THE SHELTER PHOTOGRAPHS 1968-1972
Nick Hedges, the Representation of the Homeless Child and a Photographic Archive

By
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THE SHELTER PHOTOGRAPHS 1968-1972
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Volume 1
Abstract

This thesis examines the work of photographer Nick Hedges (b. 1943) who made photographs for the housing charity Shelter between 1968 and 1972. It concentrates on Hedges’ methodology, his representation of the homeless child and how this was deployed in Shelter’s campaign strategy. Moreover, it examines the wider political, sociological and cultural debates surrounding the conception, production, dissemination and reception of the Shelter photographs at this time. The thesis argues that Hedges’ photographs, although contextualised by an ostensibly radical charity agenda, were shaped by an established photographic and art historical tradition reaching back to the nineteenth century. This is examined in the light of a shifting conception of what constituted an ethically sound representation of homelessness amongst leftist critics in Britain from the 1970s onwards. The gap between authorial intention (explored in a series of interviews with Hedges) and semiotic effect is central to an analysis of how the photographs make meaning. The thesis discusses the archive as a site of photographic accession, interpretation and display, and outlines the issues that face archivists and other professionals charged with the presentation of the Hedges Collection to a contemporary audience. By combining art historical analysis of Hedges’ photographs with research into their current framing, both in terms of the intentions of their creator and the archive that houses them, the thesis offers a distinctive contribution to scholarship, exploring how photographic meaning is shaped, subverted and disseminated by individuals, organisations and institutions alike.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my three supervisors for their constant guidance, support and encouragement. I would very much like to thank Dr Francesca Berry, the lead supervisor and instigator of the project, whose extensive knowledge has been an inspiration throughout the PhD. Her expertise as an art historian has informed every aspect of the project, and her insight has changed the way I think about images, their production and their reception. I would equally like to thank Professor Ian Grosvenor for sharing his knowledge of the field of Education and social policy with me, specifically in regards to the experiences of children in Birmingham, both past and present. The thesis could not have been completed without the guidance of Dr Sian Roberts, whose knowledge of the archives and collections of the Library of Birmingham has been invaluable. I am also grateful to the other members of the academic and administrative staff from the Department of Art History, Curating and Visual Studies at the University of Birmingham: Dr Richard Clay, Deborah Clements, Maria Daniel, David Hemsoll, Tara Mann, David Pulford, Professor Matthew Rampley, Dr Richenda Roberts, Dr Camilla Smith and Dr Jutta Vinzent.

Special thanks are due to Nick Hedges, without whose co-operation this thesis could not have been written. I am indebted to him for his willingness to talk to me at length about his career as a photographer and for making the wonderful photographs that I have had the great privilege of studying.

I am mindful that the research could not have taken place without the opportunity and funding provided by the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme, for which I am most grateful.
I am equally grateful for the help and participation of the staff of Birmingham Archives, Heritage and Photography: Richard Albutt, David Bishop, Janet Brisland, Geoff Burns, Rachel Clare, Mike Hunkin, Peter James, Gudrun Limbrick, Izzy Mohammed, Sarah Pymer, Jim Ranahan, Corinna Rayner, Kevin Roberts, Angela Skitt, Alison Smith, Nikki Thorpe and Brigitte Winsor. I am especially indebted to Dr Andy Green, Rachel MacGregor and Dr Helen Maiden (née Smith) for their friendship, help, advice and guidance regarding the PhD process, the Hedges Collection and their knowledge of the photographic archives at the Library of Birmingham.

Special thanks go to photographer Dr Daniel Meadows, Professor Darren Newbury at the University of Brighton and Professor Val Williams from The London College of Communication, for their knowledge and insight regarding the History of Photography, specifically that pertaining to British photography of the late 1960s and 1970s, and their willingness to share this with me.

Thanks are also due to a number of individuals who contributed to the research and who patiently helped me with my many questions: Les Burrows, Penny Tweedie, Ola Oni and Des Wilson at Shelter; Oliver Buckley, Jo-Ann Curtis, Tom Grosvenor and Toby Watley from Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; Greg Hobson from The National Media Museum, Rhian Harris from The Museum of Childhood in London, Jonathan Watkins from Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, Dr Dorothy Clayton from the University of Manchester, Dr Julie Mathias from the University of Aberystwyth, Elizabeth Shepherd from University College London, Rachel Gill from Tyne and Wear Archives and Niall McCauley from the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board.

I would also like to thank the many staff of the archives, museums and libraries that have helped me during the research, notably those of Birmingham Archives, Heritage and

Final thanks go to my parents and grandparents for their unfailing support and encouragement in this, and countless other, endeavours.
## Abbreviations

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>AHRC</td>
<td>Arts and Humanities Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAHP</td>
<td>Birmingham Archives, Heritage and Photography, Library of Birmingham</td>
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<td>BMAG</td>
<td>Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Collaborative Doctoral Award</td>
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<td>CCCS</td>
<td>Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSA</td>
<td>Farm Security Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMPW</td>
<td>Half Moon Photography Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICA</td>
<td>Institute of Contemporary Arts, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoMA</td>
<td>Museum of Modern Art, New York</td>
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<td>NMM</td>
<td>National Media Museum, Bradford</td>
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<td>NPG</td>
<td>National Portrait Gallery, London</td>
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<td>NSPCC</td>
<td>National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIBA</td>
<td>Royal Institute of British Architects</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCL</td>
<td>University College London</td>
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<tr>
<td>V&amp;A</td>
<td>Victoria and Albert Museum, London</td>
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Introduction

This thesis begins with a black-and-white photograph of a young child in a kitchen (Fig. 1). The photograph was made in Liverpool in 1971 by Nick Hedges who was commissioned by the homeless charity Shelter, his employer between 1968 and 1972. The photograph shows a dilapidated kitchen with peeling, damp and crooked walls, blackened with mould. There is exposed plumbing and a crumbling ceiling. The room appears gloomy: light is provided by a window to the left of the child and a single, exposed light bulb that hangs directly above its head. The gas cooker is old and worn. An upturned pan balances precariously on the front left of the hob. Another pan sits unused and empty next to the sink, adjacent to a couple of unidentifiable tins. At the front right, a small table is cluttered with a variety of objects: a partially empty milk bottle, a metal teapot, a plate, a potato peeler, a spoon and a bottle of Brasso. The presence of the latter is an intriguing and somewhat incongruous element of the scene. A product associated with cleaning and polishing, it implies a sense of domestic pride and fastidiousness that is at odds with its surroundings. Do the inhabitants use it to clean in a home that appears to be beyond repair? Alternatively, does it imply that someone undertakes menial work as a cleaner outside the home? Either way, it suggests pride and hard work and an unwillingness to acquiesce to overwhelming poverty.

The focal point of the scene is a small child who holds the edge of the sink with both hands. It looks up at the camera. Its means of support are ambiguous: its small legs, clad in white knee high socks, seem to dangle in mid-air. It is only on closer inspection that a wooden stool, on which the child stands, is discernible in the darkness. The child’s body appears hemmed in by the cooker, sink and table. It is motionless and unstable. Seemingly suspended over a black chasm of deepest shadow, it appears to cling to the sink for survival. Alone in a
kitchen that offers little in the way of food, warmth or shelter, the child is a pathetic figure that embodies vulnerability and need. The child’s gaze at the camera is used to powerful effect as a direct appeal for help and action. Its distance from the camera emphasises its containment and isolation in the squalid space, heightening the urgency of the appeal.

The photograph was evidently deemed a success by the charity: it was published twice, in two different formats. In September 1971 a cropped version appeared on page twenty-five of Shelter’s Condemned report (Fig. 2). A line underneath the photograph reads: ‘Len and Mary’s kitchen’. On the page opposite the photograph, a brief introductory paragraph reads: ‘Len and Mary live in a large Corporation-owned house with their eight children. He works for himself in partnership with a friend. He has about £23 a week to manage on usually. His rent is £3.05 a week’.1 Beneath this is a detailed surveyor’s report on the condition of the house. The kitchen is described as follows: ‘Part of ceiling fallen in – remainder in dangerous condition – very damp walls – continual dripping of water from bathroom overhead – ill-fitting door.’2 It is revealed that the local government is responsible for these horrific conditions, as opposed to a private landlord. The narrative of pride and hard work, implied by the bottle of Brasso (notably edited out of the published version of the photograph), is confirmed as we learn that Len is self-employed and provides an, albeit low, wage for his wife and eight children. It is suggested that the child shown in the photograph is one of Len and Mary’s eight children, presumably located in the kitchen described in the surveyor’s report. A caveat at the beginning of the report reveals that the names of those interviewed have been changed to protect their identities.

Another version of the photograph, now even further cropped, reappeared in 1973 as the key image for Shelter Week, held between 6 and 13 October. Here it featured in posters, framed

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2 Ibid.
by the tagline ‘HOMELESSNESS is on your doorstep’ (Fig. 3). Shelter routinely used Hedges’ photographs in this format as an effective means of generating publicity. Ranging in size from A4 to A0, these posters were displayed at Shelter conferences, as well as in bus shelters, tube stations and on advertising hoardings. They were also mounted on boards and held aloft by Shelter supporters on charity walks and marches (Fig. 4). An article on the front page of the 1973 autumn edition of Shelter News commented on the image: ‘This year’s hard-hitting SHELTER WEEK poster reminds people that when children grow up in conditions like this it affects not just today, but the whole of their lives’. No details of the child, its family or housing were included. It is pertinent to note the shift in contrast that runs across the three images. The original photograph contains a wide tonal variation that depicts form and detail in subtle gradations ranging from the darkest black to white. The effect is atmospheric and evocative: the photograph is carefully crafted and betrays a certain kind of beauty, despite the horror of its subject matter. The consecutive images, printed by Shelter, lose much of this delicacy. Contrast between light and dark is emphasised and much of the mid-tone is obliterated. The effect is dramatic: the scene appears starker and somehow less real. Reminiscent of a newspaper image or a crime scene snapshot in their jarring contrast, Shelter’s versions of the photograph emphasise both the brutality of the scene, and the child’s vulnerability within it. Chapter two of the thesis explores how Shelter’s manipulation of many of Hedges’ photographs had a significant impact on their meaning and reception.

A related photograph had previously been published in the 1971 autumn edition of the Shelter News magazine (Fig. 5). This photograph expands the narrative of the image. The mother of the child is inserted into the scene. The distance between viewer and subject is diminished. The viewpoint shifts from one of removed elevation, to one of close intimacy, from which the

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3 HOMELESSNESS is on your doorstep—that’s SHELTER’s Autumn Campaign Theme’, SHELTER NEWS, News for Supporters of the National Campaign for the Homeless, Autumn 1973, p. 1.
4 SHELTER NEWS, News for Supporters of the National Campaign for the Homeless, Autumn 1971, p. 2.
viewer looks upwards towards the child and its mother. The table and its contents are brought back into view. The child stands on a stool and holds out its hands to be washed in the sink. Despite the huge, gaping hole in the ceiling and the seeping walls, this photograph is much less disturbing. Held by its mother, the child no longer appears abandoned and isolated. Moreover, the implication of parental neglect, perhaps suggested by the first photograph, is immediately discounted: the child and its mother are now both represented as victims of the local Corporation and its inability to provide a decent standard of social housing.

In many ways the original photograph epitomises the kind of image that Shelter required. Equally, it embodies the kind of image that has, perhaps mistakenly, come to define Hedges’ early career. Photographs of vulnerable and isolated children surrounded by squalor were the staple of Hedges’ work for Shelter. The thesis examines how, why and to what ends Hedges’ photographs for Shelter were made and deployed, and the critical response that they generated. It examines the gap that exists between the original prints and the published images, and the way in which Shelter’s editing of Hedges’ photographs changed their meaning and implication. Moreover, it focuses specifically on Hedges’ representation of the homeless child in domestic space as the key trope through which these narratives are played out.

Returning to the 1971 photograph (Fig. 1), now located at Birmingham Archives, Heritage and Photography (BAHP) as part of the Hedges Collection, it is pertinent to consider how the contemporary setting of the archive shapes its meaning and interpretation. Initially published as part of a Shelter report, and later featured in a high-profile poster campaign, the photograph was used to elicit an emotional, and maximise a financial, response from the public. As discussed in chapter one of the thesis, the anonymous child at the centre of the image proved a highly effective catalyst for public outrage on a grand scale. Today, the original photograph assumes a new meaning. Moving beyond its use in a charity campaign,
the photograph suggests more intimate narratives. Moreover, it generates previously overlooked art historical narratives as part of Hedges’ oeuvre. The homeless child relinquishes its role as a public icon of pity, to become an individual who was photographed at home with its mother in 1971. The child’s identity is not known, even to Hedges. Its gender is up for grabs. It may, or may not have been the child of ‘Len’ and ‘Mary’, whoever they were. It may have had seven siblings, of whose lives and experiences we know equally little. The child may, or may not be alive today. If living, it is now an adult in its mid-forties, perhaps completely unaware that such a photograph was ever made, or published. Chapter three of the thesis examines the implications of this scenario, specifically in relation to the context of the photographic archive. It explores its role in a contemporary presentation of historical photographs of anonymous children, represented in harrowing circumstances and addresses key questions attendant on this role: What context does the archive provide for someone looking at such photographs today? What would it mean to display these photographs as part of an exhibition of Hedges’ work? How can the archive best serve the homeless child who once stared into Hedges’ camera in a slum kitchen in 1971?

The photographs under consideration in the thesis are selected from the 980 images that make up the Hedges Collection held at BAHP in the Library of Birmingham. Hedges’ photographs for Shelter, made from 1968 onwards, were subsequently reprinted as a final set of archive prints. Hedges produced four of these sets during the spring and summer of 1972, while he was still working for the charity and donated two sets to the National Portrait Gallery (NPG),

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5 Hedges did not record the names of the people that he photographed. The d/file that accompanies the Hedges Collection contains an index of some family names, but not those of individuals. In interviews, Hedges remembered certain individuals and families, but does not possess contact details, either from the time the photographs were made or today.

6 Hedges secured a grant of £600 from Kodak to cover the costs of photographic paper and developing chemicals, Hedges Collection, d/file, MS 2399, BAHP.

7 Ibid. and personal e-mail from Nick Hedges to author, 19 October 2014.
to the care of Colin Ford and Valerie Lloyd. In 1983, when Colin Ford, Head of Photography at the NPG, became the first Director of the National Museum of Film, Photography and Television in Bradford (now known as the National Media Museum), the Shelter photographs moved there with him, with Hedges’ blessing. Both Ford and Hedges felt that this new setting was a ‘more appropriate venue for the archive’. A third set was donated by Hedges to the Birmingham Central Library Photography Collection in 2001 (a set of negatives and contact prints were also deposited alongside these photographs). A fourth set of prints was given to Shelter when Hedges left their employment in autumn 1972, and is today housed in a basement archive at their headquarters at 88 Old Street in London (Fig. 6). Twenty-one of the Shelter photographs are also held in the Photography Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London. During Hedges’ time at the charity, the photographs also operated as part of a picture library, available for publication (for a small fee) by a variety of agencies. Alongside Hedges’ photographs, the Shelter archive also contains a rich collection of uncatalogued material, including reports, posters, media advertisements and minutes from management meetings. From October 2011, Hedges has used the website Blurb to self-publish fifteen books of his photographs (unaccompanied by text), one of which, entitled In the Shadows, is dedicated to the Shelter images.

The thesis was the result of an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) involving the partner institutions of the University of Birmingham (the Department of Art History,

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8 Nick Hedges statement, August 2001, Hedges Collection, d/file, MS 2399, BAHP.
9 The NMM has two (near identical) sets of prints. One has Nick Hedges’ original captions pasted on the reverse, the other is blank. The inventory number of the collections is 1983-5235 (Rebecca Smith, Collections Assistant, NMM, personal e-mail to author, 21 October 2014).
10 Nick Hedges, personal e-mail to author, 17 November 2014.
11 The negatives and contacts prints remain largely unseen as they are closed to public access.
12 Only four of these photographs have been digitised and are accessible via the V&A’s online catalogue. The remainder, whilst catalogued, are not accompanied by a visual thumbnail. The photographs are accessible via personal appointment.
13 In the Shadows was published on 24 July 2012.
Curating and Visual Studies and the School of Education) and BAHP. Initially entitled *Displaying Childhood Spaces*, the project aimed to

‘research a focused aspect of the history of the visual culture of Birmingham children’s domestic lives between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries as this is represented across Birmingham City Archives and Heritage (BCAH) collections’.\(^\text{14}\)

It thus constituted ‘the first sustained art historical analysis of the pictorial representation of children in relation to the spaces they inhabit’.\(^\text{15}\) Whilst extant art historical research regarding children and childhood has ‘largely focused upon the moral and legal implications of the pictorial representation of the child’s naked or seemingly erotic body’, the project aimed to move beyond the child’s body, to the space it inhabits.\(^\text{16}\)

Further requirements of the award were the curation of a segment of the *Children’s Lives* exhibition, held at BMAG between 24 March and 10 June 2012, and the development of a set of curatorial good practice guidelines for use by BAHP staff, in relation to the display of photographs of children. Within this broad remit, the author elected to focus on the Shelter photographs and their representation of the homeless child in domestic space. The guidelines (Appendix I) focus specifically on negotiating, interpreting and displaying photographs of children within the setting of the archive.

**Literature Review**

To date, little has been written about Hedges or the Shelter photographs. Previously overlooked as a subject for academic study, the Shelter photographs have, until recently,


\(^{15}\) *Displaying Childhood Spaces* Collaborative Doctoral Award Case for Support, p. 6.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
remained out of the public eye and consciousness. Showcased in high-profile exhibitions and reviews at the time of their making in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the photographs have since been somewhat forgotten, and to a certain extent written out of, the history of British photography. Primary source material on Hedges and his work has, until now, focused on his other photographic projects, notably his study of factory workers entitled *Born to Work* (made between 1976 and 1978), his documentation of religion, entitled *I’m A Believer* (made between 1976 and 1977), and his study of the North Shields fishing industry in 1979. The two former series focused on the West Midlands, Hedges’ birthplace. After obtaining an Arts Council grant in 1982, Hedges was subsequently able to publish the *Born to Work* photographs, accompanied by a text written by Huw Beynon, in a book entitled *Born to Work: Images of Factory Life*. These photographs were the subject of a large exhibition of the same name held at Wolverhampton City Archives between 4 October and 21 December 2013. They were also featured alongside the work of photographers John Bulmer and Peter Donnelly in the exhibition *Black Country Echoes: In Pictures*, held at the Light House Media Centre in Wolverhampton between 1 September and 31 October 2014. Articles about these projects include ‘Born to Work’, ‘Factory Fantasies?’, ‘Factory Photographs, at the Half

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17 An exhibition of 100 of the Shelter photographs, entitled *Make Life Worth Living*, was held at the Science Museum in London between 2 October 2015 and 18 January 2015.
18 In 1976, Hedges (then working as a freelance photographer in London) successfully applied for a West Midlands Arts Association fellowship. This permitted him to spend the next two years photographing and interviewing workers and managers in factories in Bilston, Birmingham, Tipton, Willenhall and Wolverhampton. This work was exhibited at the Half Moon Gallery in London in 1978 under the title of *Factory Photographs*. A touring exhibition followed, in association with Camerawork and the HMPW.
19 Hedges’ thirty-six photographs of different religious groups in the West Midlands are deposited at BAHP as a fully catalogued collection (MS 2478). Between 13 May and 17 June 2011, they were exhibited as part of the *Look11* photography festival held at the Contemporary Urban Centre (CUC) in Liverpool. They were also shown as part of the *Library of Cultures* exhibition at BAHP, held between 27 January and 27 April 2014.
20 In 1979, Hedges was commissioned to document the North East fishing industry by Side Gallery in Newcastle. An exhibition of the work was held at the gallery in 1981. The photographs subsequently featured in the ‘Fishing Industry’ pack produced by Amber/Side and North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council in 1990.
22 The exhibition focused on the photographs that Hedges made of Bilston Steelworks and other factories in the Midlands between 1976 and 1978.
23 ‘Born to Work’, *Camerawork*, no. 10, p. 5.
Moon Gallery’, 25 ‘Some Factory Photographs: Nick Hedges’ 26 and ‘Fishing Industry by Nick Hedges’ 27. An article entitled ‘A World of His Own: the photographs of Margaret Gathercole and Nick Hedges’, appraises Hedges’ freelance work for the charity Mencap, made between 1972 and 1977, 28 whilst a project for the Royal Town Planning Institute, entitled Problem in the City 29 is reviewed in the articles ‘Problem in the City: we can’t see the trees for the wood’ 30 and ‘Well, it’s a nice beginning!’ 31 More comprehensive overviews of Hedges and his work are presented in the articles ‘A Narrow Road’ 32 and ‘The Meanings of Environment’ 33.

