

<p>Institution: Glasgow Caledonian University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 22 Social Policy and Social Work</p>
<p>Title of case study: Poverty - Challenging Perceptions and Informing Practice</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact GCU research into media coverage and public perceptions of poverty, and measures to tackle poverty has had an impact on policy making, policy content and the public discourse of poverty. Deprived communities have been the primary beneficiaries of this impact, e.g. GCU research helped secure pledges from all the main Scottish political parties to avoid stigmatising and socially divisive language in discussing poverty. Secondary beneficiaries have been campaigning organisations whose media engagement strategies have improved. Finally, GCU poverty research has informed the Scottish Government’s Child Poverty Strategy and the child poverty measures of Community Planning Partnerships.</p> <p>2. Underpinning research These impacts have been achieved through two related research projects and an associated body of policy commentary, community engagement and knowledge exchange activity.</p> <p>The specific research projects are: (i) <i>The Media, Poverty and Public Opinion in the UK</i> (2007/08) - funded by a £59,725 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) grant; (ii) <i>Tackling Child Poverty Locally</i> (2010/11) - a £50,655 research and consultancy project funded by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration (SCR).</p> <p>The JRF project involved a team of five GCU staff: Dr. Stephen Sinclair, Dr John Mckendrick, Professor Gill Scott and Louise Dobbie from Social Sciences, and Professor Hugh O’Donnell and Dr. Anthea Irwin from Media and Journalism (2009a; 2009b). Dobbie and Irwin have subsequently left GCU (<u>June 2010 and January 2013</u>). Scott retired from GCU in October 2007 but has an emerita role. This mixed methods project involved five integrated activities: content analysis of 640 poverty reports in UK news media; a Critical Discourse Analysis of six poverty-related reports from a range of UK newspapers; Foucauldian analysis of representations of poverty in over 40 hours of UK television drama (soap operas), and 10 hours of ‘reality’ television programmes; nine interviews with key individuals involved in the production of poverty-related news; and six focus groups conducted across Britain to explore public responses to media representations of poverty. The project was part of the JRF’s Public Interest in Poverty Issues (PIPI) programme.</p> <p>This project found that poverty was not itself a prominent item in news reporting: 43% of references to poverty were merely incidental to the main item covered; poverty was often associated with more ‘news worthy’ issues (such as political conflict, crime, etc.). Coverage was more likely to refer to poverty in the developing world (54% of stories) than in the UK (46%). Those directly experiencing poverty featured in only one in eight reports. Many reports portrayed those experiencing poverty as passive victims, even if coverage was generally sympathetic. Realistic representations of poverty were largely absent from contemporary dramas and few documentaries contributed to improved public understanding of the causes or experience of poverty. In these respects the project reflected upon and updated some findings from Golding and Middleton’s <i>Images Of Welfare</i> project from almost 30 years earlier. The project also went beyond this to analyse the production of poverty reporting and audience reception. Lessons from the former have informed the media engagement strategies of third sector and campaigning organisations (see section 4 below). Findings from the latter have cast additional light on the nature of media ‘influence’ upon public perceptions of poverty.</p> <p>The <i>Tackling Child Poverty Locally</i> (2011; 2012) project involved original research and secondary data analysis to develop an integrated body of training resources, stakeholder dialogue events and advice workshops for both national policy makers and local public sector practitioners in Scotland. This included developing an online child poverty toolkit and producing Briefing Papers and Action Learning Sets to assist local practitioners to prepare and implement child poverty strategies. These</p>

informed the work of the Employability and Tackling Poverty Learning Network (ETPLN).

3. References to the research

The key output from the JRF Media project is the report

1. M^cKendrick, J.H. Sinclair, S, Irwin, A, O'Donnell, H, Scott, G. and Dobbie, L. (2008) *Media, Poverty and Public Opinion in the UK*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Other relevant outputs from both projects include the following publications:

2. M^cKendrick, J.H. **Mooney, G, Dickie, J. and Kelly, P** (eds.). *Poverty in Scotland 2011: Towards a More Equal Scotland*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.
3. Sinclair, S. and M^cKendrick, J.H (2010). 'From Social Inclusion to Solidarity: Anti-Poverty Strategies under Devolution' in Mooney, G. and Scott, G. (eds.). *Social Justice and Social Welfare in Contemporary Scotland*. Bristol: Policy Press
4. M^cKendrick, J.H (2010). *Writing and Talking About Poverty*. Scottish Centre for Regeneration Briefing Paper 23 - http://www.employabilityinScotland.com/media/96641/writing_and_talking_about_poverty.pdf
5. Sinclair, S, M^cKendrick, J.H. and Kelly, P. (2009a). 'Taking the High Road? Media and Public Attitudes toward Poverty in Scotland'. *Scottish Affairs*. 68.
6. Sinclair, S. and M^cKendrick, J.H. (2009b). *Child Poverty in Scotland - Taking the Next Steps*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

4. Details of the impact

The report on media coverage and public perceptions of poverty was launched in 2008 with presentations to the Society of Editors; the All Parliamentary Group on Poverty; the Scottish Government; the TUC national conference; the Association of Journalism Educators; and the BBC College of Journalism. The research was reported in *The Guardian*, *Daily Record*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Scotsman*, *The Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Herald*, *The Sun*, and *Metro*; and Stephen Sinclair was interviewed on *BBC Newsnight Scotland*. The report has been viewed 12,908 times and downloaded 1445 times. This dissemination activity has had several impacts.

