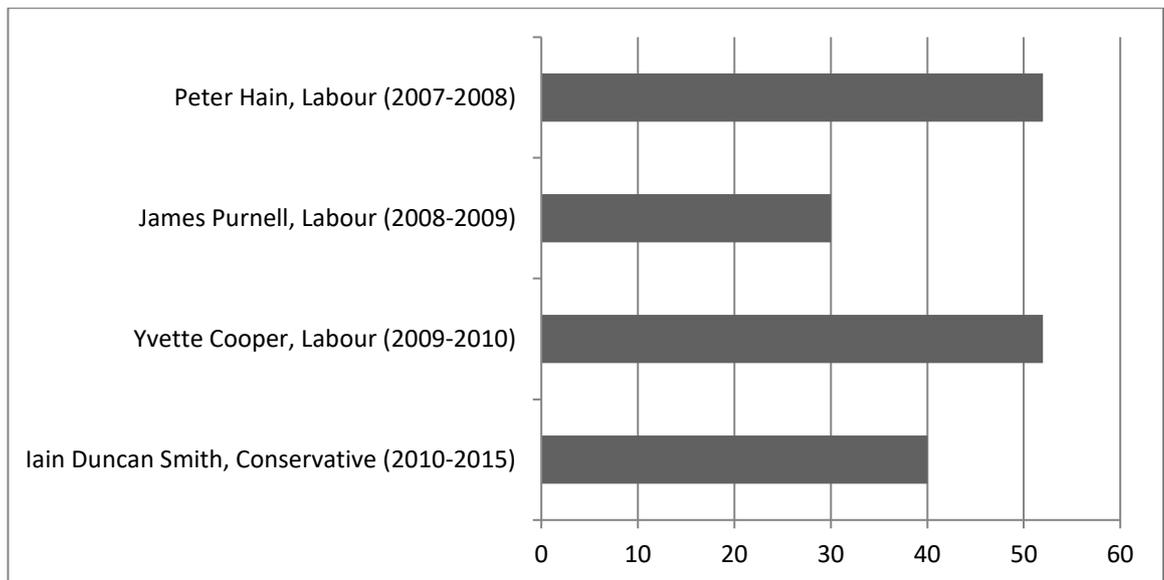
Figure 12: Articles by Work and Pensions Secretaries in national press 2007-2015

Since 2007, the four politicians in charge of welfare policy in Britain have authored 174 articles in the British national press. Since becoming Work and Pensions Secretary in 2010, Iain Duncan Smith[55] has written 23 articles in the British national press promoting his welfare reforms and defending them from critics. These articles were published in both liberal and conservative newspapers – the *Times*, the *Independent*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Guardian*. The large volume of these types of articles is worthy of attention, especially considering how little space is given by newspapers to the very people who are affected by the policies promoted by these MPs.

An article by Iain Duncan Smith in *the Telegraph,* written from his position as Work and Pensions Secretary, concludes that 'the incontrovertible truth is that we are building a system that makes work pay, is fairer to the taxpayers and claimants, and sets the strong path for a better future for Britain'.[56] However,

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[55] Iain Duncan Smith has been the Conservative Party MP for Chingford and Woodford Green since 1997, and he was Cabinet Secretary for Work and Pensions from 2010-2016.
[56] Smith, I.D. (2014), Our welfare reforms are just the beginning, *Telegraph*, 5 April 2014.

academics researching this welfare reform legislation conclude that it has been used to transform discourses on poverty and unemployment from 'evidence of market failure and income inadequacy' to one of 'state and personal failure' (Wiggan, 2012:401).

There is a case that politicians may be justified writing articles in the press to explain policy as part of the democratic process. However, the frequency of these articles is problematic considering how those affected by their policies are often excluded from the news space. In this respect, newspapers are failing to 'balance' news access in a way that eliminates excessive influence (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999:258). In the case of poverty, the imbalance is clear. This is especially problematic because media representation of political issues 'profoundly affects the conduct of politics' (Hallin & Mancini, 1984:829).

6.1. Reflecting political perspectives on poverty

Poverty is a politically contested issue. In academic debates on the left it is defined as a problem rooted in 'exploitative economic, social, and political institutions' while on the right, it is linked to 'individual responsibility' (Edelman, 1977:6). This chapter examines how these political perspectives have been framed by the British press between 1985 and 2014. Overall, the discourses of the New Right that emerged in the 1980s have dominated news coverage of poverty in the British press. This broadly reflected the policy solutions and rhetoric of the Conservative Government in power until 1997. When the New Labour Government took power in 1997 these discourses continued, but there was also a large increase in articles about child poverty, reflecting shifts in policy priorities

to emphasise support for 'deserving' children in poverty. In 2010 the government changed again, and news framing continued along Conservative lines. This pattern is one example of how news is framed to reflect rather than challenge government policy and rhetoric on poverty – except when key political players seek to challenge it. The Labour Party made poverty and redistribution key campaign issues in both the 1983 and 1987 elections (Wring, 1995:117) and there was a large number of articles on poverty leading up to and in the aftermath of the 1987 general election.

Figure 13: Articles on poverty and politics

The Labour Party moved away from making poverty a central political campaign priority following their election defeat in 1987 and poverty subsequently received less news coverage overall. This was an important development as political debates about poverty are predominantly reported from the perspective of either the party of government or the party of official opposition. News coverage of the general election of 1983 saw most British newspapers supporting the Conservative Party, with the exception of the *Daily Mirror* which gave 'lukewarm' support to the Labour Party; the *Guardian* and *Observer* 'dithered but eventually

declared themselves against a Conservative victory rather than in favour of either the Labour Party or the SDP' (Negrine, 1996:172). In 1987 there was a shift towards more favourable coverage of the Labour Party from the *Daily Mirror* but there was continuity amongst the other papers: the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Sun*, and *Telegraph* all supported the Conservative Party (Negrine, 1996:173).

In both elections, along with the 1992 general election, newspapers were found to be particularly partisan, mostly favouring the Conservative Party (Negrine, 1996:177). The evidence presented here suggests that partisanship plays an important role in shaping news framing of poverty.

6.2. Framing poverty: 1985-1997

The Conservative Government that came to power in Britain in 1979 pursued a policy of monetarism which involved public spending cuts targeting social welfare (Alcock, 1990:88). The Conservative Party made the case for welfare reform based on 'new partnership between the individual and the state' (Alcock, 1990:90). These political shifts were widely supported by think tanks and the media, who contributed to making the case for welfare cuts (Alcock, 1990:95). Their arguments repeated the 'anti-state liberalism' of the 19th century and advocates were described as the New Right (Davies et al., 2000:9). This period heralded the end of the post-war 'welfare consensus' and New Right arguments dominated the political landscape (Alcock, 1997:200).

These political shifts are clearly seen in the samples of news coverage identified throughout this thesis. Critics argue that the British press 'became even more

stridently partisan towards the Conservatives and bitterly hostile to Labour' throughout this time:

> In Thatcher British newspapers had at last found a leader in their own image, and they not only backed her to the hilt and cheered her every excess but excoriated any criticism of their heroine as akin to treachery (Petley, 2009:191).

The group that owned the *Daily Express*, *Sunday Express* and the *Star* donated heavily to the Conservative Party. In an indicative move, the group's owner, Victor Matthews,[57] cancelled an editorial which criticised the Thatcher Government's budget. He told the editor of the *Star* that 'there aren't any poor. You can take my word for it. There are no poor in this country' (Curran & Seaton, 2003:71). This line of argument was evident in a range of articles written between 1985 and 1997, and not just in the papers owned by Matthews. In 1986 the *Times* printed a lengthy rebuttal from Margaret Thatcher to critics who argued that poverty in Britain was rising under the Conservatives:

> The record of this Government on health and social benefit is very good. If he takes the definition of poverty as the supplementary benefit level, every time the Government increase that benefit, it increases the numbers in poverty. The way to reduce the numbers would be to put down the level of supplementary benefit to the level at which it stood under [the Labour Party].[58]

As mentioned above, rising poverty was a key issue in the run up to the 1987 general election. As a response, sections of the press argued that poverty had been exaggerated and third sector anti-poverty organisations were criticised. An

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[57] Victor Matthews was the Group Managing Director of Trafalgar House when it acquired Beaverbrook Newspapers in 1977. The group owned the *Daily Express*, the *Sunday Express* and the *Star.*
[58] *Times.* (1986), Parliament: Thatcher defends Government record on combating poverty/Benefits, *Times*, 2 July 1986.

article in the *Times* accused them of having an 'ideology' of 'traditional egalitarianism' which relied on 'a very generous definition of poverty' which was 'worryingly imprecise'.[59] The social and political impact of poverty was played down by the conservative press through an argument over definitions and measurements. Redden describes this type of framing as 'rationalising' poverty by emphasising 'numbers over arguments' and not discussing 'the causes of poverty, arguments for why it should be eliminated, or proposed solutions' (Redden, 2014:34).

In 1987, John Major, then the Conservative Minister for Social Security was quoted in the *Times* accusing the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) of 'shameless distortion', and he criticised their research that showed child poverty in Britain was rising.[60] Academics were also criticised. Peter Townsend's research into poverty was discredited, and according to a spokesman for the Conservative Party, 'It is perfectly clear from the content and tenor of Professor Townsend's remarks that his political views are on the very far left'.[61] The 'regime of objectivity' (Hackett & Zhao, 1996) that newspapers often use to defend their trade does not extend to academics perceived to be too 'left-wing', who are dismissed as being extremists in their views.

Another article in the *Times* gives extensive coverage to a speech by John Moore, the Minister for Social Security, who argued against using relative measures for poverty:

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[59] *Times.* (1987), Leading Article: Poverty of evidence, *Times*, 16 April 1987.
[60] *Times,* (1987), Election Summary: Poverty 'distorted', *Times*, 10 June 1987.
[61] Dunn, A. (1988), Tory ideology 'promoting poverty', *Guardian*, 31 March 1988.

He said 'poverty' had been deliberately created as a political issue in the 1960s because free enterprise capitalism was proving better than socialism at relieving it. As hunger waned, 'poverty was not rediscovered, it was redefined'. He accused academics, such as Professor Kenneth Galbraith and Professor Peter Townsend, of inventing a 'slippery statistical concept' by talking of relative poverty as opposed to absolute poverty. 'Relative poverty' meant that in a rich community where most people had three cars, those with only one were poverty-stricken. In African countries where everyone was hungry, there was, by that measure, no relative poverty. Mr Moore suggested that the poverty lobby's definition had gained currency because it enabled politicians to keep the fires of resentment and envy stoked.[62]

Throughout the Conservative Government's period in office, this idea was a recurring theme: relative poverty as a meaningless sleight of hand by the left to criticise the free market. A *Daily Mail* article from 1992 is indicative:

The lobbies' steadfast determination to use definitions of poverty which are at odds with common sense and morality means that the small amount of truth in their message risks going unheard. Their politicking of poverty into millions is so absurd we may dismiss their message entirely or think there are no poor at all. Next time, you read their estimates, ignore them, laugh if you will, but remember the few and genuinely poor as well.[63]

Another article in the *Daily Mail* from 1995 defends the Conservative Party's record by using a report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies to argue that 'the public has been misled' over claims about rising poverty. The article describes how poverty in the UK is not 'poverty as anyone from Ethiopia or Bangladesh would know it', concluding with a defence of government policy: 'the Tory years

[62] Oakley, R. (1989), 'Poor' Britons have never had it so good, says Moore; Poverty, *Times*, 12 May 1989.
[63] Anderson, D. (1992), Numbers racket that does the poor an injustice, *Daily Mail*, 1 July 1992.

have been a success in making most people richer – including the poorest'.[64] The *Daily Mail* also criticised claims that poverty is rising by using reports from the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), one of the New Right think tanks that helped the Thatcher Government develop their welfare policies (Alcock, 1997:200; Cockett, 1995). The IEA report suggests that in Britain 'few pensioners were really poor'.[65] On other occasions, newspapers like the *Sunday Times* criticised charities including Barnardos and the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) for using relative measures of poverty, arguing that these measurements make poverty 'ineradicable':

> It could quite easily survive in a society composed solely of multi-millionaires and even billionaires however the article points out that if absolute measures are used then there can be little doubt that poverty in the Haitian, Dickensian or African sense has been virtually eliminated from Britain.[66]

The newspapers here explicitly cast doubt over the existence of poverty in the UK by questioning how it is defined and measured, while other news reports from the sample do the same by pointing to the accumulation of goods in the poorest households. A 1996 article in the *Daily Mail* was written under the headline 'Fed, clothed and housed, with money for cigarettes and TV and £680 for Christmas presents. Is this what we now call poverty?' Once again this article defends government policy, and it cites two Conservative ministers who argue against the idea that poverty in Britain is increasing.[67] These articles are indicative of a trend

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[64] Bartholomew, J. (1995), Exposed: The myth about poverty today, *Daily Mail*, 26 May 1995.
[65] Doughty, S. (1995), Poverty trap is cut down to size, *Daily Mail*, 2 October 1995.
[66] Dalrymple, T. (1995), Poverty? We don't know the meaning of the word, *Sunday Times*, 30 July 1995.
[67] Fairburn, R. (1996), Fed, clothed and housed, with money for cigarettes and TV and £680 for Christmas presents. Is this what we now call poverty?, *Daily Mail*, 28 December 1996.

within the conservative press where charities and third sector organisations are systematically criticised on behalf of the Conservative Party.

This is an example of the newspapers adopting the frames of their sources, or frame sponsors (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989:3). Petley (Petley, 2009:192) argues that the unyielding support of the British press for the Conservative Government took place at a time when there had never been 'a greater need for a press that would act as a check and watchdog on overweening state power'. This activity 'forfeited the last vestiges of any residual claims that they might have had to be a 'fourth estate' in any meaningful sense of the term' (*op. cit.*).

However, the *Guardian, Independent, Financial Times* and *Daily Mirror* did not join the pro-Conservative chorus so readily. For example, on 10th June 1987, the day before the general election, the *Daily Mirror's* front page headline was 'Privilege and poverty: Time to choose', illustrated with images of Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock. The paper urged readers to vote for the Labour Party which, it argued, was created to 'fight privilege, the degradation of poverty, the humiliation of unemployment, the misery of the slums'.[68] Similarly, in 1990, the *Guardian* criticised the Conservative Government for manipulating poverty figures:

> The Government had abolished the Royal Commission on Income and Wealth and the Supplementary Benefits Commission which published regular reports, curtailed the General Household Survey and blocked the Black report on health and social class.[69]

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[68] Page, F. (1987), Privelege and poverty, *Daily Mirror*, 10 June 1987.
[69] Linton, M. (1990), The day in politics: 'Censorship' used by PM to hide extent of poverty, *Guardian*, 31 January 1990.

Reports in the *Guardian* about rising poverty throughout the 1980s were often led by frame sponsors which were pressure groups. The Child Poverty Action Group was led at this time by Labour Party MP Frank Field, which makes it difficult to determine whether the organisation would have received the same prominence without this direct political connection.

As mentioned above, poverty was a key campaigning issue for the Labour Party in the 1983 and 1987 general elections. However, the strategy was revised following a heavy election defeat in 1987:

> The leadership and its apologists on the "soft left" accepted that the Lawson[70] economic boom was a permanent feature and that the "success" of the Thatcher Government had enabled the Prime Minister to implant her values within a significant section of the working class. These values could not therefore be contested by the labour movement. There was no more mileage to be gained by talking about poverty and public services or the welfare state (Heffernan & Marqusee, 1992:95).

After 1987 the Labour Party moved to a system based on marketing strategies which emphasised public opinion research (Wring, 1995:121). This shift in strategy marked the beginning of New Labour's approach to poverty which involved pursuing 'welfare state reconstruction and poverty alleviation' by means of a 'growth-generating Anglo-Saxon model of capitalism' (Shaw, 2012:225).

While criticism of the Conservative Government's record on poverty reduced dramatically from 1987 onwards, it did not disappear completely. In 1990, an

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[70] Nigel Lawson was the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the Conservative Government between 1983 and 1989.

article by columnist Melanie Philips[71] subjected the government to criticism for manipulating statistics to mask the effects of rising poverty:

> Margaret Thatcher's defence against the accusation that she has benefited the rich by taking money away from those that can least afford it has been shown to be a lie, a lie made possible by massaged information over the years, a lie sustained, even as she spoke, by her government's cynical manipulation of the facts only hours before.[72]

Although most of the coverage in the *Times* supported the arguments of the New Right, there was a small selection of articles criticising the government's record on poverty.[73,74] One article in the *Times* directly challenges the 'trickle-down' economics favoured by the Conservative Party:

> As long as the streets of London are lined with dossers, a rising number of young people reporting to homelessness centres and mental patients being decamped unaided into the community, targeting will have to bear an ever rising burden of social responsibility. The Government's claim that the trickle-down effect would also help is now seen, to say the least, to be not proven.[75]

Criticism of the Conservative Government continued in the *Guardian* throughout John Major's time as Party leader, as poverty was deemed to have risen since his election victory in 1992.[76] News coverage of poverty as a political issue declined following Conservative Party election victories in 1987 and 1992.

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[71] Melanie Philips was a columnist for the *Guardian* until 1993 before moving on to write for the *Observer. S*he joined the *Sunday Times* in 1998 before writing for the *Daily Mail* between 2001 and 2013.
[72] Phillips, M. (1990), Commentary: Statistics and the poverty of integrity, *Guardian*, 27 July 1990.
[73] Fletcher, M. (1988), MPs accuse Government of trying to hide poverty, *Times,* 13 July 1988.
[74] Sherman, J. (1987), Election 87: Manifestos attacked on poverty, *Times*, 1 June 1987.
[75] *Times*. (1990), The poverty trickle, *Times*, 8 May 1990.
[76] White, M. (1993) Poverty soars in wake of election, *Guardian,* 27 August 1993.

The Labour Party were concerned that their proposals to tax wealthy households in southeast England had been successfully branded by the Conservatives as a 'tax bombshell', contributing to their election defeat in 1992 (Gould, 2011:109). They suffered repeated electoral defeats despite Britain becoming a 'less healthy and more unequal place' throughout this period (Scott-Samuel et al., 2014:66). This meant that traditional Labour Party approaches to poverty, rooted in values of universalism, redistribution and equality had failed to gain the support of the British electorate. The emergence of a different political approach was a pragmatic move which became part of the way that Labour did business.

As Shaw notes, 'the driving force behind programmatic renewal in the Labour Party since 1987 has been the search for votes' (Shaw, 1996:181). The Labour Party adopted an ethos of 'pragmatic and managerialist rationalism' (Clarke, 2004:38). This was marked by a shift in language away from emphasising the need to tackle 'material poverty', focussing instead on 'social exclusion' and 'prospects, networks and life chances' (Fairclough, 2000:52). This choice of language reflected the New Labour approach, constructed as a 'third way' which attempted to reconcile the politics of the New Right with the traditional socialist policies of the Labour Party (Giddens, 2000).

The 'third way' was, in practical terms, 'a poorly specified, pick and mix strategy, largely defined by what it is not' (Powell, 2000:298). Following the election defeat in 1992, John Smith was elected as Labour Party leader. He set up a 'Commission on Social Justice', which coincided with the 50-year anniversary of the 1942 Beveridge Report and signalled a shift in rhetoric:

> We are a commission on social justice, not on economic success, but it is a constant theme of this report that there is not an opposition between these two aims (Haddon, 2012:5).

In a 1994 report, the commission highlighted the importance of equality of opportunity and offered an updated appraisal of the Beveridge Report, arguing that social ills need to be addressed through implementing an 'intelligent welfare state':

> For far too long, aspirations to social justice were linked to managerial conceptions of society under which welfare was supposedly directed to the needy by high-minded bureaucrats manipulating society's controls. That, as a total conception, is both a failure and an insult, and in our recommendations we have left it behind. […] Communities do not become strong because they are rich; they become rich because they are strong'. [77]

These arguments attempt to combine traditional Labour principles with economic growth and a strong economy, but the proposals in the report were never implemented. The death of John Smith in 1994 saw him replaced by Tony Blair, who had different political aims (Haddon, 2012:5). In 1996, Tony Blair made the Labour Party's commitment to poverty very clear, arguing that 'if the next Labour Government has not raised the living standards of the poorest by the end of its time in office it will have failed' (Hills & Stewart, 2005:10). The main focus of Labour's poverty-fighting plans centred on reducing child poverty.

Blair's main objective in implementing these reforms was to 'reposition the party in the eyes of the electorate' (Haddon, 2012). A focus on 'deserving' children was

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[77] Williams, B. (1994), Radical solutions needed for a society disillusioned by poverty and crime, *Times*, 24 October 1994.

coupled with an outlook which accepted the underclass thesis. In setting out his vision for the country, Blair argued that Britain had an 'underclass that may be a minority but is frighteningly large' (Blair, 1996:218). Labour also abandoned the principle of universalism by legislating to manage deviant 'others' such as 'ASBO recipients, 'nuisance' neighbours or 'benefit cheats' (Wallace, 2010:35). By the mid-1990s, the two main political parties in Britain framed poverty as an issue of individual responsibility, playing down redistribution as a potential solution. This is significant for this research because the primary frame sponsor of political news about poverty is generally either the Conservative Party or the Labour Party.

As discussed in Chapter Four, a primary frame sponsor is the source cited most prominently in an article, while other frame sponsors may be cited to provide balance. In the figure below, the primary frame sponsor for each political article in the sample are identified. Unsurprisingly, political actors are the most numerous here. The Child Poverty Action Group also featured quite prominently, although as mentioned above, this may be related to the organisation's connection with official party politics through Frank Field MP.

Primary Frame Sponsors
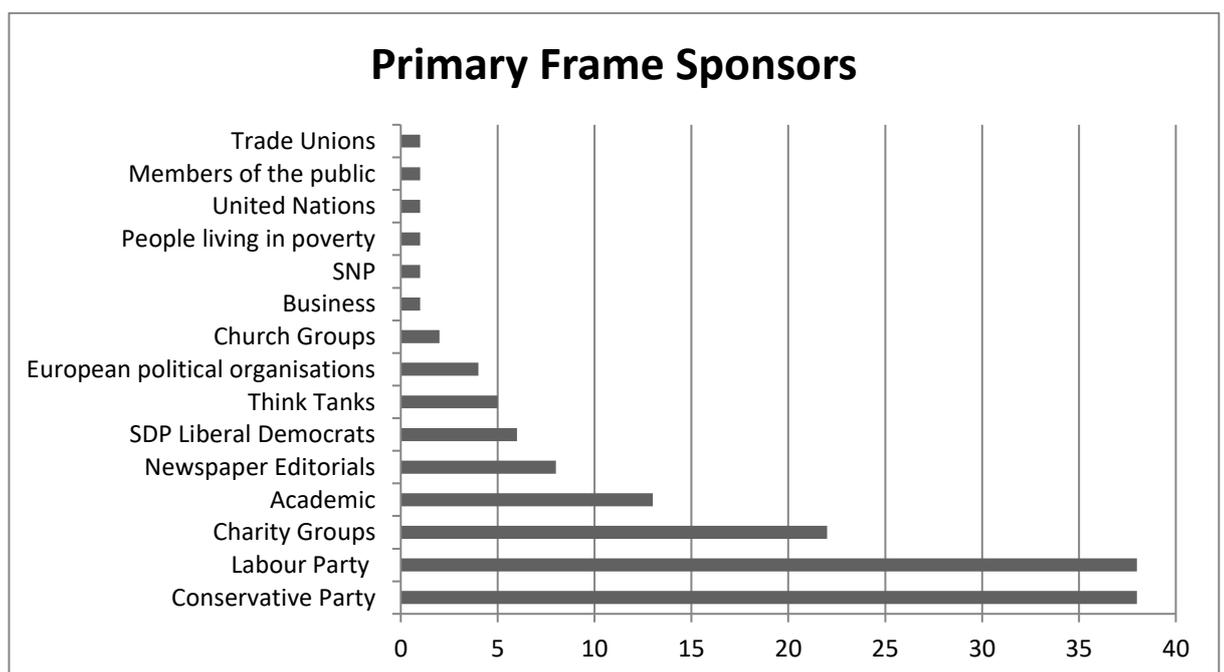
Figure 14: Primary frame sponsors 1985-1997

It is no surprise that the two main perspectives in terms of frame sponsors are derived from the party of government and the official opposition. The prominence of academic perspectives suggests a more pluralistic role of the press in framing political debates on poverty than has been suggested thus far. There is a distinct lack of articles citing people with a direct experience of poverty, although the reasons for this may not be straightforward. For example, previous research into poverty has shown that 'some people don't want to tell others they are poor or even admit it to themselves' (Alcock, 1997:208). The primary frame sponsors in political articles between 1985 and 1997 were evenly split between the Conservative Party and the Labour Party. This supports the 'indexing hypothesis' that news coverage follows the contours of elite debate. It also captures part of a period when the Labour Party were still using poverty a key criticism of the government. This commitment to fighting poverty was somewhat modified when they were in power.

6.3. Framing poverty 1997-2010

New Labour's approach to poverty attempted to change the welfare state from a passive entity which encouraged 'dependency and lack of initiative' to an active system which 'promotes personal responsibility and individual opportunity' (Lister, 1998:224). This shift in social policy signalled a move away from universalism towards a means-tested system for identifying deserving and undeserving welfare recipients. The 'undeserving' were subjected to sanctions described by critics as 'illiberal', 'authoritarian' and 'socially conservative' (Driver & Martell, 2006:52), primarily targeted at 'the rights of the poor' (Dwyer,

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1998:515). Fundamentally, the process of deindustrialisation meant that working class communities became 'a social problem rather than an economic motor' (Crouch, 1997:355). Casting people living in poverty as a social problem represented a practice of social exclusion targeted at people already excluded from society. The shift by the Labour Party away from universalism continued a discourse of individualism which had been fostered by the New Right.

The flip side of the 'undeserving' coin was a poverty reduction programme targeted at the most 'deserving' group imaginable: children. In 1997, Prime Minister Tony Blair made a pledge to halve child poverty within a decade and eradicate it completely in 20 years, and policy innovations like the minimum wage and child tax credits were implemented. Between 1997-2005 there were large reductions in relative child poverty, but it began to rise again between 2005-2008 (Lansley, 2012). The focus on tackling 'child poverty' was clearly underpinned by the child's status as 'deserving', and these measures went hand in hand with a programme of anti-social behaviour orders that targeted 'communities that are already suffering hardships' (Hodgkinson & Tilley, 2011:301). This is an example of how the deserving and undeserving dichotomy extends beyond news coverage into actual policy implementation.

The *Daily Mirror* was a steadfast a supporter of New Labour. In an article shortly after the 1997 election, rising poverty figures were described as being the result of a 'shock survey':

Most people quizzed blame the Tory Party for turning Britain into a nation of haves and have not's, inequality in Britain was described as 'obscene' and the report findings as 'alarming'.[78]

One article in the *Guardian* following Labour's 1997 victory argued that the 'missing link' in Labour's poverty-fighting plans was redistribution.[79] However, there was evidence of support for the new government's poverty-fighting plans, with even the *Daily Mail* praising the 'bold' plans to end poverty. The early years of the Blair Government were reported uncritically as the Labour Party's 'war on poverty'. When Tony Blair made his 1999 pledge to end child poverty within 20 years, an article reporting the pledge in the *Times* added criticism from CPAG which argued that it could be eradicated in half the time. The article also included criticism from Conservative Iain Duncan Smith, who said that 'by introducing a range of anti-family, anti-marriage policies, the Government is going in completely the wrong direction to alleviate child poverty'.[80]

In 2002, criticism emerged from the *Daily Mail* using arguments from the Conservative opposition to accuse the Labour Party of 'cooking the books' in claims to have reduced child poverty.[81] By 2003, criticism about failed child poverty targets was repeated in the *Daily Mail* but significantly they were joined by the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*. There was no critical assessment of Labour's policies from either the liberal or conservative press. This was despite research that argued New Labour's child poverty plans were 'undermined by the

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[78] White, S. (1997), 11 million brits living in poverty, *Daily Mirror*, 22 July 1997.
[79] *Guardian*. (1997), Restore redistribution: still the missing link in Labour's anti-poverty plans, *Guardian*, 15 August 1997.
[80] Sherman, J. (1999), Blair promises to end child poverty within 20 years, *Times*, 19 March 1999.
[81] Eastham, P. (2002), Blair's poverty trap; PM is accused of 'cooking the books' over claim that he rescued 1.4m poor, *Daily Mail*, 19 September 2002

free market approach informing childcare and family support strategies' (Lloyd, 2008:488).

Members of the Labour Party frequently described how they were in the process of 'lifting children out of poverty' – a clear attempt to focus efforts on the 'deserving' poor. However, attempts to tackle child poverty were carried out alongside rhetoric which rejected the language of collectivism and redistribution in favour of a 'social integrationist discourse'. This focussed on shifting people from welfare dependency to work, alongside a 'moral underclass discourse' which adopted themes from the New Right by targeting the individual behaviour of poor people rather than structural conditions (Fairclough, 2000:57).

Scholars have suggested that New Labour's child poverty measures were 'in the direction of more institutionalised Continental and Nordic welfare states' (Pierson & Castles, 2006:466). However, they were developed at the same time as reforms to the welfare state that implemented 'increased reliance on means-tested and private forms of welfare provision' (Lister, 2003:437). Labour's approach has been criticised for focussing too much on children as 'investments' while ignoring 'principles of social justice and the human rights of children' (Lister, 2006:330). This political framing of poverty has been reflected by newspapers that criticise adults in communities with high levels of poverty and unemployment. This occurs despite some of those adults being parents of 'deserving' children.

In 2004, Tony Blair claimed that people were no longer interested in 'understanding the social causes of criminality' (Squires, 2006:163). The antisocial behaviour strategy that emerged from this belief was focussed on

'selective social exclusion' accompanied by 'pejorative language' and based on the behaviour of individuals (Squires, 2006:163). Measures to tackle antisocial behaviour disproportionally targeted communities experiencing poverty, and this represented an abandonment of the concept of citizenship based on inclusion as a universal right (Bell, 2006:202). Instead, inclusion had become conditional and based on people's participation in the labour market (Barnes & Mercer, 2005:541).

Labour's attempts to 'get tough' on welfare recipients emerged as a response to media criticism that they had fostered a culture of 'welfare dependency'. Even the 'deservingness' of disabled people was questioned, for example in a *Daily Mail* article from 2006 by columnist Melanie Philips:

> The way to end the incapacity benefit scam is surely to provide just one benefit for all who are unemployed, and impose tough tests to ensure that it is restricted to people who genuinely cannot find work. Tinkering with the system won't solve it; watering down the tinkering turns pusillanimity into a joke. The situation cries out for tough-minded thinking. But if Mr Blair was incapable of this when he was at the peak of his political power, few can believe that, with power draining from him every day, he is likely to achieve it now.[82]

Meanwhile, the Labour Government intended to begin reducing welfare spending, and in 2006 they made plans to cut the number of people receiving disability benefits from 2.7 million to 1 million (Garthwaite, 2011:369). Soon after, the financial crisis of 2007-2008 led to calls for deep public spending cuts and austerity measures. So while children were constructed as being 'deserving' in

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[82] Phillips, M. (2006), Once Labour was proud to be the party of the poor. Now it's the party of perpetual poverty . . . *Daily Mail*, 4 January 2006.

the media and political narrative, people with disabilities were targeted for cuts to their support (Bambra & Smith, 2010; Garthwaite, 2011).

News coverage from the *Daily Mirror* throughout this period is noticeably favourable to the Labour Government. For example, a 2009 article about rising child poverty makes clear that ministers 'pledged 200,000 hard-up families would be pounds 20 a week better off thanks to benefit changes' and government spokesperson Yvette Cooper is quoted as saying 'we want to help'.[83] Research into press partisanship in the 2010 UK election showed that the *Daily Mirror* was the only national newspaper to support the incumbent Labour Party (Wring & Deacon, 2010:450).

While child poverty has remained a key issue in British politics and news coverage since it was introduced by New Labour, attitudes to adult poverty hardened throughout the period of Labour governance. According to Sage (2012:371), this was a political failure which led to the erosion of 'collective notions of fairness, social cohesion and reciprocity'. It allowed the media to construct adult poverty as an issue of welfare dependency amongst deviant groups, and this framing intensified following the financial crisis of 2007-08.

Criticism of Labour's record on poverty was more prominent following the election of Prime Minister Gordon Brown who replaced Tony Blair in 2007. Labour were criticised for missing poverty targets and unfairly recalculating poverty by using 'the measure preferred by ministers' and Gordon Brown's own 'favourite definition

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[83] Beattie, J. (2009), 2M children facing life of poverty', *Daily Mirror*, 3 November 2009.

of poverty'.[84] A Conservative Party opposition minister is quoted as saying, 'this is the measure the government has chosen to use, and this is the one they should be judged by'. The article does make it very clear that while the government should be criticised for failing to meet poverty targets, the targets themselves are cast into doubt by pointing out that 'critics say what [they] measure is inequality and not real levels of poverty'.[85] Failure to meet child poverty targets became a key criticism of the Labour Government which lost power in 2010.

During this period of governance, the Labour Party were by far the most prominent primary frame sponsor on news articles about poverty. However, there was also a rise in the number of newspaper editorials where the newspaper itself was the primary frame sponsor. This coincided with a reduction in the number of articles with other external frame sponsors, suggesting a reduced capacity in newspapers' ability to report from outside the world of official party politics and their own newsrooms.