Whilst Hedges’ other photographic projects have generated notable publicity as a result of exhibitions, articles and publications, the Shelter photographs remain somewhat ignored, unexamined and decontextualised. A notable exception, discussed in chapter two of the thesis, is Ainslie Ellis’ 1970 article about Hedges and the Shelter photographs entitled ‘Things As They Are: The Work of Nick Hedges, Photographer to Shelter’. 34 More recently, the catalogue Make Life Worth Living, Nick Hedges’ Photographs for Shelter, 1968-72, has

29 Problem in the City was a collaborative project produced by Ron McCormick, Nick Hedges and Larry Herman for the 1975 annual conference of the Royal Town Planning Institute. In thirty-two large panels, the exhibition combined photographs with quotations from books, newspapers, government reports and interviews. The photographs were made in numerous locations including Clydeside, the South Coast, Greater London, Merseyside, the West Midlands, Tyneside and South Wales. It was exhibited at the ICA in London between 12 December 1975 and 6 January 1976.
30 Douglas Manella, ‘Problem in the City: we can’t see the trees for the wood’, Amateur Photographer, 7 January 1976, pp. 100-03.
31 Tom Picton, ‘Well, it’s a nice beginning!’ Camerawork, no. 1, February 1976, pp. 4-6.
been published to accompany the 2014 exhibition of the same name at the Science Museum in London.\textsuperscript{35} This includes an afterword written by Hedges, which provides a brief overview of the Shelter commission.

An article entitled ‘Charity Begins At Home: The Shelter Photographs’, written by Hedges in 1979, was published in \textit{Photography/Politics: One} by the Half Moon Photography Workshop (HMPW).\textsuperscript{36} The article is Hedges’ response to Jo Spence’s damning critique of his practice in her 1976 article ‘The Politics of Photography’, which is analysed in detail in chapter one of the thesis.\textsuperscript{37} In his article, Hedges identifies five stereotypes of homelessness preferred by the charity, one of which is ‘Forlorn child (innocent victim)’.\textsuperscript{38} The 1991 photo-book \textit{From the Centre, Living Through Change in an Industrial Society 1965-1990} includes a chapter on the Shelter photographs.\textsuperscript{39} Authored by Hedges’ friend Paul Lewis, the book is illustrated with Hedges’ photographs and provides an overview of his career from the 1960s to the present day. Written in collaboration with Hedges, the book revisits many of the points made by the latter in his 1979 article. Despite the range of photographs discussed, Hedges’ representation of the homeless child as a dominant subject in the Shelter photographs is not touched upon.

Both aforementioned texts refer to Hedges’ often difficult role as a photographer, faced with the demands of a commission that seemed, in hindsight, to compromise his ethical and political beliefs. As a committed socialist, Hedges wanted his work to make a positive difference. He believed that his photographs for Shelter could achieve this. In many ways they did: Shelter’s campaigns, heavily reliant on Hedges’ striking images, were highly

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{38} The other stereotypes favoured by Shelter were ‘Mother and baby (Madonna and child)’, ‘Anxious old age pensioner (helpless innocent)’, ‘Depressed family group (object of pity)’ and ‘Resigned father (victim of society)’.
\end{flushright}

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successful in generating funds for the charity. However, this success must be balanced against the demands of a commission that often left Hedges little choice in the kind of subjects that he photographed, or how they were ultimately used. Moreover, by the early 1970s his photographs were targeted by certain leftist photographers and critics as exploitative and stereotypical.

The Shelter photographs are also the subject of an article written in 2005 by Hedges’ daughter Ruth Hedges, published in the online magazine *MAP*. The article discusses the *Percent for Art* scheme, part of the latest redevelopment programme of the Gorbals in Glasgow. The scheme commissioned contemporary artists, including Kenny Hunter, Steven Hurrel, Amanda Currie, David Cotterell, Matt Baker and Dan Dubowitz, to produce site-specific works (‘artistic interpretations of the Gorbals’ past and future fabric’). The article compares these works with Hedges’ photographs of the same locations made between 1969 and 1972. A significant proportion of the article is devoted to an interview with Hedges. As in his own account of 1979, and that of Lewis in 1991, the photographer highlights the pitfalls of the Shelter commission, and the restraints that led to the production of a certain kind of photograph.

Whilst clearly regretful at the way in which the homeless were represented in many of his photographs, Hedges is also cognisant of the specific demands of the Shelter commission and balances his perceived misrepresentation of the homeless against the good that resulted from the charity’s campaigns, commenting that ‘when you work for a charity you soon understand that you are concerning yourself with special pleading and stereotyping’. This awareness of the necessary compromise at the heart of the commission was later echoed in my own

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41 Ibid.
interviews with Hedges: ‘It’s part of the nature of the job and I don’t blame the charity. I have to make the observation though that it’s not a complete picture’.  

Little has been published about Shelter as an organisation, and such writing that does exist does not feature Hedges, or his photographs, as a topic of study. The main sources of information are two books, both written by Des Wilson who was the Director of the charity between 1966 and 1971. The first, entitled *I Know it was the Place’s Fault*, was published in 1970. The second, entitled *Memoirs of a Minor Public Figure*, is an autobiography published in 2011. Both texts are useful in their provision of an historical, if one-sided, account of Shelter’s formation and activities. The earlier text is particularly interesting in its discussion of the charity’s groundbreaking media campaigns, constructed around Hedges’ photographs. Although it features twelve of Hedges’ photographs as illustrations, there is no discussion of them, or how they were made.

The second text features two of Hedges’ photographs as illustrations, but is equally devoid of any direct engagement with them. Perhaps it is not surprising that the photographs, although central to Shelter’s campaigns, are somewhat overlooked. The focus of Wilson’s accounts is the establishment and success of the charity, not an analysis of photographic meaning. Equally, both texts are written from Wilson’s perspective: one, a personal account of his role as Shelter’s Director, the other, an autobiography. Whilst central to an historical understanding of the charity, Hedges’ photographs have little bearing on Wilson, or an account of his life. Hedges’ own relative silence regarding the Shelter photographs and their lack of public exposure may also have contributed to Wilson’s disinterest in them.

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44 Des Wilson, *I Know it was the Place’s Fault*, London: Oliphants, 1970.
To sum up, Hedges has been somewhat sidelined in the history of British photography. He is not included in the canon of British independent photographers that are deemed instrumental in shaping documentary practice in Britain from the late 1960s onwards. Hedges’ marginalisation is recognised by historians of photography, yet little explanation is given for his exclusion. In 2005, a conference series entitled *What Happened Here? Photography in Britain since 1968* was coordinated by the magazine *Creative Camera*, with the intention of telling ‘the story of independent art photography in Britain from the end of the 1960s until today’.

In the introduction to the conference catalogue, David Manley suggests a political framework for Hedges’ effacement:

‘Maybe too, the developing agenda of Thatcherism, an agenda that has had a more powerful impact on our thinking than many of us care to consider too closely, played a greater part in the history of photography and its trajectory, than has properly been credited. The example of the work of Nick Hedges may usefully prove instructive here. *Virtually forced underground and out of the equation*, its refusal to elevate the personality of the producer above that of the subject and the message conveyed may be part of a movement that dispensed entirely with the genre of social documentary. If, as Thatcher suggested, there was ‘no such thing as society’ then it simply wasn’t a

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46 Val Williams, personal e-mail to author, 12 November 2014.  
49 David Manley is a lecturer, artist, curator and consultant in photography and the visual arts, based in the Midlands.
subject to be pictured. *If Hedges’ work has been written out of the history* then the work of others has been subsumed into it’.\(^{50}\) (my italics)

Manley suggests that Hedges’ exclusion from the history of British photography is a result of his inability, or unwillingness, to cultivate an individual identity that stands apart from the photographs that he made. Once his photographs were deemed politically obsolete, Hedges too disappeared into the background.

Whilst recognised as a documentary photographer of this era, Hedges’ photographs have not attracted the same attention as those of his peers and he has been omitted from the broader literature on British photography in the late 1960s and 1970s. Surveys of the history of British photography from this era rarely mention his name, or his work. David Alan Mellor’s book, *No Such Thing As Society, Photography in Britain 1967-87*, does not include Hedges.\(^{51}\) Val Williams and Susan Bright’s book, *How We Are: Photographing Britain from the 1840s to the Present*, does not mention him.\(^{52}\) Likewise, he is omitted from Martin Parr and Gerry Badger’s epic three-volume tome *The Photobook: A History*.\(^{53}\) Val Williams’ exhaustive and detailed accounts of the British independent photography movement, included in her monographs on Daniel Meadows (*Daniel Meadows: Edited Photographs from the 70s and 80s*)\(^ {54}\) and Martin Parr (*Martin Parr*),\(^ {55}\) overlook Hedges entirely. Mary Warner Marien’s discussion of social documentary photography in her more general survey of the medium

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\(^{50}\) *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8


\(^{52}\) Val Williams and Susan Bright, *How We Are, Photographing Britain from the 1840s to the Present*, London: Tate Publishing, 2007.


\(^{54}\) Val Williams, *Daniel Meadows: Edited Photographs from the 70s and 80s*, Brighton: Photoworks, 2011.

entitled *Photography: A Cultural History*, also excludes Hedges in a listing of noteworthy British social documentarists of this era.\(^\text{56}\)

Other texts, however, acknowledge Hedges as an important figure in British socialist photography. The chapter entitled ‘Surveyors and Surveyed’, published in the book *Photography, A Critical Introduction*, references Hedges’ contribution to the genre:

> ‘The work of UK photographers Chris Killip, Nick Hedges and the Exit Photography Group (Nicholas Battye, Chris Steele-Perkins and Paul Trevor) were all recognisably in the tradition of documentary’.\(^\text{57}\)

Similarly, the article ‘Photography’s Changing Face’ places Hedges on an equal footing with Jo Spence, as one of six distinct contributions to the leftist photography movement:

> ‘In recent practice there are at least six important examples which have developed a specifically socialist photography…They are the work of Victor Burgin (photo and text), John Berger and Jean Mohr (photo and text and photonarrative, images arranged in such a way as to tell a story), Peter Kennard and Ric Sissons (photomontage and text), Lorraine Leeson and Peter Dunn (photomontage and text), Nick Hedges and Jo Spence…All of these share the desire to give back to the represented the power of the image’.\(^\text{58}\)

Hedges’ ambivalent place in the history of British photography is thus predominantly shaped by a political debate surrounding a socially concerned, leftist photographic practice from the early 1970s onwards. A number of publications are fundamental to an understanding of this

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debate, and Hedges’ positioning within it. Foremost amongst these are the journal Camerawork and the book Committing Photography. The former (published between 1976 and 1985) is an inexhaustible source of articles on an emerging ‘radical’ photographic practice, showcasing the work of Jo Spence, John Berger, John Tagg, Victor Burgin and Stuart Hall. Key essays were subsequently republished in 1997, along with a comprehensive introduction, in the book The Camerawork Essays, Context and Meaning in Photography. It is pertinent to note that reviews of this book have been somewhat critical, dismissing many of the claims made by Jessica Evans in her introduction as misrepresentative of the journal’s genesis and ethos. Jo Spence’s essay, illustrated with a large reproduction of one of Hedges’ photographs for Shelter, entitled ‘The Politics of Photography’ was published in the first issue of Camerawork in February 1976.

Committing Photography places Hedges right at the centre of a debate concerning an errant photographic practice, whilst Photographic Practices: Towards a Different Image, provides an invaluable overview of groups involved in ‘making, circulating, exhibiting and publishing images and texts in new ways’ at this time. The books Photography/Politics: One and Photography/Politics: Two are fundamental to an understanding of leftist photographic practice during the 1970s and 1980s. Initially published by the HMPW, they bring together a collection of essays by photographers and theorists on a wide range of subjects and issues, united by a political philosophy. Ten.8 was an equally influential photography journal,

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60 Thirty-two issues of Camerawork were published between 1976 and 1985.
published between 1979 and 1992.\textsuperscript{66} Established in Birmingham by Derek Bishton, Brian Homer and John Reardon, the magazine aimed to provide a platform for the work of local photographers, including Nick Hedges, and remains a useful source of articles examining photography within a political, social and cultural context.\textsuperscript{67}

The damning implications of both ‘The Politics of Photography’ and Committing Photography, unequivocally aimed at Hedges, are explored and reassessed in chapter one of the thesis. Here, the Shelter photographs and their production are examined in relation to a political framework for the first time. The validity of Spence’s argument is questioned in the light of interviews with Hedges and research into the Shelter commission. Hedges’ integrity, both as an individual and a photographer, is discussed in relation to how he made the photographs, and his agency in their final framing and publication by the charity. The thesis thus revises received knowledge on Hedges and the Shelter photographs, regarding a previously uncontested political interpretation and judgement, in circulation from the 1970s onwards. It challenges existing literature and presents an alternative reading of Hedges’ photographs and practice. Moreover, for the first time, the thesis addresses Hedges’ exclusion from the history of British photography, and examines the reasons behind this, seemingly arbitrary, ostracism.

In the introduction to Peter James and Richard Sadler’s 2004 book Homes Fit for Heroes, Photographs by Bill Brandt 1939-1943, a direct link is forged between Brandt and Hedges:

\textsuperscript{66} Based in Hockley, Ten.8 was established as a collective in 1979 in the last year of the minority Labour government of James Callaghan. Like Camerawork, it was set up as a vehicle through which political photographic practice could be developed and disseminated. The first issue took as its theme ‘Photography and the Community’ and included articles on ‘The Growth of Community Photography’ and ‘How ‘Real’ is Social Documentary?’ The journal was embedded in a local network of community-based organisations and projects using photography, film and print for progressive political ends.

\textsuperscript{67} See Laura Guy’s (Goldsmiths College London) doctoral research into Ten.8 and its influence, presented in her paper ‘Resisting Practices: Reading Ten.8 Photography Magazine’ at the Photographic History Research Centre’s annual conference, ‘Photography in Print’ at De Montfort University, Leicester, 22-23 June 2015.
‘In 1967 Nick Hedges followed in Brandt’s footsteps, undertaking a project for the Birmingham Housing Trust. Hedges’ photographs of housing conditions in Birmingham and other British cities reveal in stark detail that in the mid-1970s the promise of a ‘New Jerusalem’ after the Second World War had failed to materialise.’

Here, Hedges is presented in the tradition of the great documentary observer, embodied by the illustrious figure of Bill Brandt. Drawing on the notion of the ‘detached’ voyeur, the thesis examines the extent to which Hedges, and his critics, cultivated the concept of documentary photography as neutral, unplanned and candid. Once considered completely unstaged in their production, James and Sadler’s book reassesses Brandt’s photographs in the light of previously unseen negatives that reveal the highly constructed nature of many of his images. In the same vein, the thesis references unpublished negatives and contact prints in a reinterrogation of the Shelter photographs as documentary records of homelessness. Challenging Hedges’ claims that his photographs were not ‘set up’ in any way, the thesis examines his role in shaping the scenes that he photographed. This intervention is balanced against an awareness of the demands of the Shelter commission and Hedges’ responsibility to fulfil them. Moreover, chapter one of the thesis explores the genealogy of the Shelter photographs for the first time. Focusing on the representation of the homeless child, the photographs are discussed in relation to Brandt’s photographs for Picture Post and a wider tradition of British slum photography. The thesis thus challenges the widely held view of Shelter’s campaign strategy and Hedges’ photographic representation of the homeless, as a radical departure from tradition, and foregrounds the similarity between Hedges and earlier British photographers such as Brandt and Bert Hardy.

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69 Hedges 1979, op. cit., p. 162.
Another strand of the thesis is a discussion of how photographs continue to make meaning in the archive. For the most part, literature on photographic archives is published in journals aimed at archive professionals. The key journals that proved useful in this regard are Archivaria, The American Archivist and the Journal of the Society of Archivists, the latter published in Britain. Other pertinent essays include Allan Sekula’s ‘Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital’70 and ‘The Body and the Archive’71. Regarding wider archival theory, Jacques Derrida’s seminal text Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression, provides an apposite framework for considering the function of the archive as a space that shapes knowledge and meaning.72 Equally, Michel Foucault’s The Archaeology of Knowledge has exerted considerable influence on theorists of the archive.73 Another useful resource is the book Archives, Documentation and Institutions of Social Memory, which brings together a wide range of essays, presented during a year-long seminar on the subject at the University of Michigan in 2007. The essays reflect a range of theoretical positions, and attest to the contested nature of the archive as a subject of academic enquiry.74 The archive, both photographic and otherwise, continues to be the focus of an interdisciplinary conversation concerning the function and fate of the historical record.75

To sum up, at present there is a dearth of existing literature on Hedges and the Shelter photographs. Both primary and secondary source writing that does exist is scanty and subject to bias, rather than critical or contextual in nature. Moreover, such writing is marked by an

absence of detailed visual analysis of individual photographs and an awareness of how they were made and used by the charity. An exploration of the homeless child as a central and dominant trope of the Shelter photographs is equally overlooked. The thesis addresses this absence in scholarship through an examination of the Shelter commission and the photographs that Hedges produced, focusing specifically on those that represent children. Moreover, it explores how the photographs were deployed by Shelter and how this appropriation affected the meaning and currency of the images. The thesis expands this narrative to engage with a contemporary understanding of the Shelter photographs as historical documents, now housed in the archive. It goes on to address ethical issues attendant on the Shelter photographs, which have come into play since the production of the photographs in the late 1960s.

Methodological Approaches

The analysis of the Shelter photographs in the thesis is structured around four overarching conceptual methodologies of photographic interpretation. These emerge throughout as unifying themes and provide a framework for the various arguments that shape each chapter. The first concerns the role of the author (photographer) as a determiner of meaning. Two essays inform this approach to Hedges’ photographs: Roland Barthes’ ‘The Death of the Author’ and Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson’s ‘Semiotics and Art History: A Discussion of Context and Senders’. Each points to the inability of the author to control the meaning of his or her creation, which ultimately depends on a range of factors including context, framing and audience. Drawing on the ideas presented in these essays, the thesis suggests that the

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meanings generated by Hedges’ photographs are not fixed and cannot be deduced by interviewing their creator: on the contrary, the photographer’s intentions may ultimately be at odds with both an historical and contemporary response to the images that he creates.

