**Student Name**  
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**Research Project Title** [should not be too long, suggest max 15 words]:

How do journalists represent poverty in Africa in British Newspapers?

**Research Question** [Definitive focus: Identifies object of study to realise objectives]:

How do journalists represent poverty in Africa in British Newspapers?

**Research Aims and Objectives** [specific realistic goals/ends or intended outcomes & how to achieve them]:

To analyse British newspapers to see if they use stereotypical representations of poverty within them. Discover if poverty within Africa is represented negatively or positively. Are there any solutions given? Using discourse analysis to pick up on negative or positive language – framing, stereotypes used? Discover solutions to the Press’ problems (under-researched area, limited resources) when reporting on poverty. Find out if there are there certain regions in Africa that are represented more harshly than others. Discover if Western Racist Discourse is present.

**Key Texts and References**

Context/Background & Rationale [link with society & similar work, past & current; why project is important now]:

After dropping drastically in 2012, African economy is growing more rapidly than it has in recent years, reaching almost 5% in 2016. (African Development Bank Group et al. 2016)

To many young people, the lack of accurate and up to date information about contemporary Africa gives them the impression that nothing is happening that would challenge their existing perceptions of the continent. (Borowski 2012)

Lader (2007: 3) reported that 47 percent of UK citizens use newspapers as a source of information about the lives of poor people in Africa.

Postcolonial theory suggests that a distorted perception has been socially constructed to maintain a post-colonial dominance over independent Africa – using prejudice, discrimination and racism within reporting. (Borowski 2012)

(Shirk 1999) also feels reporting poverty can cross racist lines.

Framing and stereotypes are important areas. Journalists need to develop a deep understanding of poverty, as do readers. Poverty is an under-researched area – must use sensitive language.

Journalists do not have a record of consistently reporting the truth: can be dangerous to go to damaged economic regions – can just make things worse.

The percentage of people claiming to receive information about ‘poor countries’ from newspapers (41%) is much higher than for TV documentaries (24%), the internet (15%), radio (11%) or television charity programmes and appeals (7%) (Harvey, 2008)

HEADLINES: (Scott 2009)
24. Beware of Lion (Sun 05.06.07).
25. Going ‘green’? Consider plight of African Farmers (Express 04.06.07).
26. Pure hearts and dirty water (Mail 08.06.07).
27. £30bn for war on disease not enough for activists (Telegraph 09.06.07).
28. Lonrho to gamble £100m in Zimbabwe fund (Guardian 07.06.07).
**Literature Review** [theories to be employed in making sense of, or analysing, the chosen topic, citing theorists, most common theories in literature]:

(Ebo 1992) and (Brookes 1995) argues that there is a **disproportionally negative portrayal** of Africa in the British press, with specific over-emphasis on disease, poverty and famine. Stereotypes are common in reporting African poverty, especially in Western media (Nworah 2009). Ebo claims that these newspaper articles are part of a **deliberate and systematic process** to portray African’s as savage.

VSO (2001) blames the UK media for developing an **extensive public perception that African people are victims** whilst, (Martin 1994) insists that Africa is a place of famine and disease, so it must be reported on. To not report on such topics would itself be a distortion.

(McDonnell) says poverty and poor people don’t have to be covered, as city halls and schools do. A newspaper can do without stories that are depressing, a turn off for readers. One key focus in a study by (Washer 2004) focuses on the British Press’ reporting on Ebola in regards to poverty. By symbolising Ebola in relation to Africa as a whole and in general, it “**implies that such disasters are ‘incontrovertibly African’ (disaster ridden)”**.

Research carried out by (Leiberman 2001) indicates that journalism as a whole is not **adequately resourced to report on poverty**. This gives an answer to (Ashoka 1994 cited by Berger 2003), who suggests poverty is mainly covered by UK newspapers as an event, a death or disaster etc. He believes that poverty is much more than death or famine, contrary to previous texts. This combination of limited resources and non-context reporting makes **covering poverty a much more challenging process**.

(Aderokunbo-Edmunt 2016) gives a current perspective of positive reporting of Nigeria from UK Newspapers. “**Only 7 stories on Nigeria were on Poverty and health accounting for only 2% of all stories reported on Nigeria in the British press from 2007 to 2010.”** This comes as contrast to the stereotypical reporting of Africa and acts as good balance when completing this investigation.

(Scott 2009) research suggests “**that the character of the UK press coverage of Africa is not as marginalized, negative or trivial as it is often accused of being”**

The negative portrayal of poverty in the region of Africa has not hugely improved over the last twenty years of print. This means that this investigation will show that the British Newspaper Industry is still learning how to avoid using stereotypes and framing (lazy tools), and that they are under-equipped with poverty being an under-researched area. It has been suggested that journalists need specific help in this area (Shirk 1999). It is expected that the negative representation will continue throughout the investigation.

Some solutions have been found to help journalists understand poverty, and could later be developed within this investigation. “**By encouraging (Harrison and Palmer, 1986: 3) or discouraging (Moeller, 1999: 3) charitable donations, media content is important if it is understood to have tangible effects for the world it portrays.”**
### Methodology and Sources

[Tools/techniques to be employed in the gathering and analysis of data; methods of accessing/acquiring data or evidence or information; sources of the data]:

The chosen combination of research methods will provide an in-depth analysis of how poverty is represented in Africa in British Newspapers. Both discourse and content analysis will be used over a twelve month period (2015-2016) correlating with Africa’s economic rise. This does not concentrate on periods of time of extreme conflict and disaster (Wall 2007)

**DISCOURSE:** Qualitative.
Using (Fairclough 2010) Critical Discourse Analysis: relating to the socio-historical conditions which govern these processes – is the historic negativity around Africa present?
(Kroger and Wood 2000) definition of discourse: discourse not an object, is the way of treating the language used – how is poverty described in newspapers? What language is used?
Looking at newspaper’s use of stereotypes, negative and positive language towards poverty – is there a Western racist discourse? (Brookes 1995)

**CONTENT:** Quantitative
Using (Krippenorff 2012) definition of content analysis: a systematic reading of a body of texts to analyse several newspapers.
Collating the number of times lexis is used: famine, disease, disaster, poverty – negative or positive lexis?
Total number of articles – how much coverage does poverty get?

### Ethical Implications (if any)

[brieﬂy indicate whether/how there is an ethical implication for the researcher in this work. What do you need to consider as a researcher?):

Due to the methodology using text based methods, there are no ethical implications for this investigation.

### Strengths/Weaknesses of the Project

[brieﬂy indicate any strengths or weaknesses of the project across all areas]:

**WEAKNESSES**
Time consuming – content and discourse analysis
Not free of human error – content and discourse analysis
Archives of poverty articles – not too much coverage
Academics becoming outdated

**STRENGTHS**
Combination of methods make allows detailed research
Newspaper’s poor coverage highlight simple changes that need to be undertaken – easy solutions
Poverty is a wide issue, and contemporary in the newspaper issue today
Highlights key areas in journalism: framing and stereotyping