[84] Doughty, S. (2000), 11 million living below Brown's poverty line, *Daily Mail*, 15 July 2000.
[85] Doughty, S. (2000), 11 million living below Brown's poverty line, *Daily Mail,* 15 July 2000

Primary Frame Sponsors
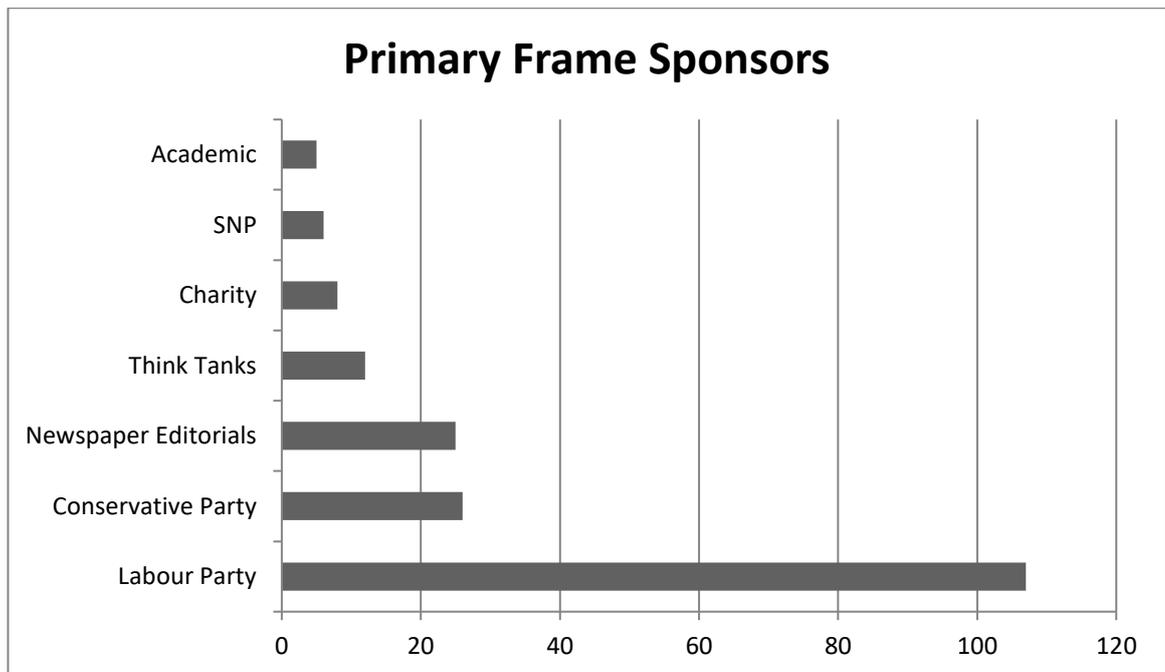
Figure 15: Primary Frame Sponsors 1997-2010

There were two clear findings from looking at the primary frame sponsors throughout the Labour Party's period in power. First of all, they were clearly the most prominent type of frame sponsor throughout this period. Secondly, there was a rise in the number of newspaper editorials where the newspaper itself is the primary frame sponsor. This coincided with a reduction in the number of articles with other external frame sponsors suggesting reduced capacity in newspapers ability to report from outside the world of official party politics and their own newsrooms.

6.4. Framing poverty 2010-2014

Following the election of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government in 2010, criticism was directly linked to welfare reforms. A narrative emerged after 2010 once again targeting the 'poverty industry' and questioning

whether overseas aid organisations should have their budgets exempted from austerity cuts.[86] For example, Conservative MP John Redwood provided a comment piece for the *Guardian*:

> I do not believe you can make the poor rich by making the rich poor. The problem is the rich do not have to hang around if you seek to make them too poor. They have the best lawyers and accountants. They can go on strike when it comes to investing and developing businesses. The second source of disagreement is the trickle-down theory. I believe that having more rich people and successful companies here in the UK does allow some of the income and wealth to circulate to the rest of us. We succeed in taking some tax off them; they employ armies of professional advisers, set up businesses and create jobs […] that is why I urge people not to be jealous of the Premier League footballer, the pop star or the media personality who hits the big time and earns mega-bucks. It gives others something to aim for.[87]

Tim Montgomerie, a Conservative Party activist who wrote 274 articles in mainstream British newspapers between 2007-2015, argued that the Conservative approach to poverty is also supported by the British electorate:

> Voters object to welfare going to the undeserving but want the old, sick and disabled properly cared for. Cameron and Osborne understand this. Pensions have just risen by a record amount. The NHS has escaped the cuts. New independent medical tests have been introduced so that false claimants do not bring disability benefits into disrepute.[88]

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[86] Groves, J., & Shipman, T. (2010), I'll curb the jetset lifestyle of the poverty fat cats says minister, *Daily Mail*, 14 September 2010.

[87] Redwood, J. (2011), Reply: Response It's ludicrous to say that rightwingers don't care about inequality: We all want to cut poverty and improve life chances - we just differ on how to do it, *Guardian*, 18 August 2011.

[88] Montgomerie, T. (2011), Comment: Conserve our compassion: With nothing left to spend on the state, the Tory approach to poverty is the only game in town, *Guardian*, 8 December 2011.

Montgomerie, a former speechwriter and adviser to Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith, argued in another article in the *Times* that Duncan Smith's welfare reforms are one of the Conservative Party's 'dominant success stories':

> If the Left is obsessed with what the State can dole out in welfare benefits, the Conservatives are focussed on two of the surest platforms for building a life outside of poverty: a good education and a job'.[89]

The media were accused of focussing on 'benefit scroungers' as a way of deflecting criticism from the damaging role of welfare reforms for people with disabilities (McCartney, 2012). The pressure to cut welfare costs following the financial crash led to 'effort, anxiety, sense of stigmatisation and social disenfranchisement' amongst claimants of sickness related benefits, and those forced off benefits 'risk severe impoverishment, and are in danger of being lost from sight' (de Wolfe, 2012:627-628). As Slater points out:

> Drastic and punitive welfare reforms arguably constitute the centrepiece of a severe fiscal austerity package, where possibilities for a redistributive path are drowned out by the rhetoric of "welfare dependent troubled families" causing society to crumble at the margins. This rhetoric then serves as the justification for massive public expenditure gutting as the appropriate course of crisis management (Slater, 2014:964).

The liberal press did criticise the coalition's welfare reform programme. The *Daily Mirror* accused Iain Duncan Smith of 'moving the goalposts' on how poverty is measured.[90] Welfare reform was linked with a return to poverty. As one journalist put it in the *Daily Mirror,* 'the cold hand of poverty is back', and he urged that the

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[89] Montgomerie, T. (2013), Tories, wear your hearts on your sleeves; On social justice and poverty, the best ideas come from Conservatives. The party needs to spell out its moral vision, *Times*, 14 January 2013.
[90] Lyons, J. (2012), Poverty isn't all about money; says Work and Pensions Secretary who earns £134,565 and lives rent free in a £2 million mansion, *Daily Mirror*, 15 June 2012.

government be held to account for the increase in poverty.[91] The *Daily Mirror* continued to report along party political lines when they defended the Labour Party:

> Child poverty fell to its lowest level for 25 years during Labour's last year in power. Office for National Statistics figures show the number of children living in a household below the poverty line had dropped by 200,000 in 2009-10. The reduction will be seen as a vindication of Gordon Brown's tax credits and welfare policies. Campaigners welcomed the figures but warned the good work could be undone by Coalition cuts.[92]

In an interview with CPAG's chief executive, Alison Garnham, the *Guardian* emphasised how the coalition was 'in danger of emulating Margaret Thatcher's record on poverty'. Garnham was quoted as saying:

> It has been said her governments did two things for poverty: they increased it, then they pretended it did not exist. The coalition must avoid a similar, devastating legacy.[93]

Another article in the *Guardian* described how 'this recasting of inequality as being to do with lack of ambition or aspiration is to hide the truth: the political will to tackle this has dissipated'.[94] *Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee criticised Iain Duncan Smith's welfare reform proposals:

> Duncan Smith invents figures, defying even the UK Statistics Authority's rebukes. His Centre for Social Justice churns out reports that blame poverty on the poor and their failure to marry, while all his own policies are in crisis. This week universal credit was blasted by the Commons public

[91] Armstrong, S. (2012), The Road to Wigan Pier is still paved with poverty, *Daily Mirror*, 27 April 2012.
[92] *Daily Mirror*. (2011), Gord legacy; poverty, *Daily Mirror*, 13 May 2011.
[93] Benjamin, A. (2011), Society: Interview Alison Garnham: A 'triple whammy' for poor families: The coalition's policies could do more harm even than Thatcher, says the head of the Child Poverty Action Group, *Guardian*, 14 December 2011.
[94] Moore, S. (2012), A pointless debate about poverty is taking place among people who have no idea of average earnings, never mind the price of toilet rolls, *Guardian*, 12 July 2012.

accounts committee, while Deloitte is bailing out of his Work Programme. Easterhouse is left asking: what second epiphany led him to cut £23bn from children, the sick and the unemployed, shrinking their incomes by a quarter?[95]

Further criticism of the Coalition Government's budget was published in an article in the *Guardian*. The article singled out Conservative chancellor George Osborne, describing his language in terms very familiar to the news coverage of poverty:

> While Osborne likes to draw a distinction between "scroungers" and "hard-working families", the fact is that many of these hard-working families rely on welfare – in the form of in-work benefits – to top up their poverty wages'.[96]

Another article in the *Guardian* argued that the Labour Party oversaw years of social progress on several indicators such as health and education, but by 2015 these indicators would 'hurtle into reverse' by 'moving backwards on just about every social measure'.[97]

Although the *Daily Mirror* and the *Guardian* criticised the Government's record on poverty, their criticism was often superficial, focussing on Iain Duncan Smith's personal wealth or how the successes of the Labour Party were being undone. This framing failed to acknowledge the continuation of programmes which the Labour Government set in place, and failed to provide a structural critique of

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[95] Toynbee, P. (2013), IDS's second epiphany: from compassion to brutality: Ten years ago Duncan Smith wept at poverty in Easterhouse. Today he inflicts untold misery on those who live there, *Guardian*, 8 November 2013.

[96] Elliott, L. (2013), The chancellor's policy: more poverty, worse public services: Osborne is shrinking the state to pre-1948 levels. He has other options but this is not just about the money, *Guardian*, 9 December 2013.

[97] Toynbee, P. (2013), Labour's spending worked. Why don't they defend it?: In power they improved schools and hospitals and cut poverty. But in doing it by stealth they never embedded their agenda, *Guardian*, 2 July 2013.

welfare reform. There has been a clear continuity here with news framing of poverty that masks the role of 'market failure' and 'income inadequacy' in poverty and unemployment. Instead, both the liberal and conservative media have constructed these problems as caused by 'state and personal failure'.

It is clear from this discussion that the way that journalists frame political discussions about poverty is largely influenced by which party is in government at the time. However, the way that poverty has been framed has remained fairly consistent between 1985 and 2015. To draw together some of the frames outlined here, it is necessary to think about solutions to poverty. This is done by looking at three different solutions to poverty. Firstly, New Right constructions of poverty diagnose it as a problem rooted in individual behaviour, best tackled with punitive interventions such as welfare sanctions. Secondly, status quo solutions attempt to deal with poverty without making any major structural changes, for example New Labour's attempts to implement child and working tax credits while also cutting disability benefits. The third, more radical option would involve considerable structural change, for example raising taxes to fund anti-poverty and employment programmes or targeting inequality through redistributive measures such as a wealth tax.

Between 1985 and 2015, political responses to poverty avoided the third type of solutions, and the sample of articles discussed here shows that news framing of poverty was limited to the first two options. Interestingly, it has only been during Conservative Party rule or coalition that the third type of option has appeared in the news, through *Guardian* comment pieces, though notably the *Guardian* also published comment pieces from the New Right in this timeframe. There have

been rare instances of solutions to poverty in the *Daily Mirror* as well, but only in the context of a critique of the Conservative Party. Notably, when the Labour Party has been in power, calls for redistributive solutions have been largely muted in the press. Nevertheless, the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* moved from strictly New Right positions to status-quo positions during the New Labour period of governance, particularly when Tony Blair was Prime Minister.

Between 2010 and 2015, the Conservative Party were the most prominent primary frame sponsors, followed by newspaper editorials. The latter appeared as primary frame sponsors more often than the Labour Party, who were the official opposition. This is a notable shift away from the party politics dimension and suggests a marginalisation of the Labour Party's perspective throughout a period dominated by economic crisis and austerity economics.
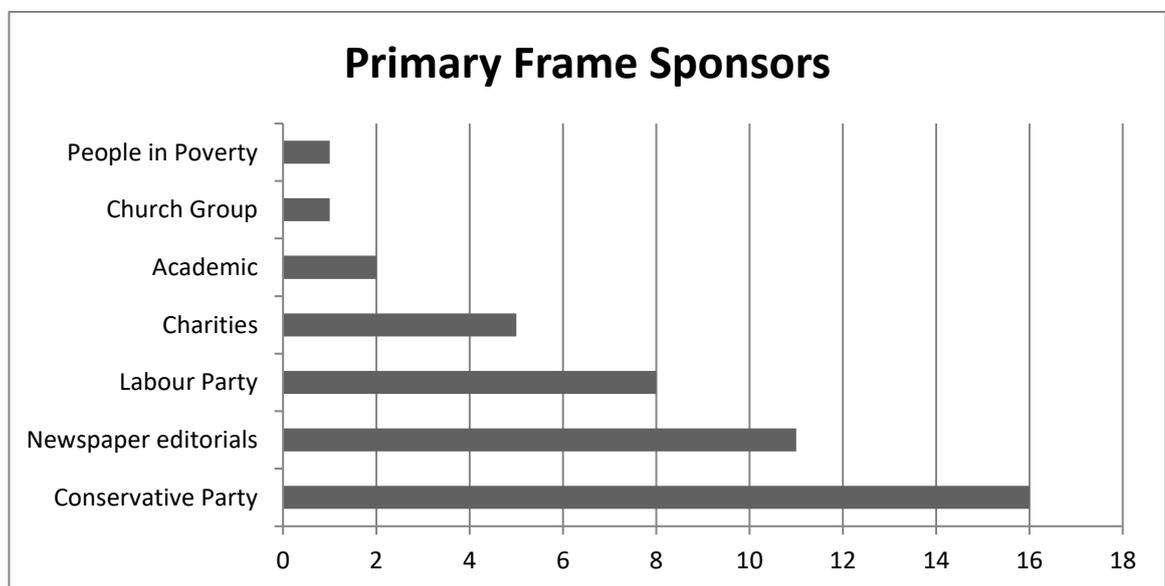
Figure 16: Primary Frame Sponsors 2010-2014

As with the other primary frame sponsors presented in this chapter, the period between 2010 and 2014 saw the news media most often write articles about

poverty primarily discussing the views of Conservative Party members. While this was a period of coalition government, the Liberal Democrats did not feature as part of the analysis. The picture that emerges from this quantitative analysis of primary frame sponsors indicates an overall reduction in the number of different sources that the press consult. Coupled with the rise in newspaper editorials on poverty, this suggests a shift in the way that newspapers operate, which might make them less likely to challenge elite claims purely in terms of practical resources. As an indicative example, the following section outlines a case study where the interests of the government and the conservative press were closely aligned.

6.5. Case Study: Framing the spare room subsidy

The Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government embarked on a series of welfare reform proposals following their election in 2010. Cutting the deficit was outlined as a key policy aim and reductions in the welfare budget were part of this strategy. They enacted a policy of housing benefit reduction in 2012 for working age social housing tenants as an incentive for them to occupy appropriately sized housing. If they did not vacate properties considered too large for them, then they would face the financial penalty of a housing benefit reduction. The policy has been colloquially described as a 'bedroom tax', a label that has stuck in the public consciousness as the 'poll tax' did in the late 1980s.

The first academic studies are beginning to appear on the impact of the bedroom tax, and the findings are not favourable to the policy architects (Beatty & Fothergill, 2013; Meers, 2014; Moffatt et al., 2014; Moffatt et al., 2015). The policy

has been criticised for an 'under-evidenced conceptualisation', which had 'fundamental design problems' alongside an 'implementation failure' leading to a clear 'policy failure' (Gibb, 2015:2). Key justifications for the policy were that it would address under-occupation in the social housing sector and reduce the housing benefit bill, but research has found that this 'stretches credibility' and is based on a faulty premise, as small properties in the private rental sector are often more expensive than large properties rented from the state (Gibb, 2015:14).

In an example of 'multiple policy failure,' disabled people are 'massively over-represented' in the demographic affected by the bedroom tax (Gibb, 2015:10). Legal scholars have described the spare room subsidy as 'an ideological device which operates to increase inequality whilst deploying a rhetoric of fairness' (Carr & Cowan, 2015:87). Many of these criticisms were picked up by Raquel Rolnik, UN special rapporteur for housing, in a preliminary report produced after visiting Britain in 2013. There are elements of the report which highlight key problems in the British housing market:

> Part of the problem might be the priorities governing the allocation of resources. In 1975, about 80 percent of public investment in housing went to capital funding for new council homes or maintenance of existing stock. By 2000, however, the bulk of public spending in this area was directed to housing benefits; more recently, a significant proportion of that amount has been going to private landlords. Added to this, the housing stock is no longer viewed as a public resource, to be kept available for various generations. The housing stock sold under the Right to Buy scheme has not been replaced. At the time, local councils received half of the money from the sales, but faced strict capital controls, making it difficult to use the money to replace homes that were sold (Rolnik, 2013:8).

As Gibb points out above, one motivation for the policy was to reduce housing benefit payments, as part of a political strategy to transform the banking crisis and financial crash into a problem of overspending on welfare. This 'reworking' has 'focused on the unwieldy and expensive welfare state and public sector, rather than high-risk strategies of banks, as the root cause of the crisis' (Clarke & Newman, 2012:300). Rolnik's report for the UN clearly highlights the structural problems with the British housing market which have caused the housing benefit bill to be so high (Rolnik, 2013:8). Selling cut-price social housing while failing to build new homes has led to a massive transfer of wealth from the state to private landlords. As with other policies intended to 'roll-back' (Peck & Tickell, 2002) the state, the Right to Buy 'had to be accompanied by a paternalistic raft of measures aimed at reducing the acknowledged risk to marginal homeowners' (Blandy & Hunter, 2013:33). In short, Rolnik's report was broadly accurate and supported by academic research in this area. However, the way it was reported in the British press rarely afford it this level of credibility.

6.5.1. Defending the British State from the 'loony left'

Coverage on Rolnik's report focussed heavily on her nationality. It was mentioned in 40 articles despite it having no relevance to her report into UK housing (Figure 17), and it became a key feature of ad hominem attacks. This is one example of how the British national interest is reflected by newspapers as a key element in building 'imagined communities'.
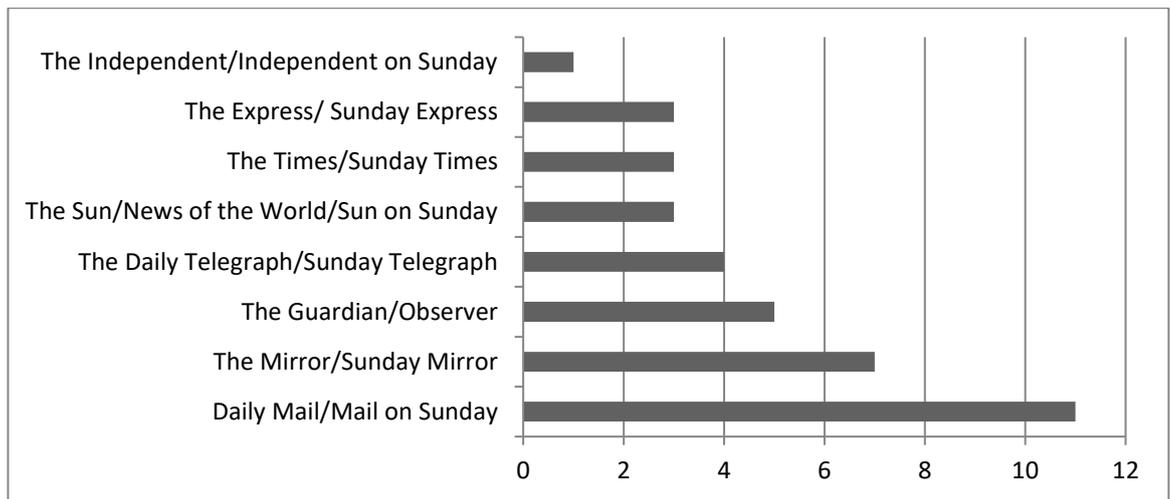
Figure 17: Articles mentioning Raquel Rolnik's nationality

In a comment piece in the *Daily Mail,* Rolnik's report was described as a 'patronising, wrong-headed intervention […] laughable were it not so offensive'.[98] What offended the author was Rolnik's Brazilian nationality: she was urged to 'take a look at her own backyard instead of hectoring us […] Brazilians live in squalid slums without basic facilities'.[99] This was cited as a salient feature in many news reports in the conservative press,[100] even though she was working as a United Nations official.

Rolnik was also criticised for being part of the 'loony left', a term dating back to news coverage of the Labour Party in the 1980s when a new generation of Labour politicians were elected to run local councils. They were portrayed as being extremists in the 1980s, but many of the policies then considered extreme are now 'part of day-to-day contemporary politics' including 'commitments to feminism, anti-racism, gay rights, disability rights and environmentalism' (Gaber, 2014:475-476). This type of framing emerged as a defence of the politics of the

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[98] McKinstry, L. (2013), How dare this idiot preach at Britain on human rights, *Daily Express*, 12 September 2013.
[99] *Op. cit.*
[100] Platell, A. (2013), Will Diana ever get the tribute she deserves?, *Daily Mail*, 7 September 2013.

New Right in the late 1980s and has been used by British journalists to discredit the left ever since (Negrine, 1996:9).

Broadly speaking, this 'loony left' framing allows journalists to cast left-wing political ideas as belonging to the 'other' (Curran et al., 2005:209). The press were able to ignore the findings of Rolnik's report by focussing on her nationality and political beliefs. The *Daily Mail* also conducted research on Rolnik's background to find ways of discrediting her:

> Miss Rolnik had been an avid follower of Candomble, an African-Brazilian religion that originated during the slave trade. The academic, brought up a Marxist, offered an animal sacrifice to Karl Marx when she was studying for her master's degree in architecture, according to her sister.[101]

This description makes clear references to the tropes of the 'loony left' while also emphasising Rolnik's otherness. By casting her as an 'other' with alien or foreign values, she is undermined as a credible authority when it comes to understanding British politics. In the *Daily Mail,* readers were urged to 'forget Brazilian Raquel Rolnik's ignorant description of a reduction in subsidies for spare rooms as a bedroom tax' and ask instead:

> With millions of refugees living in pitiful squalor the world over, and 54 million in her own country without water or sanitation, isn't the real mystery what this batty woman was doing in Britain in the first place?[102]

Beyond nationality, some newspapers also used Rolnik's left-wing convictions to discredit her research. The *Telegraph* described Rolnik as a 'Brazilian busybody'

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[101] Chapman, J. (2014), A Marxist Diatribe, *Daily Mail*, 4 February 2014.
[102] *Daily Mail*. (2013), Let this be the start of a vital revolution, *Daily Mail*, 12 September 2013.

with 'Leftist pieties',[103] and the *Daily Mail* claimed that Rolnik was a 'leading member of Brazil's Workers' Party, which is closely allied to Fidel Castro's Cuban Communist Party.[104] These political affiliations were reported as if Rolnik had tried to keep them secret. One article described how she had been 'exposed as a member of Brazil's far-Left Workers' Party, funded by Cuba'.[105] In the *Sun,* Rolnik was described as 'Brazil's nut',[106] a play on her Brazilian nationality and the British use of the word 'nuts' as an offensive term meaning mentally ill.

The articles are repeatedly framed to emphasise that Rolnik's report should not be taken seriously because she is foreign, left-wing and allegedly mentally ill. The latter point is based on the claim mentioned earlier that Rolnik sacrificed a chicken while she was a University student. One report described how Rolnik was 'brought up a Marxist' and 'actually offered an animal sacrifice to Karl Marx'.[107] In the *Sunday Times*, there was a detailed and descriptive 'reimagining' of the scene before she is described as 'the mad UN representative […] a strange-looking creature, a member of the left-wing Brazilian Workers' party who sports large plastic-framed spectacles'.[108] A number of articles make reference to Rolnik's personal appearance, focussing mainly on her colourful spectacles; she is compared to comedy characters such as 'Timmy Mallet' and 'Dame Edna Everage', familiar to British audiences for wearing large colourful spectacles.[109]

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[103] *Daily Telegraph*. (2013), Get the housing market moving - but not too fast. *Daily Telegraph*, 11 September 2013.
[104] Littlejohn, R. (2013), She's a leading member of Brazil's Workers' Party, which is closely allied to Fidel Castro's Cuban Communist Party., *Daily Mail*, 12 September 2013.
[105] Wooding, D. (2013), My apolargies; Top Argentine sorry for Cam 'dumb' jibe, *Sun*, 15 September 2013.
[106] Dunn, T. N. (2013), Brazil's nut, *Sun*, 27 September 2013.
[107] Seamark, M., 2013. Raquel: A dabbler in witchcraft who offered an animal sacrifice to Marx. *Daily Mail,* 12 September 2013.
[108] Liddle, R. (2013), Bedroom tax bad, animal sacrifice good for comrade Brazil nut, *Sunday Times*, 15 September 2013.
[109] Littlejohn, R., 2013. She's a leading member of Brazil's Workers' Party, which is closely allied to Fidel Castro's Cuban Communist Party. *Daily Mail,* 12 September 2013.

These references build a caricature of Rolnik, allowing the newspapers to avoid taking her seriously.

The criticism of Rolnik's intervention is most often written from a perspective which defends the British Government and by extension the British state:

> No matter how much the British government might moan, these days it is perfectly respectable for some failed politician from a Third World hell-hole to come over here at our expense (somewhere down the line) and tell us how absolutely useless we are.[110]

Only one article from the sample[111] of five conservative newspapers offered any criticism of the bedroom tax. However, while this article from the *Times* satirised the extreme news coverage of Rolnik's visit, it still managed to reinforce many of the key themes from other conservative newspapers. Even though the bedroom tax was bad, it argued, Rolnik should still not be taken seriously:

> She's Brazilian for starters: yeah, when Sao Paulo clears its favelas come talk to us about housing. She gets worked up in press conferences: cue headlines of "Brazil Nut". She favours those big, primary-coloured specs last seen on GLC wimmin councillors, circa 1981. And not only is she a Marxist but, as a practitioner of the quasi-religious art of Candomblé, once sacrificed a chicken. Yes, this angry, loony-leftie woman is an actual witch![112]

Alongside the ad hominem attacks on Rolnik are a series of quotations from Conservative Party MPs who claim repeatedly that the report is 'utterly ridiculous',

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[110] Liddle, R. (2013), Bedroom tax bad, animal sacrifice good for comrade Brazil nut, *Sunday Times*, 15 September 2013.

[111] Article sample 2.

[112] Turner, J. (2013), A bedroom tax looks un-British, even in Brazil; Austerity may be necessary but the coalition's spare room subsidy policy is illogical, unfair and cruel, *Times*, 14 September 2013.

'partisan', 'completely discredited' and a 'misleading Marxist diatribe', which they argue is 'biased, poorly researched and contains inaccuracies'. Many of the critical quotations about Rolnik's role in the UN come from Conservative MPs:

> The aid budget is a way in which poor people in Britain pay for the lifestyles of rich people in developing countries. We are having to pay taxes to put this international trougher up in a four-star hotel. People like Mrs Rolnik never seem to grasp that we have elections so people can decide these matters for themselves.[113]

Rolnik is described by politicians as 'a loopy Brazilian leftie with no evidence' who is accused of 'masquerading as a serious UN official'. An article in the *Telegraph* quotes Conservative Party chairman Grant Schapps at length:

> This report is an absolute disgrace and I'm going to be writing to the UN Secretary General today to ask serious questions including how this came about. How is it that a woman from Brazil, a country that has 50million people in inadequate housing, has come over, failed to meet with any government ministers, with any officials from the Department of Work and Pensions or even to refer to the policy by its accurate name anywhere in the report at all?[114]

Conservative Party attempts to discredit the report were repeated in BBC news coverage of the issue. For example, in a BBC News interview, one question was framed entirely from the perspective of the British Government:

> Grant Schapps, the Tory Party chairman, has been speaking this morning saying you weren't invited, you have come over with an agenda, he says it is an abuse of the process for you to come over, to fail to meet with

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[113] Doughty, S., & Brown, L. (2013), £300-a-night hotel for the UN inspector who lectured Britian over bedroom tax, *Daily Mail*, 13 September 2013.
[114] Swinford, S. (2013), UN attack on 'bedroom tax' is absolute disgrace, claims Tory chairman, *Daily Telegraph*, 12 September 2013.

government ministers, fail to meet with the department responsible, to produce a press release even though the report is not due out until next spring, how do you respond to all of that?[115]

The news story had been transformed by the Conservative Party and a supportive conservative press from a critical assessment of government policy to a lampoon about the personality of a UN official. According to the *Daily Express*, Rolnik's recommendations would lead to a 'morally degenerate, dehumanising world without any requirement to work or take personal responsibility'.[116] The Labour Party were criticised for sharing Rolnik's thinking on human rights in the *Daily Express*, which offered robust support for the government: 'the coalition has bravely reversed the trend with its programme of welfare reform'.[117] Criticism was also extended to the role of the United Nations, who were accused of abusing public money by sending Rolnik to produce the report, and of inability to understand 'proper human rights'.[118]

None of these articles addressed the findings of the report or discussed evidence of hardship caused by the removal of the 'spare-room subsidy' or 'under occupancy charge'. The findings of Rolnik's report have been supported in other academic research studies into the welfare reform programme (Carr & Cowan, 2015; Gibb, 2015). This case study shows that when faced with criticism for their record on tackling poverty and human rights in relation to housing, a large section of the British press vehemently defended the government. These reports made little effort to engage with Rolnik's report or consider providing an impact

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[115] *BBC News*, (2013), Interview with Raquel Rolnik, *BBC News*, 13 September 2013.
[116] McKinstry, L., (2013), How dare this idiot preach at Britain on human rights. *Daily Express,* 12 September 2013.
[117] *Op. cit.*
[118] *Times.* (2013), Not the Point; It is not the job of the UN to intervene in the domestic policy debates of democracies, *Times*, 12 September 2013.

assessment on the possible effects of the government's welfare reform proposals.

6.5.2. Reporting Rolnik in the liberal press

There was not a single ad hominem attack on Raquel Rolnik in the *Guardian,* the *Observer*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Sunday Mirror*, the *Independent* or the *Independent on Sunday.* All of these newspapers reported Rolnik's visit and engaged with the findings of her report. An article in the *Guardian* quoted the Labour Party shadow housing minister, who used the report to criticise the government:

> Labour has called on David Cameron to reverse his unfair and unworkable bedroom tax because we can see the impact it is having on hard-pressed and often vulnerable people, the majority of whom are disabled. If he doesn't repeal the bedroom tax, the next Labour government will.[119]

In support of Rolnik's report, a *Guardian* journalist interviewed people living in poverty who had been adversely affected by the spare room subsidy, backing up Rolnik's findings.[120] Another report in the *Guardian* examined the negative news coverage in the conservative press, giving Rolnik the right of reply about the ad hominem attacks. In response, she argued that 'my nationality is of no relevance to my role as a special rapporteur' and that 'what should matter is how to address the housing issues in the UK in a way that respects the rights of people living in the UK'.[121] She was also quoted in the *Guardian* as saying:

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[119] Gentlemen, A., & Butler, P. (2014), UN Housing report dismissed as 'Marxist': Ministers defensive in face of Rolnik's research in UK Criticisms of bedroom tax rejected as 'misleading', *Guardian*, 4 February 2014.
[120] Gentlemen, A. (2013), Housing: Food or heating: tough choices for tenants caught by bedroom tax, *Guardian*, 28 November 2013.
[121] Taylor, M. (2013), UN housing specialist shocked by 'Brazil nut' response to findings: Rolnik bedroom tax report mocked by rightwing press: Tory chairman's complaint to UN regarded as 'hostile', *Guardian*, 13 September 2013.

It was the first time a government has been so aggressive. When I was in the US, I had a constructive conversation with them, accepting some things and arguing with others. They did not react like this.[122]

News articles in the *Independent* also supported the UN criticism of the spare room subsidy policy, citing reports from the Labour Party and the pressure group False Economy which corroborated many of Rolnik's assertions.[123] A report in the *Observer* described the British Government as behaving 'in the manner of uncouth thugs' in their treatment of Rolnik, and the *Daily Mirror* reported that 'It took someone from another country to tell our government this tax must be suspended. That is a matter, not for mockery, but of national shame'.[124] This criticism from the liberal press is interesting because it took issue with the way the British state and the conservative press handled the UN report.

One of the most common themes throughout this chapter has been the way that news coverage of political solutions to poverty has reflected rather than challenged state solutions to poverty. These solutions have most often been framed in to reinforce the ideas of the New Right that emerged in the 1980s. This runs contrary to a range of studies which have argued that the media play a key agenda-setting role when it comes to the political arena (Walgrave et al., 2007; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

This chapter has looked at the changing way that poverty has been framed and how this relates to shifting periods of governance in the UK. Part of the analysis

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[122] Ellen, B. (2013), Welcome to modern Britain, home of the boor, *Observer*, 15 September 2013.
[123] Dugan, E. (2013), Bedroom tax: now 50,000 people are facing eviction, *Independent*, 19 September 2013.
[124] Wynne-Jones, R. (2013), Just read letters to see truth, *Daily Mirror*, 12 September 2013.

looked at the use of news sources, or 'frame sponsors', in framing articles about politics. The chapter that follows looks at the way these sources were used by newspapers in much more detail by focussing on two contemporary manifestations of poverty.