A second way of responding to Hedges’ photographs privileges the relationship between word and image, a dynamic that shapes much of Shelter’s use of the photographs. Barthes’ essays ‘The Photographic Message’{78} and ‘The Rhetoric of the Image’{79} provide a basis for this approach. Discussed in relation to press photographs and advertising images, the essays introduce the concepts of connotation, denotation and anchorage, all of which are pertinent to an analysis of the Shelter photographs. Barthes’ theories are also applicable to a discussion of how photographs continue to make meaning in the archive, as visual artefacts framed by a linguistic grid of classification and display.

A third approach references the work of John Berger, specifically the theory of radial narrative discussed in his essays ‘Ways of Remembering’{80} and ‘Uses of Photography’.{81} This proved fundamental to a reassessment of Hedges’ photographs which have hitherto been understood by critics as purely public images. Drawing on Berger’s discussion of the gap that exists between the private and public image, the thesis attempts to reinsert the Shelter photographs into a radial narrative. This is achieved through an analysis of previously unseen photographs (in the form of negatives and contact prints) that permit alternative interpretations and narratives to emerge. Berger’s theory is also fundamental to envisioning new methodologies of cataloguing and display in the archive, whereby photographs are able to retain associated meanings through a more sensitive approach to context and interpretation.

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These are enumerated in the guidelines of best practice produced for archive professionals at BAHP (Appendix I).

A final theoretical approach is suggested by John Tagg and Susan Sontag’s work on photographic representation. Framed by a Marxist rhetoric and drawing on Foucault’s theories, Tagg’s book *The Burden of Representation, Essays on Photographies and Histories* discusses how photographs are used as instruments of control by a variety of institutions. His essays ‘A Means of Surveillance’ and ‘God’s Sanitary Law: Slum Clearance and Photography in Late Nineteenth-Century Leeds’ are particularly pertinent to a discussion of how certain modes of photographic representation, particularly concerning poor children and the homeless, are inscribed with narratives of power and exploitation. Susan Sontag’s seminal texts *On Photography* and *Regarding the Pain of Others* are equally relevant to an analysis of the Shelter photographs. Foregrounding the concept of the ‘Other’, both texts explore the ethical implications of social documentary photography and its representation of suffering. The ideas presented by Tagg and Sontag locate the Shelter photographs in an established photographic tradition, and raise pertinent questions regarding erroneous concepts such as documentary ‘truth’, photographer as neutral observer and audience as innocent witness.

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88 More recently, the underlying motivation for documentary photography through much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to represent society’s ‘victims’ has been called into question. Political scientist Robert Meister argues that post-structuralism challenges the rhetoric of victims and victimizers and rejects the ‘demonization’ of any member of an oppressive system. Foucault concludes that power resides everywhere in
Moving beyond these overarching frameworks, the thesis also draws on other scholarship whose conceptual methodologies prove pertinent to an interpretation of the Shelter photographs. The writings of Victor Burgin, Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, Sally Stein and Abigail Solomon-Godeau on the subject of documentary photography and the politics of representation have informed an analysis of Hedges’ photographic representation of the homeless child. Predominantly shaped by a leftist sensibility, each demands a new kind of documentary practice centred on ‘a full awareness of the role played by context, subject/object relations and the various structuring mechanisms that determine photographic meaning’. It is significant that Burgin, Rosler, Sekula and Stein, in addition to their theoretical work, have also undertaken conceptual art projects informed by, and demonstrating, this awareness, primarily through a fusion of photographs and text. Stein’s essay on Riis’ photographs of the urban poor suggests a particularly apposite model for a

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94 Solomon-Godeau op. cit., p. 182.
95 In Britain, Burgin first came to attention as a conceptual artist in the late 1960s, fusing photographs and words in leftist critiques of advertising images. In America, Sekula was a central figure of what became known as the San Diego Group, based at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) in the early 1970s. UCSD was a magnet for leading Marxist intellectuals: John Baldessari, David Antin, Herbert Marcuse, Manny Farber, Angela Davies and Fredric Jameson’s students. Within the Visual Arts Department, Sekula began to collaborate with Fred Lonidier, Phel Steinmetz, Martha Rosler and Steve Buck in a reassessment of modernist photographic theory and practice, showcasing the work of the San Diego Group as a manifesto for an alternative model of practice.
discussion of the Shelter photographs. By suggesting new ways of interpreting and understanding photographs of the dispossessed ‘Other’, these authors challenge conventional understanding regarding the politics of representation, and provide a useful way of thinking about Hedges’ photographs of homelessness.

The research for the thesis employed a number of different methodologies. Primary amongst these was a first-hand engagement with the Hedges Collection in the archive at BAHP. The handwritten index which accompanies the collection also proved significant. Although not all 980 photographs were of significance to the thesis, the ability to study the collection as a whole provided a valuable insight into the breadth of Hedges’ practice. Much of the thesis depended on the direct visual analysis and interpretation of Hedges’ photographs. Access to the closed collection of Hedges’ negatives and contact prints was also vital. The information file (d/file) which accompanies the Hedges Collection, although closed to public access, was equally important in understanding Hedges’ reasons for depositing his photographs with BAHP, the technical components of his final prints and for tracing the locations and dates of specific images. The fact that the collection remains to date uncatalogued, shaped the research process. At the time of writing, the collection is not accessible online, or framed by any technical or contextual information. However, as a result of the research and the *Children’s Lives* exhibition, twenty-eight of the Shelter photographs were made accessible online via BAHP’s *Connecting Histories* website. The research also led to the digitisation of 121 of the Shelter photographs and the capture of associated metadata.

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96 In her essay, Stein explores the hidden agendas and latent meanings that shape Riis’ photographs, locating them within a political, social and economic framework for the first time. Moreover, Riis’ agency in regards to his reformist commission is examined in the light of his writings on the subject. Through direct visual analysis of Riis’ photographs, Stein explores the subject/object relations that lie at the heart of the genre of victim photography.


98 This is an initial step towards the digitisation and cataloguing of the complete collection.
Other photographic collections at BAHP proved pertinent to a discussion of photographic representations of impoverished domestic space. The photographs of James Burgoyne\(^99\), Bill Brandt (deposited as part of the Bournville Village Trust Collection\(^100\)) and the Copec Collection\(^101\) were useful in establishing a genealogy for the tropes that reappear in the Shelter photographs. BAHP also holds periodicals that were of relevance to the research. The journals *Camerawork* and *Ten.8* were important resources for information about British photographic practice from the late 1960s onwards. The journal *New Society* proved the most appropriate contextual primary source in an interrogation of Hedges’ representation of the homeless child in impoverished domestic space. Characterised by its reliance on visual illustration (both photographic and graphic) and its focus on political and social issues affecting the child and the family, the journal provided a wealth of information pertinent to an analysis of Hedges’ photographs and Shelter’s campaign strategy. Moreover, photographs by Hedges and other Shelter photographers also feature in the journal in articles unrelated to Shelter, evidence of how its picture library was accessed by a wider clientele.\(^102\)

The Shelter archive at 88 Old Street in London was of central importance to the project. Located in the basement of the current headquarters of the charity, the archive consists of five shelving cabinets, packed with storage boxes and folders (Fig. 6). Little used and somewhat eclectically organised, the archive contains negatives, photographs, documents, management meeting minutes, press cuttings, publications and advertising material dating from the formation of Shelter in 1966 to the present day. In addition to a number of Hedges’ final prints, the archive contains the work of other Shelter photographers, many of whom worked

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\(^99\) Birmingham Improvement Scheme Collection, LS2, BAHP.  
\(^100\) Bournville Village Trust Collection, MS 1536, BAHP.  
\(^101\) This collection of photographs is reproduced in F. Margaret Fenter, *Copec Adventure-The Story of Birmingham Copec House Improvement Society*, Birmingham: The Birmingham Copec House Improvement Society, 1960.  
\(^102\) For example the *New Society* articles ‘Whose city?’ (23 January 1969, pp. 120-22) and ‘Running FIS (the Family Income Supplement)’ (13 January 1972, p. 64) feature photographs by Penny Tweedie. The article ‘No Fixed Abode’ (21 December 1972, pp. 690-91) includes Hedges’ Shelter photograph of a man sleeping rough on a park bench (Fig. 103).
alongside him in the early days of the charity, including that of Rob Cowan, Maggie Gathercole, Shirley Kilpatrick, George Marshman, Graham McCarter, Stuart McPherson and Penny Tweedie. Although the photographs are somewhat generic in terms of subject matter and style, the identity of the photographer is invariably stamped on the back of the photographs (Fig. 7). This material creates an invaluable context for Hedges’ photographs, and provides an overview of how the charity used his images in their campaigns. The archive was created by Les Burrows, who worked for the charity in a variety of roles between 1973 and 2009. He informed me that Shelter intends to digitise the archive in time for its fiftieth anniversary in 2016, at which point it will be relocated to the Bishopsgate Institute in London.¹⁰³

Other archives were also accessed during the research. The British Library Newspaper Collection provided important information regarding the public response to Shelter’s advertising campaigns in the late 1960s.¹⁰⁴ The Oral History of British Photography archive at the British Library provided a useful insight into photographic practice in Britain in the late 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰⁵ It holds a recording of a 1979 lecture by Hedges entitled *Working in Depth* which was useful in gaining an understanding of how Hedges perceived his photographic practice in the 1970s.¹⁰⁶ Here, Hedges discusses his photographic studies of British industry, but fails to make any specific reference to the Shelter photographs (a transcript of the lecture is included in the thesis as Appendix II).

¹⁰³ Les Burrows, personal e-mail to author, 5 August 2014.
¹⁰⁴ At the time of the research, The British Library Newspaper Collection was located at Colindale, North London. This closed in November 2013 and the collection has temporarily relocated to the Newsroom in St. Pancras. Work is underway to move the collection to a purpose-built Newspaper Storage Building (NSB) in Boston Spa, West Yorkshire.
¹⁰⁵ The Oral History of British Photography archive (catalogue no: C459) is an ongoing project charting the development of photography in Britain from the 1920s to the present day. Audio recordings of interviews include those with David A. Bailey, Shirley Baker, Ian Berry, Helen Chadwick, Anna Fox, Helmut Gernsheim, Mike Goldwater, Paul Graham, Mark Haworth-Booth, Nick Hedges, David Hurn, Simon Norfolk, Martin Parr, George Rodger, Jo Spence, Sam Taylor-Wood, Gavin Turk and Nick Waplington.
Fundamental to the research were three protracted interviews with Nick Hedges, conducted at his home in Shrewsbury between June and August 2010. Each was, on average, of three hours’ duration. These were recorded and later transcribed (Appendix III). The interviews mark the first time that Hedges has spoken at length about the Shelter commission, and provide previously unknown information about how the photographs were made, who the subjects of the photographs were, and how Shelter used the photographs. They also reveal how Hedges felt in 2010 about his practice and its reception, both historical and contemporary, by critics and public alike. The interviews were constructed around specific questions regarding the Shelter commission and photographs. The latter was facilitated by showing Hedges particular photographs and asking him to discuss them. In addition to Hedges, interviews with other people associated with Shelter were invaluable. An interview with Les Burrows was particularly informative regarding Shelter’s advertising campaigns, and their subsequent impact. It was also useful in gaining a general understanding of how the charity was organised and its political motivations. A telephone interview with Penny Tweedie was equally revealing. E-mail correspondence with Des Wilson provided background information on the charity, although Hedges’ work was not discussed. Wilson answered questions regarding Shelter’s advertising campaigns, but had little to say about Hedges’ photographs, or how they were used.

The research equally depended on a series of fourteen interviews with BAHP staff, conducted between March 2010 and February 2011. The aim of the interviews was to identify the key

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107 The interviews took place at Hedges’ home in Shrewsbury on 3 June, 15 June and 2 August 2010 respectively.

108 Les Burrows was employed by Shelter as a Housing Aid worker between 1973 and 1978; from 1978 to 1983 he was a researcher at Shelter Head Office. The interview took place at 88 Old Street on 18 May 2010.

109 Penny Tweedie, telephone interview with author, 3 March 2010. Tweedie worked alongside Hedges as a freelance photographer for the charity between 1967 and 1970. She was the sole photographer for Shelter’s 1967 report Back to school… from a holiday in the slums! A year later she worked alongside Hedges and Graham McCarter on the report Notice to Quit. Her photographs were also used in advertising campaigns.

110 The fourteen members of BAHP staff that were interviewed were as follows: Richard Albutt, Head of Digitisation and Outreach (20 October 2010), Janet Brisland, Development Manager for Children’s Services (23
concerns that shaped the archive professional’s interaction with photographs of children. The intention was to discover what kind of issues, if any, were raised by photographs of children and how, or if, these affected the way in which they were displayed. Archive professionals representing a cross section of BAHP’s four key departments (Public Services, Digitisation and Outreach, Collections Management and the Photographic Department) participated. In each interview members of staff were shown a series of ten photographs of children taken from the BAHP collections, four of which belonged to the Hedges Collection. The photographs encompassed a diverse range in terms of subject matter, style and date. Two of the photographs featured naked children. Of the four photographs made by Hedges, two represented children living in impoverished domestic space. After being shown the photographs, the interviewee was free to discuss any issues that they felt would impact on an intention to access, or display, them within the archive. In addition to the interviews, I also attended an Access Panel to discuss the protocol governing access to certain material in the archive, including photographs of children. Many of the issues raised in the interviews and Access Panel concerned child protection, and whether or not it was appropriate to access or display certain photographs. A fuller understanding of this overarching concern was gained through an interview with Niall Macauley, Procedure Writer on the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board.

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111 At the time of writing in 2010, these four departments were in place. On moving to the new Library of Birmingham in 2013, they were reorganised as part of a new management and staff structure.

112 The Access Panel took place on 1 February 2011. Those in attendance were Rachel Macgregor, Jim Ranahan, Corinna Rayner, Kevin Roberts, Alison Smith and myself.

113 Niall Macauley interview, 26 March 2010.
Further information on photographic archives and archive training was obtained through e-mail correspondence with a number of institutions. Both Elizabeth Shepherd, Archives and Records Management MA course leader at UCL, and Dr Julie Mathias, Archives and Records Management Team at Aberystwyth University, provided information on current training offered to archive professionals. Rachel Gill, member of the Archives Enquiry Team at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, explained the protocol governing access and Data Protection in the case of the online exhibition of photographs. Moving beyond the archive, interviews with museum and gallery professionals (staff at BMAG\textsuperscript{114}, Ikon Gallery in Birmingham\textsuperscript{115}, The New Art Gallery Walsall\textsuperscript{116}, The Museum of Childhood\textsuperscript{117} in London and Manchester University\textsuperscript{118}) provided further knowledge of exhibition practice, photographic and otherwise. Although these interviews were, in retrospect, not directly relevant, they proved useful in thinking about display methodologies, censorship and audience expectations, specifically in relation to photographic representations of children.

**Thesis’ Structure**

The thesis consists of an introduction, followed by three chapters and a conclusion, plus appendices. Chapter one focuses on Hedges as the maker of the photographs. It examines the context in which he made the images, both in terms of the Shelter commission and what was happening in British photography in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It argues that in 1976 Hedges became a scapegoat for a certain faction of the leftist photography movement after a

\textsuperscript{114} Toby Watley (Director of Collections) interview, 16 November 2010; Oliver Buckley (Interpretation and Audience Development Manager) interview 26 November 2010; Tom Grosvenor (Exhibitions Officer) interview, 8 December 2010.

\textsuperscript{115} Jonathan Watkins (Director of Ikon Gallery) interview, 17 January 2011.

\textsuperscript{116} Deborah Robinson (Head of Exhibitions) interview, 30 October 2012.

\textsuperscript{117} Rhian Harris (Director of the Museum of Childhood) interview, 6 July 2011.

\textsuperscript{118} Dr Dorothy Clayton (Director of Image Licensing and Copyright, The John Rylands University Library) interview, 11 November 2010.
high-profile attack on his character by Jo Spence. It suggests that this attack prompted Hedges to publish a public defence of his work, and also to exhibit previously unseen photographs in support of this defence. Moving beyond this initial incident, the chapter examines the validity of Spence’s critique. Through a detailed analysis of his making of the photographs, it focuses on the concept of integrity as a marker of Hedges’ professional, moral and ethical character. It questions the usefulness or relevance of the term in analysing a commission that often left Hedges little choice regarding the subjects of his photographs, or how they were used.

Focusing specifically on photographs of homeless children, the chapter examines the genealogy of Hedges’ representations, arguing that they refer to a well-worn art historical tradition. Within this tradition, however, the chapter argues that Hedges attempted to present a more positive representation of the homeless child in images that were never published by Shelter. Hedges’ repeated representation of the homeless child in certain kinds of domestic space is explored. The ways in which the performativity of this space shapes the narratives and meanings generated by the photographs is examined. A detailed analysis of how Hedges made the photographs, based on information obtained in interviews, informs a discussion of the technical properties of the photographs, in terms of lighting, composition and viewpoint, and examines how these contribute to their semiotic effect. The chapter further explores the gap between authorial intention and semiotic effect that sits at the heart of Hedges’ practice.

The chapter examines the wider critical response to the Shelter photographs, in an attempt to move beyond Spence’s critique as a definitive, and currently unchallenged, judgement. Whilst cognisant of the limitations of the Shelter commission, the chapter examines Hedges’ agency in creating photographs that, in his own words, presented a ‘one-dimensional’ view of
Hedges’ assertion of the candid nature of his practice is examined in the light of research that points to a more interventionist methodology. It is argued that, despite his claims to the contrary, many of Hedges’ photographs were carefully orchestrated to achieve certain ends. Finally, the chapter examines how the establishment of a radical leftist photography movement in the 1970s led to Hedges’ marginalisation as a British photographer. It contends that a new way of representing the homeless, centred on the deconstructed photographic image and community photography, was pitted against Hedges’ practice as passé, clichéd and unethical. The fairness of this assessment is questioned. The chapter suggests that, at the moment of their making, the Shelter photographs, whilst undoubtedly stereotyping the homeless, were shaped by the social and political climate of their day and the demands of the Shelter commission, and therefore cannot be measured against a retrospectively-imposed model of ‘acceptable’ socialist documentary practice.

Chapter two focuses on Shelter as the commissioning agent of the photographs. Through the case study of a photograph of a girl in a slum kitchen, the chapter explores the ways in which the charity used Hedges’ photographs and to what ends. It argues that Shelter presented a highly edited version of Hedges’ oeuvre and, moreover, refused to publish photographs that did not fulfil their agenda. It suggests that this led to a misrepresentation of Hedges’ work in the public arena. The chapter goes on to explore the contradiction that underpinned Shelter’s strategy: its identity as a radical and revolutionary charity was built on a traditional, paternalistic and conservative representation of the homeless. Whilst undoubtedly the catalyst for groundbreaking policy change (as in its successful campaign to redefine homelessness in 1970), the charity was unable to move beyond a somewhat exploitative and demeaning visualisation of the problem. Whilst ostensibly representing homelessness in a new, more

realistic way, the chapter argues that the charity relied on representing the homeless as vulnerable victims and objects of pity.