The Scottish Government commissioned a briefing paper on *Writing and Talking About Poverty* from M^cKendrick for the Scottish Centre for Regeneration. This has heightened practitioners' awareness of the negative impact of using pejorative terms in relation to lower income groups; e.g. it was highlighted in Edinburgh Capital City Partnership's *Social Inclusion News* (2011, Issue 78, p.10). The briefing also informed the Outer Hebrides Working Group on Poverty and Welfare Reform's communication plan:

http://ohcpp.org.uk/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&qid=116&Itemid=234

Our findings informed the revised media engagement strategies of several poverty campaigning organisations: For example, in 2009/10 the Poverty Alliance prepared a contact list of journalists with an interest in poverty, and provided media training to local community representatives and activists who are now able to satisfy journalist's requests to interview people with experience of poverty.

Findings from the media project have been used by the 'Stick Your Labels' campaign developed by an Anti-Stigma Working Group: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/StickYourLabels>. This campaign secured a public commitment from the leaders of all the main Scottish political parties to avoid stigmatising language in relation to those experiencing poverty, and to challenge unrepresentative negative portrayals of low income communities: <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/fm-and-party-leaders-sign-anti-stigma-commitment-shocking-%E2%80%98state-nation%E2%80%99-poverty-report-lan> (17th March 2011). This research and the related *Poverty in Scotland 2011* book were referred to in Scottish Parliament debates; and the Scottish Government affirmed its support for the campaign in its *Child Poverty Strategy* (2010, p.11). The legacy of these public commitments is reflected in the lower prominence within mainstream Scottish political discourse of the divisive

rhetoric of 'scroungers' and 'skivers' prominent elsewhere in the UK. The continued impact of our research is reflected by reference to it in the UK Church Action on Poverty report, *The Blame Game Must Stop* (2013, p.10). <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/stigma/report/blamegamereport>

The JRF's own evaluation of the PIPI programme (see Section 5) includes testimony from a government policy maker describing the project's impact on her professional activity as 'factoring attitudinal work into policy formation [and] facilitating greater contact with the third sector' (p. 4). Similarly, a Northern Ireland government policy maker described the project's impact as ensuring that the Northern Ireland Executive's review of its ageing strategy reached 'beyond the "usual suspects" to those who may not be automatically sympathetic'. In particular our project's evidence on how damaging stereotypes can be reproduced unthinkingly had 'alerted her to the danger of using the language of the "underclass" - it's always "somebody else", people in poverty are different from "us"' (p. 21).

The importance of the Community Regeneration and Tackling Poverty Community of Practice (the former name of the Employability and Tackling Poverty Learning Network), which has drawn upon the analysis, advice and guidance provided by the GCU team is referred to in the Scottish Government's *Child Poverty Strategy* (2010, p.51), which described it as 'a well used resource across the Scottish public sector' <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/14094421>. The Scottish Government's 2011 *Child Poverty Strategy Annual Report* reiterated this impact (p. 3) and testified to the value of the *Child Poverty Online Resource, Poverty-Sensitive Decision-Making Guide* and *Guide to Effective Local Measurement of Poverty*, produced by M^oKendrick as part of Tackling Child Poverty Locally project. Evidence of this impact is the increased sophistication of the child poverty measures included in Community Planning Partnerships' Single Outcome Agreements, as documented in a report commissioned by Save the Children: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/local-action-tackle-child-poverty-scotland>.

Stephen Sinclair drew upon both projects while Chairing the Tackling Poverty Stakeholder Forum (TPSF) (2009-12). The Forum was established with Scottish Government support to enable dialogue between policy makers, representatives of deprived communities and other stakeholders, and to scrutinise the *Achieving Our Potential* strategy. The Forum facilitated sustained engagement between poverty campaigners and senior Government officials, and had a direct influence on policy; particularly tackling the 'poverty premium', fuel poverty, and mitigating the impact of UK welfare reforms. The Scottish Government *Europe 2020: Scottish National Reform Programme 2012/13* described the TPSF as an 'effective and efficient model of good practice on the issue of participation in national policy development' (p.42). <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00392200>

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

The JRF commissioned an evaluation and impact assessment of the PIPI programme which was published in November 2009 and is available from the Foundation on request.

Additional corroborative sources:

PIPI programme Manager, Poverty programme Manager, Head of Poverty Team, Chief Executive: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Director of the Poverty Alliance.

Policy & Advocacy Manager, Save the Children.

Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission.

Head of the Child Poverty Action Group, Scotland (Formerly) Learning Network Manager Scottish Government (now Independent Consultant).