7. Poor sources: 'Expert' voices in reporting food and fuel poverty

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of news sources used to support articles about food poverty and fuel poverty. These were two of the most common manifestations of poverty reported by the British press as identified in the thematic content analysis presented in Chapter Five. Other studies have argued that news sources in elite positions are increasingly able to shape the news agenda (Briggs & Cobley, 1998:66; Cottle, 2000 :436) because newspapers are reliant on outsiders because of commercial pressures and cutbacks in the newsroom (Lewis et al., 2008:1). The people discussed throughout this chapter are affected by hunger and cold, which places them beyond the semantic discussions about relative poverty.

Journalists who write about poverty have been criticised for having a 'lack of desire and methodological inability to include the poor themselves' (Bambra, 2003:550). This chapter provides some empirical evidence for this contention by examining the way that journalists rely on 'expert' sources to construct news articles about poverty. 'Experts' are used by journalists for their 'news value', because they support the 'editorial agendas and influences' of a particular newspaper or simply because of 'time pressures' or to 'provide objectivity and

balance' (Boyce, 2006:903). This chapter suggests that the British press relies heavily on the testimony of 'experts' from the world of politics and business to construct news articles about food and fuel poverty. Conversely, in an example of institutionalised social exclusion within the newsroom, a relative lack of column inches is given to people experiencing poverty or to non-political actors with expertise in the field.

As argued throughout this thesis, a great body of research contradicts the normative claim that journalists act as a 'fourth estate'. The press rarely live up to this idealistic role, and instead of challenging elite interests research has shown that they are more likely to reflect the worldview of politically and economically powerful groups (Bourdieu, 1998b:70; van Dijk, 1991). The media play a key role in shaping how poverty is discussed and understood (Redden, 2011:821; Sotirovic, 2001:766). However, the condition of poverty is intrinsically related to social exclusion. Therefore, by including the perspectives of people who have experience of living in poverty, or that of experts who know about which anti-poverty programmes work, journalists could play an important role in helping readers to understand poverty as a social problem. Instead, the social exclusion of people living in poverty is compounded by the press, who most often use 'expert' sources from politics and business, constructing poverty from an elite perspective within the news.

Prevalent journalistic norms dictate that a 'close interplay with sources is considered unacceptable' (Örebro, 2002:32). However, this thesis echoes the findings of Schneider's research on journalistic framing of homelessness by showing that the social exclusion of those suffering from fuel poverty and food

poverty is institutionalised by British newspapers through their use of news sources (Schneider, 2012). The previous chapter outlined the influence of politicians in shaping discourses of poverty. According to Becker, elite groups are given more 'credibility' by the media and afforded a greater right to be heard because of their 'rank' within a system, placing them into a 'hierarchy of credibility' (Becker, 1966a:241). Cottle describes how this works in practice:

> Whose voices predominate, whose vie and contend, and whose are marginalized or rendered silent on the news stage are questions of shared interest. How social groups and interests are defined and symbolically visualized is also part and parcel of media source access (Cottle, 2003:5).

This chapter discusses how politicians are extremely prominent as news sources on both fuel poverty and food poverty. This supports findings from a study of news sources in Sweden which showed that between 65% and 77% of news articles cited a politician as a source (Strömbäck & Nord, 2006:160).

7.1. Sourcing food poverty

The rise of food poverty and food banks in Britain is a highly contested political issue. The number of people in Britain who require food aid in order to feed themselves and their families has increased in recent years (Dowler, 2014:160), and this is a complex phenomenon happening in countries across Europe. In Finland for example, a country with a Nordic welfare state and a constitutional commitment to social justice, food poverty has become a serious social problem (Kore, 2014). In the UK context, critics have argued that the combination of austerity and welfare reform policies have left people relying on food banks to

survive.[125] The government has argued that the growth of food banks is simply because they are giving away free food, which is causing a spike in demand.[126] British conservative commentators such as Michael Portillo have argued that children rely on food banks because their parents spend their money on drugs: 'to say that food banks prove there is hunger is illogical' (Harkins, 2015a). This is despite research linking the rise food bank use to welfare sanctions (Garthwaite et al., 2015; Loopstra et al., 2015).

The British press are clearly split on the issue of food poverty. The *Daily Mirror* campaigned vociferously against rising hunger[127] and editorials in the *Guardian*[128] condemned the increase in food poverty, with both newspapers placing the blame firmly with the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government. On the other hand, food poverty is largely ignored in conservative newspapers. When it is covered, criticism is directed at food poverty campaigners,[129] or scepticism is expressed about the existence of hunger or the government's responsibility for causing it.[130] Articles about food poverty appear more often in liberal publications; the following figure shows the spread of articles from the exercise outlined in Chapter Five.

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[125] Lyons, M. F. J. (2014), Benefits blunders forcing thousands to use food banks says Tory think tank, *Daily Mirror*, 3 March 2014.

[126] Morris, N. (2013), Demand for food banks has nothing to do with benefits squeeze, says Work minister Lord Freud, *Independent*, 02 July 2013.

[127] Monroe, J. (2014), We need a budget to end the scandal of UK hunger; Join poverty petition plea to chancellor George Osborne, *Daily Mirror*, 25 February 2014.

[128] Butler, P. (2014), Food poverty shames this government, *Guardian*, 26 February 2014.

[129] Littlejohn, R. (2013), Ah Pesto! Meet the poverty poster girls, *Daily Mail*, 01 November 2013.

[130] Cavendish, C. (2014), The wrong notions about solving poverty are piled up high at the food bank, *Sunday Times*, 16 March 2014.

Food Poverty Articles
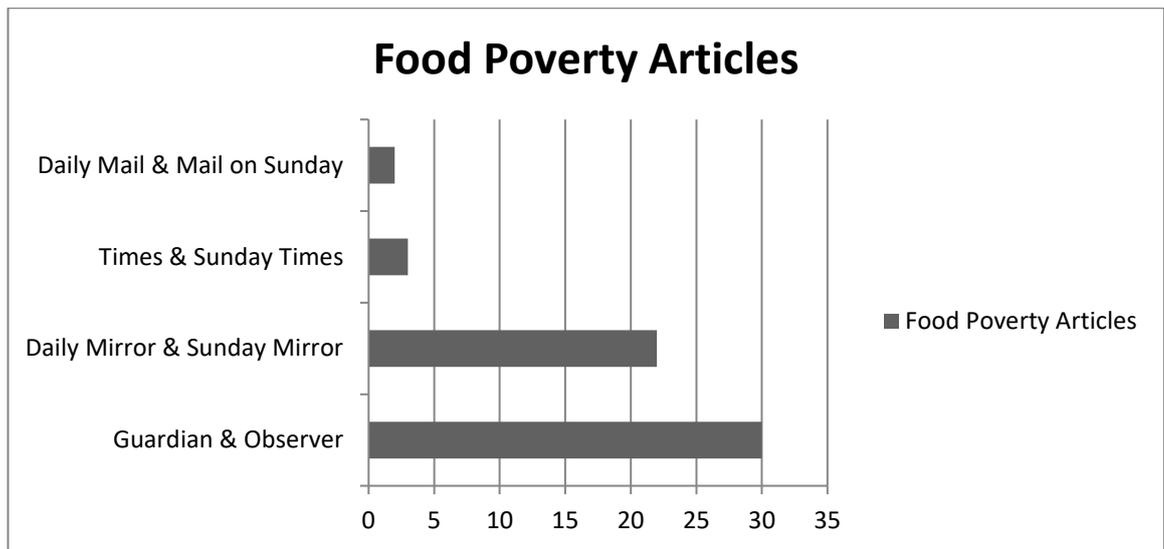
Figure 18: Food poverty articles 2012-2013

These patterns were repeated when all eight national newspapers were examined individually. Two interesting findings from this dataset include that the *Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* articles in the sample[131] did not include a single source from the second and third tier categories. Instead, they constructed narratives of food poverty and food banks entirely from the perspective of 'expert' sources. The *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Mirror* rely on food bank volunteers as sources more often than the other newspapers. However, when it comes to the number of words given to each source, experts are allowed far more words than food bank volunteers and users. This echoes the findings of other research on news sources, which has suggests that 'the higher the social status of the speaker, the more verbatim the quotation is likely to be' (Schneider, 2012:73).

It is clear from these results that journalists rely heavily on the testimony of 'experts' to frame news stories about food poverty and food banks. Food bank users and volunteers are partially excluded from the conversation about the issue

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[131] Article sample 3.

with the exception of relaying their direct experiences. A detailed examination

shows that journalists are most likely to quote politicians in stories about food

banks and food poverty. This is a common finding in research into news sources

(Lewis et al., 2008; Schneider, 2012; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006).

The second largest 'expert' group included official spokespeople for charities and

non-governmental organisations, because most stories about food poverty and

food banks are framed as a conflict between the government and food bank

charities. This conflict also explains the high use of church representatives in

stories on food poverty: many of the UK's food banks are linked to church

organisations. Church representatives have also been vocal in criticising the

government for the rise of food banks in Britain, and this conflict has been the

main news story with the issue of widespread hunger only a secondary concern.
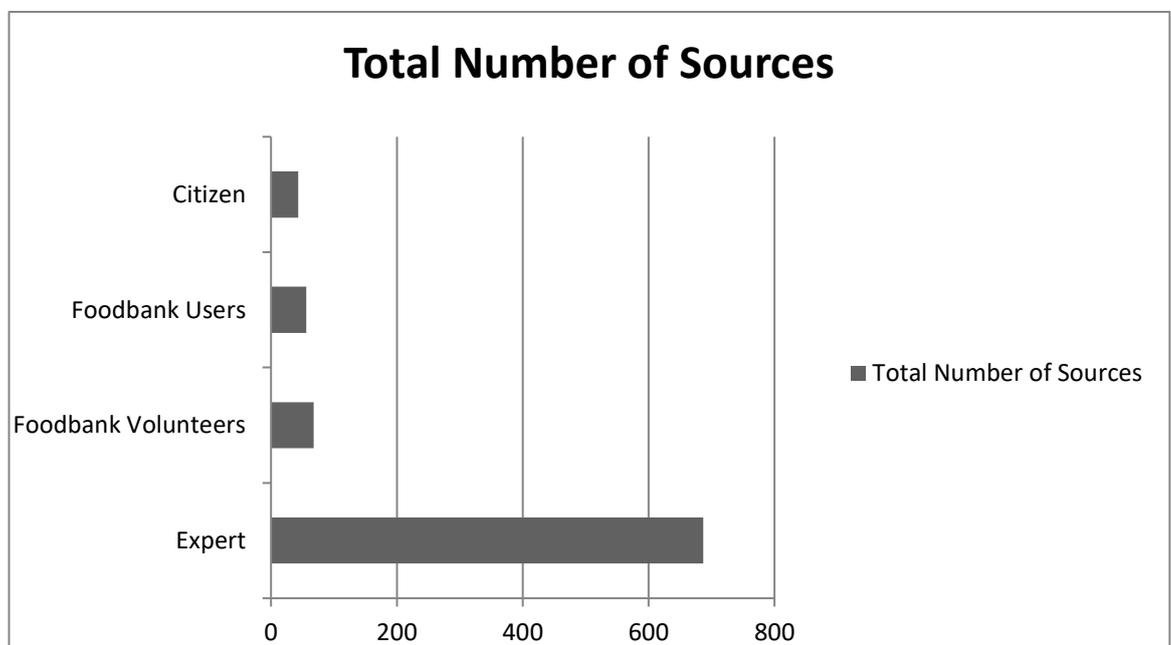
Figure 19: Food poverty sources 2012-2013

By examining the sample[132] of articles from all 8 newspapers, it is clear that journalists are heavily reliant on 'expert' sources. From a total of 854 identified sources, 687 were from 'expert' speakers. In comparison, only 68 sources were from food bank volunteers and 56 were from food bank users. 'Citizens' were quoted 43 times, making them almost as likely as food bank users or volunteers to be interviewed about food poverty. In total, out of 39,280 quoted words, 29,710 were from experts with 3875 coming from food bank volunteers, 3618 from food bank users, and 2077 from 'citizens'.
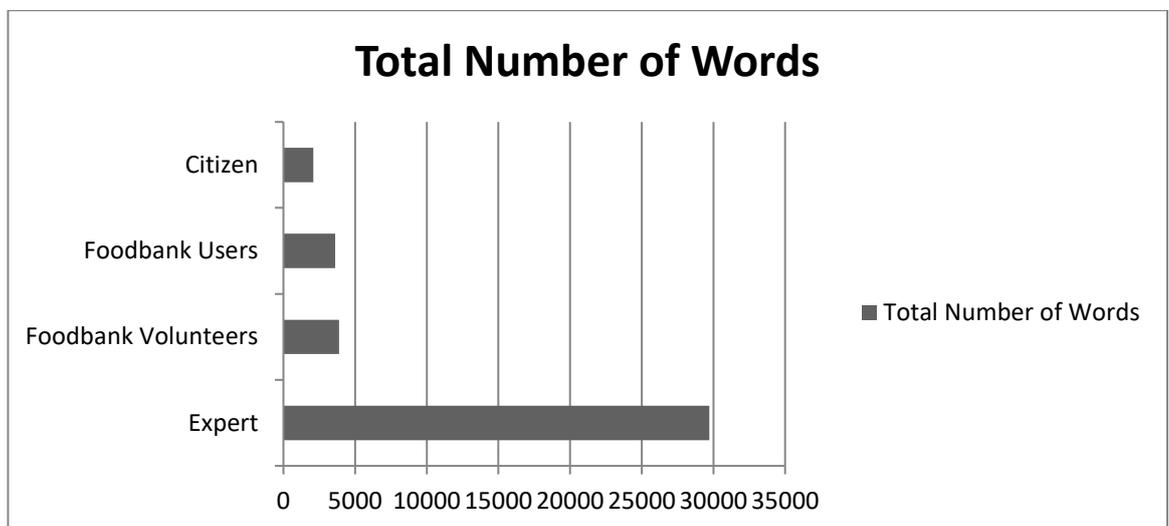
Figure 20: Food poverty words in articles 2012-2013

In line with findings discussed above, the most common 'expert' sources came from the world of politics, followed by charities, NGOs and representatives from churches. There is a consistent pattern in both liberal and conservative newspapers where political voices are favoured throughout all aspects of news coverage of poverty and welfare.

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[132] Article sample 3.
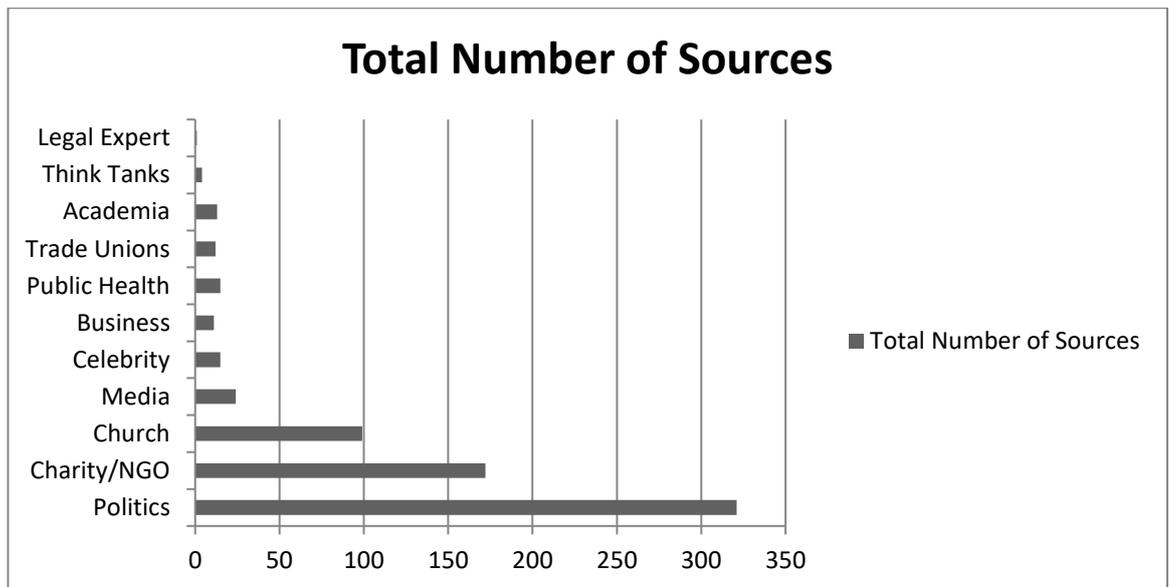
Figure 21: Food poverty sources 2012-2013

News sources play an important role in the construction of news (Tuchman, 1978), and the dominance of political voices in the news coverage of poverty shows a consistent trend in journalism production. Sigal's research showed that three-quarters of the sources used in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* were government officials (Sigal, 1973). The hierarchy of sources, also observed by Gans, is clearly evident in the data presented here (Gans, 1979). One reason for the prevalence of political voices is that journalists are encouraged by editors to use official sources with established credibility, who are easy to access (Ross, 2007:454). In this sense, 'journalists' ability to choose who speaks (or does not speak) in news coverage enables them to frame news without appearing to do so' (Schneider, 2012:72).

The dominance of political sources on this topic is problematic because a growing body of research has demonstrated that the UK welfare reform programme is driving food poverty and the need for people to use food banks (Caraher et al., 2014; Garthwaite et al., 2015; Livingstone, 2015; Loopstra et al., 2015;

Tsilimpounidi et al., 2014). As mentioned above, this had been denied by politicians, who claim that the rise in food bank use has been caused by people's desire for free food, or by people spending their money on drugs rather than food (Harkins, 2015a).

The editorial position of the newspapers was clear from their use of sources, with the liberal newspapers – the *Independent, Guardian* and *Daily Mirror* – giving far more space to food bank users. Of all the words given to food bank users, 82% appeared in these three publications. The *Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* sample[133] did not contain a single quotation from a food bank user or someone living in food poverty. However, even though the liberal press were more likely to give space to these voices, their appearance was dwarfed in comparison with elite voices.
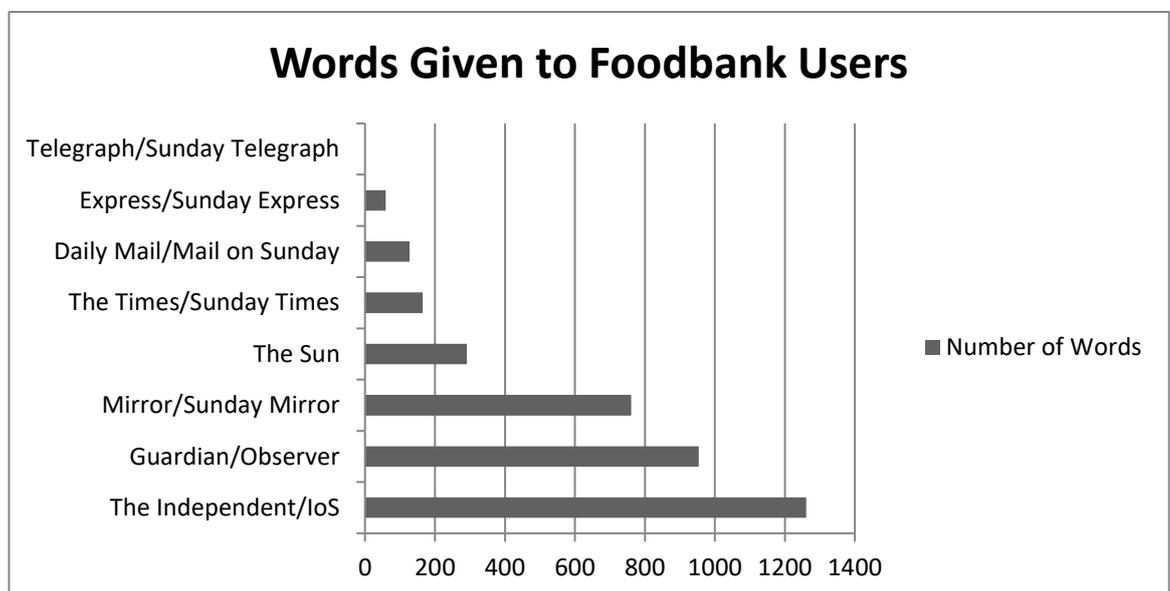
Figure 22: Food bank user words by newspaper 2012-2013

[133] Article sample 3.

7.1.1. Sourcing food poverty in the liberal press

In the *Guardian,* columnist Suzanne Moore called the existence of food banks in Britain a symbol of 'ludicrous inequality', arguing that 'a twisted logic comes into play: a logic that makes those at the bottom accountable in ways those at the top never are'. In one of the most critical pieces in the sample, Moore argued:

> This surely is where the debate about standards of living must start: the immorality of food banks in one of the world's richest countries. Our standards of everything – mine and yours – are lowered by their existence. A society that tolerates this, a government that refuses to acknowledge why, is neither "big" nor clever. For, actually, the chancers or whoever these genetically poor folk are who use their services, are returning some food because they cannot afford to heat it up. This is no standard. This is not living.[134]

Another *Guardian* columnist, Zoe Williams, argued that 'people are using food banks because, for reasons of lateness or insufficiency or maladministration, their benefits aren't enough to cover food'.[135] This was one of the few news articles making an explicit link between welfare reform and food poverty, despite this link being made repeatedly in academic studies (Caraher et al., 2014; Livingstone, 2015; Loopstra et al., 2015; Tsilimpounidi et al., 2014). Testimonies from food bank users in the *Guardian* were most often limited to their personal experiences. There was some room for wider criticism from food bank users, who argued that 'the government are happy to let [food banks] happen. They're not in touch with the real world'.[136] The *Guardian* and *Observer* also went into great detail about

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[134] Moore, S. (2014), Surely the debate about living standards must start with the immorality of food banks in one of the richest countries in the world, *Guardian*, 17 October 2014.

[135] Williams, Z. (2013), To Lord Freud, a food bank is an excuse for a free lunch: The minister's attempt to link the rise in food banks to greed rather than poverty shows a withered meanness, *Guardian*, 4 July 2013.

[136] Rayner, J. (2013), Food bank Britain: Life below the line, *Observer*, 18 August 2013.

the financial struggles of food bank users by outlining how people's financial situations had led them to need food banks.

Some opinion pieces made an explicit link between welfare reform and food poverty, but this link was largely absent within hard news coverage. In this way, the persistent use of political sources could mystify the connection between welfare sanctions and food poverty. Although this argument has been made repeatedly in academic literature, including recent studies emphasising that the crisis has been exacerbated by austerity policies (Dowler, 2014:160). it was rarely reflected by hard news coverage in the *Guardian*. One editorial in the *Independent* cited a report which 'contradicted the claim that visits to food banks are up simply because there are more such facilities available'.[137] However, this article also pointed out that while there is 'some evidence' of the link between welfare reform and food banks the link is 'far from unequivocal'.

In a more critical article in the *Independent*, columnist Grace Dent argued that 'this growing Tory umbrage over the existence of food banks needs to be put in its place'.[138] Dent singled out Lord Freud, Edwina Currie and Michael Gove for criticism when she explained that 'Conservatives bad-mouthing food banks, for me, is as bleak as the sudden outbursts of sexism and racism that Cameron has worked so hard to move his party away from.'[139]

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[137] *Independent*, (2014), A God delusion; Britain's poorest are suffering terribly. But clerics have no special authority in political debates about their welfare, *Independent*, 22 February 2014
[138] Dent, G. (2013), The Nasty Party is back, sneering at food banks and those who use them, *Independent*, 17 October 2013
[139] *Op. cit.*

The *Independent* printed more words than any other newspaper in the sample that were dedicated to the voices of food bank users. The testimony of food bank users mostly explained their direct experience of poverty, but some linked their food bank usage to changes in the benefits system:

> I was at the Ministry of Defence for 20 years. I'm now unemployed but not old for a pension. When the council changed benefit payments on 1 April, I had no money for food. I complained to the council and they suggested a food bank. I have no family and don't want my friends to know about my situation, so had no where (sic) else to turn. [140]

In the same article another food bank user said, 'when my benefit payments changed I had no money left'.[141] Other food bank users in the sample explained how state benefits did not give them enough money to live on, leaving them reliant on food banks. Overall, the *Independent* spent more time speaking to food bank users and were also the only newspaper to make the explicit link between welfare reform and rising food poverty in their hard news articles.

The *Daily Mirror* adopted a consistently critical stance over the existence of food poverty and food banks, arguing that 'emergency food parcels' are 'the grim reality of life in Britain'. A piece from columnist Kevin Maguire argued that Prime Minister David Cameron was 'out-of-touch':

> Cameron sounds as if he's on another planet when he talks as though we're on the verge of unparalleled prosperity. The extra tax cuts he's preparing to gift millionaire chums are charity for the wealthy as he makes life tougher for the hardworking majority. Any economic recovery worth the

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[140] Morris N. & Cooper, C. (2013), Hungry Britain; More than 500,000 people forced to use food banks Number of Britons turning to food banks has trebled in past 12 months, *Independent*, 30 May 2013
[141] *Op. cit.*

name must mean more than leaving most people to wait for a few crumbs from the rich man's table.[142]

For Maguire, the solution to the political problem lies in 'stronger trade unions, work for all, living wages, improved public services, new houses plus an end to zero-hours-zero-pay contracts and wage-cutting contracts'.[143] The *Daily Mirror* gave a greater proportion of its words than many other newspapers to share the voices of food bank users:

> It is so frustrating to be in Banbury with all these wealthy people around us. They're just standing, watching, laughing at us. Meanwhile Cameron's going around everywhere posing for the cameras. [144]

> [Prime Minister David Cameron] could do a lot more for us.[145] We struggle to pay the bills and get enough food for the kids. […] the things we see in Newcastle you would associate with a Third World country'.[146]

With the exception of the first two food bank users above who criticised David Cameron, most quotations from food bank users related to their first-hand experience of poverty and receiving food parcels, with little in their testimonies about the wider context of food banks and food poverty in Britain. While the *Daily Mirror* attempted to hold the government to account on the issue of rising food poverty, they did not make a robust case linking the food poverty with welfare reform. Similarly, the *Guardian* did not link welfare reform with rising food poverty in any hard news articles. This was perhaps surprising as the *Guardian* is one of the leading liberal newspapers in the UK. The tone and framing of coverage in

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[142] Maguire, K. (2014), Run on food banks but PM's all smiles, *Daily Mirror*, 6 January 2014.
[143] *Op. cit.*
[144] McPhee, R. (2013), Same Country...different worlds, *Daily Mirror*, 5 Dec 2013.
[145] *Op. cit.*
[146] Armstrong, J. (2014), Food banks explosion, *Daily Mirror*, 03 March 2014

the *Daily Mirror* made it less likely to be constrained by considerations of objectivity, but the short tabloid format of the articles may explain the lack of depth in presenting the link between food poverty and welfare reform. Explicit links between welfare sanctions and food poverty were made in hard news articles in the *Independent,* which was an unusual approach even amongst the liberal newspapers.

None of the three liberal newspapers attempted to deny the existence or rise of food poverty in the UK, and they made the link to welfare reform and provided far more coverage of the voices of people affected by food poverty than the conservative press. However, much of the hard news reporting in the *Guardian* was produced within a 'regime of objectivity', favouring news sources from political elites. There is a notable contrast between this coverage and the opinion articles on food poverty.

7.1.2. Sourcing food poverty in the conservative press

The conservative press articles in this sample[147] were often critical of the organisations making the case against growing food poverty in Britain. One such article from the *Sunday Telegraph* was an opinion piece by Conservative politician Dominic Raab, who described how food bank users lead 'chaotic lives'. He argued that criticism of the government from the church over food banks 'displays a reckless disregard for the facts, and willful ignorance of the underlying causes', and that church representatives should not 'lazily lean on Left-wing crutches'.[148] Another comment piece in the *Telegraph* asked, 'are the poor

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[147] Article sample 3.
[148] Raab, D. (2014), The free-market fix for food banks, *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 February 2014.

dangerously fat or dangerously underfed?', questioning the very existence of food poverty in Britain:

> Today's food banks are not fuelled by the needs of the poor so much as by the needs of charities and campaigners. I think the main beneficiaries of the fashion for opening food banks, and for press-releasing these openings to every media outlet in the land, are the poverty industry rather than the poor. The poverty industry is made up of those campaigners who depend, for their very existence, on the idea that there exist hordes of helpless, hapless poor folk – and so the more these campaigners can fuel that idea, the better.[149]

The articles from the *Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* offered no testimonies from food bank users. Editorially these newspapers reject the rise of food poverty in the United Kingdom and take a position which defends the government from criticism on this issue. The lack of material from people experiencing food poverty or volunteering at food banks is interesting here as an example of how newspapers can favour ideology over evidence. Journalists often defend their trade by appealing to the 'fourth estate' tradition or by claiming 'objectivity' based on fairness and balance (Maras, 2013).[150] However, in terms of reporting food poverty it was clear that the *Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* met none of these conditions. They also failed to cover food poverty in their hard news sections.

Columnist Leo McKinstry wrote in the *Daily Express* that increased public awareness of food banks was related to 'hysterical propaganda' and 'emotional blackmail' from 'the Left':

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[149] O'Neill, B. (2013), What's fuelling the food-bank frenzy? The hunger for publicity of anti-poverty activists, *Telegraph*, 18 October 2013.
[150] Dacre, P., (2011). Paul Dacre's speech at the Leveson inquiry - full text, *Guardian*. 12 October 2011.

if an organisation offers something for free, inevitably people will take it
[…] If our country is really so hungry then how come we are constantly told
that we are facing an "obesity time bomb"?[151]

This editorial contrasted sharply with a hard news article in the *Sunday Express*
quoting food bank users who said that food banks had saved their lives:

My son would come home from school, open the cupboard and say: 'When
will we have food to eat? […] I have been working all my life but there just
are not the jobs out there. The bills are piling up. I cannot afford to eat. I
am suffering from depression because of it all.[152]

The difference in tone between the editorial in the *Daily Express* and the
testimony of food bank users in the *Sunday Express* was striking. However, as
mentioned above, material from food bank users was limited to the voice of
experience. While the editorial in the *Daily Express* was similar in tone to
coverage in the *Telegraph,* there was a clear difference in the hard news article
quoted above which presented food bank users as 'deserving' of support.

Overall news coverage in the *Daily Express* was sceptical about the existence of
food poverty in the UK, and their coverage was very much in line with the other
conservative newspapers. An editorial piece in the *Daily Mail* accused church
leaders of making 'shrill attacks on the Government's welfare reforms […]
regardless of the facts'[153]. The article accused the church of delivering a 'sermon
from the Labour Party press office' for highlighting the sharp rise in the number
of food banks in Britain.[154] Another story written to defend the government from

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[151] McKinstry, L. (2014), Despite the Left's claims Britain is not going Hungry, *Daily Express*, 17 April 2014.
[152] Johnston, L. (2013), Food bank Britain, *Sunday Express*, 17 Nov 2013.
[153] *Daily Mail*, (2014), Church's misguided message on welfare, *Daily Mail*, 21 April 2014.
[154] *Op. cit.*

church criticism claimed that 'there will always be an almost unlimited demand for food that is given away for free and that does not necessarily mean people are going hungry'.[155]

The *Daily Mail's* sister paper, the *Mail on Sunday,* ran an undercover exposé on food banks with the headline 'No ID, no Checks... and vouchers for sob stories: The truth behind those shock food bank claims'. The paper sent journalists undercover as food bank users and volunteers to find out how easy it was to access food banks. A Conservative MP was quoted as welcoming the investigation, saying that he 'has always been very suspicious of the level of abuse in some food banks'.[156] Another part of the investigation was published with the headline 'MOS reporter got 3 days of groceries… no questions asked'. This claim was directly contradicted in the article, which explained how the food bank staff 'asked our reporter a series of questions about why the vouchers were needed'.[157] Along similar lines, *Daily Mail* columnist Simon Heffer argued:

> Leftists cynically exploit the existence of food banks as proof that a Tory-led government inflicted terrible hardship on the poor, [but] there is a widespread belief that some people use them because they have chosen to spend their money, instead, on drink, tobacco, slot machines, tattoos or pornography.[158]

Another columnist for the *Daily Mail*, Amanda Platell, claimed that it was troubling for Christians to see the church 'blame welfare cuts for the rise in the use of food

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[155] Cohen, T. Louise Eccles & Jason Groves, (2014), Stop Preaching Politics, Tories Tell the Bishops, *Daily Mail*, 21 April 2014

[156] Murphy, S. & Manning, S. (2014), No ID, no checks…and vouchers for sob stories: The truth behind those shock food bank claims, *Mail on Sunday*, 20 April 2014.

[157] *Mail on Sunday*, (2014), How MoS Reporter got 3 Days of Groceries...no questions asked, *Mail on Sunday,* 20 April 2014.