The particular appeal of Hedges’ photograph of the girl in a kitchen is examined in relation to representations of the child’s naked body and an attendant ‘crisis of childhood’ which has emerged in the decades following the making of the photograph. Through an analysis of the relationship between word and image, the chapter suggests that Hedges’ photographs assumed a new significance when framed by Shelter’s reports and advertisements. It proposes that certain narratives and meanings were privileged at the expense of others. The chapter identifies these narratives in the light of social policy debates that surrounded the homeless child from the late 1960s onwards. The chapter also explores how the public reaction to homelessness and the squatting movement in the 1970s shaped Shelter’s publicly acclaimed and highly lucrative campaign strategy. The final part of the chapter examines photographs that the charity refused to publish. Often not made into final prints, these images only exist as negatives and contact prints. By reinserting the photograph of the girl in the kitchen into a network of related images, a fuller understanding of her life emerges. The chapter argues that it is only in the light of these unseen images that a more meaningful interpretation of Hedges’ photographs is made possible.

In its fulfilment of the remit of the CDA, chapter three examines the photographic archive, both as a site of accession and display. Currently housed in the archive at BAHP, Hedges’ photographs continue to make meaning, now as historical artefacts as opposed to commercial images. The chapter examines current archival practice in the UK, in terms of photographic collections. It suggests that, at present, photographs deposited in archives are not being best served by a system that is primarily geared towards textual documents. In the light of a postmodern redefinition of the archive as a space of shifting, as opposed to fixed, meaning it suggests that current methodologies of accessioning, cataloguing, accessing and displaying
photographs are hindering an effective engagement with photographs. It goes on to outline ways in which these methodologies may be adjusted in order to facilitate, rather than frustrate, this engagement. Focusing specifically on photographs of children, the chapter also explores how archive professionals approach potentially problematic images, in terms of access and display. In line with current legal requirements, the overarching themes that define this interaction are data protection, copyright and child nudity.

Whilst cognisant of the importance of these factors, the chapter identifies other, equally important, considerations that are currently being overlooked. Primary amongst these is the consent, or lack thereof, of the photographic subject. Focusing on Hedges’ photographs of homeless children, the chapter examines the implications of displaying photographs made prior to the introduction of an ethical and legal concept of consent, and proposes that a carefully considered display methodology may go some way towards minimising the potential exploitation of the photographic subject. The chapter proceeds to examine the significance of the Discovery Gallery in the new Library of Birmingham as a prototypical space within the photographic archive. Referencing the photographic exhibitions Daniel Meadows: Early Photographic Works (The Discovery Gallery, Library of Birmingham, 16 May – 17 August 2014) and Make Life Worth Living (Science Museum, 2 October 2014 – 1 March 2015) as case studies, the chapter explores new ways of interpreting and displaying the Shelter photographs. The findings of the chapter are formalised in a set of guidelines of best practice for BAHP staff (Appendix I).

In conclusion, the thesis reassesses the Shelter photographs and their making in the light of conversations with Hedges, research into the Shelter commission and through direct visual analysis of the photographs themselves. Moving beyond current thinking on Hedges and his work, the thesis suggests new ways of interpreting his photographs informed by a contextual awareness of their commission, production, dissemination and reception. It proposes that
Hedges’ representation of the homeless (dominated by the trope of the homeless child) involves far more than the perpetuation of a paternalistic politics of representation as explored in previous studies of victim photography. By reinserting the photographs into a complex contextual narrative, the thesis outlines an alternative way of interpreting a series of photographs which have dismissed as clichéd, unethical and exploitative. An examination of the photographic archive as a depository of previously unpublished images, and the site of the Shelter photographs as historical artefacts, is equally important in a re-evaluation of Hedges’ work and legacy. The thesis thus presents a detailed and comprehensive account of the Shelter photographs and their maker, predicated on research into Hedges, the representation of the homeless child, and the photographic archive in which they are housed.

In 1979, Hedges wrote an essay entitled ‘Charity Begins At Home: The Shelter Photographs’ which was published in Photography/Politics: One by the HMPW. In this essay, Hedges identified five stereotypes that underpinned the photographs that he had made for Shelter: ‘Forlorn child (innocent victim)’, ‘Mother and baby (Madonna and child)’, ‘Anxious old age pensioner (helpless innocent)’, ‘Depressed family group (object of pity)’ and ‘Resigned father (victim of society)’. Collectively, Hedges’ stereotypes defined the homeless as innocent victims and helpless objects of pity. This chapter focuses on the categories of ‘Forlorn child’ and ‘Mother and baby’ as a means of exploring how Hedges represented the homeless child in his photographs, and the implications of this.

It can be argued that Hedges’ essay was a response to one written three years earlier by the feminist photographer and co-founder of Camerawork, Jo Spence. In February 1976 her essay entitled ‘The Politics of Photography’ was published in the first issue of Camerawork. Its importance was highlighted through its republication in The British Journal of Photography the following month. The essay explored different strands of contemporary photographic practice in Britain within a political, specifically Marxist, framework. Although Hedges was not mentioned by name, the essay was dominated by one of his photographs (Fig. 8). Captioned with his name, this image was placed centrally within the text (Fig. 9). A cropped version of the photograph also featured prominently in the republished essay (Fig. 10). The photograph had previously been used on the front cover of the 1971 Shelter report entitled Condemned. It was also published in key campaign material,

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121 Hedges 1979, op. cit., p. 162.
122 Ibid.
in a variety of guises (Figs. 11, 12 and 13). In 1991, it was republished in *Building for the Future*, Shelter’s twenty-fifth anniversary report. The photograph shows two children in domestic space. The focal points of the photograph are the children’s faces. They are highlighted against the gloomy space of the interior, and the photograph was taken at relatively close range. One child stares directly into the camera, open mouthed and wide-eyed, its head resting against a table edge. Somewhat in contrast, the younger child appears grubby and unkempt and its eyes are closed. Both appear vulnerable and constricted by their cramped and cluttered surroundings (the younger child seems to be squeezed into the shadowy recess under the table). At first glance, the children appear almost decapitated as a result of the composition and lighting.

Under a paragraph headed ‘Social Realism’, Spence discussed photographers employed by charities, and summed up the charitable strategy as follows:

‘Appeals are usually graphically presented, tastefully designed, with suitable abject women or children on the covers. Usually such photographs are taken by people of a different social class from those depicted…The integrity of photographers faced with this situation hangs by a very fine thread’.  

Four years after leaving Shelter, Hedges was cited as the ‘archetypal’ charity photographer and the integrity of his practice was called into question. Now recontextualised as a suspect image, as opposed to an illustration of slum housing, the photograph assumed a new meaning. The prominent letters that spelled out CONDEMNED were now aimed at Hedges and his work. Transgressing the uppermost edge of the photograph, the word seems to have been rubber stamped indelibly across Hedges’ character, beliefs and career. Spence’s essay placed Hedges’ practice at the centre of a stylistic debate about what political photography

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might entail. It also framed the issue in terms of class: Hedges’ middle-class background was contrasted with the predominantly working-class identity of his subjects. His Shelter photographs of ‘abject women and children’ were chosen as an example of a retrograde and morally unsound photographic practice. They were used as an example of ‘what not to do’ as a politically committed socialist photographer. As a leading feminist and Marxist activist, Spence reacted against the notion of the heroic male photographer, whose identity relied on an unquestioned authority to elicit the ‘truth’. For Spence, this truth was predicated on the objectification of marginalised groups (notably women, children and the working class) in photographs that presented one-dimensional and non-threatening images of inequality.

It is possible that Spence’s essay influenced Hedges’ decision to exhibit previously unseen Shelter photographs in the *Children Photographed* exhibition, held between 25 September and 23 October 1976 in the foyer of the Shaw Theatre in London (Fig. 14). The exhibition subsequently went on tour throughout England. Funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain, the exhibition explored representations of childhood in British photography and resulted from a collaboration between the Children’s Rights Workshop (of which Jo Spence was a founding member) and Ikon (the design group formerly known as Penguin Education’s art department). Hedges had exhibited the Shelter photographs at Impressions Gallery in York three years earlier. However, in *Children Photographed* he exhibited preparatory contact prints alongside final prints for the first (and only) time. As if in response to Spence’s critique, Hedges exhibited images that contradicted her argument. A series of contact prints of the Tandy family (rejected by Shelter as unsuitable for publication) showed a happy, smiling family, far removed from the abject women and children cited by Spence (Fig. 15).

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127 The exhibition was shown at Charing Cross Hospital between 28 October and 13 November 1976, after which it toured libraries and railway stations around the UK. It featured the work of eighteen photographers and its intention was to explore ‘authentic views’ of childhood. For reviews of the exhibition see Paul Harrison ‘Images of childhood’, *New Society*, 28 October 1976, pp. 203-04 and Tom Picton ‘Children Are Beautiful, Too…’, *Camerawork*, no.4, October 1976, pp. 6-7.
Hedges’ attempt to salvage his reputation had little effect, however. As late as 1983, his photographs of the homeless continued to be castigated as examples of an exploitative and paternalistic practice. In her book *Committing Photography*, Su Braden contrasted photographs made by the Bootle Art in Action community photography group with those made by Hedges. She observed how the former,

‘could never be mistaken – although they too show bad conditions, crumbling housing and poverty – for the photographs taken for a charitable organisation like Shelter. The Bootle pictures do not evoke pity. They show defiance, pride, humour and beauty in the people and the place’.  

(Fig. 16)

By way of contrast, one of Hedges’ photographs (Fig. 17) was accompanied by the caption: ‘Shelter’s fundraising campaign falls into a reforming role which denies that the people most concerned have a voice of their own’. For Braden, the Bootle images were the antithesis of Hedges’ silent stereotypes. Made by the homeless themselves, they epitomised the kind of images produced by numerous community photography groups during the 1970s. Allied to a leftist agenda, this way of documenting social problems adopted the democratisation of the photographic image as its rallying cry. The agency of disempowered working-class groups (the homeless, the poor, single mothers, ethnic minorities and children) was reinstated through self-authored photographs. As a charity photographer, Hedges’ practice stood in direct opposition to the community photography movement, and was thus seen by the left as politically and ethically unsound.

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128 Braden *op. cit.*, p. 71.
130 The community photography movement emerged in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s in an attempt to democratise the medium and to deploy it as a tool of radical political activism. For further discussion of community photography see Ian Grosvenor and Natasha Macnab’s ‘Photography as an agent of transformation: education, community and documentary photography in post-war Britain’, *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, vol. 51, nos. 1-2, 2015, pp. 117-35.
A year later in 1984, Hedges responded to Braden’s critique of his work in a scathing review of her book, published in Ten.8. Here, he describes her text as ‘confused’ and Braden as ‘not really equipped to give an historic contextualisation for committed photography’. In Hedges’ opinion, the book fails to give an accurate, or balanced, account of socially concerned photography in Britain. Hedges foregrounds Braden’s ‘blatant attempt to promote some rather undistinguished, dull but politically ‘correct’ photography’ and her bias towards the feminist photographic community which she ‘singled out for fulsome praise’. Hedges sums up by stating: ‘there is nowhere in the book an adequate description or discussion of current community photography projects’ and deals Braden a final, decisive blow in his dismissal of her text as ‘turgid lecturing’ beyond rescue.

The chapter explores the issues raised by leftist critiques of Hedges’ work and the antagonism that existed between Hedges and the proponents of a new radical leftist photography. It focuses on Hedges’ agency, or lack thereof, in the making of the Shelter photographs, and how this is manifested in the photographs themselves. Through an examination of individual photographs, the chapter attempts to unpick the complexities of Hedges’ practice and the potential contradictions inherent in it. It examines the shift in photographic discourse throughout the 1970s that resulted in Hedges’ photographs being dismissed as a hackneyed and unsatisfactory way of representing social inequality. It assesses the impact of this shift on Hedges’ understanding of his practice and his public engagement with this discourse through articles, books and interviews spanning twenty years. A series of extensive interviews with Hedges also form the basis for a discussion of his practice.

131 Hedges was a member of Ten.8’s editorial group for issues number 7/8, 9 and 10. The other members of the group were Ed Barber, Derek Bishton, Brian Homer, Paul Lewis, John Reardon, John Taylor and Belinda Whiting.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
The analysis of Hedges’ photographs for Shelter is grounded in the historical circumstances of their production between 1968 and 1972. Straddling the 1960s and the 1970s, Hedges was making photographs at a seminal moment in the history of British photography, when the nature and purpose of the medium were being called into question. The chapter explores the photographic tradition that shaped Hedges’ visualisation of the homeless child, and the reasons that lay behind his mode of representation. It examines how Hedges negotiated the demands of the Shelter commission, and how he reconciled his personal and political beliefs with the necessity of making photographs that raised funds. It explores how Hedges’ photographs of the homeless child, and the response to them, raised pertinent issues regarding the role of the socially concerned photographer and the photographic representation of social inequality.

An analysis of Hedges’ practice is underpinned by a clear differentiation between the 980 final prints that constitute the Hedges Collection and the preparatory negatives and contact prints that were not printed as photographs. The former is not privileged over the latter: each is assessed as discrete evidence of Hedges’ agency. The thesis examines how Hedges’ practice was shaped by the Shelter commission, and explores the practical demands of making photographs ‘to order’ in the pursuit of public donations. However, within this remit, the thesis suggests that Hedges achieved a certain autonomy that furnished him with representational choices. It argues that Spence’s attack on Hedges, if not completely unwarranted, did not take into account the full range of his Shelter photographs, the subtleties of his practice or the demands of his position. Cognisant of Spence’s focus on the semiotic effect of the photographs, as opposed to the intentionality of their creator, the thesis reassesses her critique in the wider context of their commission.

Focusing specifically on Hedges’ representation of the homeless child, the validity of Spence’s argument and her foregrounding of authorial and ethical integrity as a defining
characteristic of 1970s leftist photographic practice is examined. Fundamental to her critique was an inability or unwillingness to separate Hedges from the photographs that he made. She suggests that, as a white middle-class man, Hedges was unavoidably entrenched in a position of privileged entitlement. He embodied the power, freedom and control that were denied his photographic subjects. He could choose how, where and when to make his photographs. He could decide how they would look, and what kind of pictures best suited his purpose. His decisions dictated the way the homeless were represented, and how they would be remembered by history. Regardless of Hedges’ intentions (of which Spence had little insight), she believed that his photographs were doomed to perpetuate the stereotype so favoured by white middle-class men in power: the poor as pitiable victims of their own making.

Spence’s position seems to epitomise that challenged by Roland Barthes in his 1968 essay ‘The Death of the Author’. Following Barthes’ lead, other theorists have explored the uncontrollable nature of photographic meaning, regardless of the intentions of the author. Unwilling or unable to assess Hedges’ photographs independently of the identity of their maker, Spence chose instead to seek the explanation of the work ‘in the man or woman who produced it’. In this chapter, a space emerges between Hedges and the photographs that he made. Following Barthes’ suggestion, each photograph is approached as ‘a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash’, rather than as a text fixed by the author. In many cases, it is clear that Hedges’ intention to make photographs that would generate the maximum profit for Shelter resulted in representations of the homeless that lacked dignity and breadth.

135 Barthes 1968, op. cit.
136 See for example Ariella Azoulay’s observation in Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography (London: Verso Books, 2012): ‘The image is the point of departure for a voyage whose route is never known in advance’ (p. 44).
137 Barthes 1968, op. cit., p. 143.
138 Ibid., p. 146.
Hedges is clear about the purpose and function of his photographs:

‘You couldn’t get emotionally entangled…You knew that the most effective thing you could do was to take the best kind of photographs that you could and use them in the most effective way that you could. That’s what you could do. You weren’t a social worker, you weren’t a counsellor. Basically, you had to know what your role was’.¹³⁹

Ultimately however, the look, meaning and effect of the photographs that he made often seem at odds with Hedges’ undoubted respect for the people that he earnestly wanted to help. An awareness of the potential fissure between authorial intention and semiotic effect is vital if Hedges’ photographs are to be assessed in a balanced and critical way.

The ‘Forlorn Child (Innocent Victim)’

The first of the five stereotypes that Hedges identified as defining his work for Shelter was that of the ‘Forlorn child (innocent victim)’. Hedges’ choice of ‘forlorn’ to describe a homeless child is revealing. His conception of the homeless child is overwhelmingly negative and defined by unhappiness, loss and abandonment. Hedges’ description further associated the forlorn child with notions of innocence and victimhood. In Hedges’ retrospectively imposed taxonomy, a diverse range of photographs (of different children, settings and locations) taken over the four years that he worked for Shelter, coalesce to form this type of photograph.

In his article, the category of the forlorn child was illustrated by a photograph made in Salford in 1971 which was subsequently published as a full-page illustration in Shelter’s

The photograph features two young children, a boy and a girl, in domestic space. They are seated next to each other on an old and tattered couch. The boy holds a cup in his hands and looks off-frame towards an adult, whose shoe is just visible, cropped by the right-hand border of the photograph. Perched on the edge of the couch, the girl looks up towards the camera. Resting between the two is an illustrated comic bearing the title *The Rocky Road to Nowhere*, a particularly germane headline that seems to sum up the children’s life chances. Although not shown, the source of light appears to be a window behind the couch on the left-hand side of the room. In the background there is a damp and peeling alcove to one side of a crumbling, tiled mantelpiece.

Retrospectively, this photograph embodied Hedges’ notion of the ‘forlorn’ child. Seven years after leaving Shelter, Hedges perceived it as a stereotype, rather than as a representation, of individual circumstances. An awareness of the rise of the homeless child as a staple subject for socially concerned photography from the 1930s onwards, provides a context for this interpretation. An overview of representations of the homeless child, both in photography, film and painting, forms the basis of a discussion of Hedges’ photographs as a negotiation of an established visual rhetoric. By tracing its genealogy, it is possible to evaluate how Hedges’ photograph both engages with, and departs from, existing representations of the homeless child.

Some of the first photographs that featured genuinely homeless children were made as part of town planning initiatives. A discussion of these early photographs is framed by a contemporary definition of the term ‘homeless’ which would not have been recognised at the time of their making. During the nineteenth century, people living in slums were described as destitute and poor, but were not recognised as homeless. The reluctance to recognise extreme poverty and poor housing as homelessness persisted until Shelter successfully negotiated a

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140 *Condemned*, Shelter report, 1971, p. 46.
change in the law in 1970. At this point, the legal definition of homelessness (which had previously been limited to people living on the streets, those literally without shelter) was expanded to include people living in poor housing. The identification of homeless children in these early photographs is therefore made retrospectively and in line with a current understanding of the term.