[158] Heffer, S. (2014), Let's get the feckless to buy food – not fags and booze, *Daily Mail*, 5 April 2014.

banks', arguing that welfare reform represented 'exactly the type of moral behaviour our church leaders should be supporting'.[159] The hard news coverage in the *Daily Mail* was also framed in a way that used the testimony of food bank users to criticise their lifestyle. One food bank user said that they were given 'a huge box of food' and knew others who claimed food parcels if 'they have been out on benders over the weekend and spent all their benefits':

> Come Monday, they have no money left. Then they just ask the Sure Start nursery staff where they take their kids for vouchers. They just fill out a form and lie. It's very easy and very cheeky. Their attitude is to hell with them. It doesn't worry them. Benefits cash isn't for people to go out and get drunk on. But they seem to think that they're entitled to it.[160]

The condemnation of 'undeserving' food bank users is interesting here, as it supports the *Daily Mail*'s editorial line of defending the government over criticism on food banks.

Coverage of food poverty in the *Daily Mail* echoed the approach adopted by the other conservative newspapers. An editorial in the *Times* criticised the church for making a 'foolish' and 'reckless foray into politics' for criticising the government over food banks:

> It is far from ideal that half a million people have visited food banks since last Easter [but] the growth of hunger in Britain has more complex causes than changes to welfare. […] There is little doubt that the supply of more food banks may have helped to stimulate the demand for them. […] Churches should beware of the dangers of blithely defending a gargantuan

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[159] Platell, A. (2014), Drink, drugs and the Brit's 'role models', *Daily Mail*, 22 February 2014.
[160] Bird, S. (2014), Unpalatable truth about food banks the Left finds so hard to swallow: Political football and undeserving claimants distract from the many who are in genuine need, *Daily Mail*, 13 March 2014.

welfare budget which every serious politician would cut as a matter of economic sense'.[161]

Another article quoted a food bank user who said, 'once you go on to benefits, everything falls into arrears'.[162] In the *Times*, food bank users are quoted exclusively about food poverty and the experience of using food banks. Although food bank users were given voice here the newspaper's editorial position remains sceptical about the existence of food poverty.

In an editorial piece criticising *Daily Mirror* coverage of food banks, the *Sun* claimed that food bank charity the Trussell Trust was on 'another round of endless self-promotion' and that news stories about poverty were 'run by the Loony Left'. The article cast doubt on the need for food banks:

> If you give away something for free, people tend to want it. An increase in demand doesn't mean more people are hungry. It just means more people are on to a good thing. […] Given the choice between shopping in a supermarket when you are tired and hungry or picking up a box of free groceries ready packed in a neat little box, most would choose the latter.[163]

Former Conservative MP Edwina Currie produced an editorial for the *Sun,* claiming that 'if something worth having is being handed out free, there will be many willing takers. There are more users because there are more food banks. It's obvious.'[164] Another editorial criticised a BBC programme about food poverty, calling it 'gleeful at another chance to imply that the Tory-led Coalition' was responsible for the problem. It pointed out that the food bank user in the

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[161] *Times.* (2014), Church and Welfare State; The intervention of the Church in the argument about welfare spending lacked any sense either of the complexity of the problem or the need for a radical solution, *Times*, 25 February 2014.
[162] Bannerman, L. (2014), Heat or eat: energy bills keep food banks busy, *Times*, 1 March 2014.
[163] *Sun.* (2014), Our Gut Instinct, *Sun*, 18 April 2014.
[164] Currie, E. (2014), Food Banks are a Mistake...They are a hand out not a hand up, *Sun*, 22 February 2014.

programme had spent their money on tattoos, but claimed that 'the BBC won't let the facts stand in the way of its blind pursuit of a Left-wing agenda'.[165]

Another article in the *Sun* from columnist Jane Moore questioned whether food bank users 'are all in genuine need', claiming they may be:

> simply grabbing a freebie so they can use money they would have spent on food to buy a plasma TV instead. […] How many are Eastern Europeans who haven't long arrived on these shores and can't believe their luck that free nosh is being dished out?'[166]

The *Sun* quoted food bank users from the perspective of their experience of using food banks, although as with the *Daily Mail* there is a distinction between deserving and undeserving food bank users. One food bank user justified having tattoos by explaining, 'If I couldn't feed my children I wouldn't spend what I had left in my budget on tattoos'.[167] Another was quoted as saying:

> I couldn't believe it when my mate told me you can get top brands of jars, sauces and cereals and even restaurant tokens in a food bank. I was buying value products and now I'm eating quality food without worrying about price. With food banks I can take my daughter to the cinema, buy cigarettes and live a normal life.[168]

Some of the testimonies do contradict the editorial line of the *Sun,* with food bank users saying that they 'have to choose between whether to pay my electricity company or feed my kids'.[169]

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[165] *Sun*. (2014), Beeb in tatters, *Sun*, 4 April 2014.
[166] Moore, J. (2014), Helen's sad symbol of benefits despair, *Sun*, 2 March 2014.
[167] Adams, L. (2013), We're spreading a Lidl bit of Christmas cheer, *Sun*, 19 December 2013.
[168] Currie, E. (2014), Food banks are a mistake...They are a hand out not a hand up, *Sun*, 17 April 2014.
[169] Hamilton, J. (2013), Fuel crisis Brits give back food bank grub*, Sun*, 16 October 2013.

When it comes to reporting food poverty it is clear that the five conservative newspapers attempted editorially to defend the government from external criticism. They did this through denying the existence of food poverty, reporting the issue almost exclusively through the testimony of politicians with an interest in masking the link between welfare reform and rising food poverty.

7.1.3. Reporting food poverty summary

There is a large body of academic research linking rising food poverty in Britain to political attempts to reform the welfare state (Caraher et al., 2014; Dowler, 2014; Livingstone, 2015; Loopstra et al., 2015). While the *Daily Mirror* is perhaps the most critical newspaper here in terms of holding the government to account, their analysis lacks the depth required to properly understand how food poverty is being driven by changes in the UK welfare system. Part of this failure comes from the way that the voices of food bank volunteers and people experiencing food poverty are reduced to passive accounts of their experiences. This frames the issue of food poverty through the 'politics of pity' of 'pity regimes' (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2013), and operates through a 'compassion with no obligation' framework (Lugo-Ocando, 2015:39).

7.2. Sourcing fuel poverty

Many of the patterns identified in news coverage of food poverty were also evident in news coverage of fuel poverty with two notable differences. Firstly, fuel poverty, particularly amongst the elderly, has been covered by newspapers for over a decade in comparison to food poverty which is a relatively recent news item. Secondly, voices from business were used far more frequently to

contextualise fuel poverty because power companies have an interest in any political measures to increase taxes or interfere with the market on behalf of people experiencing fuel poverty.

Although Britain has one of the lowest variations between summer and winter temperatures, they have one of the highest levels of cold-related winter deaths. These rates are almost double the levels found in Scandinavia, which has considerably colder winters, and remarkably, higher than the levels in Siberia which is one of the coldest regions in the world (Boardman, 2010:168). Nevertheless, the British press focus on a market rationale when reporting fuel poverty, rather than focussing on the phenomenon's risk for vulnerable people. The mass media play a crucial role in the 'communication of hazards' within the broadly defined notion of the 'risk society' (Beck, 1992). Poverty is a major source of risk in Britain, especially amongst pensioners who live on a fixed income (Barr, 2002; Bridgen & Meyer, 2005). As with food poverty, news coverage of fuel poverty is heavily reliant on 'expert' sources in terms of both the number of sources used and the number of words give to those sources.
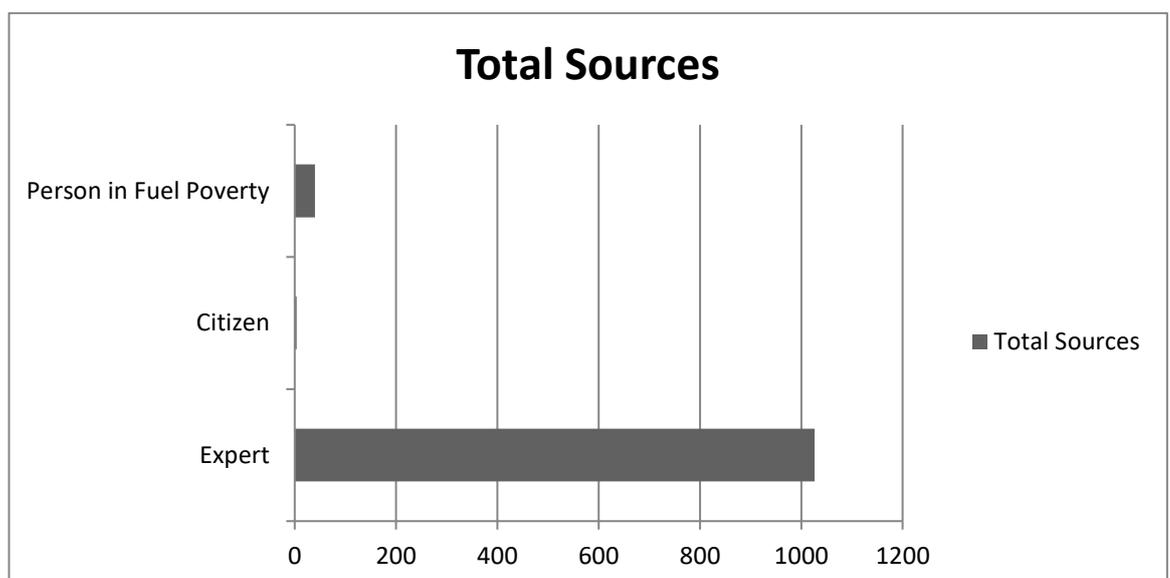
Figure 23: Fuel poverty sources 2004-2014
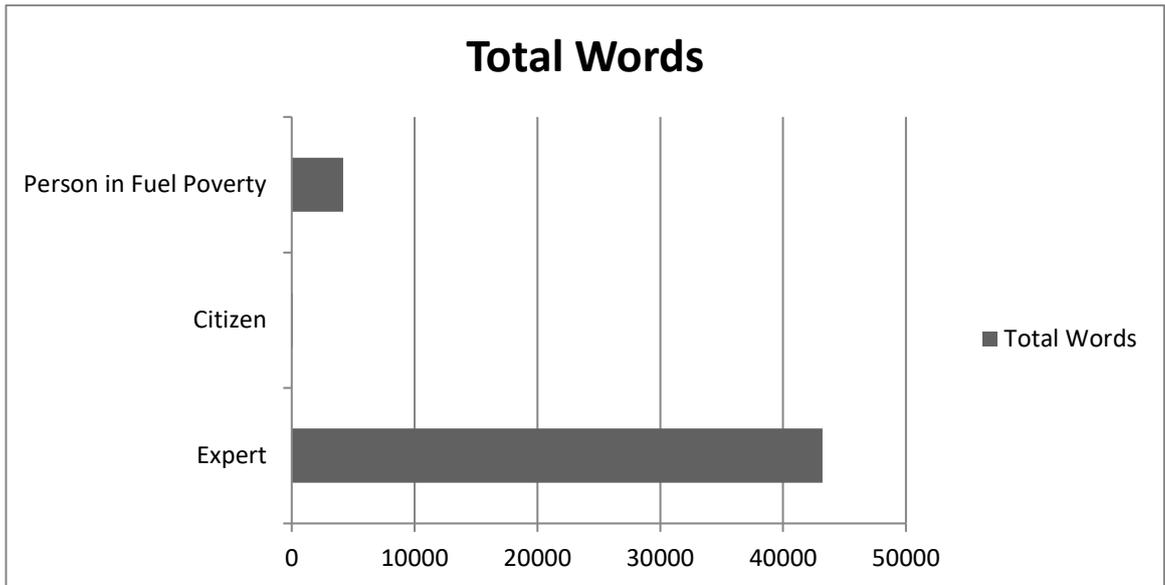
Figure 24: Fuel poverty words 2004-2014

The figures above show that 'expert' sources dominate news coverage of fuel poverty. The many people who struggle to heat their homes are largely excluded from the news space while 'expert' sources shape the way the issue is framed and presented, echoing the findings of other research studies into news sources (Conrad, 1999:301; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006).
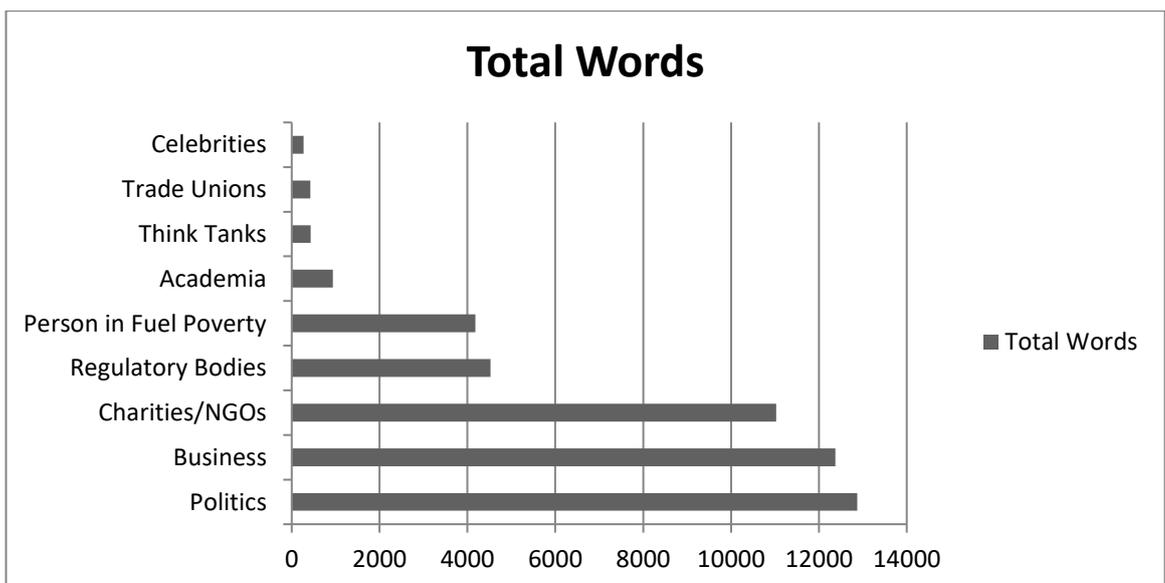
Figure 25: Fuel poverty words by source type 2004-2014
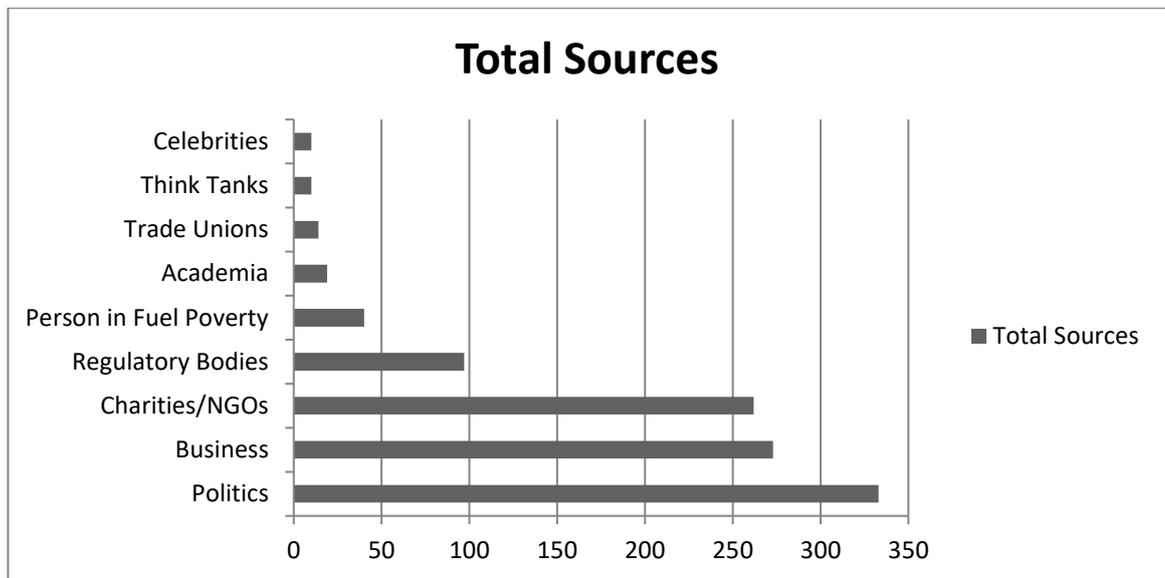
Figure 26: Fuel poverty sources 2004-2014

As with food poverty, experts from the world of politics were the most likely to be used as sources and dominate news coverage of fuel poverty. However, there was a noticeable increase in the amount of space given to business spokespeople, often speaking for the energy industry and arguing against government regulation of the market. The prevalence of voices from business was interesting here because they did not feature so prominently in the food poverty sample.[170] Business sources were followed by charities and NGOs who tend to emphasise palliatives and price regulation as a solution to fuel poverty. The fourth most commonly quoted 'expert' sources were the regulatory bodies, in charge of implementing policy and guaranteeing the framework for appropriate services and competition, but these also tended to emphasise market-driven issues such as 'self-regulation' and 'competition'.

7.2.1. Sourcing fuel poverty in the liberal press

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[170] Article sample 3.

The figure on the next page shows the spread of sources in the liberal press for reporting fuel poverty. The *Guardian* and the *Observer* are the main quality liberal newspapers in Britain, yet in terms of fuel poverty, the sources they have given the most space to were from the world of business. People affected by fuel poverty were far less likely to be interviewed by journalists from these newspapers about the topic and its possible solutions. Indeed, most of the quotations from people living fuel poverty were from a single special report in the *Observer*. In this report, a pensioner described his situation:

> I was watching a doctor on television who said that you have to keep your heating on because the cold makes it more likely you will have a heart attack. I have already had two mini strokes. What do you do? Put your health first and go into debt, or keep the heating off to keep the bills down? Do you know how many people died because of the cold last year? It was 20,000. The fuel costs are going up. I know that British Gas has said it will keep the rate the same for three years, but it is already high and they are not the cheapest.[171]

[171] Ryle, S. (2005), Special report: Fuel poverty: 'It is much dearer to be old than young': Many older people don't like claiming state benefits to help with heating bills, *Observer*, 2 January 2005.
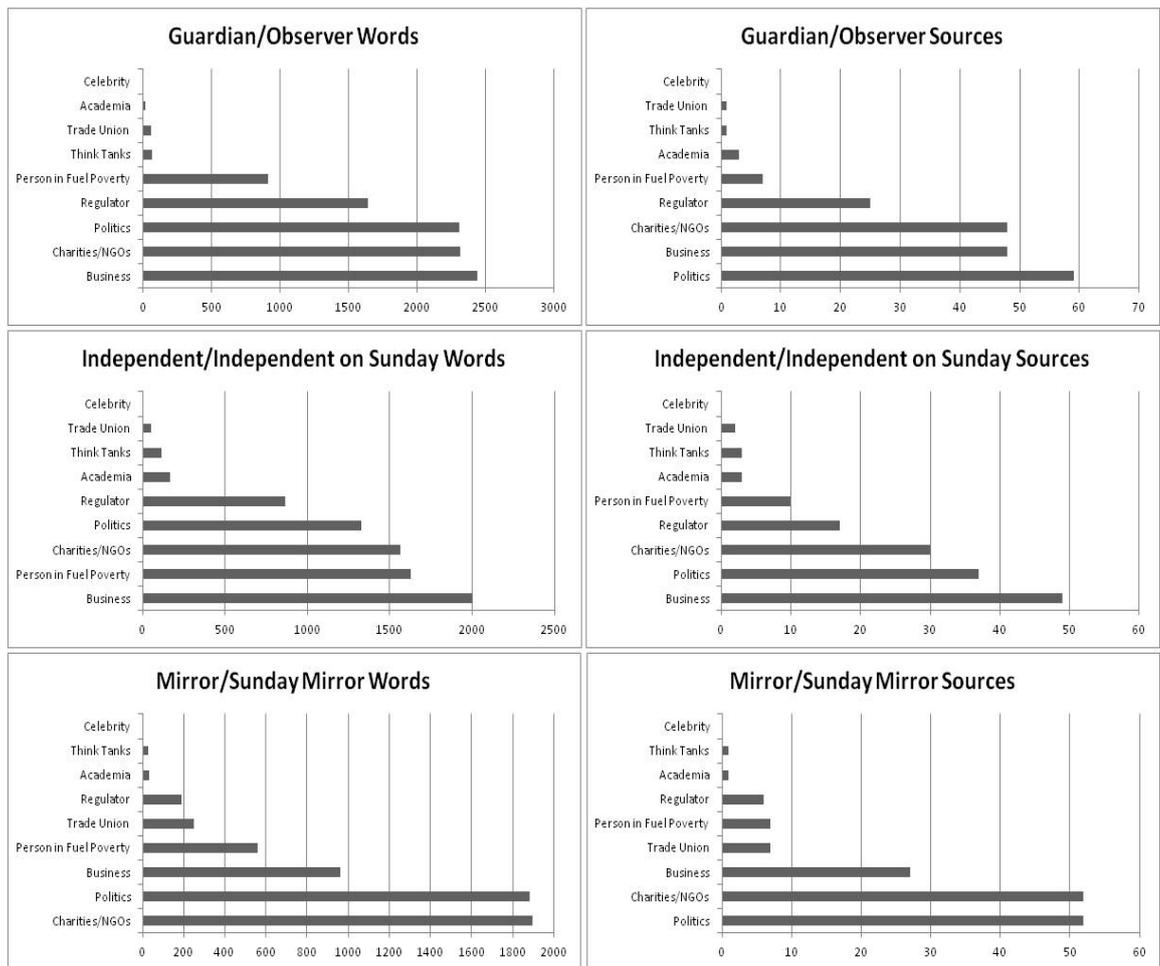
Figure 27: Fuel poverty sources in the liberal press 2004-2014

Even with the special report, the *Observer* and the *Guardian* were far more likely to quote 'experts' as sources, most often from the world of business. Representatives of power companies were regularly quoted explaining why they were unable to act on high prices. For example:

> We are not going to comment on the timing or the size of any price increases but given the fact that wholesale 75% this year over last year it is more or less inevitable that all suppliers in this market will be pushing through substantial price increases.[172]

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[172] Wray, R. (2006), Gas rise takes home energy bills over £1,000: Calls for investigation into 25% price hike: Fears for welfare of poor, sick and elderly customers, *Guardian*, 6 February 2006.

Energy companies also argued that too much responsibility is placed on them for fixing fuel prices. One spokesman for an energy company said, 'who is going to help the food poor? People can't afford to eat properly, but everyone is beating up on the energy companies'.[173] A three-way discussion emerged in the *Guardian* and the *Observer* where charities argued that the government must act on fuel poverty, the government criticised power companies, and the power companies explained why the market drives their pricing policy. Within this three-way discussion, the voices of those affected by fuel poverty rarely appeared.

A familiar pattern emerged from coverage in the *Independent* and *Independent on Sunday*'s use of sources, where representatives from business were quoted most often and also given the highest number of words given in these publications. The sample[174] also showed that the *Independent* and *Independent on Sunday* gave the second highest number of words to people experiencing fuel poverty; only experts from business received more space. Testimonies from people living in fuel poverty comprised several extended quotations which focused on the experience of living in fuel poverty. As with the *Guardian*, there was a notable three-way discussion between voices from charities, politics and business debating how to solve fuel poverty.

The *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Mirror's* coverage of fuel poverty followed a similar pattern to the other newspapers. They offered less space to business experts, though their quotes were used often and represented the third most prominent type of source. The *Daily Mirror* focused more often on voices from charity

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[173] Webb, T. (2008), Special report: Energy giants forced to act on fuel poverty: With energy bills soaring across the UK, six million households now face fuel poverty, *Observer*, 3 August 2008.
[174] Article sample 4.

organisations and politics. Discussions between these actors were presented, but a more critical editorial stance towards the position of business representatives was taken in these articles. For example, one article in the *Daily Mirror* quoted a power company executive who said, 'our operating profit was just over £992 million for January to June 2008. Well, I am not about to apologise for making a healthy profit'.[175] This quotation was framed in a critical way, questioning the business narrative about needing to secure profits by focussing on the wealth of industry executives.

However, the way that this was presented was problematic. By focussing on one insensitive executive, it implied that one greedy individual was responsible for the problem, rather than examining the structural issue affecting the whole of society. Overall, though, it was very rare for newspapers in the sample to make this kind of critical observation. The exception here shows how news coverage of poverty is most often dominated by a business or market rationale, which is also evident in the conservative press coverage of fuel poverty.

7.2.2. Sourcing fuel poverty in the conservative press

Conservative newspapers were far less likely to quote people who experience fuel poverty than their liberal counterparts. There was not a single quotation from

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[175] Gregory, A. (2008), As British Gas leaves million in fuel poverty with a 35% price rise, its millionaire boss says in e-mail: I'm not sorry, *Daily Mirror*, 2 August 2008

the *Sun* from people experiencing fuel poverty. Instead, testimonies from political

and business experts dominated news coverage of fuel poverty.
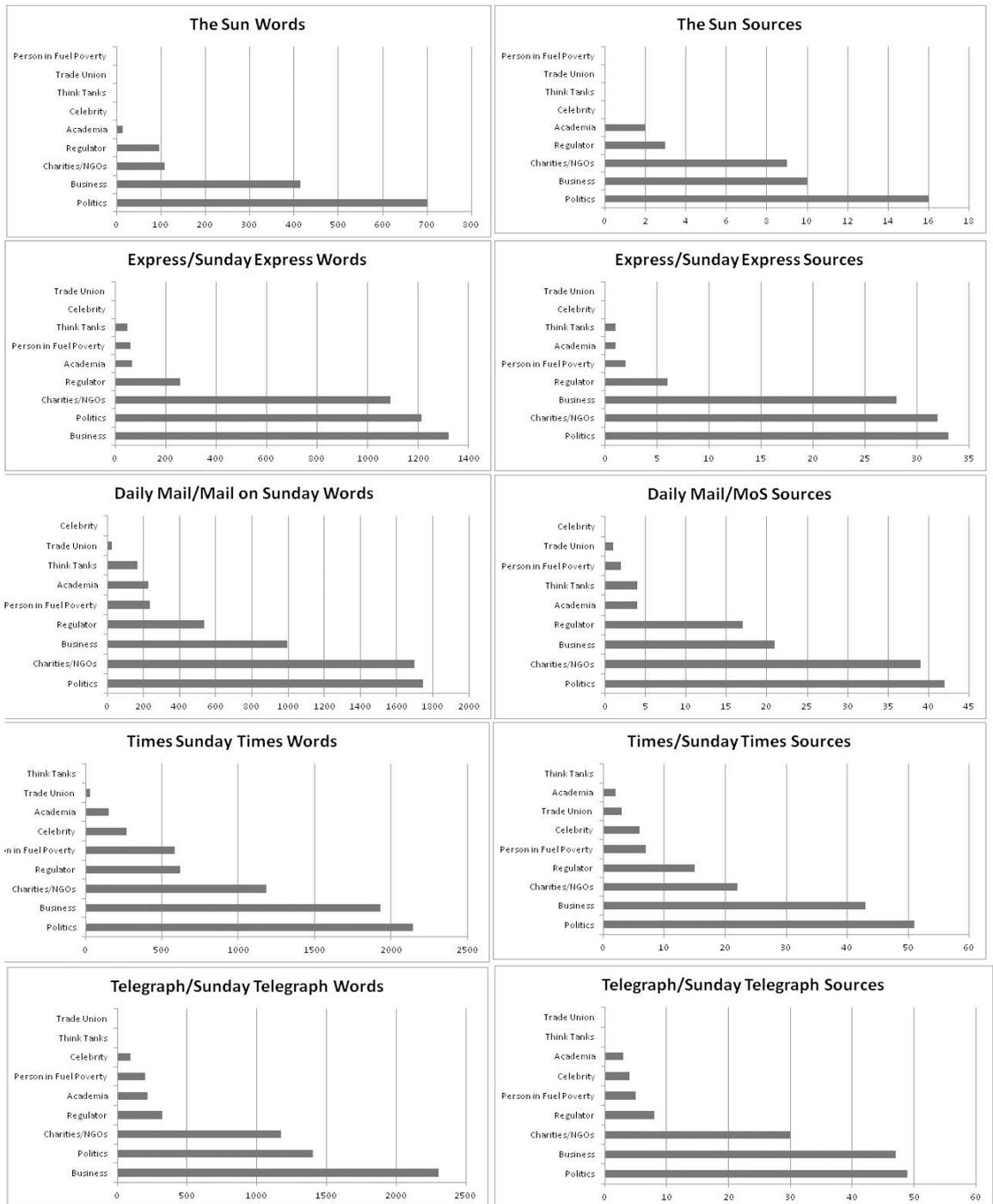
Figure 28: Fuel poverty sources in the conservative press 2004-2014

However, this does not tell the full story. Although people experiencing fuel poverty were excluded from coverage in the *Sun*, the newspaper did launch a fuel poverty campaign:

> The *Sun* has teamed up with consumer champions Which? to launch a five-point campaign urging power giants British Gas, E.ON, EDF, nPower, Scottish and Southern Energy, and Scottish Power to play it fair.[176]

Experts from politics and business also dominated coverage in the *Daily Express,* where it was very rare to see people experiencing fuel poverty quoted. One article in the *Daily Express* argued that fuel bills were rising and poverty was increasing because of the government's insistence on green energy initiatives. The article's framing supported claims by Conservative backbench MP Philip Davies, who was introduced in the article as 'a critic of excessive concentration on "green" energy':

> The public are having their pockets picked in the name of climate change. If people understood how much money this is going to cost them, they would be horrified. At a time when people are already struggling to pay their bills, it is unacceptable that Britain's industry and hard-working families are going to be penalised in this way. Much of this obsession with renewable energy sources is simply about meeting European Union targets. And it will simply increase the amount of fuel poverty in this country.[177]

Along similar lines, the *Daily Mail* regularly produced articles about fuel poverty being increased by green 'stealth taxes'.[178] They allowed representatives from charitable organisations more column inches than other newspapers, but political

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[176] Wilson G., Hawkes S. & Ashton, E. (2011), Chilling: Fuel poverty is killing 2,700 people a year; shock report as Sun calls for fair energy deal, *Sun*, 20 October 2011.
[177] Hall, M. (2009), Energy bills to rise by £230, *Daily Express*, 13 July 2009.
[178] MacRae, F. (2011), Green 'stealth tax' will hit the poor hardest, *Daily Mail*, 28 June 2011.

sources and representatives from business still dominated the news. As with the earlier example in the *Daily Mirror*, when the *Daily Mail* criticised the energy industry it was from an individualist rather than a structural perspective. The following example is typical of the way that energy executives were criticised in the British tabloid press:

> Multi-millionaire Jake Ulrich offers advice to families feeling the pinch: 'Stick another sweater on' A gas firm boss faced a heated backlash yesterday after telling families struggling with soaring fuel bills to 'wear two jumpers'. Jake Ulrich of Centrica - the parent company of British Gas - was attacked for his 'flippant' and 'out of touch' remarks. The 55-year-old, who earns more than £1million a year, was accused of having no sympathy with his cash-strapped customers. His firm warned yesterday that gas bills could rise to more than £1,000 a year by 2010.[179]

The *Times* coverage of fuel poverty was also dominated by voices from politics and business. These were balanced with the perspectives of charitable organisations, though the latter were quoted less often than in the liberal press. The *Telegraph* favoured sources from politics for reporting fuel poverty, but business voices were given the most words in terms of direct quotations.

One of the most remarkable things about this coverage was its consistency across liberal and conservative newspapers. There was an identifiable pattern in the way that the British press use sources across all titles. Overall it was clear that British print journalists' reliance on 'expert' sources meant that they reinforced rather than challenged elite perspectives. This was seen in the way that people who experience poverty were largely excluded from the news while

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[179] Barrow, B. (2008), What a flaming cheek!; As families face huge heating bills, £1 million-a-year gas chief says: Just wear two jumpers, *Daily Mail*, 19 July 2008.

'experts' from the world of business and politics were quoted far more frequently on the topic of poverty. In terms of 'deserving' groups like elderly people living in poverty, there were more quotations in the press from 'experts' who professed to speak for them, such as charity workers.

Solutions to fuel poverty were presented as being market-based. For example, many articles discussed switching electricity suppliers as a way of reducing fuel bills. Although fuel poverty and excess winter deaths have been a serious structural problem and consistent news item for ten years, this has had little effect on public policy. Because of the dominance of voices from politics and business throughout this coverage, the issue of fuel poverty was largely framed in terms of 'market', 'prices' and the need to 'guarantee supply'. Liberal newspapers such as the *Guardian* and the *Observer* tended to give more space to NGOs and charities to argue that the government must act on fuel poverty. But when analysing what 'these actions' meant, there were two distinctive features. Firstly, the charities tended to highlight the issue of prices:

> Citizens Advice claimed that gas and electricity prices had risen by up to eight times more than increases in average weekly earnings. The charity projected last November that by January of this year the big six suppliers would have raised their prices by 37% since October 2010. The average annual dual-fuel bill – for gas and electricity – is £1,315 per household. In fact prices have fallen slightly as the government has taken steps to lift the cost of various energy efficiency and other "green" measures from bills.[180]

Secondly, the interventions of charities tended to be apolitical, mostly failing to question the regulatory framework in which the energy sector operates. The

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[180] Macalister. T., (2014), Big six braced for inquiry into competition: Regulators studied energy firms for three months CMA recommendation to be published this week. *Guardian*, 22 March 2014.

sample showed that charities' calls for action were limited to suggesting a cap on prices for the most vulnerable, or some type of subsidy. They made no call to examine ownership in the sector or the general framework of the energy system. Instead, they tended to embrace market-based solutions:

> Caroline Abrahams, a director at the charity [Age UK], said: 'With the cold weather nearly upon us, it is hugely disappointing that these latest statistics show painfully slow progress with the Green Deal. With projections showing that fuel poverty rates are likely to rise, the Government must seriously explore using new carbon tax revenues to insulate fuel-poor homes against the spiralling cost of energy. In the run-up to the next election all the main parties need to show they have a clear plan to deal with fuel poverty once and for all.'[181]

From the discussion above, it is clear that the British press relies on 'expert' sources, mostly from business or politics and largely embedded into market ideologies. This means that they manage the discourse of 'risk' of fuel poverty in such a way that transforms it from being a collective social problem into a 'potential threat' to market supply. This allows business interests to prevail over collective priorities in the news narrative, while reinforcing the sense that the current framework for energy and gas is adequate despite evidence to the contrary. This shows a clear failure by British journalists to recognise that fuel poverty and food poverty are clearly issues of injustice and inequality (Walker & Day, 2012:69). However, these issues are constructed in a way that largely excludes the voices of the victims of these injustices.