The homeless child was a popular subject in both the visual arts and photography in the nineteenth century. Paintings such as Augustus Edwin Mulready’s *Uncared For* (1871) (Fig. 19) and Thomas Kennington’s *Homeless* (1890) (Fig. 20) present a somewhat sentimental and romanticised view of the plight of destitute children, a theme that gained popularity from the 1870s onwards as a result of the increasing influence of illustrated journals such as *The Illustrated London News* and *The Graphic*, which commissioned artists to provide images of ‘real’ life. Painters represented the waifs and urchins of the Dickensian imagination to much public acclaim. Urban poverty and homelessness, particularly visualised through the experience of the child, became a central theme of the Social Realist genre in painting at this time. Photographers were also called to document the changing face of Britain’s urban centres and, in so doing, represented the homeless by accident, rather than design. In 1866, the Scottish photographer Thomas Annan was commissioned by the Glasgow City Improvement Trust to photograph the slums of the city (Fig. 21). The commission resulted in a series of photographs entitled *Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow*. Annan recorded the poor housing conditions as a detached observer. Taken from a distance, his photographs of

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141 When the Conservative Party won the general election in 1970, it honoured its pledge to redefine homelessness and introduced legislation that expanded the definition of homelessness to include Shelter’s recommendations.

142 A similar impulse to document the changing face of Paris can be seen in the work of Charles Marville (1813-1879) and Eugene Atget (1857-1927). The former photographed architecture, landscapes and the urban environment, specifically of ancient Paris before it was swept away under the auspices of Haussmannisation, Baron Haussmann’s plan for the modernization of Paris, beginning in 1854. Atget was a pioneer of documentary photography and determined to record the architecture and street scenes of Paris before their disappearance.

back alleys and tenements attest more to an interest in architectural photography than that of welfare reform. In 1871 a similar project took place in Birmingham, when parts of the city were cleared to make way for the construction of the new Parisian-style boulevards of New Street and Corporation Street. Local photographer James Burgoyne was commissioned to photograph the city’s shops, streets and slums before they were destroyed as part of Joseph Chamberlain’s Birmingham Improvement Scheme (Fig. 22).  

In the photographs of Annan and Burgoyne, the homeless appeared by chance, sometimes caught as a blur on the photographic plate (note the blurred figures in the lower left-hand corners of both photographs). Homeless children (or adults for that matter) were not a pictorial priority. In such photographs, the homeless child was merely part of the landscape of the slums, an incidental feature that intermittently appeared, tucked into a doorway, gathered in a curious crowd or crouched on a step. Due to the technical limitations of cameras at this time, these photographs represented exterior, rather than interior, scenes: it was not yet possible to make photographs inside slum houses. In other cases, the homeless child took centre stage. In 1860, Oscar Gustave Rejlander made his iconic image of child homelessness, variously titled as Poor Jo, Night in Town, Homeless or The Outcast. Exhibited by the Royal Photographic Society, it was subsequently used in the publicity campaigns of the Shaftesbury Society for more than a century to advertise the plight of homeless children (Fig. 23).  

145 Flash photography was invented in Germany in 1887 by Adolf Miethe and Johannes Gaedicke.  
147 This photograph was so successful in generating a response from the public that it is still used by the charity today.
From the late nineteenth century onwards, the figure of the homeless child captured the public imagination, emerging as a transnational icon of social crisis and economic depression. Both in Britain and America, photographs of dispossessed children were politicised and used as tools of social reform within the genre of slum photography. Motivated by a desire to improve conditions, or simply a prurient fascination with how the other half lived, sordid images of slum life were ubiquitous in lantern slide shows, the precursor of modern day cinema. The amateur photographer Thomas Burke produced a series of sixty images for a set of lantern slides entitled *Slum Life in Our Great Cities*, published in 1892 by Riley Brothers of Bradford, one of the largest mass producers of lantern slides. An accompanying slide note read: ‘In city slum life one is struck, nay appalled by, the great body of mere boys and girls who are ragged, careless and apparently uncared for’. Likewise, the photographs of John Galt, Watson and Horace Warner represented the squalid conditions of urban slums and the children who inhabited them. In America, Jacob Riis produced iconic photographs of New York’s urban waifs and strays, commonly known as Street Arabs due to their nomadic existence. Lewis Hine’s photographs of child labourers

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148 Those that ventured into the slums with a social purpose included temperance advocates, educationalists, child protectionists, Evangelists and housing reformers.
149 Thomas Burke (1865-1941) was a city councillor for the London Borough of Vauxhall. His day job was as a poultry and fish salesman in St. John’s Market. The majority of his photographs were made in Liverpool and are striking due to their crude hand-colouring. A corresponding set of black-and-white images in albums are held by the Liverpool Record Office.
151 John Galt (1863-1942) was born in Elgin, Scotland. In 1890 he came to London to work for the London City Mission. Between 1893 and 1894, he made a series of photographs of the slums in the East End to be used in a lantern slide lecture. Entitled *Thrilling Tales of London Life*, he delivered the lecture all over Britain, raising funds for the Mission.
152 Watson (active 1890-1910) was an unidentified photographer who made photographs of slum housing for the Unhealthy Dwellings Sub-Committee of Kingston-upon-Hull from 1899 onwards. The Watson prints document slum areas prior to demolition and are similar to those of Annan and J. H. Cleet.
153 The Bedford Institute Association was a charitable organisation founded by the Quakers in 1865. It had five centres in the East End and four centres in other parts of London. Horace Warner (1871-1939) was a Trustee of the Institute. In 1912, he made 240 photographs of the Spitalfields area. Approximately thirty of these photographs were purchased by the Institute, to be used in their annual reports. In many of the photographs, the children were posed.
154 See for example *Children Sleeping in Mulberry Street* (1890). See also Sally Stein, ‘Making Connections with the Camera: Photography and Social Mobility in the Career of Jacob Riis’. Here, Stein points out the misleading historical conflation of Riis and Hine despite ‘the obvious differences in style, choice of subject, period and context in which they worked’ (Stein *op. cit*, p. 10).
were instrumental in changing the child labour laws in the US.\textsuperscript{155} During the 1930s, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) was established to combat and document rural poverty during America’s Great Depression in support of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal.\textsuperscript{156} Some of the most iconic photographs produced by the FSA’s Information Division featured the homeless child as a key trope. Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Margaret Bourke-White and Marion Post Wolcott all made photographs of homeless children in desperate need.\textsuperscript{157}

In Britain during the same era, the photographs of Edith Tudor-Hart, Margaret Monck, Bill Brandt and Bert Hardy documented poor housing conditions and were deployed in campaigns for improved living standards.\textsuperscript{158} Their photographs likewise mobilised representations of the poor, working-class child. The introduction and success of photo-magazines, such as \textit{Picture Post} in Britain and \textit{Fortune, Life} and \textit{Time} in America, created a platform for the dissemination and consumption of such images on a mass scale.\textsuperscript{159} Photographs of domestic space, both good and bad, illustrated \textit{Picture Post} articles such as ‘What It Means to Live in a Good House’.\textsuperscript{160} Here, positive images of happy families in comfortable interiors were

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{156} FSA photographers included Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Margaret Bourke-White, Ben Shahn, Arthur Rothstein, Russell Lee and Marion Post Wolcott. They were charged ‘with the task of bringing facts before the public…(to make) the rural problems known through the press, the radio, motion pictures and still photography’ (Stephanie Schwartz, ‘Late Work: Walker Evans and Fortune’, Special Issue: Modernism After Paul Strand, \textit{Oxford Art Journal}, vol. 38, no. 1, 2015, p. 117).
\item \textsuperscript{159} \textit{Picture Post} was published in Britain between 1938 and 1957; \textit{Life} was published in America between 1936 and 1972.
\item \textsuperscript{160} ‘What It Means to Live in a Good House’, \textit{Picture Post}, 1 January 1944, p. 22.
\end{itemize}
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juxtaposed with photographs that illustrated the other side of the coin under the heading ‘What It Means to Live in a Not-So-Good House’ (Fig. 24). Photojournalism depended on eye-catching and emotive images to engage public interest, and photographs of suffering children proved highly effective in this endeavour.

In 1939 *Picture Post* ran a photo-story entitled ‘Enough of All This!’ 161 The article revealed that the slums of East London had changed little since Charles Booth had published his survey *Life and Labour of the People* in 1889. 162 Some fifty years later, the same areas continued to be blighted by terrible housing conditions. Tenants felt powerless to challenge slum landlords, who demanded high rents and responded to complaints by issuing a notice to quit. In November 1938, a group of tenants in Stepney formed a committee with the intention of reducing rents, making repairs and improving housing conditions. Fundamental to their success was an organised programme of rent strikes across the East End. Significantly, six of the ten photographs used to illustrate the article focused on poor children, although they weren’t mentioned in the text. Moreover, these photographs dominated the layout of the article in terms of placement and scale. Perhaps to deflect attention away from the militant strikers, the narrative was anchored to images of vulnerable children, situated in appalling domestic space.

Two photographs (Figs. 25 and 26) on the first page of the article, made by an anonymous photographer, showed children in slum interiors above the heading ‘British children are growing up in these conditions in the year 1939’. 163 It can be argued that the efficacy of these photographs as propaganda in the fight against poor housing depends on two factors: firstly, a

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161 ‘Enough of All This!’ *Picture Post*, 1 April 1939, pp. 54-57.
162 Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People* [1889], London: Macmillan, 1902. Booth’s research, undertaken with a team that included Beatrice Potter and Clara Collet, revealed that thirty-five percent of the inhabitants of London’s East End were living in abject poverty. A second volume of research, which covered the rest of London, was published in 1891.
163 ‘Enough of All This!’, *Picture Post*, 1 April 1939, p. 54.
graphic portrayal of impoverished domestic space and secondly, the insertion of the forlorn child into this space. In both photographs, children are shown alone and apparently abandoned. In both, scale and composition are used to suggest the child’s powerlessness: the children are pushed to the outer edge of the picture plane and appear small in relation to the looming rooms that surround them. Elements within each photograph serve to restrict and encroach upon the child’s space. In both, invasive lines cut across the children’s bodies. In the first photograph, the edge of the fire screen bisects the figure of the little girl; in the second, the edge of a wall slices into the boy’s head. The photographs are also characterised by spatial compression, achieved by the elevated viewpoint of the camera. Paradoxically, although the domestic space appears to loom over the diminutive figures of the children, it simultaneously seems to fold in on itself. Space is cavernous and empty, yet also suffocating and stultifying. The unforgiving use of an early indoor flash bulb creates harsh tonal contrasts that further bleach out tone and contribute to a sense of flatness. This effect would have been exaggerated by the reproduction process that transformed the original print into a published image.

Most noticeably, it is the expression on the children’s faces that indicates their forlorn state. The children do not engage with the viewer. The little girl appears to be unaware of the camera and turns her head away. She hunches over, somewhat dejectedly, and pets a kitten that sits between her knees. The emotional state of the boy holding his sibling is less ambiguous, as both children stare with wide eyes and open mouths towards something unseen and out of frame. This effect is enhanced by the position of the photographer, who towers over the children: their ‘wide-eyedness’ is exaggerated as they look up towards the camera. There is a suggestion of fear, anxiety and vulnerability in their unsettling expressions. Both photographs illustrate a highly effective way of combining emotive images of children with a factual and detailed inventory of poor housing conditions.
It is possible to draw parallels between these photographs and Hedges’ photograph of the ‘Forlorn child’ (Fig. 18). In many ways, Hedges’ image seems to be a composite of the two. The emotional detachment and isolation of the little girl with the kitten, reappear in the identical posture and inaccessibility of the little boy in Hedges’ photograph. The wide-eyed stare of the boy holding his sibling reappears in the uncertain and anxious gaze of the little girl in Hedges’ photograph. Hedges’ photograph merges both manifestations of childhood trauma to disconcerting effect. As in the 1939 Picture Post photographs, the children in Hedges’ image appear to be alone and abandoned. The peeling walls, tattered leather couch and disused fireplace are features common to both sets of photographs. Hedges’ photograph is made from the same elevated viewpoint that appears in the Picture Post photographs, resulting in a truncated perspective and the suggestion of a claustrophobic and stifling domestic space. It also emphasises the frailty of the children’s bodies, the boundaries of which are similarly punctured by the rough edges of walls. A final parallel can be detected in Hedges’ choice of harsh chiaroscuro to define the space. The light from the concealed window on the left is concentrated on the figures of the children, lending them an almost unearthly glow. It pools around their hair and faces, highlighting their expressions and defining them as focal points of the composition. Their luminosity is contrasted with the threatening shadow that cloaks the alcove behind them, as in the Picture Post photograph of the little boy and his sibling.

In 1948, Bill Brandt and Bert Hardy worked together on a Picture Post article entitled ‘The Forgotten Gorbals’. The pair photographed the same slums that Hedges would document some twenty years later. The front page of the article featured three photographs by Brandt, whereas the rest of the article was illustrated with Hardy’s photographs. The photographs recorded both street scenes and domestic interiors, with the homeless child as the subject of

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five out of a total of thirteen photographs. It is again possible to identify similarities of narrative, setting and composition that link these photographs with those later made by Hedges. On page three of the article, one of Hardy’s photographs filled over two-thirds of the page (Fig. 27). In the foreground, a young girl sits at a table, the surface of which is cluttered with half a loaf of bread, a packet of Sifta salt and an eclectic array of crockery. Behind her, the cramped space is filled by a bed in which a little boy, perhaps her brother, sleeps. The caption beneath the photograph reads: ‘In a Gorbals Front Room, a Girl Finds Her Dreams are Slipping Out of Her Grasp’. A sub-caption expands this narrative, ‘Mary is sixteen…She dreams of nice clothes, handsome suitors, happy times. But already her life is coloured by her surroundings’. The photograph explores a different aspect of forlorn childhood: the desolation and wasted potential of the child trapped in a cycle of poverty. The girl is a tragic figure. She rests her chin on her hand and stares vacantly into space. Her slumped posture denotes fatigue and hopelessness and recalls Dorothea Lange’s iconic *Migrant Mother* photograph in her apathetic resignation (Fig. 28). Unlike the sleeping boy, she is aware of her entrapment, implied pictorially by the way in which her figure is compressed into the shallow space between the bed and the table. The photograph juxtaposes the innocence of the boy with the knowingness of the girl. Her expression is one of bitter disappointment that implies a growing awareness of the futility of her situation.

In 1970, Hedges made a series of photographs of a family who lived in one of the Gorbals tenements in Glasgow. The family consisted of a father and his three children (a young boy and two teenage girls). During an interview, Hedges selected one of these photographs as his favourite from amongst the hundreds that he had made for Shelter (Fig. 29).

He explained the reasons for this choice:
‘I was very fond of that family. The dad spent most of the interview sitting in his chair with a little boy. There were two sisters. One had a tattoo that said ‘I love Jim’. The reason I’m very fond of it is because adolescent girls are extremely difficult to photograph. We’d been with the family quite a long time and they’d got used to us being there. Another of my favourite photographs is the one of the two girls sitting together in the chair. The older sister was unemployed, the younger one was still at school, I think about fourteen, and you got this terrible sense that nothing was going to change and that they were trapped, the fourteen-year-old would become an unemployed sixteen-year-old two years later…I was very touched by it all.’

Hedges’ comments suggest an emotional response to the scene. In retrospect, Hedges projected a narrative of wasted potential onto the sisters. As in Hardy’s photograph, Hedges’ portrait communicates a sense of the sisters’ hopelessness. They are photographed slumped across a chair, their bodies entwined and framed by a cluttered and chaotic domestic space. Crumpled clothes surround them, draped across the back of the chair and suspended above the fireplace. A black cat sits by the empty grate. The youngest girl’s arm bears the words ‘I love Jim’, a pathetic and touching inscription of her romantic dreams. Both girls look downwards and wear the same disillusioned and bored expression.

Returning to the 1948 *Picture Post* article, another of Hardy’s photographs explored the sense of displacement that often defined the forlorn homeless child (Fig. 30). It visualised the child as an unwanted and itinerant denizen of the slums, characterised by its inability to find a secure space in which to belong. The photograph shows two young boys, one sitting and one standing, in a stairwell of a tenement building. The seated child holds a folded comic in his hands. The pair, illuminated from above by an unseen light source, is framed on either side

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165 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 388.
166 ‘The Forgotten Gorbals’, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
by bare stone walls, whose darkness enhances the theatricality of their illumination. On the right of the scene the darkness is punctuated by a brightly-lit doorway, through which it is possible to see part of a toilet.

The insalubrious setting is scattered with litter and filth. The dampness of the walls, the coldness of the steps and the griminess of the detritus are effectively conveyed by the harsh chiaroscuro of the print, which serves to emphasise the squalor of the scene. The biting edges of the stone steps form a cascading series of dramatic lines that separate brilliant light from blackest shadow. The steps descend into a murky space of indistinct shape and form, where sight is superseded by touch and smell. Compositionally, a connection is made between the space occupied by the boys and that of the toilet. Each forms a strip of light in the blackness that demands attention as a focal point of the photograph. The viewer’s eye oscillates between the two, to forge an uneasy link between the children and the imagined filth and stench of the toilet.

In the photograph, the homeless child seems to be contaminated by its surroundings. It embodies a rejection of childhood as a state of purity and innocence. It is the antithesis of the wanted child, who is loved and kept clean, warm and safe. The children in the photograph are left alone in a space that is dirty and cold. They are framed by a space associated with human excrement. Moreover, the caption beneath the photograph reveals that this is the only space where the children can go. Beneath the heading ‘Where the Young Can Sit and Read’ the caption reads: ‘No room to sit around at home. No place to sit around in the yard. If a fellow wants to read his comic in peace he can do so on the stairs’. This apparently anodyne, almost jocular, statement delivered in a ‘make do and mend’ register, sits uneasily with the abjection of the space that is represented.
In July 1971, Hedges made a photograph in Liverpool 8 (a notorious slum area) that related directly to the narrative of Hardy’s earlier photograph (Fig. 31). He photographed a boy reading a comic in the stairwell of a basement flat. The photograph was published as a half-page illustration in Shelter’s 1971 Condemned report. Although similar in narrative, Hedges’ photograph seems to present a different relationship of photographer to subject. In Hardy’s photograph, the homeless boys appear unaware of the camera’s presence, although the careful composition of the image would imply an orchestrated image. Hardy’s position at the moment of making the photograph suggests a voyeuristic and distanced view. Unseen by the children, perhaps hidden by the shadows, he peers round a corner to get his shot. In contrast, Hedges’ photograph documents a moment of connection between photographer and subject. The photograph records a candid and spontaneous interaction between Hedges and the boy who looks directly into the camera, pausing momentarily before turning the page of his comic. His expression is ambiguous – perhaps surprised or even slightly annoyed at having been discovered? There is a clear sense of the boy’s ownership of the space (the comics scattered on the floor function as territorial markers) and equally of Hedges’ unsolicited, and perhaps unwelcome, intrusion. Hedges’ photograph seems to represent a more positive version of the narrative of the homeless child. Despite his poverty, the boy defines his own space and revels in his self-sufficiency and privacy.

Hedges’ photographs clearly share common traits with those made by Brandt and Hardy for Picture Post. In both, the slum home is visualised as a cramped, unkempt and dirty space. Both rely heavily on the motif of the homeless child situated in this kind of domestic space.