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[181] Poulter, S. (2013), Farce as just twelve homes sign up for Green Deal as owners are put off taking out loans to fund energy-saving measures. *Daily Mail*, 20 September 2013.

8. Blaming the victims: News framing of the Welfare State

This chapter looks at news coverage of the welfare state between 1985 and 2015. In doing so, it examines the way that the status of welfare recipients as 'outsiders' is reinforced by the British press. At this stage, it is important to make clear that because this chapter focuses on news coverage of the welfare state, it not only looks at people living in poverty but also examines how the press have constructed other groups such as immigrants and asylum seekers. While these groups suffer disproportionately from poverty, they appear in this analysis because of their status as welfare recipients.

The chapter is divided into three sections which examine changing periods of governance in the United Kingdom: the Conservative Government (1985-1997), the Labour Government (1997-2010) and the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015).

One of the defining characteristics of neoliberalism has been its steadfast opposition to the welfare state. Politicians have frequently employed anti-welfare rhetoric (Hartman, 2005:63) and the media have amplified these sentiments. This type of institutionalised social exclusion will be examined throughout the chapter. In considering the construction of welfare recipients between 1985 and 2015 the chapter looks at the demographics that have been the focus of the British press, and links news articles to wider social, political and economic developments.

The concept of the welfare state has been placed under a sustained intellectual critique since the 1980s, a phenomenon which has been described as a 'war on the poor' (Gans, 1995; Katz, 1990, 1995). The analysis here echoes previous research showing that the media reflect elite interests (Gurevitch, 1982:1), and there was little dissent within the five British conservative newspapers in presenting news about the welfare state. Opposing the concept of the welfare state, these newspapers constructed poverty as a 'lifestyle choice', an idea which is based on 'the pathology of individual inadequacy as the cause of poverty' (Golding, 1999:146). More importantly, justifying cuts to welfare spending involves the construction of welfare recipients using a rationale which is 'immediately recognisable in popular prejudice and mythology' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:230).

8.1. Framing the welfare state 1985-1997

The 1980s were marked by political attempts to 'roll back' the state, including deep cuts and restrictions in public spending and the deregulation of the financial services sector in the City of London in 1986 (Hills, 1998:2; Scott-Samuel et al., 2014:54). The press responded by casting the welfare state as a threat to the British economy, justifying spending restrictions. The 'dependency culture' theory promoted by the New Right was the dominant way of representing the welfare state in the press throughout the 1980s (Dean & Taylor-Gooby, 1992). It constructed people living in poverty as a homogenous welfare dependent, out of control 'monster', as this *Sunday Times* article shows:

> Tolerating the dependency culture is bad enough, but persisting when it turns into a monster threatening the society it was meant to protect is

irresponsible. Crime crackdowns may catch the headlines. Solving the problem needs politicians to tear down the benefits house and start again.[182]

Another example of the 'dependency culture' idea can be found in a 1987 article quoting Conservative politician John Moore's outline of welfare reform plans: 'the future aim of the welfare state should be to promote independence and self-reliance, not dependence on government handouts'. In the same article, Labour MP Robin Cook agreed that it was 'undesirable to encourage dependency on benefits' but criticised the Conservative Party's record in failing to control unemployment. [183]

Unemployment peaked at 3.4 million people in 1986 before dipping and then rising again to over 3 million people in 1993 (Riddell, 1989:28; Timmins, 1995:386). The programme of cuts undertaken by the government was part of a 'social interventionist' agenda aiming to ensure that, 'as many costs as possible should be shifted from the state and back onto individuals, and markets, particularly labour markets, [which] should be as flexible as possible' (Gamble, 2001:131-132). These cuts failed to reduce public spending because of huge rises in unemployment, alongside an increase in the number of pensioners and lone parent families (Hills, 1998:4).

The privatisation of social housing also led to a rise in homelessness, particularly amongst 16- to 18-year-olds, who had benefit entitlements removed (Scott-Samuel et al., 2014:55). Increases in the number of homeless people were driven

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[182] *Sunday Times* (1993), Punishing politics, *Sunday Times*, 28 February 1993.
[183] Sherman, J. & Fletcher, M. (1987), Moore is warned against cuts: Welfare review, *Times*, 26 September 1987.

by the culmination of a halt to the building of social housing, the reduction of housing stock through privatisation, and benefit cuts (Carlen, 1996; Franklin, 1999:111; Timmins, 1995-435). This led to an increase in crime which was concentrated on areas where large amounts of social housing stock were sold:

> As well as producing a rise in property crime rates (which of course led to the much lauded crime drop), other aspects of the social policies pursued at this time, produced a social and (eventually) geographical concentration of crime amongst some social groups and in some areas of our towns and cities (Farrall et al., 2015:15).

The development of these social problems led to a paradox in neoliberal thinking. Those in power realised that 'less government' created a need to 'mask and contain the deleterious social consequences' of rolling back the state (Wacquant, 1999:323). Critics argue that this led to 'aggressive re-regulation, disciplining, and containment of those marginalised or dispossessed' (Peck & Tickell, 2002:389).

Throughout the 1980s it was becoming increasingly clear that attempts to 'roll back' the welfare state had failed. Instead, spending on social welfare had increased because rolling back the welfare state created high levels of unemployment, youth homelessness and an increased number of lone parents (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Platt, 1999). According to Harvey, the government continued with its programme despite the social consequences because of ideology rather than pragmatism. He cites a key economic adviser to the Thatcher Government who reflected on the period by suggesting that 'the 1980s policies of attacking inflation by squeezing the economy and public spending were a cover to bash the workers' (Harvey, 2005a:59).

Instead of revising their policy in light of the mounting evidence, in 1985, senior members of the Conservative Party including Michael Portillo, Peter Lilley and John Redwood created a group called 'No Turning Back'. The group lobbied to support Margaret Thatcher's free market reforms, including welfare spending cuts (Heppell, 2002:308). They constructed the issue of unemployment as being related to fraud rather than a lack of jobs, and they constructed single mothers as being to blame for the high cost of welfare rather than a consequence of high levels of unemployment. The press reproduced this way of framing the damage done by spending cuts, blaming the individuals who were affected by the cuts. For example, the rise in homelessness was blamed on 'individuals who make themselves homeless by moving from their home area' (Franklin, 1999:111). Margaret Thatcher criticised homeless people by claiming that their attitude was, 'I am homeless, the government must house me!':

> They are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first.[184]

An article in the *Times* argued that the best way to fund the welfare state was to cut taxes for the richest citizens: 'cutting taxes at the top is good business for the desirable parts of the welfare state such as the NHS and for helping the needy'.[185] Criticism of the welfare state became a staple of British press coverage as the media aligned with the policies of the Conservative Party (Conboy, 2011:54; Conboy & Steel, 2010; McNair, 2009:146).

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[184] Thatcher, M. (1987). Interview for *Woman's Own,* available from: http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689, accessed 20 January 2016.
[185] Woodrow, W. (1988), Tax as punishment, *Times*, 23 March 1988.

As part of this criticism, individual parts of the welfare state were scrutinised. For example, the Social Fund, which was designed to allow people living in poverty to purchase essentials like cookers and fridges, was called as 'an extravagant waste of time and money' and a 'grotesque symbol of how Social Security has gone wrong'.[186] Paradoxically, the *Daily Mail* argued that the welfare state increases poverty through creating 'the various non-economic ills of our society',[187] and their proposed solutions involved severe cuts to benefits. In the case of unemployment, for example:

> There has been much talk of the fact that Britain pays unemployment benefit for longer than other countries before the cut-off date comes. Some analysts want unemployment pay to stop sooner. In fact, there is more of a case for stopping unemployment pay altogether in the first, say, three months of unemployment.[188]

The conservative press repeatedly invoke Lord Beveridge[189] as justification for their support of welfare cutbacks. The *Daily Mail* claimed that he would be 'appalled at the gargantuan size of the Welfare State which has grown into a monstrous caricature of what he originally proposed'.[190] Conservative think tanks developed a closer relationship with the press through a series of articles in the 1990s, and the *Daily Mail* used reports from the Adam Smith Institute[191] to make the case for removing the welfare state altogether:

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[186] *Daily Mirror* (1993), The lesson of the £10,000 fridge, *Daily Mirror*, 27 March 1993.
[187] Bartholomew, J. (1993), Is the welfare state destroying Britain?, *Daily Mail*, 30 March 1993.
[188] Anderson, D. (1993), Why we can no longer afford the welfare state, *Daily Mail*, 26 April 1993.
[189] Duncan Smith, I. (1994), Every day, every working Briton pays £13 in tax to those on state benefit – And it's going to get even worse, *Daily Mail*, 13 April 1994.
[190] Bartholomew, J. (1993), How the welfare state betrayed its founder, *Daily Mail*, 2 December 1993.
[191] Wall, M. (1995), How to survive without the state, *Daily Mail*, 26 November 1995.

The welfare state should be scrapped, urges a report today. It claims the benefits system is turning some neighbourhoods into 'factories of crime and violence' and inflicting 'moral and psychological harm' on those who receive them. The radical demand from the Right-wing Tory think-tank, the Adam Smith Institute, will be seen as an attack on Mr Major's failure to cut the benefits bill significantly.[192]

Think tanks have played an important role in developing support for a neoliberal agenda. One of their key roles is public relations activity:

Pseudo-groups who pump apparently independent stories in the media and sometimes masquerade as spontaneous grass-roots organizations which create a mass of newsworthy activity (Davies, 2008:168).

One clear example has been the rise of the Taxpayers' Alliance (TPA).[193] Investigative journalist Paul Lashmar describes the organisation's growing influence in the context of other pressures on news organisations:

Journalists are often now so overstretched that a lot of work that used to be carried out in the newsroom is carried out by groups like the TPA. You don't see extensive research anymore whereas it used to be commonplace in Sunday papers to have exercises where, for example, you would ring around every MP for their opinions as the TPA has done numerous times.[194]

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[192] Norris, D. (1994), Abolish welfare state says the right, *Daily Mail*, 29 February 1994.
[193] The Taxpayers' Alliance is an organisation funded by wealthy individuals but masquerading as a public advocacy group campaigning for lower taxes in Britain (Harkins, 2012).
[194] Merril, J. (2008), How the Taxpayers' Alliance is making headlines, *Independent*, 4 August 2008.

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ),[195] has also been influential in providing 'research' about poverty to reinforce Conservative Party solutions. Critics argue that the CSJ engages in 'manufactured ignorance' about poverty by constructing it as a 'lifestyle choice by dysfunctional families'. Its solutions to poverty focus on 'upholding morality and traditional institutions such as marriage' (Welshman, 2013:219). Lobbying by this type of think tank has coincided with a period when newsroom resources are least able to conduct research and have become more reliant on public relations material (Davies, 2009a; Lewis et al., 2008).

Arguments for a greatly reduced or scrapped welfare state ignore the fact that every attempt to cut welfare spending has actually driven spending up because of the cuts' associated social costs. Gans highlighted the ideological nature of this paradox:

> I have never understood why trying to head off street crime with effective employment programs is liberal, and failing to do so with ineffective punishment is conservative. By the same token, isn't spending millions for prison-building that does not deter crime a good example of tax-and-spend liberalism – or, more to the point, a foolish waste of the public monies conservative are supposed to prevent liberals from spending? (Gans, 1995:8).

Indeed, rising unemployment has been linked to rising crime throughout the early years of Conservative Party rule. Unemployment doubled between 1979 and 1993, and Davies explains the connection to crime statistics:

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[195] The Centre for Social Justice is a conservative think tank set up by Iain Duncan Smith and Tim Montgomerie, producing research to support Duncan Smith's welfare reform programme.

In 1994, the chief constables of England and Wales trawled through their own crime reports and discovered that 70 percent of their offenders were unemployed (Davies, 1997:240).

Structural issues such as unemployment clearly affected rates of crime, yet this was largely ignored by the press and politicians in power. Meanwhile, conservative intellectuals offered alternative explanations for the effects of high unemployment. Herrnstein and Murray's 1994 book *The Bell Curve* used IQ tests to link intelligence with race, producing a racial hierarchy of intelligence that echoed the ideas of Victorian eugenicists. They argued that welfare cuts were necessary to stop 'encouraging the wrong women' to have children (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994:548). In 1989, the *Sunday Times* brought one author of *The Bell Curve,* Charles Murray over from the United States. He claimed that in the UK, 'crime, unemployment and illegitimacy had soared conspicuously' (Murray, 2001:1).

According to Murray, the UK had a rising 'underclass': 'people at the margins of society, unsocialised and often violent […] the chronic criminal is part of the underclass, especially the violent chronic criminal' (Murray, 2001:2). Murray argued that the rising underclass could be measured by three key indicators: 'drop-out from the labour force among young males, violent crime and births to unmarried women' (Murray, 2001:2). These indicators, Murray contended, were 'associated with the growth of a class of violent, unsocialised people who, if they become sufficiently numerous, will fundamentally degrade the life of society' (Murray, 2001:3). A report in the *Sunday Times* promoted Murray's ideas:

Britain has a growing population of working-aged, healthy people who live in a different world from other Britons, who are raising their children to live

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in it, and whose values are contaminating the life of entire neighbourhoods.[196]

Instead of seeing the victims of social spending cuts as an example of a failed policy agenda, the press used the 'underclass' theory to blame those worst affected for the high cost of welfare spending. Government cuts were supported by New Right academics, who argued that 'we must abandon Beveridge' (Marsland, 1992:149). For them, high unemployment was not down to a lack of available jobs but was caused by 'morally destructive welfare dependency' (Marsland, 1992:147). The cost of lone parents to the welfare system was another focus for the press as they constructed welfare recipients in a negative way.

The end of the welfare state consensus had developed as a political consequence of the Cold War ending, as the war had given the welfare state its 'legitimating rhetoric' (Kaplan, 2006:182). The perceived triumph of liberal democracy over socialism was famously described as representing the 'end of history' by Fukuyama, who observed that the gap between rich and poor individuals was no longer growing (Fukuyama, 1989:1). Bauman has argued that the 'underclass' fills the void that was left by no longer credible theories of a foreign revolution (Bauman, 2005:67). The idea that the 'underclass' represents a threat common throughout the literature on the subject (Bauman, 2005; Gans, 1995; Katz, 1990; Lister, 2004), and arguments about the existence of an 'underclass' dominated media coverage of poverty in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1992, following the 'Black Wednesday' financial crash, John Major launched his 'Back to Basics' call to return to traditional family values. The

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[196] Durham, M. (1989), Britain's new underclass: Professor Charles Murray, *Sunday Times,* 26 November 1989.

campaign ultimately demonised single mothers because political and media rhetoric constructed them as both a burden and a threat to society.

8.1.1. Single Mothers, the 'underclass' and the welfare state

The recession of 1991 pushed UK unemployment to its highest levels since the post-war peak of 1982. Single mothers were increasingly targeted by politicians for being a burden on the state. At 1992's Conservative Party Conference, Peter Lilley sang a song which outlined a list of 'benefit offenders' to the tune of Gilbert and Sullivan's musical *Mikado*. His list included:

> Young ladies who get pregnant just to jump the housing queue / and dads who won't support the kids / of ladies they have... kissed.[197]

As politicians focussed their efforts on single mothers following John Major's 'Back to Basics' campaign, newspapers picked up this theme, claiming that welfare dependency had ruined the lives of single mothers:

> The welfare system has not merely failed – though that it has certainly done. It has become perverse. It actually destroys lives instead of saving them. And for hundreds of thousands of young women, many of them born into single-parent families themselves, this kind of debilitating dependency is all they know.[198]

According to the *Daily Mail*, Beveridge's system had failed because he had not anticipated that 'if you give more to unmarried mothers, you will increase the supply of them'.[199] The newspaper claimed that the welfare state was 'destroying

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[197] O'Flynn, P. (2009), Peter Lilley was reviled for what he said but he was right, *Daily Express*, 22 August 2009.
[198] Bartholomew, J. (1993), Mrs Gammage and the madness that is the welfare state, *Daily Mail*, 2 April 1993.
[199] Pirie, M. (1993), Half a Century on, the Beveridge dream is crippling Britain, *Daily Mail*, 27 October 1993.

family life'.[200] Single mothers were held responsible for rising crime as the press argued that 'welfare ghettos'[201] had developed in Britain. These articles focussed on a 'burgeoning underclass' which needed 'middle-class taxpayers' to write 'ever larger cheques' to support them.[202] The Conservative Party targeted benefit cuts against single mothers, accompanied by a critical campaign within the British press highlighting the welfare burden created by this demographic (Cohen, 2011; Franklin, 1999; Jones, 2011:67).

The government attempted to deflect criticism about their failure to control unemployment by framing single mothers as a 'potent moral threat':

> "Feckless mothers" get pregnant to obtain state welfare; they raise children who will be criminals of the future; absent fathers are present somewhere, unemployed and also living off the state (Cohen, 2011 p.xxi).

A 1993 article from the *Daily Mail* highlights how these arguments were framed:

> The permissive culture of the Sixties – the self-absorbed hedonism of sex and anything goes – was promoted by the fashionable Left, and practised by them. And it didn't, in the end, do them much harm since the better-off have by definition the time and money to cope with a permissive lifestyle. Not so the poor. When liberal permissiveness filtered down to them it pushed many of them over the edge to ruin. That is why you see today, in the American inner cities, such a terrifying warning of where liberal values can lead. There, the family has disintegrated, and society with it.[203]

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[200] Hughes, D. (2014), Portillo attacks welfare state as the scourge of family life, *Daily Mail*, 28 June 2014.
[201] Leslie, A. (1995), Is state welfare a drug destroying our society?, *Daily Mail*, 9 March 1995.
[202] Murphy, J. (1997), Welfare, at last, for the better off, *Daily Mail*, 25 May 1997.
[203] Toner, M. (1993), Is the Left at last learning simple morality?, *Daily Mail*, 25 February 1993.

The press followed this agenda with articles constructing single mothers as a 'slovenly and benefit-dependent "underclass"' (McRobbie, 2013:120). They were associated with a range of characteristics:

> Typically [they are portrayed with] several children fathered by different men, reliant on benefits, living in a council house and with an appearance which suggests lack of attention to body image […] cheating the welfare system, bringing up delinquent children, never having had a job or else having failed to provide their children with reliable father figures' (McRobbie, 2013:124-125).

Policy changes targeting single mothers led to some women being forced to live with violent ex-partners because of a renewed focus on enforcing cohabitation rules. This drive ignored the lack of infrastructure in terms of 'shelter, childcare and jobs' that single mothers needed for independence (Campbell, 1984:28).

According to senior Conservative Party figures such as Peter Lilley, single mothers were 'undeserving' and 'benefits driven' (Atkinson et al., 1998:2), and the 'No Turning Back' think tank argued that single mothers were an economic burden on society (Lund, 2008:46). This framing was reinforced by portraying single mothers on benefits as 'lazy, disinterested in education, and promiscuous' (Bullock et al., 2001:230). The British press followed this logic and a *Daily Mail* article from 1993 reported how the growth of single mothers 'threatened to engulf the benefits system'. It argued that the cuts were intended to 'encourage young women to become more responsible for the result of their sexual behaviour'.[204]

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[204] *Daily Mail* (1993), Single Mothers May Face Benefits Squeeze, *Daily Mail*, 1 July 1993.

Despite evidence to the contrary, as discussed above, the 'moral panic' about single mothers also held them responsible for rising crime (Mann & Roseneil, 1994:317). The *Times* alerted readers to their 'possible effects on crime rates',[205] and Conservative Home Secretary Michael Howard was reported as 'linking rising crime to the increase in single-parent families':[206]

> Perhaps the most frightening of all is that more than 70 percent of all juveniles convicted of a crime serious enough to send them to state reform institutions come from homes without fathers.[207]

Single mothers were not only linked to crime through their 'likely to be criminal' children; they also became the focus of news articles about 'benefit scroungers' themselves (Bortolaia Silva, 1996:178).[208,209] They were accused by the press of benefit fraud as various reports claimed that a huge proportion were cheating the welfare system[210,211] – this will be discussed in greater depth in the next section. Overall, according to the *Daily Mail,* the rise of lone-parent families represented a 'breeding ground for dependency and crime'.[212] Politicians had constructed single mothers as 'one of the biggest social problems of our day'.[213]

Arguing that the 'welfare state has taken over the traditional roles of the husband', the conservative press claimed that a decline in traditional family values had encouraged women to get pregnant as 'ploy' to 'make money without having to

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[205] Sherman, J. (1992), Lilley ready to deprive single mothers of 'incentives', *Times*, 13 August 1992.

[206] Deans, J. (1993), Crackdown on lone mothers, *Daily Mail*, 6 October 1993.

[207] Novak, M. (1993), Crime, poverty and families without fathers, *Daily Mail,* 10 November 1993.

[208] Williams, D. & Wright, S. (1993), A string of houses, private schooling for the children, £1,000 a week… All on you, *Daily Mail*, 18 December 1993.

[209] *Times* (1994), Dole Cheek, *Times*, 10 June 1994.

[210] Deans, J. (1995), £1bn scandal of the cheating single mothers, *Daily Mail*, 11 July 1995.

[211] Sparrow, A. (1997), Lone parents 'are the biggest cheats': single mothers may be lying their way to £1 bilion, *Daily Mail*, 6 August 1997.

[212] *Daily Mail* (1994), In Defence of Family Man, *Daily Mail*, 22 June 1994.

[213] Eastham, P. (1993), Single Mothers Storm, *Daily Mail*, 3 July 1993.

find a job'.[214] A similar theme – women having children to obtain social housing – allowed single mothers to be blamed for the housing crisis. Conservative MP John Redwood was quoted in a *Daily Mail* article claiming that teenage single parents used their children as a 'passport to a council flat and a benefit income'. He argued that they 'should consider giving up their babies for adoption – or be housed in special hostels' because they are 'costing £10 billion a year in social security'.[215]

This line of argument focuses attention on both the cost of lone parents receiving benefits and their impact on the social housing shortage However, it is not contextualised with reference to the social housing crisis that arose through attempts to 'roll back' the state. The Conservative Party legislated under the Housing Act 1980 for social housing tenants to be able to buy their properties at a large discount (Forrest & Murie, 1991:55). This dramatically reduced social housing stock while local authorities stopped building social housing (Jones & Murie, 2006:119). The developing housing crisis was constructed by politicians and the press as being driven by teenage single mothers who were able to 'jump to the top of housing queues' by having a baby.[216] The theme of single mothers 'jumping' the housing 'queue' is reported repeatedly by the *Daily Mail* and the *Times*, echoing the sentiment in Peter Lilley's 1992 conference speech.[217,218,219] The framing of these reports ignored the fact that privatising social housing and changes to benefit entitlement for teenagers led to a sharp increase in

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[214] Mullally, P. (1993), In the week that the Mail sparked a national debate over single mothers, a hotelier who housed scores of young women and their babies presents a disturbing account of their motives and attitudes, *Daily Mail*, 10 July 1993.
[215] Deans, J. (1995), Adoption plan lands Redwood in a storm, *Daily Mail*, 14 August 1995.
[216] Sherman, J. (1992), Lilley ready to deprive single mothers of 'incentives', *Times,* 13 August 1992.
[217] Grice, A. (1994), Blair's 'tough love' plan to outflank timid Tories on welfare, *Sunday Times*, 13 November 1994.
[218] Sherman, J. (1993), Benefit may depend upon living in hostel, *Times*, 7 July 1993.
[219] Sherman, J. (1993), Lilley vows to crack down on benefit abuse, *Times*, 7 October 1993.

homelessness and more people being dependent on the state (Timmins, 1995). There was also a ten-fold rise in home repossessions due to the recession: from 2,100 in 1979 to 21,000 in 1989 (Brown & Sparks, 1989:128).

Despite being in opposition, the Labour Party adopted the same critique as the Conservatives, with party leader Tony Blair telling the *Daily Mail* that 'women who deliberately set out to become single mothers were morally wrong'.[220] Prior to taking on the Labour leadership, Blair delivered a 'tough love' speech in 1993 which linked rising crime to a 'breakdown in family life'. He cited a book from the IEA, emphasising the importance of 'individual responsibility'.[221] It is worth noting that the book's preface endorsed the work of Charles Murray and Melanie Phillips:

> The Sunday Times has generally provided space for regular careful discussion, focusing especially on the work of Charles Murray. Melanie Phillips produced several columns in the *Guardian* and the *Observer* and more lately an article in the *Tablet*. Melanie Phillips perhaps deserves most praise for her courage in ramming home to readers of the *Guardian* and the *Observer* what must have been an unwelcome message (Dennis, 1993:viii).

A key feature of framing the welfare state was support for government cuts alongside criticism that they were not cutting far enough. Government spending reviews made welfare spending cuts the government's 'top priority' according to reports, but the *Daily Mail* accused them of producing only 'paltry agreed savings'.[222] When Chancellor Kenneth Clarke was not willing to privatise the

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[220] Gordon, G. (1994), Why there are votes in morality, *Daily Mail*, 26 July 1994.
[221] White, M. (1993), Blair waves the flag for family values: Attack on poverty linked to 'individual responsibility', *Guardian*, 26 June 1993.
[222] Deans, J. (1993), Welfare warning divides Tories, *Daily Mail*, 21 May 1993.

welfare system, an article described him as 'betraying a visceral discomfort with radicalism' and being 'stubbornly wet' on the issue.[223]

8.1.2. Welfare fraud, unemployment and disability

Another key aspect of welfare framing throughout this period was a focus on fraud and criminality. News coverage focussed on 'dole cheats' as welfare recipients were constructed as criminals. A 1985 article in the *Times* explained that 'ministers believe the cost of appointing more dole fraud investigators will be more than offset by the amount saved in unemployment benefit'.[224] The implication here was that many people receiving unemployment benefit were doing so fraudulently. News articles focussed on individual cases of fraud which were often sensationalistic. For example, one pensioner allegedly claimed welfare benefits fraudulently by using 84 different names.[225] In a dispatch from a Liverpool to London train described as the 'dole special', a reporter asked passengers 'about the opportunities for benefit scrounging', and was told that some people 'were drawing unemployment benefit both in Liverpool and in London, as well as earning £400 cash every week'.[226]

According to the *Daily Mail,* defrauding the welfare system was widespread and commonplace; it had become the 'acceptable face of fraud'.[227] The alleged scale of fraud was emphasised repeatedly, and as the government sought to reduce spending on invalidity benefit, the press obliged:

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[223] Bush, J. (1996), A welfare system reshaped by force of individualism, *Times*, 25 July 1996.
[224] Webster, P. (1985), Move to curb the dole cheats, *Times*, 5 August 1985.
[225] *Times* (1986), Fraud man used 83 aliases to get benefit, *Times*, 3 September 1986.
[226] Faux, R. (1987), The scroungers' overnight special, *Times*, 3 August 1987.
[227] Bartholomew, J. (1993), Why do (sic) put up with the welfare state cheats?, *Daily Mail*, 12 May 1993.

It is easier to claim invalidity benefit than most other types of benefit. About 90 per cent of claimants receive it with a note from their GP, without independent medical examination. [228]

Plans to reduce invalidity benefits were reported enthusiastically by the *Daily Mail*:

[The plans are] most determined assault on benefits abuse in the Welfare State's 45-year history. [They will] weed out fit people who collect invalidity handouts, and coax thousands of dole claimants into a more active search for jobs.[229]

Despite the news media's emphasis on fraud, previous investigations into the welfare fraud phenomenon had uncovered 'virtually no abuse' of the system (Deacon, 1978:346). This exaggeration and distortion of welfare fraud is an example of how 'folk devils' are constructed (Cohen, 2011:31), and how individual cases are presented in the media as 'confirming a general theme' (Cohen, 2011:81).

8.1.3. Framing the welfare state in the liberal press 1985-1997

Some articles in the liberal press were more supportive of the welfare state. One example in the *Daily Mirror* described the National Health Service as a key part of 'not just of the welfare state but of a civilised society'.[230] Other articles in the *Daily Mirror* conceded that the welfare state needed reform, trusting in the Labour Party to accomplish this: 'it needs to be revived and that is what a Labour

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[228] Pirie, M. (1993), Half a Century on, the Beveridge dream is crippling Britain, *Daily Mail*, 27 October 1993.
[229] Eastham, P. (1993), Tough tests for welfare, *Daily Mail*, 2 December 1993.
[230] *Daily Mirror* (1995), Welfare state of disgrace, *Daily Mirror*, 20 September 1995.

Government will do'.[231] Labour's proposed welfare reforms were framed as necessary to 'stop the social security bill from ballooning out of control'.[232] As with conservative newspapers, the liberal press represented Tony Blair as a 'genuine inheritor' of the Beveridge legacy.[233] Most of the coverage from the *Guardian* in the 1980s focussed on how the Labour Party made welfare their central issue for the 1987 election.[234,235]

News articles about the Conservative Party's cuts to the welfare state were balanced with a discussion about the risk of such a strategy in both the *Guardian* and the *Independent.* These articles reflected the 'strategic game' frame that scholars have outlined as frequently occuring in public policy news (Aalberg et al., 2012; Lawrence, 2000). However, both newspapers stopped short of defending the concept of the welfare state in their news coverage of this period. It was notable that relatively few articles from the liberal press appeared in the sample.[236] The five conservative newspapers frequently criticised the concept of the welfare state, while there was very little defence offered by the liberal press in the articles analysed here.

8.2. Framing the welfare state 1997-2010

Following their election defeat in 1997, some Conservative Party insiders blamed their image as the 'nasty party' on their disregard for people living in poverty.[237]

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[231] *Daily Mirror* (1996), Giving us work: Not welfare, *Daily Mirror*, 8 May 1996.
[232] *Daily Mirror* (1997), Reform must not damage real victims, *Daily Mirror*, 15 December 1997.
[233] Routledge, P. (1999), The Mirror's chief political commentator welcomes Tony Blair's welfare state vision, *Daily Mirror*, 18 March 1999.
[234] Linton, M., Hetherington, P. & Travis, A. (1985), Labour at Bournemouth: Welfare state central issue, *Guardian*, 2 October 1985.
[235] *Guardian* (1986), Welfare state must be Labour priority, *Guardian*, 3 September 1986.
[236] Article sample 5.
[237] White, M. & Perkins, A. (2002), 'Nasty party' warning to Tories, *Guardian*, 8 October 2002.

However, in the early days of the Labour Government, newspapers reported that Labour had announced 'another purge on benefits for single mothers'.[238] Antipathy towards the welfare state had been cemented in the British press through a 'moral panic' which focussed on fraud, single mothers and an underclass rather than critiquing the government's inability to control structural unemployment, which was the main cause of increased welfare spending and the rise in single-parent families. As unemployment levels began to fall, the focus on single mothers also faded in the press, and by 1997 news articles with negative portrayals of single mothers had declined (Atkinson et al., 1998).

The New Labour administration were not as solely focussed on cuts as their Conservative predecessors, although they made a number of policy adjustments including reductions in welfare spending in their early years (Hills, 1998:23). However, this period also brought the creation of the minimum wage, the New Deal, and a package of redistributive tax policies such as Working Tax Credits. This welfare spending was targeted at 'deserving' groups such as children, those in work, and pensioners. Meanwhile, cuts were targeted towards other areas (Brewer et al., 2002) including unemployment and disability. These early initiatives were followed by a second phase of welfare reform which focussed on a 'gradual escalation in the requirements asked of benefit recipients', specifically targeted at 'lone parents, and the sick and disabled' (Brewer, 2007:26).

As unemployment declined, the focus of articles about 'welfare scroungers' underwent a shift away from single mothers, towards both sick people and

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[238] Sparrow, A. (1997), Harman's new purge on cash for lone parents, *Daily Mail*, 3 December 1997.

immigrants. Prime Minister Tony Blair argued that the welfare state was still 'weighted heavily towards rewarding and supporting people who were not actively seeking to improve their situation, whether by looking for work or by taking part in training' (Marston, 2008:363). The British press enthusiastically welcomed this commitment to welfare reform, with the *Daily Express* mocking up a picture of Frank Field MP as Moses with the caption 'thou shalt not shirk' (Golding in Franklin, 1999:149). However, the *Daily Express* later described the Labour Party's handling of the welfare state as a 'fiasco', insisting that the system was 'in desperate need of reform', 'bloated', and 'riven with fraud'.[239]

Critics argued that welfare changes under the Labour Government were effectively abolishing the principle of unemployment benefit and implementing an 'extensive workfare scheme' (Taylor-Gooby, 2001:147). However, political and media framing continued to propagate 'the idea that ordinary taxpayers have a lot to fear from a large group of "welfare dependent" spongers' (Marston, 2008:364). This group were the focus of continued media criticism:

> Let us never forget, as the Victorians didn't, that the poor are always with us. Hardly a week passes without further evidence of the depravity of our feral underclass – the ones our more plain-speaking forebears would have branded 'the undeserving poor' – and this one has been no exception […] The estates on which they live are, whatever the police say, often no-go areas. They and their children regard school as optional. Drug dealing and theft are the main careers, nicely supplementing the old staple of benefit fraud. Random death is commonplace – school-age children get shot late at night, to widespread horror, only for it to be found subsequently that they have small fortunes stashed away in building society accounts.[240]

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[239] *Daily Express* (2004), Voters may judge Blair on Welfare State fiasco, *Daily Express*, 19 August 2004.
[240] Heffer, S. (2007), If the dog is dangerous, the owner will be, too, *Telegraph*, 6 January 2007.