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168 This more positive visualisation of the poor and homeless child echoes the work of Hedges’ contemporary, the photographer Shirley Baker who documented the slums of Salford between 1961 and 1981. Rather than focusing on the poverty of the children, her photographs (many in colour) capture the joy and exuberance of childhood play, freedom and exploration. Baker’s photographs were the subject of the exhibition Shirley Baker: Women, Children and Loitering Men held at The Photographers’ Gallery between 17 July and 20 September 2015.
The child is invariably represented as abandoned, hopeless, fearful and physically neglected. Its vulnerability is emphasised through its diminutive size and its exposure to its surroundings. Moreover, the homeless child often appears to be threatened by the space that surrounds it, either in terms of darkness, isolation or dirt. Compositonally, the figure of the child is often transgressed and compromised by its surroundings: sharp edges cut into it and claustrophobic spaces limit and confine it. Hedges’ photographs thus draw on an established pictorial convention of representing slum homes established by *Picture Post* in the 1930s. However, within this overarching similarity of approach, it is possible to suggest a point of difference. As illustrated by his photograph of the boy reading in the stairwell, Hedges made some photographs that tell a more positive story. In these images, Hedges desists from representing the homeless child as a victim, choosing instead to emphasise its self-sufficiency and agency. This alternative narrative is most evident in negatives and contact prints, where the full range and diversity of Hedges’ practice is evident. For the most part, it is missing in the photographs published by Shelter.

To sum up, Hedges’ representation of the forlorn homeless child in domestic space can be located within an established and widely disseminated photographic tradition that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, both in Britain and America. Moreover, both the *Picture Post* photographs made by Brandt and Hardy and those of Hedges, rely heavily on the representation of domestic space as a signifier of meaning. The kinds of spaces that frame the figure of the homeless child are fundamental to the narrative of the photographs, whether positive or negative. The way that rooms were photographed was an essential part of ‘setting the scene’, both literally and ideologically. It is also pertinent to note the predilection of social reformers, charities and photo-magazines for a specific, almost prescriptive, representation of the homeless child. Unsurprisingly, photographs of happy children were not required. As in the case of Hedges, these images existed, yet were never published.
Languishing in the archive as negatives and contact prints, such images are now coming to
the attention of photographers and photographic historians, keen to explore alternative, less
insistent narratives.\textsuperscript{169}

\textbf{Dark Space: The Photographic Void}

‘I’m not frightened of the darkness outside. It’s the darkness inside houses I don’t like\textsuperscript{170}

Across Hedges’ oeuvre, the representation of dark space generates a particularly striking
semiotic effect. Hedges’ photographs of children in dark space are used to construct a
narrative of the homeless child as victim. A comparison of two of his photographs of children
in similar settings reveals the way in which the technical properties of film and camera could
be used to present this version of homelessness when required. Both photographs show young
girls in slum bathrooms. However, only one of the photographs presents the homeless child
as ‘forlorn’ in line with the stereotype that Hedges applied to his work in his 1979 article.
This photograph was made in Moss Side in Manchester in July 1969 (Fig. 32). In an
interview, Hedges remembered it as unusual in that he shot the photograph twice with
different cameras: once in colour and once in black-and-white. The colour photograph, shot
on slide film, was produced for a Shelter slide talk.\textsuperscript{171} In contrast, monochrome film was
preferable for images used in Shelter’s printed material.

Historically, black-and-white photography is associated with the genres of both art and
documentary photography. In the latter, it is interpreted as a signifier of gritty realism,

\textsuperscript{169} See Allen C. Benson, ‘Killed Negatives: The Unseen Photographic Archives’, \textit{Archivaria}, no. 68, Fall 2009
and Kristen Lubben (ed.), \textit{The Magnum Contact Sheets}, London: Thames and Hudson, 2011. See also Lisa
Oppenheim’s photographic exhibition entitled \textit{Killed Negatives, After Walker Evans}, held at Store Gallery in

\textsuperscript{170} Shelagh Delaney, \textit{A Taste of Honey}, Modern Plays, Modern Classics, Methuen & Co., 1959, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{171} The purpose of the colour photograph was to illustrate a pre-existing script that would be presented to Shelter
groups and other sympathetic parties who raised money for the charity.
authenticity and seriousness. Introduced in America after the Second World War, colour photography was mainly used for advertising and publicity images. Colour photographs had been possible to make prior to this: FSA photographers had occasionally used colour film.\textsuperscript{172} However, the limited printing technology of the 1950s and 1960s meant that, on the whole, colour photography was the exception rather than the rule. It was a rarity outside magazine articles and advertisements, black-and-white images being ‘less expensive and less time consuming to produce’.\textsuperscript{173} In Britain during the 1960s, prohibitive printing costs meant that colour photographs were reserved for high-end glossy magazines such as \textit{The Sunday Times} colour supplement.\textsuperscript{174} On either side of the Atlantic, colour photography thus tended to be associated with commercial photography.

In America, Walker Evans refused to work in colour throughout the 1960s, commenting that ‘there are four simple words which must be whispered: colour photography is vulgar’.\textsuperscript{175} In his book \textit{The Decisive Moment}, Henri Cartier-Bresson discussed colour photography primarily in terms of the new difficulties it posed, and refrained from including any colour images in the text. In interviews he claimed that he was exploring colour photography purely because of the commercial demand for it. Likewise, Robert Capa produced colour photographs from 1938 onwards, in response to the growing demand from magazines.\textsuperscript{176} Since the 1980s colour has infiltrated the genre of news photography from personal and commercial photography, challenging the assumption that serious issues can only be visualised in monochrome. In her essay ‘Post-Documentary, Post-Photography?’ Martha Rosler observes how highly saturated colour film serves to aestheticize the image, ‘producing

\textsuperscript{172} Warner Marien \textit{op. cit.}, p. 358.
\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 360.
\textsuperscript{174} The photojournalist John Bulmer produced some notable colour work for this publication during the 1960s.
\textsuperscript{175} Warner Marien \textit{op. cit.}, p. 362.
\textsuperscript{176} The response of Cartier-Bresson and Capa to colour photography was discussed by Dr Kim Timby (Ecole du Louvre, Paris) in her paper ‘The Illustrated Press as a Catalyst in the Adoption of Colour Photography’ presented at the annual conference of the Photographic History Research Centre, ‘Photography in Print’, De Montfort University, Leicester, 22-23 June, 2015.
eye-catchingly beautiful images of crime scenes, battlefields, slums and mean streets’. 177 Paradoxically black-and-white and colour imagery have become equally problematic in their tendency to aestheticize the subject: the ‘truth value’ of the photograph appears somewhat frustrated by both.

Although more accessible throughout the 1970s, British documentary photographers continued to eschew the use of colour photography, resorting to it ‘only from commercial necessity’. 178 As observed by Val Williams and Susan Bright in their book *How We Are, Photographing Britain, From the 1840s to the Present*: ‘The Britain of this decade was photographed in black-and-white’. 179 As always, there were exceptions. Charlie Meecham worked in colour throughout the 1970s, using large format colour transparency film to make documentary photographs of the North of England. 180 The photographer Shirley Baker used Kodachrome colour film, alongside monochrome, in her representation of poor housing in the slums of Manchester and Salford from the mid-1960s onwards 181 (Fig. 33). She explained her decision to swim against the tide:

‘People think of those areas in black-and-white because that’s how they were photographed. People thought that artistic photos had to be in black-and-white, but a photograph was near to what you could call reality, so I didn’t see why you shouldn’t do it in colour’. 182

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178 Williams and Bright *op. cit.*., p. 137.
Daniel Meadows made a series of colour photographs at a Butlins holiday camp in Filey in 1972 (Fig. 34). Val Williams describes the latter as ‘a rare example of colour photography by a young British photographer of the 1970s’. Meadows recalls that colour photography in the 1970s ‘was expensive and difficult to do’. In 1980, the Magnum photographer Raymond Depardon made a series of colour photographs in Glasgow, many of which are striking in their similarity to Hedges’ photographs of the same locations made a decade earlier. However, for most social documentarists, black-and-white film was de rigueur for the representation of social issues such as poverty, homelessness and inequality. As observed by Derrick Price in his essay ‘Surveyors and surveyed: photography out and about’:

‘the use of black-and-white film and, in the case of documentary, a particular kind of subject-matter, were considered to be the necessary markers of a serious photographer. Colour not only belonged to the world of commerce, but was regarded as lacking the technical control and aesthetic order of black-and-white photography’.

The use of black-and-white photography also signalled an ideological separation between the campaign material of charities and that of commercial advertising, as observed by Su Braden in Committing Photography: ‘The Shelter campaign posters for the homeless…and Oxfam posters for the starving are designed to work in stark black-and-white opposition to the lush full colour claims of those advertising consumer durables’.

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183 Williams 2011, op. cit.
184 Ibid., p. 37.
185 Daniel Meadows, personal e-mail to author, 5 December 2014.
188 Su Braden, Committing Photography op. cit., p. 41.
It was not until the 1980s that the full impact of colour photography was felt within the realm of British documentary. Under the auspices of ‘The New British Colour’ movement, the work of Keith Arnatt, Paul Graham, Anita Corbin, Jem Southam, Martin Parr, Anna Fox, Paul Reas and Peter Fraser employed vivid colour to different ends. United by the intention to display their work in galleries, these photographers harnessed the eye-catching luminosity of the technicolour image. British documentary photography was transformed: by 1984 ‘the consciousness of independent British photography could be said to have been entirely changed by the recognition of colour as a force’. This sea change was examined in Susan Butler’s 1985 essay ‘From Today Black and White is Dead’. The ultimate purpose of Hedges’ monochrome photograph of the girl in the bathroom (as a functional image, duplicated across Shelter’s campaign material) prompted him to make a photograph that delivered maximum emotional impact, both in terms of representing the child and the housing conditions. During an interview, Hedges agreed with the suggestion that the photograph seemed to present the child as an archetypal innocent victim. Although he denied consciously staging the photograph, he seemed to know what kind of photograph would satisfy Shelter’s remit, adding that ‘children would feature more than I was particularly happy with’. In making the photograph, Hedges was aware of certain pictorial conventions (evident in Hardy’s photographs) that could be employed to maximise the photograph’s appeal.

The emergence of colour photography during the 1980s in Britain was the result of several factors, notably the influence of American photography and writing (specifically John Szarkowski’s *William Eggleston’s Guide*, 1976 and Sally Eauclaire’s *The New Color Photography*, 1981), technical developments in the newspaper industry regarding colour printing, and the introduction of a new medium format camera, the Plaubel Makina. These photographers used the newly available Kodak T-grain medium format film as opposed to the more common smaller 35mm film, which was more easily processed and of a much higher quality than earlier colour stock. They attached a large Norman flashgun onto the Plaubel Makina camera to provide the light. The Plaubel was preferred because it worked much like a 35mm Leica camera. However, it used 120 film to produce a large negative. The combination of the new film and camera allowed photographers to make enlargements that were suitable (large and smooth looking) for display in galleries.

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191 Mellor *op. cit.*, p. 129.


193 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 393.
Hedges recalled details about the bathroom and how he photographed it:

Hall: The photograph is so dark.

Hedges: It was. It was difficult to take photographs there.

Hall: Is this during the day?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: And the window’s here?

Hedges: The window’s above her head. There is no reflective light because the walls are dark material, the floor is dark.

Hall: Do you remember the room?

Hedges: I remember the smell. It was foul. This is their bathroom…They didn’t have baths, they just washed in a bowl but that was what was provided. It’s rented accommodation and it’s dire.

Hall: She looks like she’s questioning the viewer.

Hedges: I think that’s just lucky.

Hall: Were you talking to her at the time?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: What did you talk about?
Hedges: With a four-year-old? I was probably saying, ‘Let’s get out of here’ or something. It was a very long time ago now. It was about forty years ago’. 194

It is significant that Hedges’ did not remember speaking to the girl about anything in particular whilst making the photograph. He remembered talking to the girl, but was somewhat dismissive about the role of this dialogue in the making of the photograph. His comments suggest the implausibility of holding a sustained and relevant conversation with a four-year-old. Perhaps the reason for this lack of verbal interaction went beyond Hedges’ professed disinterest in talking to young children. It may have been a conscious strategy that mitigated any ethical concerns he had about making photographs of homeless children.

In another interview, Hedges revealed that he deliberately avoided speaking to children about their housing conditions when he made photographs of them:

Hall: When you said earlier that you didn’t like talking to children directly, that interested me. Was that just because you didn’t want to upset them?

Hedges: It wasn’t that, but just imagine the situation. You’re going to interview and talk to a mother and father about their housing conditions and you’ve made contact with them and you’ve arranged to go at around three o’clock in the afternoon, or whenever it is. So you do that and you talk about them, the kids are hanging about. They’re near the door, or whatever. You introduce yourself to them, ‘What’s your name?’

194 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 394.
You talk to them as any adult with a young child might. You try and make them relax and feel at ease with your presence there.

Hall: So you never had a conversation with children about housing conditions? Was it more like, ‘How is it going at school?’

Hedges: Or, ‘Shall we have a game of football?’

Hall: So you didn’t want to upset children with questions about their circumstances.

Hedges: I'm glad you’ve got round to seeing that. You don't impose yourself on them because you’re going away. You don't want to make them feel bad about their life, do you? That's why you don't talk to them about it. Children notice their environment. You’ve only got to read any autobiography by anyone who’s grown up in unfortunate circumstances to understand the significance of their childhood and its impact upon them. You realise that they feel these things as a young person. They used to dread doing such-and-such. You don't need to ask them when they’re kids, because you can’t do anything about it.  

Hedges’ comments reveal his commitment to protecting the children that he photographed. As far as he could, Hedges avoided all discussion of the reason for his presence. In this way, children assume a special status as subjects of his photographs. This clear concern for the welfare of the children that he photographed seems to contradict Spence’s condemnation of Hedges’ lack of integrity. It also points to the gap between Hedges’ authorial intention and

the resulting semiotic effect of many of the photographs that he made. The former was ostensibly ethically sound: he did not want to make homeless children feel bad about their lives or the houses in which they lived. He did not want to draw attention to their poverty. Would Spence recognise Hedges’ concern as integrity? Her objections to Hedges’ photographs seem to be rooted in their ultimate appearance and effect, rather than in how they were made. Alternatively, it could be argued that Hedges’ deliberate avoidance of any kind of meaningful discussion with the children could be interpreted as a further exploitation of their situation. The children remained ignorant, both of how their photographs would be used and how they would appear in them. Perhaps Hedges was protecting himself, and his own feelings as much as those of the children, by choosing to avoid any difficult discussions.

Spence’s condemnation may be more applicable to the way that Hedges made photographs of homeless adults, which resulted from a diametrically opposed methodology. Alongside a journalist, Hedges talked to them at length about their living conditions. Hedges developed a rhythm with the journalist. When the journalist needed a break to write something down, Hedges continued the conversation. Conversely, when Hedges needed to make a photograph, the journalist moved slightly out of shot. This double act was carefully orchestrated to get the most out of each interview. In his 1979 article, Hedges revealed the way in which this technique could be used to evoke a certain response in the subject. The journalist’s focus on difficult and often upsetting questions (‘Tell us about the harassment you have had from the landlord’; ‘What is the health of your children like?’) naturally resulted in ‘a particular

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196 For the most part, Hedges worked in collaboration with a journalist. Hedges identified these writers as Jeremy Harrison, Anna Bowman and Pam Pelling, with Annie Stewart producing the archive captions and photographer’s notes (Hedges Collection, d/file, BAHP). He also stated that ‘photographs often appeared with transcribed interview material’. Each year, they visited different cities, staying up to a week in each. On arriving at a location, they contacted a local network of interested parties (Shelter groups, the Housing Trust and the neighbourhood action project which may have been funded by Shelter). These contacts provided them with introductions to people who were living in poverty. Hedges and the journalist subsequently approached the families directly.

response, which conveyed – in terms of facial expression – depression’. Hedges admitted that ‘another set of questions might have evoked a joyous response, but joy is not our business’. Questions were used to elicit a particular facial expression.

A precedent for this way of working was established by the FSA photographers in 1930s America. In 1937, Margaret Bourke-White took leave from *Fortune* and *Life* to publish *You Have Seen Their Faces* with the novelist Erskine Caldwell. In making her photographs she ‘looked for faces that would express what we wanted to tell’. While Caldwell talked to a potential subject, Bourke-White ‘lurked in the background with a small camera, not stealing pictures exactly, but inconspicuously taking them’. After an hour or so of discussion, the subjects usually delivered the desired reaction: ‘The look: mournful, plaintive, nakedly near tears’. Retrospectively perceived as exploitative, the ‘horrors’ of Bourke-White’s approach is contrasted with that of Agee and Evans in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. The more transparent and acceptable methodology of the latter is, in fact, open to debate: Agee referred to himself as ‘a spy, travelling as a journalist’ and Evans as ‘a counter-spy, travelling as a photographer’. Another FSA photographer, Arthur Rothstein, noticed that when he tried to make photographs of poor sharecroppers they automatically adopted false smiles for the camera. In order to capture ‘the look’, he got a local person to talk to the

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199 Ibid.
200 The photography section of the FSA project, headed by Roy Stryker, was established in 1935 to document the effects of the Depression on the rural poor in America.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., p. 60.
204 In contrast to Agee and Evans, Bourke-White ‘remained an outsider. She cajoled and pried. She did not try to get to know her subjects. She simply took pictures’ (Stephanie Schwartz, ‘Late Work: Walker Evans and *Fortune*’, Special Issue: Modernism After Paul Strand, *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2015, pp. 117-41 (p. 139).
205 For many, the worst aspect of the book was the juxtaposition of words and photographs. The latter were framed by the words of Bourke-White and Caldwell, not those of the photographic subjects.
206 Stott established the dichotomy between the two books in *Documentary Expressionism and Thirties America*, pp. 270-71.
207 Stephanie Schwartz *op. cit.*, p. 140.
subject whilst he stood unobtrusively in the background with his Leica camera. When the subject responded with ‘anxiety or concern’ to the questions, Rothstein quickly made his photograph.  

In an interview, however, Hedges denied working in this way:

    Hall:  Were your photographs informed by what you were talking about?

    Hedges:  Yes. *You didn’t ask questions for effect*; you asked questions because you wanted to find out certain things about their situation.  

Why would Hedges disavow this inherent component of his methodology? Perhaps he retreated from asking such questions, leaving this part of the process to the journalist accompanying him. Perhaps, in hindsight, he prefers to distance himself from a practice that could be construed as exploitative? Whatever the reason behind it, Hedges’ collaboration with a journalist was fundamental to the kind of photographs that he made. His partner’s questions served to evoke an intense emotional response, whilst simultaneously attracting attention away from Hedges and his camera. Engrossed in distressing accounts of slum life, the homeless had less time to focus on Hedges. Whilst particularly fruitful in terms of Hedges’ practice, this collaborative approach was not unique. A methodology that seamlessly blended interviews with making photographs was employed by other documentarists in the 1970s, as social documentary foregrounded the synergy of word and image. The photographic practice of Janet Mendelsohn, Daniel Meadows and the Exit Photography Group amongst others equally relied on the combination of word and image as a frame for both making, and publishing, photographs. As in Shelter’s publications, the voice of the

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208 Stott op. cit., p. 61.
subject, albeit carefully edited, emerged in interviews, excerpts of which were published alongside photographic representations.  

Hedges’ account of making the photograph of the girl in the bathroom (Fig. 32) focuses on his impressions of the room, especially its smell. In many ways, the photograph communicates an impression, rather than a detailed record, of the slum bathroom. It prompts a sensory and imaginative response in the viewer that in some ways reflects the photographer’s own, primarily sensory, response to the space. Much of the detail of the room is obliterated by shadow. It is possible to discern the form of the bath and the toilet seat, but the rest of the room is concealed by darkness. This contrasts with the second photograph of a slum bathroom which was not published by Shelter (Fig. 35). In many ways the first photograph is much more effective in communicating the ‘feel’ of the space than the second, and was therefore perhaps considered more useful in evoking an emotional response in the viewer.

In his 1988 essay ‘God’s Sanitary Law: Slum Clearance and Photography in Late Nineteenth-Century Leeds’, John Tagg discusses how early photographs of slums carry an ideological meaning that is embedded in the very process of their production. The essay analyses a series of photographs produced under the supervision of Dr James Spottiswoode Cameron, the Medical Officer of Health for Leeds. These photographs recorded the city’s slums at Quarry Hill. Bound portfolios of carefully selected prints were presented to Parliament in 1896 and 1901 respectively, as evidence of the unsanitary nature of the area and the need for

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210 Janet Mendelsohn’s archive of 3,000 photographs of the residents of Balsall Heath in Birmingham, made in 1968, were deposited, alongside transcripts of extensive interviews with her photographic subjects, with the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham in 2014. Daniel Meadows’ photo-book Living Like This: Around Britain in the Seventies (1975) featured the Free Studio portraits made during the tour of the Free Photographic Omnibus. The photographs were published alongside text written by Meadows, which included extensive transcripts of interviews with some of the people he photographed. Likewise, The Exit Photography Group (Nicholas Battye, Chris Steele-Perkins and Paul Trevor) published Survival Programmes (1982) which featured photographs juxtaposed with transcripts of interviews with those pictured.

a slum clearance program. In contrast to the detailed written accounts of the spaces published in Cameron’s report, the photographs were characterised by their darkness and ambiguity (Fig. 36). Tagg interprets this photographic absence as a signifier of meaning: ‘What the photographs did not show was made to signify…Another space was conjured up, beyond photography, blacker than the dark images and more confined’. The photographs recorded a metaphorical space ‘beyond photography’ that signified,

‘the narrowness, closeness and bad arrangement…the bad condition of the streets and houses…the want of light, air ventilation or proper conveniences’.

The technical constraints of making these early photographs (so often presented as an explanation for their darkness) is likewise reinterpreted by Tagg as a carrier of ideological meaning:

‘Technical constraints are present only when the available camera equipment is set to work in a particular way. They then become visible in the photographs not as a boundary but as a meaning: the alleys are underexposed, dark, dingy; the spaces are foreshortened, compressed, cramped; the compositions are repetitious, bare and brutal’.

Tagg interprets the darkness of the photographed spaces as a highly effective way of conveying their pathology. What is not shown is far more powerful than anything that can be photographed. As in Hedges’ photograph of the slum bathroom, an embodied sensory response is provoked through the necessary absence of photographic information.

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212 This was one of the earliest, possibly the first, occasions on which photographs were presented to a Parliamentary committee as evidence.
214 Ibid., p. 145.
215 Ibid., p. 149.
A handful of Hedges’ photographs employ a highly distinctive aesthetic that distinguishes them from the rest of his Shelter images. These ‘dark’ photographs feature prominently in Shelter’s publications. Newspaper advertisements and reports consistently used photographs that represented the homeless child in dark, dingy surroundings. Shadow hides the detail and logical spatial structure of slum rooms. The front cover of Shelter’s 1970 report *Happy Christmas!* featured Hedges’ photograph of a young girl surrounded by darkness (Fig. 37). The photograph on the back cover of this report reappeared the following year as a newspaper advertisement in its own right, published both in *The Times* and *New Society* (Fig. 38). In 1971, the front cover of *Shelter Now* (the charity’s newspaper) carried Hedges’ photograph of a young boy and his mother in their slum kitchen (Fig. 39). Other advertisements featuring dark photographs were published in *The Times* on 11 December 1969 (Fig. 40), 13 March 1970 (Fig. 41) and 27 May 1970 (Fig. 42), amongst others.

The popularity of this kind of photograph in Shelter’s campaign material suggests that this small subset of Hedges’ photographs was clearly viewed as successful, in terms of their ability to attract attention and to raise funds. It is also pertinent to note that other documentary photographers employed the same set of conventions when photographing poor children. In 1964, Joseph McKenzie made a series of photographs of the Gorbals slum tenements four years before Hedges photographed the same area for Shelter (Fig. 43). In some cases, it is difficult to distinguish between their work with its shared predilection for dark space and enveloping shadow. As in Tagg’s analysis of the Quarry Hill photographs,

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216 This kid can’t wait to get to school, Shelter advertisement, *The Times*, 5 October 1971, p. 14.
218 *The Times*, 4 December 1969, p. 4.
220 *The Times*, 27 May 1970, p. 1. This photograph was also published as a full-page illustration on page twenty-nine of Shelter’s report *Face the Facts, Who are the Homeless?* in September 1969.
221 Born in London in 1929, McKenzie trained as a photographer whilst in the RAF. He later became one of Britain’s most prolific postwar photographers. After being appointed as Lecturer in Photography at Duncan and Jordanstone College of Art in 1964, he began a series of documentary projects. During the 1960s, he documented the transformation of Scotland’s inner cities. His series of 130 photographs of the Gorbals was published in the book *Gorbals Children, Joseph McKenzie, A Study in Photographs* (1990).
this way of photographing domestic space effectively communicated meaning through the photographic void. An absence of photographic information is used to evoke primal feelings of fear and disgust. As in the case of Quarry Hill, detailed written accounts of overcrowding, damp, subsidence, infestation, infection and inadequate lighting and heating (ubiquitous in Shelter’s campaign material) were juxtaposed with photographs of dark and ominous spaces.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, this kind of photograph was not easy to make. As a result of the conditions in which he worked, Hedges became an expert in the manipulation of light and the technical potential of low exposure films.

In an interview, he singled this out as a key skill that defined his practice:

‘On the technical side, I think I became much more assured about working at very low light levels. I was explaining to you how much more difficult it was to take pictures on film in those days than it is today with digital cameras. People simply do not understand that we really were working at the margins. If you decided you weren’t going to use flash, and you didn’t want to set any pictures up, you were working right at the limits of what the technology would allow. The more you did it, the better you became. By the time I’d got to the end of three or four years at Shelter, I became very good at working at very low light levels.’ 222

These technical constraints contributed to the distinctive aesthetic of certain high-profile Shelter photographs and, as suggested by Tagg, ‘became visible in the photographs not as a boundary but as a meaning’ (my italics). In retrospect, within the context of the Shelter campaign, the darkness of Hedges’ photographs produced a specific semiotic effect, particularly when it framed the figure of the homeless child. At the moment of making the photographs, however, Hedges perceived this darkness as an unavoidable element of the

spaces that he documented. His intention to create authentic representations of dark domestic spaces resulted, intentionally or otherwise, in photographs whose semiotic effect created a narrative of pathology and childhood trauma.

Many of the domestic spaces that Hedges photographed were by nature dark: slum rooms invariably had little ventilation, few windows and inadequate electric lighting. The darkest of his photographs were made in cellars and basement rooms which were devoid of windows. The spaces were small and cramped. They were damp and often infested with insects and rodents. There was little storage space which resulted in clutter and mess. Many homeless families struggled to keep such spaces clean and tidy. It would have been difficult for Hedges to make photographs of light, ordered and comfortable domestic spaces in these conditions. This was not the reality of the spaces that came to Shelter’s attention. Hedges did not use artificial lighting or flash photography, and the resulting photographs were thus unavoidably dark and underexposed.

In an interview, Hedges commented on the darkness that characterised many of his most iconic photographs (Fig. 39):

Hall: Can you say anything about this photograph of a boy being dried by his mother at the sink? The motif of children in dark spaces crops up quite a lot in your Shelter photographs.

Hedges: Yes. That photograph was probably overprinted, inasmuch as I exaggerated the pool of light and darkness in that. There's probably a little bit more detail in the shadows.

Hall: Was that because you wanted more impact?
Hedges: Yes, and I think probably because, I guess, down here and round here the room was untidy so you don't want to show that.

Hall: Because that would distract you?

Hedges: It would.223

A comparison of the published photograph with representations of the same scene that exist as another final print (Fig. 44) and a contact print (Fig. 45) reveals how Hedges used shadow to conceal the peripheral ‘distracting’ elements of domestic space, in order to focus attention on the boy and his mother in the published photograph. Darkness is employed to heighten the drama of the photograph, whilst simultaneously enhancing its aesthetic and emotional impact.

However, regardless of Hedges’ intentions, technical restrictions and the physical characteristics of slum housing, the darkness of the photographs must also be interpreted in the light of an established art historical convention. Hedges’ choice to represent the homeless child in dark space as a recurrent trope in his photographs serves to tie his photographs to a recognisable pictorial tradition. Representations of the urban slum dwelling poor have invariably been located in dark, dirty and overcrowded domestic space. In 1872, the book London: A Pilgrimage was published. Alongside the text (written by Blanchard Jerrold), the book was illustrated with 180 copperplate engravings by Gustave Doré. The intention was to produce a comprehensive portrait (both in writing and images) of the city. The final chapter of the book was dedicated to an overview of London charities, which included homeless refuges, orphanages, institutions for the blind, deaf and dumb, penitentiaries for fallen

women, asylums, homes for poor sailors and soldiers, charities for poor Jews and relief societies for the clergy.\textsuperscript{224}

One of the engravings that illustrated this chapter was entitled \textit{Found in the Street} (Fig. 46). It visualised a scene thus described in the text:

‘We are in the receiving room of a night refuge – the home of the ragged scholars whom Lord Shaftesbury has befriended…A worn-out, prostrate Arab – a baby in years – has been dragged in from the wintry streets. His face is livid yellow; his lips are black…His infant fellow-sufferers look on, while he lies upon an old man’s knees’.\textsuperscript{225}

Doré’s engraving depicts a dark and bare space, lit by a single candle on the floor. A large group of homeless children emerge from a shadowy doorway on the right of the scene to look upon the new arrival. Dressed in rags and barefoot they are the archetypal waifs of the Victorian imagination. The darkness of the refuge is the antithesis of a warm, secure and loving family home. Another engraving of ‘the hideous tenements’ of \textit{Bluegate Fields Ragged School} is described as ‘a densely-packed haunt of poverty and crime’ (Fig. 47). The scene is shrouded in darkness, punctuated only by a feeble gas lamp. The crooked tenement buildings crowd in on one another to form a shadowy and claustrophobic corridor, inhabited by the destitute, slumped in the street or huddled in conspiratorial groups. The windows and doorways are black and vacant. Doré’s engravings represent the demi-monde of London’s poor as inhabitants of a subterranean world. Against this backdrop, it is possible to interpret Hedges’ decision to photograph homeless children surrounded by dark space as a narrative device with specific implications.


\textsuperscript{225} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 185.
To sum up, Hedges’ most visible photographs (those that appeared in Shelter’s advertisements and reports) were often defined by the representation of the homeless child framed by dark space. This repeated visual formula alludes to an established pictorial convention, evident in Victorian print culture that implies a compromised childhood. Referencing this convention, the pronounced darkness and heightened chiaroscuro that characterises many of Hedges’ photographs can be interpreted as a signifier of the homeless child’s risk of isolation and alienation. Furthermore, it would seem to imply that the root cause of this lies with the breakdown of the family unit as a nurturing space of love and security. Hedges’ photographs do far more than represent the physical spaces of homelessness. Regardless of his authorial intentions, or the inherent darkness of the rooms that he photographed, the darkness in his images assumes a discrete semiotic meaning that transcends the individual circumstances of their making. Hedges’ decision to represent the homeless child as a recurrent motif in this kind of space serves to tie his photographs to a recognisable art historical tradition with particular ideological associations. When viewed in light of this, the genealogy of Hedges’ photographs of the homeless child can be traced back to a nineteenth-century fascination with the poor and destitute, the alienated ‘Other’ that lurked in the shadow world of the inner city slums.

The Wide-Eyed Child

It is significant that, when interviewed, Hedges seemed to skim over the agency of the child in the making of his photograph of the slum bathroom (Fig. 32). He did not mention her position in the room and dismissed her expression as an unplanned element of the image. Both factors are, however, fundamental to the semiotic effect of the photograph. The way that the child is photographed has been carefully considered to suggest a certain narrative. Her
body, expression and position contain visual cues which reference a wider narrative of the child as forlorn and isolated. The photograph is made from an unusual viewpoint, from which the photographer seems to loom over the child. An overview of Hedges’ work implies that he favoured this elevated viewpoint in making photographs of homeless children and families (Fig. 48). The frequency of this viewpoint in Shelter’s published images attests to its ability to provoke a response in the viewer (Fig. 49). Contact prints reveal the, often precarious, positions (in the case of bathrooms, usually standing on toilet seats) that Hedges adopted in order to make photographs from this angle (Fig. 50).

When asked about the prevalence of this elevated viewpoint in his photographs, Hedges explained it as a practical necessity:

Hall: There's a repeated composition where the person is in the lower third of the image and you have a bare light bulb and peeling wallpaper. There is a repeated view, especially of children, from above with very strong eye contact. I see that a lot in the Shelter photographs and I think it’s very effective in terms of emotion. You must set that up in some way?

Hedges: Well, I can tell you how things like that happen sometimes. When you want to take a photograph that explores a particular activity (it could be cleaning a yard, doing something with a bowl or whatever it might be), if you photograph it from the same level, from ground level, you can’t see what they’re doing, because their body gets in the way. What you do as a photographer, quite often in situations where the ground level position isn’t sufficient, is you go above and you look down on things. If you look carefully though the archive you’ll see there are a number
of pictures where I moved from ground level up to either the first floor, or even higher sometimes, because it becomes more like a map then. You can actually see the patterns of things, they lay themselves out in front of you, so this change of angle of view is not a trick, but a way of enabling you to show things in a clearer way. You can sometimes do it from very low down, so you crouch down and look up at something, or you can go above and look down on something. When you’re photographing from eye level the view is more confused. It’s a device that photographers use, and it’s not uncommon. I don't think it’s anything special about my pictures, and it’s a device photographers use quite often. 226

Taking into account the practical advantages of making a photograph from an elevated angle, Hedges’ explanation fails to engage with the emotional and psychological effects engendered by this way of photographing people, especially children. The gap between authorial intention and semiotic effect is apparent. Hedges’ intention to make a legible photograph fails to acknowledge a discourse of power that is invoked by the pictorial convention of representing someone from an elevated position.

In another of Hedges’ photographs of the girl in the slum bathroom, she is almost unrecognisable as the same child. Photographed in a living room, standing between her father and her brother, she appears healthy and of normal weight (Fig. 51). The elevated viewpoint of the bathroom scene results in an emphasis on the child’s gaze, and the exaggeration of her eyes. As she looks up towards the camera, her eyes automatically widen to reveal more of the white surrounding the iris. The comparative scale of the eyes, compared to other features, is increased. Photographs made from this angle equally result in a proportional distortion of the

226 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 386.
child’s body: the head is enlarged and the body is attenuated and truncated. The thinness and frailty of the child’s body is heightened. A contradictory mix of associations is put into play by this representation of the child’s body: vulnerability, poverty, degeneracy, innocence, repulsion and wide-eyed cuteness. The viewpoint emphasises the size of the child’s head and eyes, resulting in a greater psychological and emotional appeal. To paint or photograph someone from an elevated viewpoint implies an unequal relationship of observer and observed. The subject assumes a position of vulnerability and subjugation: it is looked down upon and scrutinised from a position of privileged detachment. This pictorial convention is routinely employed in the representation of disempowered subjects, both in painting and photography.227

This mode of representation links Hedges’ photographs with an avant-garde and modernist photographic practice.228 The work of émigré photographers (many of whom worked for Picture Post) such as Cyril Arapoff, Bill Brandt, Lisel Haas, Felix H. Man, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Martin Munkácsi and Edith Tudor-Hart was characterised by striking chiaroscuro and unusual viewpoints (Fig. 52).229 Arriving in Britain and America from Germany or Hungary, these photographers introduced a new way of looking at the world. In Britain, many émigré

227 Linked to the concept of the gaze within feminist art history, an elevated viewpoint implies an unequal power relationship between the active (male) spectator and the passive (female) subject. This is especially pertinent to a discussion of the pictorial conventions that dictated the representation of the female nude in art history. For a discussion of how an elevated viewpoint implies notions of ‘access and address’ in the representation of the female nude, see T. J. Clark’s essay ‘Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of ‘Olympia’ in 1865’, Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris (eds.), *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*, London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1992, pp. 105-20.


229 A low camera angle, in particular, was a trope of Constructivist photography, which originated with the work of Alexander Rodchenko who stated, ‘In order to accustom people to seeing from new viewpoints it is essential to take photographs of everyday familiar subjects from completely unexpected vantage points and in completely unexpected positions’ (Rodchenko, A., ‘The Paths of Modern Photography’ in Christopher Phillips (ed.) *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings 1913-1940*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989, pp. 256-63). The films of Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, characterised by striking chiaroscuro and vertiginous camera angles, may also have contributed to this aesthetic. This theme was discussed in Trond Klevgaard’s paper ‘The Future-People Vote for the Labour Party: The Photograph in Scandinavian Political Graphics 1928-1936’, presented at the annual conference of the Photographic History Research Centre, ‘Photography in Print’, De Montfort University, Leicester, 22-23 June 2015. I am grateful to him for providing me with the details of the Rodchenko quotation.
photographers became involved in social documentary and photographed poor living conditions, notably those in the East End of London. Their work introduced a modernist European formalism into the British documentary tradition.²³⁰ Edith Tudor-Hart’s photograph entitled Gee Street, Finsbury, London (c. 1936-1937) (Fig. 53), epitomised this innovative aesthetic.²³¹ In her 1997 article ‘Engendering the Slum: Photography in East London in the 1930s’, Gillian Rose observes that these photographers were ‘influenced by various modernist aesthetics and shared a broad concern for striking, formalistic composition’.²³² Photographs were ‘made from unusual positions or angles or at moments of odd lighting effects in order to create strong abstract patterns’.²³³ The startling and unusual compositions that characterise many of Hedges’ photographs of the homeless attest to the influence of 1930s émigré photography and its avant-garde representation of British slums. Moreover, the ideological implication inherent in this way of picturing poverty is pertinent to a discussion of the Shelter photographs. Rose observes that:

‘the interest in formally striking compositions often served to place the slum dweller securely in that space; this documentary photography nearly always pictured East Enders as figures passively enclosed and trapped by the walls, dead ends and alleyways of their slums’.²³⁴

²³⁰ For example, Cyril Arapoff worked with the journalist Jack Barker to document the Hanbury Buildings, Poplar, one of the worst slums in East London. Barker described the steps that ran through the tenement block as ‘chipped and treacherous’. In support of a tenants’ rent strike, Arapoff and Barker documented the terrible conditions for Picture Post, but the photographs and accompanying narrative were never published. For further discussion of émigré photography and its presentation in Picture Post, see Amy Shulman’s (Birmingham University) doctoral research entitled ‘Picture Post and the Photo Essay: Émigré photographers and Cultural Narratives in Britain 1938-1945’.

²³¹ This photograph was published in the satirical magazine Lilliput in 1939, alongside another of her photographs entitled Poodle Parlour, London (c.1936-1937). The ironic juxtaposition of the photographs highlighted the contrast between the living conditions of the urban poor and those enjoyed by the pampered pets of the wealthy. This format characterised left wing journals on the Continent. The Austrian magazine Der Kuckuck had published a similar article in 1931.