The *Daily Express* claimed that the welfare state had created a 'tribe of urban savages', driving unemployment, crime and a rise in single mothers.[241] In an article in the *Sun*, Chancellor Gordon Brown maintained that there were 'thousands' who were 'able to work but unwilling to do so'.[242] US-style welfare reforms, mimicking Bill Clinton's approach in 1996, were introduced as a solution to the problem of welfare expenditure. These reforms, under the 1996 Personal Responsibility Act, included the requirement that single mothers 'work for their welfare' and were given 'no extra payouts for additional children conceived once the mothers were on benefits'.[243] The press argued that America had 'found an effective solution' to the welfare issue:

> Paying benefits only to those who cannot work. The able-bodied lose their welfare cheque if they refuse employment. It has transformed lives, rebuilt families, restored the work ethic […] And saved a fortune in taxes.[244]

This 'solution' was supported by British newspapers despite wide-ranging research linking this approach to increasing social problems in the United States (Gans, 1995; Katz, 1990, 1995; Wacquant, 2010). The New Labour era was also characterised by an increase in news stories about asylum seekers.

8.2.1. Immigration and the welfare state

Immigration to industrialised countries increased from 4.3% to 7.5% between 1995 and 2005 (Manacorda et al., 2012:121). Throughout Margaret Thatcher's reign, political framing of immigration often focussed on criminality and the issue

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[241] Bartholomew, J. (2005), How the welfare state created a tribe of 'urban savages', *Daily Express*, 12 January 2005.
[242] *Sun* (2002), 'Work or lose dole' warning, *Sun*, 17 September 2002.
[243] Hartley-Brewer, J. (2009), Spongers are soaking up our hard earned billions, *Sunday Express*, 30 August 2009.
[244] *Sun* (2007), Just the job, *Sun*, 9 November 2007.

of welfare abuse (Spencer, 1998:81). Kundnani argues that Thatcherism developed from a position which constructed British nationalism as synonymous with 'an ethnicity of Englishness' which 'replaced the sense of citizenship that the downsizing welfare state could no longer embody' (Kundnani, 2007:43). After the election of the New Labour Government in 1997, news coverage focussing on asylum seekers as an economic threat to the welfare state began appearing far more often (Lugo-Ocando, 2007:30), frequently linking immigration and the receipt of benefits with criminal activity.

News coverage of welfare highlighted the government's programme to 'weed out bogus asylum seekers' and 'illegal immigrants' who were constructed as potential 'benefit scroungers'.[245] Immigrants were constructed by the press as 'undeserving' of welfare and a financial burden to the state, echoing the arguments applied to single mothers in the 1980s and early 1990s. This way of framing immigrants, especially asylum seekers and refugees, is a common way for the media to construct a series of 'myths' which use foreigners as scapegoats for issues such as crime and unemployment (Alia & Bull, 2005:27-28). The Labour Government's flagship identity card policy was sold to the public as a way to 'crack down further on benefit scroungers and illegal immigrants'.[246] Research has shown that this type of news coverage is based on 'misconceptions of welfare support for asylum seekers and refugees' (Guedes Bailey & Harindranath, 2005:280) For example:

> Every day, scores of asylum seekers enter Britain to live off benefits as they wait for their mostly bogus applications to be processed. This week it

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[245] Kirkby, I. (2000), Migrant smugglers face 10 years in jail, *Sun*, 23 January 2000.
[246] Ashworth, R. (2002), Compulsory ID cards likely in blitz on crime, *Sun*, 24 March 2002.

was revealed that trainloads of Somalis arrive by Eurostar in an organised immigration scam.[247]

Asylum-seeking benefit cheats are using false identities to claim handouts in frauds costing the British taxpayer £100 million each year.[248]

Strict controls on welfare payments for 'East European benefit scroungers' were imposed by the Labour Government, in a move described as a 'major victory for the *Sun*'.[249] The newspaper had waged a campaign based on fears that Britain would be 'swamped with millions of benefit scroungers' because 'Roma gipsies suffering grinding poverty' were 'poised to trek to the UK'.[250] This was a rare admission that immigrants suffer from 'grinding poverty', but it was clear that responsibility for this poverty existed outside the UK. This type of news article helped to propel immigration to one of the key election issues in 2005, with the Labour Party and Conservative Party competing to be tougher on 'bogus refugees' (McLaren & Johnson, 2007:709).[251]

Another way that immigrants were constructed as a threat was to describe them as 'health tourists' in the midst of an 'HIV and Tuberculosis crisis' in Eastern Europe. They were accused of putting the British NHS at risk of 'being overwhelmed by hordes of patients of different nationalities'.[252] Immigrants were framed as a 'burden to the country' as the media focussed on the need to reduce public expenditure (Philo et al., 2013). Research on this topic shows a clear link between political rhetoric and media discourses of immigration and welfare.

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[247] Field, P. (1997), Gipsy curse of racketeers milking the welfare state, *Daily Mail*, 2 August 1997.
[248] *Daily Express* (2003), Asylum case scrounger jailed – but who is he??, *Daily Express*, 18 November 2003.
[249] Pascoe-Watson, G. (2004), Wins U-turn on EU scroungers, *Sun*, 5 February 2004.
[250] *Op. cit.*
[251] Kirby, I. (2004), I'll halt asylum scrounger cash, *News of the World*, 15 February 2004.
[252] Pascoe-Watson, G. (2004), International health service, *Sun*, 24 February 2004.

In another strand of anti-immigrant rhetoric, Labour MP Frank Field was quoted by both the *Daily Express* and the *Telegraph*, claiming that 87% of new jobs had 'gone to immigrants' and calling for 'tougher rules on welfare' (Philo et al., 2013). An article in the *Sunday Express* maintained that politicians have 'no idea how many millions of taxpayers' money is being stolen by bogus asylum seekers',[253] and the *Daily Express* suggested that the welfare state had driven a huge rise in 'illegal immigration'.[254]

The subject of immigration and asylum was reported from the perspective of the British national interest and the threat posed by 'others' – 'foreigners' – who allegedly threaten UK (Guedes Bailey & Harindranath, 2005:283). This framing has turned the term 'asylum seeker' into a form of abuse while continuing a long-held British press tradition of racism against the 'other' (Greenslade, 2005:5). It is important to understand that the news coverage of asylum seekers was part of a 'media campaign' rather than 'legitimate news coverage' (Lugo-Ocando, 2011:108) because of how disproportionate the coverage was (Greenslade, 2005:2).

8.2.2. Continued focus on fraud and disability

The New Labour administration continued with the Conservative Party policy of cutting welfare spending on disability benefits,[255] and the press continued to frame the welfare state in terms of the 'culture of dependency' concept

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[253] Shipman, T. (2003), Home office can only guess at mounting cost of rip-off by bogus migrants: asylum fraud chaos, *Sunday Express*, 16 February 2003.
[254] McKinstry, L. (2009), Our welfare state is to blame for illegal immigration, *Daily Express*, 22 April 2009.
[255] *Daily Mail* (1997), Anger of disabled leaves Blair facing new benefits battle, *Daily Mail*, 19 December 1997.

established by the New Right in the 1980s (Dean & Taylor-Gooby, 1992). The *Sun* portrayed Britain as a 'nation that is enslaved to welfare handouts', arguing that 40% of the 2.7 million people claiming disability benefits 'have nothing physically wrong' with them. Using familiar themes, they claimed that 'scams and fraud' have led to billions of pounds being 'stolen':

> Welfare has driven up unemployment by making it pointless to work. It has robbed people of their self-respect, encouraged broken families by making single parenting pay better than marriage, fostered crime, destroyed ambition and eaten away the soul of our nation. This is not what the founding fathers of the welfare state intended.[256]

In 2004-05, the Labour Party sought to reduce the number of incapacity benefit claimants and address a long-term issue dating back to the social impact of changes in the 1980s (Beatty & Fothergill, 2010:5). The press described how they had launched a 'war' on 'work-shy Britons' in order to 'crack down' on 'the spiralling sick note culture costing taxpayers £8 billion a year'.[257] News articles focussed on people who claimed disability benefit while 'wrestling alligators'[258] or 'riding jet skis'.[259] The implication was that most people on disability or sickness benefit were cheating the system in the most extravagant ways. Previous research has suggested that disabled people receive very little news coverage (McKendrick et al., 2008:55). However, as this analysis shows, when the issue is linked to welfare cuts they receive far more attention.

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[256] Shanahan, F. (2006), Scandal of a nation enslaved to benefits, *Sun*, 27 January 2006.
[257] Little, A. (2004), War on sicknote Britain: checks at doctors to force skivers back to work, *Daily Express*, 3 December 2004.
[258] Bunyan, N. (2005), Snapped: the man who wrestles alligators but is 'too disabled' to get a job, *Telegraph*, 17 June 2005.
[259] Smith, R. (2014), 'Bed Bound' benefits cheat caught after holiday snaps showed him on a jet ski, *Daily Mirror*, 26 August 2014.

Research on media coverage of disability prior to the financial crash identified some resistance within the media to disability cuts; however, this resistance faded following the financial crisis of 2007-08 (Briant et al., 2011:24). News discourses that criticised welfare recipients intensified during this period, prompting the OECD to recommend reducing the 'burgeoning welfare burden'. They issued advice to countries to 'activate existing disability benefit recipients' who were framed as an obstacle to raising labour force participation rates and a major contributor to public expenditure (OECD, 2009:5-9). The Labour Government also brought in measures to cut the number of incapacity benefit claimants, creating a renewed focus on disability in the press (Beatty & Fothergill, 2010).

Since Elizabethan times, disabled people were considered 'deserving' of help, but news coverage of them became very critical following the financial crisis (Briant et al., 2011). When the New Labour Government left office in 2010, they were the only Labour administration in history to preside over a period when inequalities in income, wealth and health had increased (Dorling, 2010:397-398). During the 2010 UK general election, the financial crisis was blamed on economic mismanagement by the Labour Party, and a coalition government of the Conservative Party and Liberal Democrats was elected.

8.2.3. Framing the welfare state in the liberal press 1997-2010

The welfare state was constructed as being, 'in crisis', by the *Independent*,[260] and articles appeared which were supportive of the Labour Party's plans to reform the

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[260] Coyle, D. (1997), Welfare state has reached 'crisis point', *Independent*, 19 May 1997.

welfare state.[261] In 2005, the *Independent* reported a speech by Labour Party MP John Hutton:

> The founding fathers of the welfare state would be amazed to see a system designed to help those literally unable to work supporting huge numbers claiming incapacity as a result of stress. He will also say it is illogical for those on incapacity benefit to receive more than those on the jobseekers' allowance for the unemployed. [262]

The article described how the Labour Party have 'talked the talk before on benefit reform without having the stomach to see it through'.[263] A similar argument was found in the *Guardian,* where the newspaper supported the concept of welfare reform under New Labour. For example, the following *Guardian* comment piece was written by columnist James Bartholomew, who also writes for the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*:

> The mess that governments have made of welfare benefits is more widely understood, too. The current administration now admits that more than a million people claiming incapacity benefit are, in fact, capable of work. The longer-term story is woeful: national unemployment insurance was introduced in 1911. Only since then has mass unemployment become a permanent feature of our society.[264]

Another columnist in the *Guardian* argued against the welfare state being replaced by philanthropy, instead supporting redistribution and highlighting the importance of tackling tax avoidance amongst wealthy individuals:

> Rightwing think tanks that claim the welfare state has stunted Victorian voluntarism conveniently forget how little health, welfare or education

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[261] *Independent* (1997), Get the words right for a genuine welfare state, *Independent*, 19 May 1997.
[262] *Independent* (2006), A last chance for Mr Blair to reform the welfare state, *Independent*, 16 January 2006.
[263] *Op. cit.*
[264] Bartholomew, J. (2006), Deep down the public knows the welfare state is failing, *Guardian*, 17 May 2006.

charities ever delivered. The voluntary sector has only become more important by taking welfare state contracts to do things a democratically elected government chooses. The money is accountable – whereas random funds from philanthropists take a taxpayers' subsidy unaccountably. As donors turn off the taps in a recession, what a disaster if the welfare state were seriously dependent on haphazard generosity. In the boom time, when I researched attitudes of high earners for the book *Unjust Rewards,* time and again the rich justified their extreme pay by citing philanthropy. It was a thin excuse as the top 10% give proportionally less of their income than the bottom 10% – so philanthropy should be a reason to pay more to low earners and less to the rich. But imagine if all those powerful philanthropists devoted their energy to persuading fellow plutocrats to pay all their due taxes without resorting to avoidance. That would raise billions more – and do immense civic good.[265]

This type of article was rare during the era of New Labour governance. The liberal press spent far less time writing about the welfare state than the conservative press, and a number of conservative columnists also wrote for liberal newspapers such as the *Guardian* to make the familiar conservative case for welfare reform. Interestingly, this practice appears to be exclusive to the *Guardian,* as there were no similar examples found of liberal or left-leaning columnists being given a platform by the conservative press.

Beyond comment pieces, the hard news articles in the *Guardian* were supportive of welfare reform, which was often reported as a battle between Labour Party leadership and dissenting backbench MPs.[266] Overall, while the liberal newspapers produced far fewer articles about the welfare state in this time period

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[265] Toynbee, P. (2009), Thank goodness the poor don't rely on philanthropy, *Guardian*, 10 January 2009.
[266] Ward, L. (2000), Darling braves welfare anger, *Guardian*, 10 February 2000.

than the conservative press, there were also few articles written in defence of the welfare state.

8.3. Framing the welfare state 2010-2015

In 2010, the Coalition Government's Work and Pensions Secretary, Iain Duncan Smith, made an argument similar to those heard in previous decades. He said that his government had inherited a 'broken system' from Labour, where people were 'parked' on benefits. Duncan Smith promised a 'welfare revolution', and welfare cuts became a key part of the government's austerity strategy to deal with the fallout from the economic crash. The press had lobbied for his appointment and were uncritical about the 'magnificent work' he was undertaking.[267,268,269]

The financial crash allowed the Coalition Government to roll out a programme to test every recipient of disability benefit to see if they were entitled to support. The programme was accompanied by a surge in media coverage of disability, focussing on people who claimed disability benefits fraudulently, lending support to the government's reform programme (Briant et al., 2013:6). Some news articles even blamed the whole debt crisis on incapacity benefit claimants: 'Shirker's Paradise: Exclusive: IDS on Benefits Britain […] Work-shy are Largely to Blame for Deficit Crisis' (Briant et al., 2013:8). Negative coverage blamed welfare claimants themselves for austerity to deflect blame from the government and create scapegoats for the cuts (Briant et al., 2011). Disability claimants were also

[267] *Sunday Times* (2009), The tories might just tackle welfare reform, *Sunday Times,* 4 October 2009.
[268] Nelson, F. (2010), The Tories have just the man to find more jobs for British workers: Iain Duncan Smith's ideas on benefits reform could overturn Labour's dismal legacy, *Telegraph,* 9 April 2010.
[269] Daley, J. (2010), Best news of the day so far: IDS for Welfare and Pensions, *Telegraph,* 12 May 2010.

portrayed as being largely fraudulent, despite research which estimated fraud on Disability Living Allowance at only 0.5% and Incapacity Benefit at 0.3% (Briant et al., 2013).

Once again, media framing echoed political rhetoric. George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, claimed that 'living on incapacity benefit had become a "Lifestyle Choice"', and this phrase was repeated throughout news coverage of welfare and disability (Briant et al., 2013). Disability cuts were based on the idea that Britain had a 'broken society' caused by the welfare state. A 'strong anti-welfare agenda' emerged from the government and the press, arguing that welfare was 'morally and socially corrupting':

> [Welfare] undermines individual responsibility, encourages worklessness and fecklessness, and is associated with a range of other problematic and troublesome behaviours (Mooney, 2011:8).

Cuts in disability benefit were conflated with the existence of an underclass. One article for the *Daily Mail* promoted ending Britain's 'sicknote culture', calling to 'halt the scandal of 300,000 workers a year moving onto sickness benefit, many with stress or depression'. The article quoted Iain Duncan Smith, who claimed that the welfare state 'now pays an "underclass" to remain idle for generation after generation'.[270] The focus on disability came as a result of the welfare reform programme; people with disabilities had previously been constructed as a 'deserving' group and therefore largely ignored by the press (McKendrick et al., 2008:55). Now the framing reflected the government's attempts to transform the financial crisis into a crisis of public spending. As the Conservative and Liberal

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[270] *Daily Mail.* (2011), IDS: How we'll beat sicknote culture, *Daily Mail*, 17 February 2011.

Democrat coalition took office, they pledged to make cuts to the welfare system, which the press described as a 'war on benefit cheats'.[271] The welfare system was described in the *Daily Express* as the 'benefits monster', responsible for 'destroying the moral fabric of our country':

> The social security system encourages idleness and fecklessness. While professional parasites are rewarded, the hard-working are punished creating a deep sense of injustice.[272]

In this article, unemployed people were pejoratively described as 'workshy scroungers'[273] and housing benefit was singled out for particular criticism:

> Of all the absurdities spawned by our bloated welfare state, none is more obscene than housing benefit. Once envisaged as a form of basic assistance for the poor, this payout has been transmuted into a monstrous engine of injustice, waste and corruption. It encourages fecklessness and idleness, distorts the property market, provides lavish subsidies to wealthy landlords, imposes a crippling burden on the taxpayer and promotes the abuse of public money.[274]

The welfare state was criticised in the *Daily Express* for supporting a 'criminal underclass'[275] and 'a bottomless money pit for foreign scroungers and opportunists',[276] rewarding 'single mothers' for their 'refusal to get a job or use effective contraception'.[277] The conservative press also regularly allowed politicians to write articles justifying their own reforms. This was particularly evident in the *Telegraph,* which regularly printed articles by Conservative Party

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[271] Brown, M. (2010), New war on benefit cheats, *Daily Express*, 9 August 2010.

[272] McKinstry, L. (2010), This bonfire of the benefits will hurt middle class most*, Daily Express*, 19 April 2010.

[273] Hall, M. (2010), End of benefits for the Middle Class, *Daily Express*, 4 October 2010.

[274] McKinstry, L. (2010), A shameful abuse of the taxpayer is coming to a close, *Daily Express*, 1 November 2010.

[275] McKinstry, L. (2011), The welfare state is now supporting the criminal underclass, *Daily Express*, 29 December 2011.

[276] McKinstry, L. (2012), You can never have free immigration and a welfare state, *Daily Express*, 25 October 2012.

[277] McKinstry, L. (2013), Single mother is poster girl for the working class, *Daily Express*, 21 February 2013.

politicians making the case for welfare cuts. For example, analysis of articles in the *Telegraph* picked up no four by Iain Duncan Smith justifying the benefits of his welfare reforms.[278,279,280,281] There were also articles by conservative politicians such as Peter Lilley, Douglas Carswell and Daniel Hannan. Cutting welfare expenditure was a key election issue in 2015 with the *Sun*, for example, arguing that a Labour Party election victory would force people into the 'permanent trap of welfare dependency'. [282]

8.3.1. Framing the welfare state in the liberal press 2010-2015

In an article that echoed conservative framing of the welfare state, *Daily Mirror* columnist Tony Parsons argued that the 'welfare state is at an all-time low' because of unemployed people having large families.[283] This shift in tone from the *Daily Mirror* perhaps signified an internal conflict between opposing welfare cuts and supporting the Labour Party who were implementing those cuts. One article in the *Independent* from left-wing columnist Owen Jones opposed the welfare reform agenda in a rare dissenting article:

> The universal welfare state is under siege; it needs a confident, coherent defence. Talk of reform must surely centre on the subsidising of bosses and landlords. The case for tax on the basis of wealth and income desperately has to be made. As Britain's finest Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, put it: "If a rich man wants to help the poor, he should pay his taxes gladly, not dole out money at a whim." If Labour fails to do its job and drive

[278] Duncan Smith, I. (2012), It's time to take the benefit system back to Beveridge's original vision, *Telegraph*, 1 December 2012.

[279] Duncan Smith, I. (2013), We're fixing the benefits system, and living (sic) a better deal to those in work, *Telegraph*, 1 April 2013.

[280] Duncan Smith, I. (2015), We're giving everyone the chance to get on: By encouraging people into work, our welfare reforms will be a huge help to social mobility Britain, *Telegraph*, 28 May 2015.

[281] Duncan Smith, I. (2011), It's time to end this addiction to benefits, *Telegraph*, 17 February 2011.

[282] Wooding, D. (2015), Ed's extra 750,000 homes on benefits: Welfare state to balloon if Labour win, says study, *Sun*, 15 February 2015.

[283] Parsons, T. (2010), Welfare state lets fat birds feather their nests, *Daily Mirror*, 25 September 2010.

the Tory onslaught back, our already deeply fragmented society will face even further social destruction. It must not be allowed to happen.[284]

Other articles in the *Guardian* argued against Conservative cuts to the welfare state,[285] and Labour Party politicians such as Andy Burnham argued for an extension of the welfare state into social care.[286] However, there was also *Guardian* support for reforming the welfare state back to its founding principles.[287] Conservative Party politicians were given space to argue their case, with Esther McVey and Iain Duncan Smith both writing articles defending their reforms.[288,289]

8.3.2. The case of the *Scottish Sun*

Versions of the *Sun* throughout Britain echoed the anti-welfare narrative found in the other conservative newspapers, with one notable exception. The Scottish version of the *Sun* had articles which dissent from the dominant narrative of the conservative press. In the English version of the *Sun,* the welfare state was described as 'grotesquely obese, unfit for purpose and in need of emergency surgery […] a sprawling monster', where money is 'wasted on booze' and people are paid to 'have whole football teams of kids':[290]

> A gipsy looking for an interest-free loan? Take £50,000. A jailed criminal seeking a sex change op? Join the queue. No job prospects at 16? Pocket £30 a week to stay at school – and you're off the dole queue.[291]

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[284] Jones, O. (2013), IDS's attack on pensioners is really an attack on all of us, *Independent*, 29 April 2013.

[285] Milne, S. (2010), A people power fraud that promises mass privatisation, *Guardian*, 15 April 2010.

[286] Burnham, A. (2010), In Beveridge's Footsteps: A National Care Service will be a radical Labour initiative to rank with the NHS and welfare state, *Guardian*, 30 March 2010.

[287] Oakley, M. (2013), Something for something: The welfare state is no solution to poverty. It must be rebuilt around its founding principles, *Guardian*, 8 January 2013.

[288] McVey, E. (2013), At last a fair welfare state: The government's benefit shake-up will make work pay while continuing to protect the vulnerable, *Guardian*, 3 April 2013.

[289] Duncan Smith, I. (2013), Benefits: our achievement: I don't apologise for trying to make the welfare state fair – it's something only this government can do, *Guardian*, 29 July 2013.

[290] Kyle, J. (2010), Welfare fuelling wasters, *Sun*, 18 August 2010.

[291] Kavanagh, T. (2010), Brown the drain: Waste Britain: How Labour have blown our billions, *Sun*, 12 April 2010.

The English version of the *Sun* enthusiastically endorsed the welfare cuts programme proposed by the Coalition Government.[292] However, a very different narrative of welfare reform was found in the Scottish version of the newspaper.

This distinctive approach can be partially explained by the chief commercial competitor for the *Sun* in Scotland: the *Daily Record* is closely aligned with the Labour Party. Moreover, the Scottish political landscape has shifted considerably in recent years from a Labour Party heartland to strong support for the Scottish National Party (SNP). During the 2015 general election, the SNP won 56 seats in the UK Parliament, and the Labour Party only won a single seat in Scotland. With the Labour Party supported by the *Daily Record*, the Scottish version of the *Sun* has increasingly offered political editorial support to the SNP (Harkins, 2015b:55). The result of this political affiliation has been a political outlook which sometimes the complete opposite of the same newspaper in other regions (Harkins, 2015b:55).

This political curiosity has driven some of the only news stories in the conservative press critical of government welfare cuts. For example, one article in the Scottish *Sun* described 'a series of sickening attacks on the welfare state':

> David Cameron's Bedroom Tax will lead to misery and suicide while food stamps will be given to the poorest as emergency cash handouts are scrapped.[293]

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[292] *Sun* (2012), It's all shirk and no pay, *Sun*, 2 September 2012.
[293] *Sun* (2013), News, Cam and co's war on the poor is a twisted joke, *Sun*, 31 March 2013.

The article went on to argue that 'private banks' were 'responsible for the crisis' but were 'bailed out with £1trillion, 70 percent of our national income':

> The champagne is flowing again as bankers reward themselves with multi-million bonuses, yet for some reason the banks and Government have treated a £1trillion loan as a gift – which the rest of us must pay back through pay cuts and austerity.[294]

Another article in the Scottish *Sun* argued against disability cuts by linking them to the successes of Paralympic athletes:

> The Paralympic heroes we all cheered last year were all given a helping hand by the welfare state. The Disability Living Allowance – now replaced by the more restrictive Personal Independence Payments – made Paralympic glory possible. Does anyone seriously suggest that those Paralympic athletes were spongers because they needed a helping hand?[295]

This framing was not evident in other conservative publications, and it was rare for even the liberal press to adopt this type of radical framing and defence of the welfare state. This raises questions about how truly 'neoliberal' the British press are – one reading of this is that it is an example of domestic politics shaping the news agenda far more clearly than considerations based on the market. Nevertheless, the *Sun*'s competition with the *Daily Record* in the Scottish context provides an explanation for this coverage that is still underpinned by market considerations, albeit in a way that inverts the traditional neoliberal conceptions of poverty and welfare.

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[294] *Op. cit.*
[295] *Sun* (2013), Although it has been..., *Sun*, 29 September 2013.

8.4. Employing the Ideological Square to understand the construction of 'us' and 'them' through language

Van Dijk's ideological square model of discourse analysis examines the relationship between insider and outsider groups through a four stage process called the 'ideological square':

> Express/emphasize information that is 'positive' about us.
> Express/emphasize information that is 'negative' about them.
> Suppress/de-emphasize information that is 'positive' about them.
> Suppress/de-emphasize information that is 'negative' about us. (van Dijk, 1998b)

A close reading of the articles analysed throughout this chapter suggests that stages 3 and 4 in the ideological square were achieved by the press through outright omission. However, each newspaper's operation of stages 1 and 2 is outlined in the following tables. The historical outline in this chapter has already suggested that particular groups are constructed by the press as being 'outsiders'.

The following tables look at the construction of 'us' and 'them' in this sample[296] of news coverage of the welfare state. The first table highlights the way that newspapers have constructed 'us', the newsreaders and our relationship to the welfare state; it looks at who 'we' are and our behavioural characteristics in relation to the welfare state. The second table looks at constructions of 'them' in relation to 'us' across all of the national newspaper titles.

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[296] Article sample 4.

Newspaper	'Us'	'Emphasise positive'
Daily Mirror	'the British partnership', 'the taxpayer', 'the old working class', 'the hard pressed taxpayer', 'soldiers', 'working people', 'The Labour Party'.	'created the welfare state', 'defeated the Conservative Government', 'paying the highest taxes'.
Guardian	'the Conservative Party', 'the government', 'the squeezed middle', 'Britons', 'taxpayers', 'Britain'.	'fight for social justice', 'benefit cap', 'putting things right', 'we want better services', 'rebalancing the welfare state', 'pay our national insurance contributions'.
Independent	'the nation', 'Britain', 'the UK'.	'tax people on their income', 'take account of capital in allocating means-tested benefits'.
Sun	'employers group', 'the Conservative Party', 'taxpayers'.	'opposing the minimum wage', 'paying the bill', 'working hard and paying tax', paying for other people's 'sunshine holidays'.
Daily Mail	'taxpayers', 'British people', 'Conservative Party', 'Labour Party', *the Daily Mail*, Television viewers, 'workers', 'society'.	'work hard', 'put money aside for the future'.
Daily Express	'Britain', 'workers', 'taxpayers', 'Conservative Party', 'hard-pressed taxpayers', 'victims', 'the diligent', 'working man and woman', 'hard working taxpayers', 'British taxpayers'.	'working hard and saving up', 'make contributions', 'forced to subsidise people'.
Times	'Britain', 'students', 'British families', 'people in Britain', 'a very wealthy nation'.	'can't spend what we don't have', 'stumbling […] towards a Scandinavian model of giving parents services rather than cash, which erodes families' choices but may give better value for money', 'pool our risks through the NHS', 'don't get much out of the NHS', 'to break the cycle of dependency and insecurity and empower all citizens to lead a dignified and fulfilling life', 'We spend more on social security than we do on education, employment, health and law and order combined […] spend more on disability and incapacity benefits than we do on the entire school system in the UK'.

Newspaper		
Telegraph	'Conservative Party', 'British People', 'hard-working people'	'bearing the brunt', 'subsidises families'.

Table 10: Positive emphasis about 'us'.

Newspaper	'Them'	Emphasise negative
Daily Mirror	'the underclass', 'a bunch of beady-eyed spongers with no class'.	'put lager on their cornflakes'.
Independent	'lone-parent families', 'registered unemployed', 'child benefit' recipients', 'Britain's booming rich elite'.	'cost £9bn', 'cost £8bn', 'cost £7bn'.
Guardian	'the Tories', 'the Labour Party', 'critics (of welfare reform), 'the government', 'the conservatives'.	'brutal and disproportionate cuts', 'demolished some of the Country's most precious social protections'.
Sun	'spongers', 'benefit cheats', 'wasters', 'Labour Party (the Welfare Party)'.	'going on a fabulous holiday to a golden beach in the Med'.
Daily Mail	'petty cheats', 'an underclass', 'single mothers', 'factories of crime and violence', 'workshy', 'immigrants', 'asylum seekers', 'gipsies, 'Slovakian gipsies'.	'fraud and fecklessness', 'leeching off the rest of us', 'Inherently lazy', 'no interest in bettering themselves and their families', 'fostered 'crime, dishonesty and fecklessness', 'playing the system'.
Daily Express	'scroungers', 'immigrants', 'Labour', 'Britain's worst dads', 'deadbeat dads', 'spongers', 'the left', 'left-wing critics', 'freeloaders', 'drug addicts and alcoholics', 'single mothers', 'benefit cheats', 'fraudsters', 'parasites and persecutors', 'underclass', 'feckless', 'jobless mother', 'immigrants', 'asylum seekers', 'foreigners', 'Somalians', 'blundering Ed Miliband'.	'sexually incontinent, spectacularly irresponsible and sickeningly immoral parasite', 'cocooned by state subsidies', 'giving birth without any thought of the consequences', 'continually refuse jobs', 'long-term welfare dependency', 'feckless lifestyle', 'benefits dependent', 'shameless irresponsibility', 'ethical bankruptcy', 'mass idleness', 'dependency on the state', 'flood the country'.
Times	'poorer children', 'poorer patients', 'self-declared defenders of the poor', 'bosses of the poverty industry', 'web of charities and campaigning groups who depend upon the state', 'poverty lobby', 'the poor', 'poorly educated men', 'Poles', 'foreigners', 'people from Bulgaria and Romania', 'out of work adults', 'Labour Party', 'the disabled', 'those living on the worst estates', 'those in genuine need', 'the infirm, the disabled and the elderly'.	'expanded social security and shrunk social mobility', 'taking British jobs', 'benefit fraud'.

Telegraph	'asylum seekers', 'immigrants', 'underclass', 'scroungers and shirkers', 'the left', 'the work-shy', 'lone parents', 'sick and disabled people', 'criminal underclass'.	

Table 11: Negative emphasis about 'them'.

These tables show the way that most of the British newspapers, and indeed all of the conservative press, constructed 'us' and 'we' in the British national interest. The use of 'we' was also commonly used to signify 'our' status as 'taxpayers' who are 'hard-working'. Sometimes this inclusive 'we' signified that the article was written from the perspective of a political party, depending on the orientation of the newspaper. 'We' were the Labour Party in the *Daily Mirror*, and the Conservative Party in the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, the *Telegraph* and the *Times*. Both political parties were presented as 'we' in the *Guardian*. The most common positive feature of 'us', was that 'we' pay taxes, although the *Sun* claimed that 'we' do this to pay for the 'sunshine holidays' of others, and the *Daily Express* claimed that 'we' are 'forced to subsidise people'. 'We' were constructed as working taxpayers who do not receive welfare benefits, whereas the 'other' – 'they' or 'them' – always receive welfare payments.

The 'other' was described through a set of repeated pejorative terms linked to welfare. 'They' were described as 'spongers', 'benefit cheats', 'fraudsters', 'wasters', 'an underclass', 'workshy', 'factories of crime and violence', 'workshy', 'scroungers', 'deadbeat dads', 'freeloaders', 'feckless; parasites', 'shirkers', and 'criminal'. These labels reinforced the idea of a British 'us' and a foreign 'other' by describing welfare recipients as 'immigrants', 'asylum seekers', 'people from Romania and Bulgaria', 'gipsies', 'foreigners', 'the Poles', 'Somalians', and 'Slovakian Gypsies'. Less pejorative and more descriptive labels included 'single

mothers', 'lone-parent families', 'registered unemployed' and 'disabled people'. In terms of political identification, the *Guardian* once again had articles that constructed both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party as the 'other'. The Labour Party were the external 'them' in articles in the *Times,* the *Telegraph,* the *Daily Express* and the *Sun.* Other political labels were used to construct 'them' as 'the left', 'the poverty lobby', 'charities and campaigning groups'. In one article, the *Independent* constructed 'them' as 'Britain's booming rich elite'.

The construction of 'us' and 'them' in the British news articles about the welfare state was centred around the receipt of welfare payments. 'We' work hard and pay the bills while 'they' take the money out of the system, often unfairly. Pejorative descriptions of the behaviour of 'them' were repeatedly used by the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*: for example, 'continually refusing jobs' and 'giving birth without any thought of the consequences'. However, although the *Times* and the *Telegraph* used pejorative labels to describe 'them', they did not describe their behaviour in this way. There were also articles in the *Guardian* that constructed the Conservative Party as the 'other' following the post-2010 austerity agenda, accusing the government of enacting 'brutal and disproportionate cuts' and demolishing 'some of the country's most precious social protections.'

The above framing persists despite research showing that welfare benefits only supply 40% of the minimum acceptable income that an adult can live on (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Hirsch, 2013). The notion that the cost of benefits is wildly out of control is also debatable. In the mid-1980s, welfare spending represented 11% of British GDP. It rose to 12% in the mid-1990s and was at 10% in 2011.

Benefit fraud rates are also extremely low, and most of the welfare budget is spent on pensions (53%). However, pensioners were never constructed negatively as welfare recipients. They are a 'deserving' group who vote in greater numbers than other demographics, so they escaped the attention of politicians and journalists looking to cut the welfare bill. The large families described in many of the tabloid stories are also very rare, and many people are both claiming benefits and working: low wages are a poverty trap rather than welfare dependency.

These facts were ignored by British journalists with a vested interest making bold statements about getting tough on 'scroungers' and promoting their welfare reform agenda. The resulting war on welfare recipients has become a key feature of governance in the age of neoliberalism. Gans describes how this phenomenon has operated in the United States since the 1980s:

> Unknowingly repeating old strategies, the leaders of this war continue to decrease the welfare benefits that go to poor mothers unable to work or find jobs, threaten to end welfare altogether, increase the punitive conditions under which all help is given, and fan further the hatred of the poor among the more fortunate classes (Gans, 1995:1).

This offers a useful outline in understanding the conservative press in Britain and the way they report stories about the welfare state. The liberal press offer some defence of the welfare state in their comment pieces, but this framing is largely absent from their hard news coverage. The liberal press, specifically the *Guardian*, also allow a platform for prominent conservative columnists to criticise the welfare state and welfare recipients.

It is clear from this analysis that the anti-welfare rhetoric characterising political approaches to the welfare state throughout the age of neoliberalism is strongly echoed in the British press. Criticism of welfare provision was targeted at single mothers, fraud and people with disabilities during the period of governance by the Conservative Party between 1985 and 1997. When New Labour took office in 1997, the British press continued to criticise welfare recipients, although their focus shifted to immigrants and asylum seekers alongside fraud and disability. These themes continued following the election of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government in 2010, and there was a return of discussions about the 'underclass' which constructed welfare recipients as a deviant 'other'. This framing was clearly neoliberal, targeting individuals as symbols of excessive welfare expenditure.

The focus on disability also provides evidence of a neoliberal redrawing of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' categories. From a historical perspective, the sick were categorised as a group deserving of state support. However, in the neoliberal age, there have been consistent attempts by the press to link disability with fraud while the government seeks to cut disability benefits. This suggests that categories are being reformed. There is also a small amount of evidence of the British press overriding neoliberal ideology to push an agenda rooted in domestic politics: the Scottish version of the *Sun* challenges the idea of neoliberal hegemony within the newsroom.

Overall, individualised narratives ignored structural considerations. Most welfare recipients – indeed, most people suffering from poverty in the UK – are victims of

wider social forces such as deindustrialisation. Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) described how capitalism developed through a:

> [Capitalism developed through] a process of industrial mutation that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one' (Schumpeter, 2010:83).

This process, which Schumpeter described as 'creative destruction', reshaped the economy in Britain and led to high unemployment in areas which had previously housed heavy industry. These changes coincided with the emergence of the neoliberal and anti-welfare rhetoric amongst politicians and the media. This framing blames the victims of structural economic changes for the challenges that have emerged in the post-industrial economic landscape. This is evident regardless of which government is in power:

> It is a cold hard fact of contemporary politics that regimes of different political stripes have all endorsed capitalist globalization and implemented policies of deregulation, privatization, and social austerity. We get neoliberalism even when we elect social democratic governments (Albo, 2002:47).

The focus of scapegoating has shifted. In times of high unemployment and low economic growth, the British press have focussed on domestic welfare recipients such as single mothers, people with disabilities and the 'underclass'. In times of increased employment and stronger economic growth, the focus moves to immigrants and asylum seekers as welfare recipients. Both groups are constructed as presenting an economic threat to the wellbeing of the 'imagined community' of news readers.

9. Poor ideas: the neoliberal imagination in news framing of poverty

> The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy, that is the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness. It is an exercise which always involves a certain number of internal contradictions and even a few absurdities. The conspicuously wealthy turn up urging the character-building value of privation for the poor. – J.K. Galbraith[297]

This chapter examines the role of ideology in informing narratives of poverty in the British press, by considering how the dominant historical forms of representing poverty have been evident in contemporary news coverage. This involves a strategy where the news media adopt a system of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor.

Many of the themes picked up in the analysis outlined in Chapter Five are deeply ideological, such as 'inequality'[298] and 'rags to riches',[299] and they are constructed within the ideological framework of a 'culture of capitalism' (Appleby, 2010:119). This framework justifies the construction of a society of winners and losers. The focus on poverty is heavily weighted towards those who have escaped hardship through their own skill or hard work, while those who live in poverty have only themselves to blame due to poor lifestyle choices.

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[297] Cornwell, R. (2002), Stop the 'madness', *Globe and Mail* (Canada), 6 July 2002.
[298] Gould, M. (2011), The struggle to ease poverty in the shadow of skyscrapers: The glistening towers of Canary Wharf look out on some of Britain's most deprived streets, *Times*, 29 July 2011.
[299] Levin, A. (1998), She scribbled her first book in an Edinburgh café as her baby slept in a buggy. Now her worries are over as her children's classic is earning millions: How a struggling mother wrote her way out of the poverty trap, *Daily Mail*, 10 October 1998.

This narrative echoes the etchings of Hogarth outlined in Chapter Two, and ignores the role of structural inequality. Rising inequality presents a challenge to the narrative, and therefore becomes an almost invisible discourse in this category of news coverage. Inequality is examined here as the proverbial elephant in the room: its rise, indeed its very existence undermines many of the key ideological assumptions that underpin news framing of poverty.

Constructions of the 'feckless poor' contrast sharply with narratives about those who have overcome poverty. These individuals are portrayed as deserving through a narrative of 'rags to riches', which focuses on how wealthy and successful individuals deserve their hard-earned wealth after 'starting with nothing'. This type of narrative is part of an individualistic ideological system which has developed throughout the age of neoliberalism. This chapter examines some of the key features of ideology that are evident in news coverage of poverty.

9.1. Ideology and the 'undeserving' poor

Hogarth's morality tale, outlined in Chapter Two, describes a belief system based on individualism which posits that with hard work, anything is possible. The logical conclusion here is that unsuccessful people who suffer from poverty must not have worked hard enough. The story explains how individuals can begin their lives on an equal platform, but that success is determined by a solid work ethic and the avoidance of vice. Poverty in this respect is constructed as shameful and the fault of the poor, who are portrayed as lazy and amoral. Wealth is the result of hard work and pious behaviour.

This simple narrative ignores the idle rich who may inherit their wealth instead of gaining it through their own efforts. It also ignores the reality that not every hard-working person can become Mayor and that working hard and living piously does not necessarily safeguard against poverty. However, these considerations are ignored within an ideological framework which rationalises poverty in a system of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. The overall message is that in most cases, the poor deserve to be poor and the rich deserve to be rich. This chapter examines some of the framing strategies which newspapers use to reflect this ideological system.

9.2. From rags to riches

Paradoxically, very wealthy people are often discussed by the news media when they tackle the subject of poverty. It has been argued that 'rags to riches' is one of seven basic plots to any story (Booker, 2005:51), and this narrative is a common way of explaining why rich and successful individuals are 'deserving', regardless of how disproportionate their wealth may be to that of their peers. In terms of news coverage of poverty, 'rags to riches' articles described how successful people once lived in poverty but overcame this condition through hard work. J.K. Rowling, author of the *Harry Potter* series, was the subject of many such articles found in the sample:[300]

> Escaping her freezing flat for the warmth of a coffee shop, Joanne Rowling would sit with her sleeping baby daughter in a pushchair and write children's stories in the hope that one day she might escape the poverty trap she found herself in. After plucking up the courage to send them to

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[300] Article sample 1.

agents, she would batter the tales out on an old typewriter she had bought for £40 and then retype them because she could not afford the cost of photocopying. Now, as the successful children's author JK Rowling with a $1million movie deal, her fairytale ending has become a reality. She will never have to worry about paying her heating bills or ordering a second coffee, after Warner Brothers snapped up the film rights this week.[301]

It is interesting that this story was acknowledged as a 'fairytale', yet it is also one of the dominant ways of representing poverty in the news. Rowling herself highlighted this point in an interview:

> Poverty, as I soon found out, is a lot like childbirth – you know that it's going to hurt before it happens but you'll never know how much until you've experienced it. Some articles written about me have come close to romanticising the time I spent on Income Support, because the well-worn cliché of the writer starving in the garret is so much more picturesque than the bitter reality of living in poverty with a child. The endless little humiliations of life on benefits – and remember that six out of 10 families headed by a lone parent live in poverty – receive very little media coverage unless they are followed by what seems to be a swift and Cinderella-like reversal of fortune.[302]

This type of critical reflection was rarely used to contextualise the 'rags to riches' stories uncovered in this research. The story of the struggling writer escaping poverty was applied to Catherine Cookson, Josephine Cox, Mary Wesley, H.G. Wells, Richard Sennett, Frank McCourt, Buchi Emecheta, Helen Forrester and Mavis Cheek. The sample also included actors Sarah Lancashire, Warren Mitchell, and Adrian Lester; politicians Alan Johnston and David Blunkett;

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[301] Levin, A. (1998), She scribbled her first book in an Edinburgh café as her baby slept in a buggy. Now her worries are over as her children's classic is earning millions: How a struggling mother wrote her way out of the poverty trap, *Daily Mail*, 10 October 1998.

[302] Goldwin, C. (2002), I counted out coppers and found I was 2p short of a tin of beans. I pretended to the girl on the till that I'd mislaid £10: Millionaire author J.K. Rowling on her days of poverty, *Daily Mirror*, 23 May 2002.

businesspeople Carlos Criado-Perez and Clive Cowdery; athletes Paul Tergat and Dimitar Berbatov; and musician Steven Gately. All of their stories shared a common focus on how childhood poverty was not a barrier for these celebrities who managed to achieve their personal ambitions.

This formula is also followed in articles on figures outside the UK, for example Leonardo Di Caprio:

> From his earliest days, young Leonardo realised he would have to fight for anything he got. And it was this inborn drive, his 83-year-old widowed grandmother Helene Indenbirken insists, that spurred him to stardom.[303]

Oprah Winfrey's personal 'rags to riches' story is often used an example of the American Dream, but a critical account argues that it is tokenism being used 'as a rhetorical mechanism of liberal hegemony with regard to race and class' (Cloud, 1996:115). British journalists and wealthy celebrities sometimes engage in the mutually beneficial construction of 'rags to riches' narratives which are used to build their public profile (Tyler & Bennett, 2010:383).

These articles were remarkably prominent in terms of the thematic content analysis outlined in Chapter Five: the sample[304] contained 49 articles about rich and successful people who were once poor. This is significant, because as discussed throughout, the British press rarely write articles from the perspective of people living in poverty. Therefore, one of the most common ways to hear the voices of people who have experienced poverty is through the testimony of rich

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[303] Carey, T. (1998), Poverty and family split spurred Leo to £3 Million a film Titanic stardom, *Daily Mirror*, 28 January 1998.
[304] Article sample 1.

and successful celebrities. This reinforces the notion promoted by Hogarth that if individuals work hard enough they can escape poverty. This notion was satirised by R.H. Tawney:

> Intelligent tadpoles reconcile themselves to the inconvenience of their position by reflecting that although most of them will live to be tadpoles and nothing more, the most fortunate of the species will one day shed their tails, distend their mouths and stomachs, hop nimbly on to dry land and croak addresses to their former friends on the virtue by which tadpoles of character and capacity can rise to be frogs (Tawney, 1961:108).

Scholars studying the persistence of the 'American Dream' narrative have described it as the 'Horatio Alger myth', referencing an author who popularised 'rags to riches' stories (Sarachek, 1978; Weiss, 1969).

The familiar 'rags to riches' story forms the dominant narrative of successful journalists working in the US, although researchers found that when these claims were scrutinised the journalists and editors were most often from elite social backgrounds (Hart, 1976). Indeed, journalists rarely come from working class backgrounds, and this has been exacerbated by the newsrooms' reliance on unpaid internships. However, the exclusion of working class voices in the newsroom was well established before this.[305,306,307]

Jones argues that journalists are 'hopelessly out of touch with ordinary life' because 'journalists have to pay for their own training' and 'the only people who

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[305] Sutton Trust (2006), The educational backgrounds of leading journalists, Sutton Trust, available from: http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/06/Journalists-backgrounds-final-report.pdf, accessed 26 January 2016.
[306] Gibson, O. (2006), Most leading journalists went to private schools, says study, *Guardian*, 15 June 2016.
[307] GraduateFog. (2013), Not posh? Good luck becoming a journalist, available from: http://graduatefog.co.uk/2013/2528/posh-good-luck-journalist/, accessed 5 October 2014.

can do that are those with financial support' (Jones, 2011:28). Other journalists, such as *Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee, have described how they live a 'gold-plated lifestyle' (Toynbee, 2003:2). A 2009 report from the Labour Party entitled *Unleashing Aspiration* found that 'journalism has become one of the most exclusive middle-class professions of the 21st century'.[308] Journalists from privileged backgrounds most often construct social stratification through a meritocratic ideology:

> [Pursuit of social status is] an open "contest" in which everyone has an equal chance of achieving high status. In this view, equal opportunity exists; thus, differences in achievement or income supposedly reflect differences in effort and ability rather than structural forces (Tyler & McGraw, 1986:120).

Echoing Hogarth, these ideas are reflected in the concept of the 'American Dream' which is bound up with notions of 'the pursuit of happiness' at an individual level. However, Zizek points out that even this concept masks structural inequality:

> Where did the somewhat awkward "pursuit of happiness" come from in this famous opening passage of the US Declaration of Independence? The origin of it is John Locke, who claimed that all men had the natural rights of life, liberty, and property — the latter was replaced by "the pursuit of happiness" during negotiations of the drafting of the Declaration, as a way to negate the black slaves' right to property (Zizek, 2008:466).

In the British context, scholars have found that successful entrepreneurs are described by newspapers in terms of 'metaphors and mythmaking' which bear 'little resemblance to reality' despite being published in 'respected' newspapers

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[308] Wintour, P. (2009), Student fees for those who live at home should be axed – report, *Guardian*, 19 July 2009.

such as the *Independent* (Nicholson & Anderson, 2005:168). At its most benign, 'rags to riches' is simply a formulaic biographical device that journalists use to tell stories about people's lives. One study examining the biographies of journalists called this way of telling stories a 'formulaic ritual' based on an ideological premise of 'rags to riches' (Russell, 1995:86).

However, this ideology also serves a more dangerous purpose. By linking poverty to a lack of success and to personal characteristics, it becomes easy to blame poverty on impoverished people themselves. By framing poverty from the perspective of wealthy and successful individuals, journalists mask the structural conditions which maintain poverty in Britain. Issues such as lack of suitable employment, low pay, lack of affordable housing and the high cost of food and heating affect the lives of millions of people in Britain. Their voices rarely appear in newspapers unless they become rich and successful celebrities, apparently through their individual skill and talent. This ideological construction of poverty has been evident for centuries with Hogarth's morality tale emerging again and again as the celebrities and entrepreneurs of the neoliberal-era share the biography of pious and industrious Francis Goodchild.

The ideological claim of these stories is simply that the rich deserve to be rich. Chapter Eight explored the ways that the news media frame welfare recipients as deserving to be poor: they are constructed as an 'underclass' with only themselves to blame for their poverty. Members of the 'underclass' invariably behave like Hogarth's villain, the lazy apprentice Tom Idle, and this way of framing the lifestyles of people living in poverty is commonly used by tabloid newspapers.

9.3. Tabloid framing of the 'underclass'

A clear class dimension emerged in news coverage of poverty at the beginning of the age of neoliberalism, with large sections of society criticised as an 'underclass'. The conservative press used the 'underclass' label as a highly malleable tool to describe 'jobless young men', 'single mothers', 'the unemployed', and 'delinquent youths' including 'young thugs' or 'teen yobs'.[309,310,311,312] The newspapers' use of the term 'underclass' repeatedly constructed welfare recipients as criminals, and there was also a class dimension to the way the term was used.

Tabloid journalists described the 'underclass' as 'feral', 'white chavs', 'chav types', 'thuggish', 'the great unwashed', 'freeloaders', 'scrounging on the dole', and 'pushing out their soon-to-be-feral offspring'.[313,314,315,316,317,318] According to some journalists and editors, members of the underclass were 'parasites', 'second- and third-generation scum',[319] the 'feral, the feckless and the freeloaders', and 'slappers – useless, ugly freeloaders'.[320] They were represented as living in 'chaotic families that loaf away their days on easy welfare benefits',[321] being 'irresponsible and useless',[322] 'depraved and sick', with voices

[309] Kelly, L. (2008), Knife ads can't cut it, *Sun*, 31 May 2008.
[310] Nelson, F. (2007), A Triple Blight that Curses us All, *News of the World*, 26 August 2007.
[311] Smith, I. D. (2007), Where gangs are the only family, *Daily Mail*, 24 August 2007.
[312] *Sun* (2010), Kid crime kings rise, *Sun*, 10 February 2010.
[313] Gaunt, J. (2008), Karen's in a class of her own, *Sun*, 18 April 2008.
[314] Glover, S. (2008), The Left claim 'chav' is a term of class hatred. Nonsense. It's today's tragic underclass they should be fighting for, *Daily Mail*, 17 July 2008.
[315] Mackenzie, K. (2007), Ramsay is my telly nightmare, *Sun*, 22 November 2007.
[316] Mackenzie, K. (2009), Stop teen yob abuse, *Sun*, 5 February 2009.
[317] *News of the World* (2008), Dignity in torment, *News of the World*, 20 January 2008.
[318] Platell, A. (2008), The joker who's brought back spite and envy, *Daily Mail*, 29 November 2008.
[319] Littlejohn, R. (2008), Land of the rising scum, *Daily Mail*, 14 November 2008.
[320] Gaunt, J. (2008), Karen's in a class of her own, *Sun*, 18 April 2008.
[321] *Sun* (2008), Betrayed again, *Sun*, 5 December 2008.
[322] Gaunt, J. (2008), More Shannons in Benefits R Us hell, *Sun*, 5 December 2008.

coming from the 'ugly mouths of the vile underclass'.[323] Articles claimed that, 'unemployment, drug addiction, underage sex, and truancy are an everyday way of life'. They were portrayed as 'feral' 'scroungers' who sleep 'in their stinking pits'.[324]

There was also a clear trope marking the underclass as a lazy group that 'refuse to work',[325] using vivid imagery with a clear dimension of class prejudice:

> welfare scrounging […] baby machines[326]

> a huge, idle underclass for whom work is a dirty word.[327]

> the feral, the feckless and the long-term useless [who] could breed with impunity. Usually after several cans of Stella while us hard working, tax-paying mugs picked up the bill.[328]

> a feckless underclass who don't work and lay slumped in front of the TV stuffing their faces with deep-fried lard.[329]

While developing a reputation for being lazy, the underclass were also accused of 'terrorising communities across Britain'. The link between individuals who commit criminal acts and the underclass was made repeatedly across the sample of news stories. Journalists described an underclass 'whose depravity goes so low, the extent of their evil often goes undetected'.[330]

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[323] Mackenzie, K. (2009), Stop teen yob abuse, *Sun*, 5 February 2009.
[324] Gaunt, J. (2009), Chaos? I can show you chaos, *Sun*, 22 May 2009.
[325] Gaunt, J. (2009), Chuck it in, Mandy, *Sun*, 13 March 2009.
[326] Shanahan, F. (2009), Slobs and nobs are cheating taxpayers, *Sun*, 4 August 2009.
[327] *Sun* (2009), Labour's lost it, *Sun*, 30 September 2009.
[328] Gaunt, J. (2009), EU boss: I can't Blair it, *Sun*, 2 October 2009.
[329] Kelly, L. (2010), They weighed 92st and were held as examples of a feckless underclass who lay in front of the TV stuffing their faces with deep-fried lard, *Sun*, 6 January 2010.
[330] Maxwell, M. (2009), Brandon mum still to blame, *Sun*, 11 March 2009.

The conflation between criminals and welfare recipients as members of an underclass allowed British tabloids to select specific cases to criminalise whole communities of benefit recipients. Adjectives such as 'feral', unacceptable if applied to almost any other social group, were openly used to blur the distinction between crime and welfare. In this discourse, tabloid newspapers described the unemployed or single mothers in the same terms they would use for a child murderer or an out-of-control wild animal:

> And that's what we have to address now – this underclass, this group of deviants who've been allowed to take root in this country and who kill, maim and torture without guilt. These are people who have sponged off the welfare state their whole lives and who believe nothing is their responsibility, their fault or their problem. For too long we've tap-danced around these people because of political correctness. The problem was too sensitive to talk about let alone handle. But handle it we must, because if we don't this underclass will become even more savage, more Feral – and more innocents will die.[331]

This link between crime and the underclass was made repeatedly. There were also claims that an overgenerous welfare system has led to a 'mushrooming underclass',[332] itself presented as a threat magnified by association with 'rampant violent crime'.[333] This followed the Malthusian rationale that charity towards the poor – welfare in this case – only perpetuates the problem. British tabloids tended to conclude that the most serious political challenge facing the UK is 'rooting out the persistent underclass'.[334] Indeed, the development of an 'underclass' was explicitly linked in these news stories to welfare provision: 'we only have an

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[331] Malone, C. (2008), Baby P: They're all guilty, *News of the World*, 16 November 2008.
[332] Smith, I. D. (2007), Where gangs are the only family, *Daily Mail*, 24 August 2007.
[333] Nelson, F. (2007), A triple blight that curses us all. *News of the World,* 26 August 2007.
[334] Blunkett, D. (2008), Boldness only way to victory, *Sun*, 9 January 2008.

underclass because we fund it with handouts'.[335] According to these news reports, the 'generous welfare payments', also referred to as 'the poverty trap', have led to a situation where 'billions more [are] spent, insanely, making benefits more lucrative than a pay cheque.[336]

The 'underclass' was presented as 'a problem we can no longer ignore because the future prosperity of this country relies on the ability of generations to come making a valuable contribution'.[337] Other articles brought back the notion of deserving and undeserving poor when they touched on unemployment:

> in a country where the dole figure has just passed 2.2 million […] scroungers can rot in their stinking pits, only stirring to pick up the next benefit cheque or breed the next member of the feral underclass.[338]

The conservative tabloid press have inverted this logic by blaming high unemployment on the personal characteristics of the 'underclass'. In so doing, they have created a narrative paradox where the 'underclass' problem exists because 'the unemployed have become the unemployable'.[339] Here the Malthusian paradigm is used to solve the paradox by highlighting the 'inferiority' of those receiving welfare: they are 'unemployable' because they are not fit, which leads to calls to curb their numbers. Indeed, one solution proposed by the tabloids was to present benefit claimants with a stark choice: 'sterilisation or no more benefits'.[340] In ideological terms this is directly Malthusian and related directly to a critique of the welfare state.

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[335] Editorial. (2009), Cut 'em off, *Sun*, 31 July 2009.
[336] *Sun* (2009), Labour's lost it, *Sun*, 30 September 2009.
[337] Monbiot, G. (2011), A register of journalists' interests would help readers to spot astroturfing, *Guardian*, 29 September 2011.
[338] Gaunt, J. (2009), Chaos? I can show you chaos, *Sun*, 22 May 2009.
[339] Hartley-Brewer, J. (2008), Let's be fair on welfare, *Sunday Express*, 14 December 2008.
[340] Shanahan, F., (2009), Slobs and nobs are cheating taxpayers. *Sun,* 4 August 2009.

For the tabloid press, the work ethic of the 'underclass' has been destroyed by an 'overdeveloped welfare state'[341] which threatens the whole nation:

> How much longer can we survive and prosper as a nation of bankers, lawyers, architects and theatrical designers, picking up the social bills for an unemployable underclass?[342]

Similar articles described a 'submerged underclass' of 'ill-educated, ill-disciplined, near illiterate and innumerate unemployables' who were portrayed as 'living better than the working families next door'.[343] These news stories individualised the issue of welfare by emphasising specific cases to make a wider point about welfare reform. The story of Karen Matthews[344] was a frequent example:

> Britain's benefits culture has spawned an underclass of kids brought up on welfare. They include evil mum-of-seven Karen Matthews, who was caged for eight years for kidnapping her daughter Shannon. She pocketed £350 a week.[345]

Benefit recipients were described in one article as being the 'Karen Matthews brigade',[346] and authorities were criticised for carrying out a 'Karen Matthews test' to 'skew resources further towards the underclass'.[347] Matthews was also described as a 'one-woman advertisement for urgent welfare reform'.[348] As 'part

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[341] O'Flynn, P. (2010), Why our European Union membership spells doom for welfare reform, *Daily Express*, 19 June 2010.

[342] O'Flynn, P. (2010), Why our European Union membership spells doom for welfare reform, *Daily Express*, 19 June 2010.

[343] *Daily Mail* (2008), White and Male? Go to the bottom of the class, *Daily Mail*, 8 June 2008.

[344] Karen Matthews was convicted of 'false imprisonment and perverting the course of justice' after being part of a conspiracy to kidnap her own daughter in February 2008. The case was widely reported in the media.

[345] Wilson, G. (2010), The shambles of our shameless, *Sun*, 7 October 2010.

[346] *Daily Express*. (2010), Brown's bid for middle class support is doomed, *Daily Express*, 18 January 2010.

[347] *Daily Express*. (2009), Middle Britain loses again, *Daily Express*, 14 January 2009.

[348] *Sun* (2009), Holding baby, *Sun*, 14 February 2009.

of the chav class',[349] her case reinforced historical notions of class hierarchy (Hayward & Yar, 2006:9), and one article portrayed Matthews as part of an 'underclass' who are able to 'get more by scrounging on the dole rather than working'.[350] Fraser Nelson from the *Sun* argued that the 'underclass' developed because 'Britain is rich enough to keep them on benefits'.[351]

A renewed focus on the 'underclass' emerged to explain the 'London Riots' of 2011, despite the government refusing to set up an inquiry into the events. Conservative MP Ken Clarke claimed that the riots were caused by the behaviour of a 'feral underclass'.[352] Television historian David Starkey proposed they happened because 'a substantial section of chavs […] have become black' (Biressi & Nunn, 2013:48). Research shows that this type of racialised explanation for poverty has dominated coverage of the topic in the US (Gilens, 1996a, 1996b). A range of commentators have also accepted the language of the 'underclass' although they linked the term to social exclusion. For Naomi Klein, the rioters were 'locked away in a ballooning underclass with the few escape routes previously offered – a union job, a good affordable education – being rapidly sealed off'.[353]

The key point made by these stories was that the 'underclass' exists only because they can withdraw money from the state; therefore their means of subsistence should be cut off in order to reduce their numbers. This Malthusian construction

[349] Gaunt, J. (2008), Karen's in a class of her own. *Sun,* 18 April 2008.
[350] Gaunt, J. (2008), Karen's in a class of her own. *Sun,* 18 April 2008.
[351] Nelson, F. (2007), A triple blight that curses us all. *News of the World,* 26 August 2007.
[352] Lewis, P., Taylor, J. & Ball, M. (2011), Kenneth Clarke blames English riots on a 'broken penal system', *Guardian,* 5 September 2011.
[353] Klein, N. (2011), Looting with the lights on, *Guardian,* 17 August 2011.

of poverty has persisted in British journalism for over 200 years (Harkins & Lugo-Ocando, 2015:11-12).

9.4. Inequality in the British press

At the start of this thesis, inequality was discussed as a topic rarely covered by the press, despite a growing body of literature outlining its corrosive impact in other fields. Therefore, it is important to highlight how few articles from the dataset linked poverty and inequality, and to examine these articles in more detail. Overall, the British press avoids writing about inequality and when they do, they adopt a range of strategies to avoid linking it to political solutions such as the redistribution of wealth (Harkins & Lugo-Ocando, 2016).

Outside of the newsroom, there is a widespread understanding that wealth inequality is damaging to society, although this analysis is not uncontested. It is supported by historians (Harvey, 2005a; Rosanvallon, 2013), geographers (Dorling & Regan, 2005), epidemiologists (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), economists (Chang, 2002, 2010; Krugman, 2008, 2012; Piketty, 2014; Stiglitz, 2012), and philosophers (Sandel, 2009, 2012), who regularly make the case against rising inequality. In recent decades, Britain has become less equal than a range of comparable nations (Savage, 2015:59), and in 2010 there were only four industrialised countries with greater income inequality than the UK: Chile, the United States, Portugal and Israel (Hills, 2015:27). However, instead of using this body of literature to contextualise their work, journalists have instead relied on a series of decontextualised (Bullock et al., 2001) representations of poverty which ignore structural inequality.

The persistence of inequality throughout the age of neoliberalism has proven problematic for the British press because of their reliance on individualised constructions of poverty. The thematic content analysis produced above identified 2,214 articles about poverty in the UK, and from this sample[354] only 48 articles had a main theme of inequality – 84% of which appeared in the two liberal newspapers, the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror.*

Newspaper	Number of inequality articles analysed
Guardian & *Observer*	29
Daily Mirror & *Sunday Mirror*	11
Daily Mail & *Mail on Sunday*	4
Times & *Sunday Times*	4
All newspapers	**48**

Table 12: Total articles analysed on the theme of inequality

It is clear from this split that the liberal press were much more likely than the conservative press to discuss inequality as an explanatory framework for poverty. These news stories were clearly underpinned by editorial policies constrained by ideology. An article in the *Times* explicitly rejected inequality as a suitable category for academics interested in reducing poverty:

> Seldom has there been such an outpouring of opinion on the concentration of wealth. We would, however, give more than a penny for the thoughts of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on whether the top 0.1 percent are an example to us all of the rewards of hard work, or are fit only for more taxation?[355]

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[354] Article sample 1.
[355] Ashworth, A. (2008), Poverty of Imagination in debate over Wealth inequality, *Times*, 18 January 2008.

One particularly interesting pattern was the way that inequality and poverty were presented using different types of 'journalism genres' – styles, fields or separate genres, in writing accounts of events, which readers have come to recognise (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002:81). The selection of particular genres allow journalists to introduce opinions into their work, for example 'hard news stories' and 'feature articles' are often associated with objectivity, while 'comment' and 'editorial' articles are linked to opinion. The split between 'objective' genres and 'opinion' genres was exactly 50% in the articles on inequality. However, opinion was mainly used in the liberal newspapers, while the *Times* had only one opinion piece on inequality in the period studied. The *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday*, on the other hand, only reported inequality as 'hard news'. The *Daily Mirror* showed a similarly skewed distribution, in which 90% of the articles dealing with inequality were presented as hard news stories.

The preference for 'hard news stories' must be interpreted within the wider notions of news cultures (Allan, 2004) and news values (Brighton & Foy, 2007). These often define not only the way news is gathered but also presented and disseminated to the public. At the centre of these two notions is objectivity as a 'norm' in journalism practice (Maras, 2013:226). The quest for objectivity means that journalists tend to opt for styles where they can put across narratives and stories in a way that seems neutral and balanced. In this context, journalists perform the 'strategic ritual' of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972:661) by moving within familiar frameworks when reporting news, and using quotations from others to reinforce their authority as impartial observers.

'Inequality' as an explanatory framework may be considered too ideological within some news organisations or by the key stakeholders that sustain the political economy of the newspapers. Equally important to the language used to report inequality is the ability to identify who says what.
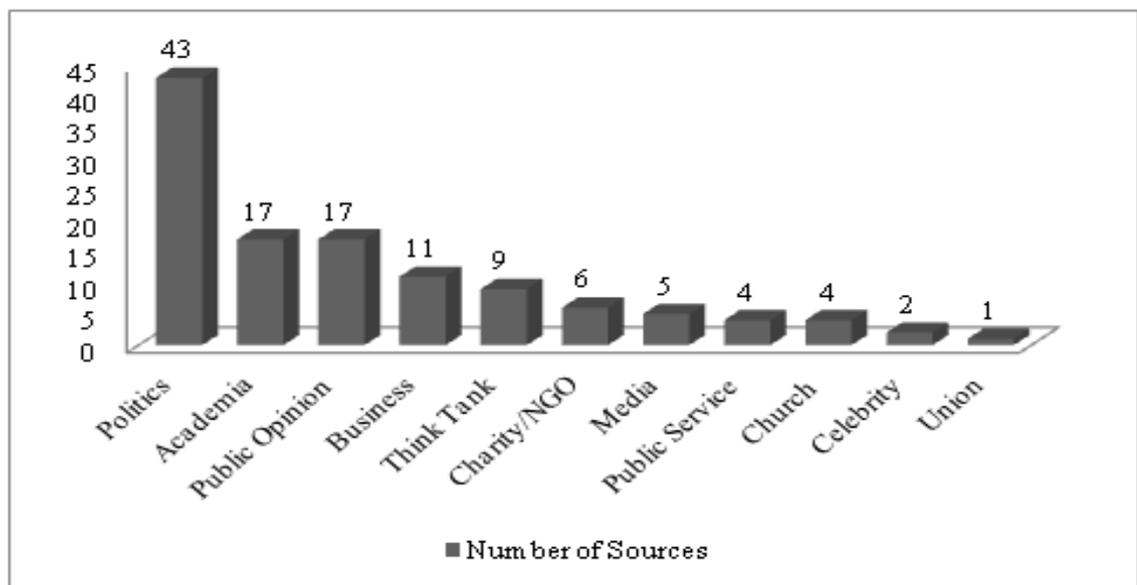

Figure 29: Sources used in articles about inequality

News sources are pivotal in articulating news content (Berkowitz & Beach, 1993; Lewis et al., 2008; Manning, 2001). Sources provide information about poverty and inequality which helps journalists to articulate meaning in their articles (Soley, 1992). Publishing quotations from sources is a 'conventional journalistic practice' which features in most newspaper articles (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001:278). In this context, the media have an important role in shaping how poverty is understood, and therefore news stories can have an impact on political responses to poverty (Redden, 2011:821; Sotirovic, 2001:766). Previous research on the role of the media has found that instead of challenging elite points of view, the media reflect the news from elite positions (Bourdieu, 1998b:70; van Dijk, 1991).

In the articles dealing with inequality, 119 different news sources were identified. Because the reporting of inequality was mostly carried out by liberal newspapers, the great majority of the sources were left-wing politicians, academics critical of the government's welfare policies, or members of the public who live in areas high on the British index of multiple deprivation.

The most commonly used type of source in stories about inequality came from the world of politics, with 43 politicians or spokespersons for political organisations. From this total, 18 were linked to the Labour party and quoted mostly in liberal newspapers. The next largest categories were academics and members of the public, with 17 quotations each, all in the liberal press. The *Times* quoted members of the public only in the context of very specific stories referring to the legacy of the London Olympics and the development of Canary Wharf. Think tanks and business people were also quoted, but this appeared mostly to provide 'balance' and offer alternative views to the main sources. In the context here, these mostly provided a counterbalance to the idea that inequality is corrosive to society.

The *Guardian* provided more articles on inequality than other papers, and also offered a wider choice in journalistic genres and more diversity in the nature of its news sources. It was also, with the *Daily Mirror,* one of the two titles that placed poverty within the framework of inequality:

> The signs are not promising, with a likely deterioration in the public finances over the next two years as the economy slows down making it inconceivable that the Treasury will find the extra £3.4bn needed to meet the pledge of halving the number of children living below the poverty line by 2010. Tackling child poverty is not a "sexy" issue and poor children

don't have powerful friends to lobby for them in the way that the CBI acts as the shop steward for non-doms. Last week, for example, Richard Lambert, director-general of the CBI, said the "rushed and confused" approach to taxing non-doms was damaging London's reputation as a global financial centre […] The reason the global financial markets have been suffering a collective nervous breakdown for the past eight months and caused what Rachel Lomax, deputy governor of the Bank of England, calls the world's "largest-ever peacetime liquidity crisis" is because the City's non-doms (many of them American) gorged themselves in a speculative frenzy without equal for its greed, stupidity, and recklessness in living memory. In the circumstances, a long period of silence from both the non-doms and the CBI would be welcome.[356]

Generally speaking, the British press tends to avoid the subject of inequality in news stories about poverty (Lugo-Ocando, 2015:2). However, inequality is mentioned far more often in other contexts: gender, race and even Scottish devolution for instance. The latter was brought up by the *Times* to argue that while Scotland contains some of the poorest areas in the UK, it also receives a disproportionate share of public money through the Barnett formula:

A decade on, the North-South divide, which characterised Scotland as a disadvantaged partner in the Union, has been reversed, according to a new study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. On every key measurement of poverty looked at for the report, Scotland now outperforms the rest of the UK and enjoys among the highest wage levels [...] The foundation says the improvements, reflecting wider economic trends and policies reserved to Westminster rather any dramatic performance by the Scottish parliament, will have been helped by Scotland's higher share of spending. While the findings are good news for Scots, they raise questions about whether the Barnett formula, which gives

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[356] Elliott, L. (2008), Poor children pay for non-doms' tax break, *Guardian*, 3 March 2008.

Scotland 20% more funding per head than England, can continue to be justified.[357]

The conservative press dismissed inequality as an explanatory framework for poverty, and it was often framed in a way that undermined it as a crucial factor in tackling poverty. One of the rhetorical strategies increasingly used by the conservative press and its news sources was the concept of the 'politics of envy' (Stiglitz, 2012:8). In an economic context, envy is often linked to post-industrial societies and closely associated with individual irrationality or limited rationality (Block, 1990:25). Take for example a report in the *Daily Mail* dealing with inequality and crime:

> A Scottish criminologist yesterday exploded the myth that poverty and deprivation are behind soaring post-war crime. Instead, he laid the blame firmly on the breakdown of family values, envy and an emphasis on equal opportunities which have led young people to expect more than they are capable of earning. Professor David Smith said rising crime levels throughout Europe, including Scotland, had their roots in a rich society and not in poverty. He said people envious of everyday objects of wealth, such as expensive cars, accounted for much of the rising levels of vehicle theft. […] It is the norm for bishops, sociologists, Eurocrats and politicians to assume growing crime is the consequence of inequality, poverty, deprivation or social exclusion.[358]

'Envy' is often used by the media to dismiss any structural explanation for poverty, preventing further discussion by assigning an irrational motivation to those who highlight inequality. The narrative of envy also reinforces the 'othering' of those living in poverty. By reducing the motivations of others to 'envy', news narratives

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[357] Allardyce, J. & Belgutay, J. (2010), North South Divide: The poverty gap between Scotland and England remains, but guess which is richer, *Times*, 10 January 2010.
[358] Walker, A. (1996), Envy and inequality not poverty, are the root of all crime: Professor blames the breakdown of family values for rising figures, *Daily Mail*, 19 September 1996.

attempt to invalidate the argument that inequality is a social problem. Spurr traces this rhetorical strategy to colonial times, and points out that it is now often used by newspapers such as *Le Monde* in France to discuss 'avid' consumption in China, highlighting 'a feeling of envy on the part of the have-nots' (Spurr, 1993:86). Anthropologists have referred to the 'discourse of desire and envy' as part of the capitalist ethos that drives the corporatization of public life (Kapferer, 2005:285). If desire and envy explain the almost incessant and irrational drive to accumulate wealth at the top, then it would seem logical to attribute similar irrationality to those at the bottom.

This is problematic in the UK because poverty is measured in relative terms: poverty statistics are based on measures of inequality. The politically contested nature of news coverage of poverty is highlighted by the way that newspapers deal with the concept of 'relative poverty'. All poverty is relative to some extent (Lister, 2004), and the UK Government's targets to alleviate poverty are calculated using a relative measurement: people below 60% of median income are classified as living in poverty. However, there is a clear political split within the British press on whether this concept is acceptable or not. Conservative newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* question the use of relative poverty as a measure:

> If the median income in a country rises, so do the number of people who appear to be in poverty. Conversely, if everyone is poor, but median incomes are low, it will suggest fewer people in poverty.[359]

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[359] *Daily Mail* (2014), UNICEF and its flawed formula, *Daily Mail*, 29 October 2014.

The way that poverty is measured is rarely explained in British national newspapers. Particularly amongst tabloid publications, this is because their output is designed to be 'clearly understandable' (Örnebring & Jönsson, 2004:287), but some articles in the quality press do make an attempt to explain the concept of relative poverty. One example from the *Guardian* explains how relative poverty relates to the government's target to reduce child poverty:

> A child is considered to be in relative poverty if he or she lives in a household whose income is below 60% of the average in that year, and in absolute poverty if he or she lives in a household whose real-terms income is below 60% of the 2010-11 average – a period set as a benchmark in this year's Child Poverty Act.[360]

This way of explaining relative poverty emphasises a strategy of focussing on numbers and avoiding discussing causes of, or solutions to, poverty (Redden, 2014:34). However, there is also an attempt by the *Guardian* to engage in the 'strategic ritual' (Tuchman, 1972) of objectivity, by including testimonies from government officials who refute the measurements and focus on 'the root causes of poverty' which include 'worklessness, educational failure, and family breakdown'.[361] This type of framing, based on the notion of 'objectivity', stands in stark contrast to how the issue is reported in the *Daily Mail*:

> The sacred agenda of equality […] is nothing other than the politics of envy and spite. The concept of relative poverty was invented to serve that agenda. By setting the poverty benchmark as a proportion of average wealth, "relative poverty" magics up increasing numbers of people deemed to be poor as society becomes ever richer.[362]

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[360] Ramesh, R. (2013), One in four UK children will be living in poverty by 2020, says thinktank, *Guardian*, 7 May 2013.
[361] *Op. cit.*
[362] Phillips, M. (2007), Sorry Dave, but who in their right mind would want Blue Labour, *Daily Mail,* 27 November 2006.

This rejection of relative poverty is an explicit rejection of arguments to reduce inequality. However, the small number of articles on inequality and poverty identified here suggests that the British press tend to ignore the issue. Similar studies of the media in the United States have described how the news media tend to legitimise economic inequality (Kendall, 2005). By ignoring or explaining away inequality, newspapers draw attention away from the large increase that has taken place in recent decades (Piketty 2014).

During the 2007-08 economic crash, wealthy individuals and corporations used offshore tax havens to avoid £20,000 million a year in tax payments (Davies, 2009a:37). The richest 1% has become so wealthy that they can transcend national boundaries and legal frameworks by developing into a 'transnational capitalist class' (Sklair 2001). Krugman argues that the collapse of socialism has eliminated any credible opposition to capitalism and invoked tacit acceptance of the 'unpleasant aspects' of our political and economic system such as inequality, unemployment, and injustice which are 'accepted as facts of life' (Krugman 2009:14).

Throughout the neoliberal time frame there has been a growing body of research on the corrosive effects of inequality in the UK (Dorling, 2011a; Dorling & Regan, 2005; Lansley, 2012; Mount, 2010; Smith et al., 2001; Stiglitz, 2012; Wilkinson & Marmot, 2006; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). In 2007, a *British Medical Journal* study found that the health gap between rich and poor in the UK was at its greatest since Victorian times (Thomas et al., 2010). Researchers have linked inequality to a range of social problems like mental illness, reduced life

expectancy, infant mortality, obesity, poor educational performance, teenage births, homicides, imprisonment rates and low social mobility (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Despite mounting evidence of inequality and social injustice, the news media have rarely covered these aspects as a news story (Davies, 2009a:37) and the data collected in this chapter support this contention.

10. Conclusion

This concluding chapter draws together the overall findings of the thesis and reflects on the process and outcomes of the research, including the limitations of the study. The chapter also re-affirms the specific contribution that this thesis makes and considers future directions for research on the basis of these findings.

At the outset, the thesis aimed to provide a better understanding of why news coverage of poverty and welfare takes the shape that it does. It placed the neoliberal era within a historical context, suggesting that longstanding historical notions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor have been perpetuated by the press since the creation of journalism in Britain. The thesis addressed five overarching questions within the overall context of neoliberalism:

1.) How has news coverage of poverty represented the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor?
2.) How have changing periods of governance affected news coverage of poverty?
3.) What sources do journalists use to construct news stories about people experiencing poverty?
4.) How have changing periods of governance affected news coverage of the welfare state?
5.) What is the role of ideology in shaping news coverage of poverty and welfare?

Each of these questions is answered in detail in the following section, which also refers back to the theoretical and methodological approach adopted throughout this thesis.

10.1. How has news coverage of poverty represented the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor?

The original phase of data analysis undertaken for this project was anchored around the search term 'poverty'. The findings of this exercise were not typical of previous studies in this area, which have predominantly focussed on the news media's critical treatment of the 'undeserving' poor. Analysis suggests that the difference emerged because other studies were anchored around news coverage of 'welfare'. Therefore, poverty and welfare are tied to distinctive news genres, with poverty more closely linked with constructions of 'deserving' groups and welfare with constructions of 'undeserving' groups.

The thesis highlights the central distortion at the heart of this binary system adopted by the press. 'Deserving' groups (children, pensioners, people with disabilities) are removed from discussions about welfare, even though a large majority of welfare expenditure goes to these groups. Meanwhile, the groups deemed 'undeserving' (unemployed people, immigrants, single mothers, the 'underclass') by the press receive very little in terms of overall welfare expenditure.

On a micro level, the separation of single mothers as an 'undeserving' group from their children as a 'deserving' group reflects the contradiction at the base of these distinctions. Reducing child poverty is generally reported by the British press as a worthy goal, but the single mothers who care for many of those children are framed as 'deviant' and dangerous to wider society. These contradictions also

exist on a macro level. The binary distinction that marks out welfare recipients as 'undeserving' does not stand up to critical scrutiny at a population level:

> If we continue to think about policy as if all its benefits, costs and problems affect a group of "other" people, we will make choices that fail to meet our own interests, even if we never expect to be out of work or face sickness or disability ourselves (Hills, 2015:367).

Hills's most recent research presented a rigorous analysis of welfare expenditure in the United Kingdom:

> Most of us get back something at least close to what we pay in over our lives towards the welfare state' (Hills, 2015:368). Furthermore, the study concludes that: […] When we pay in more than we get out, we are helping our parents, our children, ourselves at another time – and ourselves as we might have been, if life had not turned out quite so well for us. In that sense, we are all – or nearly all – in it together (Hills, 2015:368).

The term 'nearly' is interesting in this context, because this outline does not apply to a very wealthy minority of citizens who will never need to use the services offered by the welfare state. Contemporary political movements have mobilised around the injustice of great wealth being concentrated in very few hands (Dorling, 2014).

This can be linked directly to the persistence of poverty: 'the reason why so many have so little is because so few have accumulated so much' (Lugo-Ocando, 2015:4). When this explanation is removed from discussions about poverty and welfare, it becomes necessary to find someone else to blame for the persistence

of poverty in a contemporary setting where there is so much wealth. This thesis supports the work of others in this area who have argued that the British press actively mask structural failures in the economy (Franklin, 1999; Golding & Middleton, 1982).

To answer the first research question, longstanding distinctions between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor have been redrawn by the British press, linking poverty to 'deservingness' and welfare to 'undeservingness'. The theoretical approach outlined in Chapter Three examined the British press as operating within a framework of hegemony, and the news articles critical of welfare recipients support this perspective.

In the data presented here, the demonisation of 'undeserving' welfare recipients provides evidence of the British press misrepresenting poverty and reporting from the perspective of those with power and wealth. However, the analysis also shows that the British press link poverty to notions of 'deservingness' in news articles about pensioners and children who experience hardship. This suggests that the press sometimes fulfil their normative role by advocating on behalf of these groups, an idea explored in more detail in response to the second research question.

10.2. How have changing periods of governance affected news coverage of poverty?

This thesis has offered a critical account of the normative claims that the press act as a 'fourth estate'. In this respect, the project reinforces a large body of

academic research disputing the idealistic claims that the press either hold power to account or provide a platform for minority views (Lewis et al., 2008; Petley, 2009). Nevertheless, one of the critical questions in this area was why poverty would appear as a news item at all within the context of a commercialised press with no responsibility to act as a 'fourth estate'.

The analysis suggests that poverty and coverage of the 'deserving' poor feature in the news because they link to a wider set of news practices rooted in the mediation of the political sphere. Supporting this contention, the most dominant theme that emerged from the content analysis exercise was news coverage of politics, although news coverage of 'deserving' demographics such as children and old age pensioners was also very prominent. This is significant because it shows that these issues are essentially newsworthy because of news gathering practices rooted in the mediation of parliamentary politics.

This thesis has found that news coverage of poverty and politics are intertwined. The evidence presented here shows that the mediation of poverty is closely linked to party political debates at the UK Parliamentary level. The press most often discuss these debates from the perspective of officials working in party politics – an inversion of the normative claims that they provide a 'voice to the voiceless' or 'speak truth to power'. Indeed, the voices of those affected by poverty are almost entirely excluded from these political discussions. Furthermore, over the last thirty years there has been a reduction in the number of news articles using academic or expert work on the subject of poverty as a primary source.

The analysis was based on the 'indexing hypothesis' which suggests that news coverage is framed in a set of narrow parameters defined by actors within party politics. This hypothesis is strongly supported by the evidence presented here which shows that the British press predominantly reflect the policy proposals of the main political parties in an uncritical way. For example, the Labour Party made poverty a key election issue in their two heavy electoral defeats in 1983 and 1987. As they began to pursue a strategy based on maximising votes, their commitment to tackling poverty faded.

The analysis presented here shows that this coincided with a demonstrable drop in news coverage of poverty, despite high levels of poverty-related social problems such as increasing unemployment and homelessness. The link between the news agenda and political campaigning was clearly emphasised again when the Labour Party made a commitment to alleviate child poverty as a key pledge after winning power in 1997. The child poverty targets set by the Labour Party existed as an important part of the political landscape in Britain and therefore continued to receive news coverage beyond this period.

These examples of poverty as a key part of the news agenda suggest that when there is a political impetus to alleviate poverty, it receives greater coverage as a news item. This demonstrates that the press operates with considerations more complex than those associated with the free market and neoliberalism alone. Social policy appears to be newsworthy for as long as it remains part of the parliamentary party political agenda.

Nevertheless, over the last thirty years the British press, particularly the five conservative newspapers, have constructed poverty largely within a framework that emerged from the arguments of the New Right in the 1980s, diminishing structural explanations and focussing on individual behaviour. This is problematic because research has demonstrated a link between portrayals of poverty and political action on the subject (Clawson & Trice, 2000:61).

What is missing here from the liberal press is a more accurate way of representing structural issues related to poverty. For example, there is little emphasis of the role that more stringent tax collection or wealth redistribution could play in alleviating poverty and reducing inequality. Instead, the terms of the debate are set within an extremely narrow set of parameters which limit the possible options for tackling poverty. The press also questions the existence of relative poverty in a way that undermines efforts to tackle it as a social problem.

For the conservative press, the only acceptable solutions to poverty are tax cuts for the richest citizens and welfare cuts as an incentive to make poor people work harder. Much of the news agenda around poverty has responded to this New Right agenda, and many of its premises are accepted by the liberal press. However, New Labour's child poverty proposals stand out as an exception to the rule. In the climate of neoliberalism, New Labour successfully pursued a policy agenda which extended the welfare state to reduce child poverty, albeit as part of a programme which made cuts in other areas. But these proposals were initially supported by even the most conservative newspapers, such as the *Daily Mail*. This demonstrates how the press reflect power rather than representing wider society.

Overall there is a clear link between the sitting government's agenda and news coverage of poverty. This supports the 'indexing hypothesis' (Bennett, 1990) that news coverage closely follows the contours of elite debate. It also supports the theoretical approach that rejects normative claims about the role of the press as a 'fourth estate'. Instead, the news media are more accurately understood as a conduit for elite opinion, with some flexibility around which elite views are reflected.

The findings of this study show that officials from UK parliamentary politics dominate and set the terms of the debate on poverty, even to the extent that definitions of poverty are accepted or rejected at this level. There is also evidence of social exclusion presented here, where the British press exclude people experiencing poverty form debates on the subject. Overall, this suggests that anti-poverty campaigners' lobbying efforts are best directed at policy makers rather than attempting to influence the media directly.

Changing periods of governance in the UK have affected news coverage of poverty. However, the narrow parameters of parliamentary debate on poverty are very limited. Both major parties in the UK accept that public spending needs to be reduced. Wealth redistribution or higher rates of taxation are rarely presented as potential solutions to poverty. The British press rarely report perspectives from academics or pressure groups who would undermine the narrow premise of parliamentary debate on poverty. Much of the narrowing of this debate is caused by news practices which dictate the selection of 'frame sponsors' in the news.

10.3. What sources do journalists use to construct news stories about people experiencing poverty?

This thesis presented a rigorous and systematic analysis of news sources used in articles about two contemporary manifestations of poverty. Normative claims about the 'fourth estate' role of the press emphasise their role in providing a 'voice to the voiceless', but in practice these claims rarely stand up to scrutiny. However, this leaves the 'sociologically concrete' question of who speaks most often on poverty unanswered (Berger & Luckmann, 1991:135). Therefore the 'frame sponsors' used to construct articles about food poverty and fuel poverty were examined in detail in this thesis. The results reflected other studies showing that political actors dominate news coverage of poverty. This was true in the case of both food poverty and fuel poverty. However, there was a notable increase in sources from the energy industry in the case of fuel poverty.

Overall, the landscape of news sources reveals institutionalised social exclusion. The subjects of news articles about poverty are routinely excluded from news stories about their lives. This supports the indexing hypothesis that was used to examine the relationship between poverty and politics. One of the most unexpected findings that emerged from this analysis was the similar pattern of news source selection across both conservative and liberal platforms. Although the liberal press gave more column inches to personal accounts of poverty, coverage in both liberal and conservative papers was dominated by voices from politics and business. People experiencing poverty were largely excluded.

This exclusion may be rooted, in part, in the practical considerations of newsgathering under pressure. Previous research has shown that the press often reflect the news from the perspective of elite actors because they are best placed to provide expert public relations material (Lewis et al., 2008). These resources are clearly not available to people living in poverty. Nevertheless, this provides only a partial explanation for the exclusion. 'Frame sponsors' are selected by the press and their testimonies are placed within a specific set of ideological narratives which are framed in a particular way.

10.4. How have changing periods of governance affected news coverage of the welfare state?

This thesis has found that the most common way of framing the welfare state in the age of neoliberalism has been as no longer affordable. As found in other research, the periodic crashes and recessions of contemporary deregulated neoliberal capitalism have been recast by politicians and newspapers as caused by overspending on social programmes, rather than as products of neoliberalism or 'crises of capitalism' (Golding & Middleton, 1982:48; Katz, 1990). Throughout an extended period of neoliberal governance and attempts to 'roll back' the state, there has been an increase in social and economic inequality in Britain, which has exacerbated a wide range of social problems (Gans, 1995; Thomas et al., 2010; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). This has occurred in the context of widening social inequality.

In this context, the welfare state has been framed in a way that builds on the 'moral panic' of casting welfare recipients as 'folk devils'. This narrative has been

evident since the contractions in public spending in the mid-1970s. Periods of financial crisis have facilitated the expansion of the neoliberal concept that poverty is caused by individual behaviour. These framing has been used by the media to construct a narrative questioning the citizenship of groups receiving welfare, including the unemployed, single mothers, asylum seekers and people with disabilities. These media campaigns have coincided with research showing that public attitudes to poverty and welfare have hardened (Clery et al., 2013).

In contemporary political and media narratives, citizenship is based on an individual's usefulness to the market (Katz, 1990:7), justifying cuts and sanctions which result in the social exclusion of those who are not 'useful'. This reinforces the discussion about 'us' and 'them' which forms part of the analytical approach of the thesis. Although there is not enough evidence to establish a causal link here, it is notable that in times of economic crisis and high unemployment the news media focus their attention on domestic welfare recipients such as lone parents and the unemployed, usually 'able-bodied' men.

In the latest global recession, disabled people, who had previously been constructed as 'deserving', were criticised as forming part of a welfare burden. In times of economic recovery and lower unemployment, the media focus their attention on issues related to immigration, suggesting that economic performance might have an impact on which demographics are considered to be 'outsiders'.

10.5. What is the role of ideology in shaping news coverage of poverty and welfare?

Poverty and welfare have been reported in terms of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' individuals for centuries. By examining discourses of poverty from a historical perspective, this thesis has found that British press coverage of poverty in the age of neoliberalism draws on an ideological system that emerged from the industrial revolution. This ideological system, captured vividly by William Hogarth, was consolidated in the Victorian era through Malthusianism and social Darwinism. The thirty year period between 1945 and 1975 marked an exception to the rule of dominant individualism, and was characterised by a form of collectivism that allowed for the creation of the welfare state. This period ended with the advent of neoliberalism and news coverage of poverty in the British press has been filtered through a remarkably consistent set of ideological tropes in the last three decades.

The outlook on ideology in this thesis borrows heavily from the concept of cultural hegemony: the ideological framework used by the British press to write about poverty and welfare reflects these issues from the perspective of elite social actors. For example, wealthy celebrities and successful businesspeople are often the subject of articles which focus on poverty as a biographical feature of their past. These articles adopt a 'rags to riches' narrative which explains how these individuals have transcended poverty through individual skills and talents. This allows the press to cast the 'deserving' poor as a demographic that existed in the past.

'Rags to riches' narratives are juxtaposed with contemporary framing of the 'undeserving' poor, who are constructed in extremely harsh terms by the conservative tabloid press. As discussed previously, reliance on the welfare state

marks specific demographics out as 'undeserving'. By framing welfare recipients as 'scroungers', 'cheats', and the 'underclass', the British press construct welfare recipients as the problem rather than as victims of social conditions such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, poor availability of housing and a lack of educational opportunities.

News coverage of the 'underclass' is best understood through the concept of hegemony. This reinforces the work of other scholars who have argued that 'the underclass is the ideology of the upper class' (Bagguley & Mann, 1992:125). This juxtaposition of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor reflects Hogarth's prints in the 18th century. Constructing poverty as an issue affecting individuals and specific groups, journalists disguise the collective risk that poverty poses to a wide range of people throughout society. In order to maintain this framing consistently, the press are required to ignore economic inequality because it undermines individualistic and behavioural explanations for poverty (Harkins & Lugo-Ocando, 2016).

10.6. Why does news coverage of poverty and welfare take this shape?

Overall, this thesis has found that the British press frame poverty and welfare from the perspective of wealthy and powerful individuals. This is particularly true when it comes to reporting in the political arena where they are largely supportive of the government of the day. The British press also misrepresent poverty and welfare by focussing on the stories of individuals and small groups, often in a sensationalistic way. The constraints of the newsroom itself help to explain this imbalance:

The dominance of news norms such as the demand for facticity, newness, the compressed news format, and the tendency to personalise stories to engage readers (Redden, 2014:138).

Nevertheless, the extent of the misrepresentation of poverty and welfare suggests more deep rooted reasons for the nature of this news coverage. The phrase 'neoliberal imagination' describes the way that the press invert C. Wright Mills's formula by reframing 'public issues' as 'personal troubles'. The wider public issue in this case has been best outlined by Zygmunt Bauman who explains that the emergence of neoliberalism was fundamentally about the utility of the welfare state:

Considering the double (economic and political) task that industrial employment performed, the welfare state, in meaning to make the idle work again, was under the circumstances a sound, profitable investment. But no longer. Making everybody a producer is neither feasible nor seems to be imperative. What used to be a sensible investment now looks more and more like a wrong-headed idea, an unjustifiable waste of taxpayers' money (Bauman, 2005:113).

In this context, it is not only the practices of the British press that determine how they cover poverty and welfare. In the contemporary climate, the idea of full employment looks positively utopian. Social policy proposals that diverge from cutting taxes at the top and welfare at the bottom of society remain likely to be treated with outright hostility by the press. Nevertheless, there is evidence here that the press follow the dominant political agenda to a large extent.

As in other areas, British journalism experienced a shift from an individualist to collectivist ideology between 1945 and 1975. The shift towards collectivism

coincided with an unprecedented period of 'welfare consensus' that emerged from a perfect storm of events and abnormally high economic growth which is unlikely to be replicated (Piketty, 2014). During this 'golden age' of capitalism following the Second World War, some newspapers supported the concept of a welfare state. Nevertheless, the British press operate within a commercialised environment which acts as a filter for radical narratives. Although there are differences between the liberal and conservative press in Britain, within certain limits both sides share a high degree of deference to whichever party forms the government at any given time.

Poverty as a news item is largely relayed by the press through reporting official government policy. When policies have had damaging effects on the poorest members of society, the press have joined politicians in blaming the victims policy failures for their own misfortune. People living in poverty are largely excluded from these news articles.

Broadly speaking, news coverage of poverty in the age of neoliberalism represents a continuation of the long history of the British press as a conduit for elite ideas. What is different about this era is that longstanding criticisms of the 'undeserving' poor have been specifically mapped to welfare recipients. This research shows how the news media are responding to an increasingly consumerist society by constructing news from the perspectives of society's more affluent members.

10.7. Limitations of the study

This thesis has been limited by some practical considerations. For example, the Nexis UK press database does not contain full records for every British newspaper. Indeed, only the *Guardian* and the *Times* contain a comprehensive longitudinal dataset for the time period covered by this thesis. Working with digital archives also changes the relationship between the researcher and the news texts. By not examining archived copies of the selected newspapers, contextual information could potentially be missed. For example, contrasting news articles might be juxtaposed in the same page-spread, which would not be picked up through a digital analysis. Images are also missing from the Nexis UK database.

The historical outline presented in the literature review was produced by using press databases alongside a wide range of academic texts. One recommendation that springs from this is for a comprehensive analysis of news coverage of poverty in the 'age of collectivism' between 1945 and 1975. This represents a hugely under-researched area but emerging digital archives will allow this period to be studied in much greater detail.

The thesis focussed heavily on analysing news texts and stopped short of interviewing journalists or news audiences. Investigating these two areas would give a far greater understanding of the agency of journalists, the pressures and constraints under which they work, and how constructions of poverty are received and understood by audiences. While these approaches would have been interesting compliments to the research they would have required a scaling back of the core news text analysis.

The results of the sampling method also warrant more detailed discussion. Chapter Five was based around the search term 'poverty', but looking at headline mentions might have removed a large number of articles salient to the discussion. Likewise, the sampling for Chapter Six used the same technique with the terms 'welfare state', and Chapter Seven used 'food poverty' and 'fuel poverty'. This sampling technique was employed in order to reduce a large dataset to a manageable number of articles.

Part of this study's originality is the discussion poverty and welfare coverage over three decades. The sampling technique was necessary to make the scale of the study manageable, although it potentially omitted relevant articles from the discussion. The method was a conscious choice because employing a more open sampling technique would have meant reducing the timescale and scope of the research study, and this timescale was an important part of the contribution of the thesis.

10.8. Contribution to knowledge

The contribution of this thesis lies in the longitudinal approach of presenting empirical research across a thirty-year period. Poverty and welfare in the news have not been studied in this manner before, as most studies have focussed on specific manifestations of poverty. This approach allows for insights which trace the development of news framing of poverty and welfare along a timeline which is contextualised through an examination of the broader social, political and economic contexts within which this news coverage is produced.

10.9. Future research

This research has opened up a number of areas worthy of consideration for future research. The historical outline used to contextualise the neoliberal period is worthy of some detailed consideration. An examination of the ways that news coverage of poverty reflects or challenges previous research on the nature of the radical press (Chalaby, 1998; Conboy, 2004; Hampton, 2005; Hollis, 1970; Steel, 2009) would be a useful project to undertake. News coverage of poverty throughout the 'golden age' of capitalism is also worth examining in more detail, and would allow a greater understanding of the extent to which the press accepted the core assumptions of the Keynes/Beveridge era.

Another recurring theme in this project which requires further examination is the Transatlantic link between intellectuals in the United States and Britain in forging particular understandings of poverty and welfare. For example, the work of Charles Murray appears to be far more influential in both countries than other scholars working in the same area. Finally, the agency of both journalists and audiences must be examined to better understand the process of creating news about poverty, and its effect in shaping public attitudes. This type of research would move beyond the boundaries of print journalism to examine a wider range of media representations. This thesis provides a starting point for embarking on a series of further research projects on poverty and welfare.

Appendix A. Coding Frame

Article Headline: _____

Newspaper/ Date/Article ID: _____

Byline: _____

Geographical Details			
Poverty in the United Kingdom		Global Poverty (No Country Specified)	
Poverty Overseas (Country Specified)			

Main Category/Secondary Category/Third Category

Politics

Child Poverty

Elderly People in Poverty

Fuel Poverty

Welfare Reform

Rising Poverty

Poverty and Public Health

Crime and the Underclass

Low Pay (Working Poor)

Food Poverty and Hunger

Poverty in Popular Culture

Rags to Riches Tales

Poverty and Inequality

Extent of Poverty is Exaggerated

Poverty and Single Parents

Poverty and the Church

Cost of Living Crisis

Critique of the Poverty Industry

Housing and Homelessness

Charity Campaigns

Poverty in History

Poverty and Disability

Poverty and the Royal Family

Unemployment

Rural Poverty

Poverty and Education

Poverty and Recession

Poverty and Race

Poverty and Gender

Poverty amongst Students

Celebrity Campaigns

First Hand Accounts of Poverty

Poverty Rates Falling

Soldiers in Poverty

Urban Poverty

Poverty and Capitalism as Solution

Poverty and Public Attitudes

Trade Union Campaigns and Poverty

Poverty and Asylum

Poverty and Journalism

Poverty amongst Teenagers

Poverty and Capitalism as Problem

Academic Research

Happiness

Poverty Amongst Farmers

Poverty and Prostitution

Notes

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