²³³ Ibid., p. 283.

²³⁴ Rose 1997 op. cit., p. 284.
An elevated viewpoint, in conjunction with jarring angles, harsh chiaroscuro and an exaggerated geometrical abstraction, became a hallmark of this style of 1930s photography. Nearly forty years later, Hedges employed the same pictorial conventions in his representation of British slums to similar effect (Fig. 54). The homeless of the 1960s, like those of the 1930s, are consistently represented as passive, enclosed and trapped within the physical spaces that they inhabit. Moreover, an elevated viewpoint serves to distance the photographer and viewer from the subject, who is scrutinised as a specimen of ‘Otherness’ and difference.

The influence of American modernist photography on Hedges is also evident. As with many young British photographers of the 1970s, Hedges was impressed by the new wave of American photography epitomised by the work of Diane Arbus, Bruce Davidson, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, Paul Strand and Garry Winogrand. Popularised in high-profile exhibitions, photo-books and by the British journal *Creative Camera*, these photographers represented the banality of everyday life in a radical, exciting and sometimes disturbing way. Their work, although heterogeneous in terms of subject and style, was characterised by unexpected compositions, innovative cropping and unorthodox lighting and focus. Moreover, it signalled a new kind of documentary (hence the title of Szarkowski’s *New Documents* exhibition of 1967) that moved away from social concern towards personal vision.

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235 Between 28 February and 7 May 1967, John Szarkowski’s influential exhibition *New Documents* at MoMA in New York showcased the work of Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander and Garry Winogrand. In 1969, the V&A’s Cartier-Bresson exhibition attracted huge audiences. The 1970 Bill Brandt exhibition at London’s Hayward Gallery, on tour from MoMA, was hugely influential on young British photographers. In 1974, The Hayward Gallery also showed the work of Diane Arbus to much critical acclaim. American photo-books, such as Robert Franks’ *The Americans* (1958), Bill Owens’ *Suburbia* (1973) and Walker Evans’ *American Photographs* (reissued in 1975), were also influential on a younger generation of both British and American photographers. In his introductory wall text to the *New Documents* exhibition, Szarkowski wrote: ‘Most of those who were called documentary photographers a generation ago…made their pictures in the service of a social cause…to show what was wrong with the world, and to persuade their fellows to take action and make it right…[A] new generation of photographers has directed the documentary approach toward more personal ends. Their aim has not been to reform life, but to know it. Their work betrays a sympathy-almost an affection-for the imperfections...’
In an interview, Hedges commented on the innovative nature of this non-European tradition:

‘If you look at, say, Robert Franks’ or Lee Friedlander’s photographs you’ll find there is a jarring discontinuity to them, compared to the harmony that exists in a Cartier-Bresson photograph. I’m using musical terms, it’s a dissonance as opposed to a chord; it’s uncomfortable as opposed to comfortable.’

Although Hedges’ recognised that this avant-garde approach was not overtly suited to the demands of the Shelter commission, it is possible to detect a commitment to unusual viewpoints, lighting and composition in the photographs.

The presentation of the homeless child’s body from a vertiginous vantage point equally evoked a wide range of images in circulation during the late 1960s (and still current today). The most enduring of these was that of the African child which defined Oxfam’s mass media advertising campaigns of the 1950s (Fig. 55). The enlarged heads, staring eyes and skeletal bodies of starving children were shocking in their departure from a cross-cultural understanding of what the healthy body of a child should look like. In representations of the Western child these signifiers were similarly used to suggest neglect and pathology. Photographs of impoverished and neglected British children conformed to the same pictorial convention. Throughout the 1960s, publications such as The Sunday Times Magazine featured articles on poverty, specifically that of the Northern working class. Such articles were heavily illustrated with photographs made on location. On 29 August 1965 the front cover of the magazine consisted of a single image of a neglected child looking up towards the camera and surrounded by dark space (Fig. 56). Made by society photographer Antony

—and the frailties of society. They like the real world, in spite of its terrors, as the source of all wonder and fascination and value—no less precious for being irrational…What they hold in common is the belief that the commonplace is really worth looking at, and the courage to look at it with a minimum of theorizing’ (as referenced in Martha Rosler’s essay ‘In, Around and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)’, Martha Rosler, 3 Works, op. cit., p. 84).

Armstrong-Jones (Lord Snowdon), the photograph illustrated the magazine’s lead article which was entitled ‘Some of Our Children’.

It discussed the role of the Child Care Officer and the increasing number of cases of childhood neglect and poverty. Interestingly, despite the magazine’s commitment to colour photography, Armstrong-Jones chose to make a monochrome image, the preferred medium of documentary realism.

A similar representation of the neglected child inspired Glaswegian artist Joan Eardley. During the 1950s she persistently painted slum children with emaciated bodies and enlarged heads, viewed from above, as seen in her painting entitled Brother and Sister (Fig. 57). Despite light-hearted reviews that praised Eardley’s ability to ‘depict these waifs with their knobbly knees emerging stalk-like from flower pot wellington boots’, her paintings betray a dark fascination with the aberrant nature of the slum child. On learning that one of her favourite models had had a ‘violent squint’ corrected by surgery, the artist’s response was ‘Oh hell! She won’t be much use to me now’.

For Eardley, the slum child’s physical pathology and distortion was intrinsic to its appeal. During the 1960s Margaret Keane’s paintings of ‘big eyed’ waifs presented an equally unnerving version of the slum child (Fig. 58). Her paintings of children, alongside those of kittens and puppies, were kitsch and sentimental. In Keane’s work, the distortion of the child’s body was used to emphasise its appealing vulnerability, rather than its pathology.

Much of the impact of the photographs that Hedges made from an elevated angle stems from the way that the child looks up into the camera (Fig. 59). The gaze of the child is the focal point of the images. Historically, the child’s gaze became synonymous with a representation

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238 ‘Some of Our Children’, The Sunday Times Magazine, 29 August 1965, front cover and pp. 4-16
239 Cordelia Oliver, Joan Eardley, RSA, Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1988, p. 53.
240 Ibid., p. 56.
241 Several of Eardley’s paintings depicted children with facial abnormalities such as saddle nose (caused by congenital syphilis).
242 A cropped version of this photograph was published in Des Wilson’s I Know it was the Place’s Fault in 1970.
of suffering with the arrival of *Life* and *Look* magazines in America in the mid-1930s. Both used a photo-story format in their coverage of current affairs and human interest features. Both foregrounded the act of looking or gazing at other people in photographs. In her 2003 book *Picturing Poverty*, Cara A. Finnegan examines the concept of the poor as spectacle in her analysis of two articles published in *Look* magazine in 1937: ‘Children of the Forgotten Man!’ (Fig. 60) and ‘Caravans of Hunger’. Both were illustrated with images made by the photographic section of the FSA. Finnegan observes how ‘images of children predominate in both features, encouraging an infantilization of the poor’. Furthermore, the magazine’s layouts ‘encourage the gaze…they ‘zoom in’ on the children, position them prominently and frame them in odd ways’. Across both articles only one adult looks directly at the camera – it is the children alone who stare into the camera’s lens. Finnegan observes that ‘the reader’s direct visual encounters with the poor happen with the children, not the adults’ (author’s italics).

Photographs of silent children staring wide-eyed directly into the camera have since become a staple of charity campaigns. In her 2003 book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag discusses our appetite for images of suffering, as long as it is not too close to home. Photographs of distant torment are much more palatable. Sontag notes how ‘postcolonial Africa exists in the consciousness of the general public…as a succession of unforgettable photographs of large-eyed victims’. Since their introduction in the 1950s, Oxfam’s advertising campaigns have perpetuated the large-eyed and starving victim (usually a child)

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244 *Ibid.*.  
as a ubiquitous icon. A similar observation is made by Roland Barthes in his text on photography *Camera Lucida*. Here, he examines a series of photographs of a Nicaraguan rebellion in 1979, one showing two children in a bombed-out apartment. Barthes notes ‘the huge eyes of two little boys (the *excess* of those eyes disturb the scene)’ (my italics). Barthes implies that the huge, staring eyes of the children are excessive, too much to bear, beyond what is necessary, even in such a scene. Both Barthes and Sontag recognise the power of the child’s magnified gaze in photographs of poverty and suffering. In many of Hedges’ photographs, the focus on the homeless child’s wide eyes, staring directly into the camera, equally seem to suggest a kind of ocular intercession. The child sees what remains hidden from the viewer in the shadows. Its direct gaze forges a connection between the viewer and the squalor that surrounds it.

The emphasis on the gaze in photographs of suffering children embodies the ‘direct method’ of social documentary, the purpose of which is to make the spectator feel ‘implicated’. The spectator is addressed directly, either through the gaze or the text, or a combination of both, and a response (usually financial) is demanded. Social documentary thus presents the ‘facts’ in an emotionally-charged way. The direct gaze of a child is a singularly powerful way of generating this emotional charge. A 1972 American advertisement for the Save the Children Federation epitomises this approach: the power of the child’s gaze is such that it excludes all else, except for the headline: ‘You can help save Bo Suk for $15 a month. Or you can turn the page’ (Fig. 61).

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250 In her essay ‘In, Around and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)’, Martha Rosler highlights the Western predilection for this trope: ‘Like photos of children in pleas for donations to international charity organizations, liberal documentary implores us to look in the face of deprivation and to weep (and maybe to send money, if it is to some faraway place where the innocence of childhood poverty does not set off in us the train of thought that begins with denial and ends with ‘welfare cheat’), *Martha Rosler, 3 Works*, op. cit., p. 76.
254 Ibid.
Some of the most striking images made by the FSA photographers similarly used the direct gaze of the child to rally political and financial support for the rural poor during the Great Depression. Notable amongst these images is Dorothea Lange’s photograph of a young girl entitled Damaged Child made in 1936 (Fig. 62). In 1984 Sally Mann made another version of this photograph (Fig. 63). In her 1998 book Pictures of Innocence, The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood, Anne Higonnet cites Lange’s photograph as a challenge to the visualisation of the innocent child in its deviation from a Romantic construction of childhood as untainted and sacred. Lange’s photograph implies ‘want, brutality, labour, filth’ and trauma.\(^{255}\) The ‘charred abyss’ of the girl’s gaze, aimed directly at the spectator, is somehow out of place on the face of a child.\(^{256}\) Her gaze is vacant; her eyes are reduced to two narrowed absences. If the eyes are the window to the soul then this child has transgressed the boundaries of the human condition. She is dehumanised and soulless.

An art historical concept of the gaze is complex and ideologically loaded. The term implies the presence of a spectator: a person who actively looks at, and gains visual pleasure from, the image as object. For a gaze to operate there must be someone to look, and someone to be looked at. Discussions of the gaze and its implications have been framed by a discourse of power. In paintings and photographs the owner of the gaze has been privileged over its recipient, most notably in the case of feminist theory.\(^{257}\) In Margaret Olin’s 1996 essay ‘Gaze’, she observes that ‘there is a struggle over the gaze: one gets to look, to be master of the gaze; the other (or Other) is looked at’.\(^{258}\) At first glance, images of suffering children seem to embody the notion of the gaze as a unidirectional action: the empowered (adult)


\(^{256}\) Ibid., p. 116.

\(^{257}\) Laura Mulvey’s essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1975) published in Visual and Other Pleasures (1989) defined the male gaze (focused on the female as a passive object of eroticized looking) as active and voyeuristic.

spectator looks at the vulnerable and disempowered (child) subject. However, in the direct method of social documentary this power dynamic is inverted. The unidirectional gaze is supplanted by the returned gaze. Olin reinterprets this as a ‘shared gaze’, the defining characteristic of which is its ability to suggest ‘responsibility toward the person looking back at one’.  

Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the slum bathroom (Fig. 32) effectively engenders a sense of responsibility in the spectator. The whiteness of her widened eyes, emerging from the dirty face that frames them, is the focal point of the photograph. In line with the direct method of socially concerned photography, the spectator is immediately implicated by this look. In accordance with Roy Stryker’s criteria, the photograph fulfils the credentials of a ‘good documentary photograph’ which ‘should tell not only what a place or a thing or a person looks like, but it must also tell the audience what it would feel like to be an actual witness to the scene’. Hedges’ photograph effectively positions the spectator as an intimate witness to the scene, denying them the comforting distance that Sontag posits as vital to our enjoyment of images of suffering. The spectator is cast in the role of adult through the elevation of the camera’s viewpoint and in the child’s posture of looking up. As an adult, the spectator unwittingly and unavoidably assumes responsibility for the child’s suffering in this abject domestic space.

The effectiveness of the photograph to make the spectator feel implicated lies in its construction. In comparison with a similar scene (Fig. 35), the photograph holds a particular power to generate an emotional responsibility in the spectator. This is due to three key features of the image: the intensity of the girl’s gaze, the darkness of her surroundings and the

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259 Ibid., p. 327.
260 Stott op. cit., p. 29.
261 For further discussion of how photographs are used to implicate the viewer, see John Berger’s essay ‘Photographs of Agony’ (1972) published in About Looking, London, Bloomsbury, 1980, pp. 41-44. Here, Berger examines the impossibility of responding adequately to photographs of atrocity or suffering.
implied proximity between spectator and subject. The gaze of the girl is insistent and almost accusatory. It demands a response. In contrast, the girl in the comparable photograph glances somewhat passively at the spectator: hers is not a returned gaze. The darkness of the first photograph, in addition to referencing an established pictorial convention replete with associative meaning, serves to obfuscate detail. The spectator is encouraged to imagine the worst. The gaping void of the toilet bowl is particularly disturbing in its utter blackness. This obscurity evokes a sensory (primarily olfactory) engagement with the space via the spectator’s imaginary projection into the room. The spectator is encouraged to feel what it would be like to be in the space. Furthermore, the spectator is ultimately trapped in this squalid space along with the child. There is no visible means of escape. The pendant photograph merely invites the spectator to momentarily pop their head round the door to have a quick look, as if on a tour of the house. The presence of exit routes (the window in the background and the open door in the foreground of the photograph) are reassuring. The spectator is just a visitor who is free to leave at any moment. This detachment automatically shuts down a sense of empathy and personal responsibility for the child in the image. In contrast, the dark photograph of the bathroom relies on a representation of physical intimacy between the girl and the spectator for much of its effect. The girl seems to stand right next to the spectator; her foot is cropped by the lower edge of the photograph as it transgresses the boundary between observer and observed. Spectator and subject share the same space, and a commonality of experience is established.

Hedges’ decision to persistently photograph the homeless child looking directly into the camera from an elevated viewpoint must be understood as a conscious attempt to provoke a specific emotional response in the spectator. Regardless of Hedges’ intention to make clearer photographs, the semiotic effect of this kind of image links it to an established pictorial convention that characterises the direct method of much social documentary photography.
The emphasis on the child’s wide eyes, intensified through their upturned gaze, puts into play notions of power and responsibility. At first glance, his photographs appear to present the homeless child as a disempowered victim. The elevated viewpoint suggests a narrative of domination and scrutiny. Hedges himself identified the subject of this kind of photograph as a ‘Forlorn child (innocent victim)’. However, moving beyond this initial interpretation, it is possible to suggest an alternative reading of the photographs. In line with Olin’s argument, Hedges’ photographs often succeed in generating a returned gaze which ultimately serves to empower the child in the photograph. The child is represented as an active, rather than passive, entity. The gaze of the homeless child demands a response. It implicates the spectator. It resists objectification. Whilst ostensibly representing the homeless child as an appealing and vulnerable victim, certain of Hedges’ photographs succeed in combining this pictorial convention with an assertion of the homeless child’s agency, visualised in its returned, insistent and wide-eyed gaze.

‘Mother and Baby (Madonna and Child)’

The second stereotype that Hedges identified in the Shelter photographs was that of ‘Mother and baby (Madonna and child)’. According to Spence’s criticism, this kind of photograph killed two birds with one stone. It succeeded in combining the two staple components of charity campaigns - abject women and children - in one frame. To illustrate his article, Hedges’ selected a photograph that he had made in Liverpool in 1971 (Fig. 64). The photograph was used twice by the charity. In 1971 it was published both in the Condemned report, and as a poster (Fig. 65).\textsuperscript{262} It also illustrated an article entitled ‘Slum clearance being

\textsuperscript{262} Condemned, Shelter report, p. 18.
neglected, Shelter says’ which was published in The Times.\textsuperscript{263} Hedges’ overt reference to a Biblical prototype in his photographs of homeless women and children is important. How did he make photographs that suggested this narrative? What could be gained by photographing homeless mothers in this way? In 1979, he asserted that he had made photographs of homeless women and children that evoked the Madonna and child. He made this statement eight years after making the photograph that he used to illustrate his point. Did he make this statement as some kind of admission (perhaps in response to Spence’s attack) of his ‘failure’ to photograph an authentic version of homelessness? Alternatively, and more significantly, did he consciously evoke this stereotype at the actual moment of making the photograph in 1971?

Although it is impossible to know the thoughts of the photographer at the moment of making a photograph, it is feasible to make certain assumptions based on what the photographer says or writes. In many cases it is the silences (the things that a photographer chooses not to say or write) that are the most revealing. In an interview, I asked him about a comparable photograph, made in Balsall Heath in Birmingham in 1969, featuring a homeless mother and baby in a pose reminiscent of the Madonna and Child (Fig. 66):

\begin{itemize}
  \item Hall: Do you remember taking this photograph?
  \item Hedges: It’s Birmingham. Sparkbrook? It could be Balsall Heath. What I was struck by in that picture, and I have to say I was struck by it the moment I took it, was the cherubic infant Jesus pose of the baby. I mean, it is just unbelievable how much that child looks like a Renaissance painting, isn’t it?
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{263} Staff reporter, ‘Slum clearance being neglected, Shelter says’, The Times, 17 September, 1971, p. 3. Here, the photograph was not attributed to Hedges. The caption beneath it read: ‘A photograph from the Shelter report showing the cellar home of a couple and their baby in Liverpool’.
Hall: Did you think that when you took it?

Hedges: Oh yes. I think it was taken for the *Face the Facts* report. 264

Hedges stated that he was aware of the photograph’s reference to the iconography of the Madonna and Child at the moment of its making. However, he categorically denies having ever set up any photograph. He did not deliberately pose the pair as a Madonna and Child by suggesting how the mother should hold her baby, or how its limbs should be arranged. There is a qualitative difference between a photograph that is orchestrated to emulate a pictorial convention and one that unavoidably evokes it, either through subject matter, setting or title.

It is pertinent to compare Hedges’ photograph with that of a slum family made by Lewis Hine in 1904. In 1911 the latter was published in a tondo format on the front cover of *The Survey* magazine above the title *A Madonna of the Tenements* (Fig. 67). Both the format and the title make explicit reference to the iconography of a Renaissance Madonna and Child, specifically Raphael’s *The Madonna of the Chair* (1513) (Fig. 68). In his essay ‘The Invention of Photographic Meaning’ Allan Sekula observes that Hine’s photograph connotes ‘the capacity of the alien poor for human sentiment’ and that its religious association implies the ‘spiritual elevation of the poor’. 265 Sekula describes Hine as a ‘realist mystic’ in that his photograph functions both as a report/document and also as a carrier of expressive/spiritual significance. 266 Here the boundary between photography as reportage, and photography as expression, is blurred.

In his conclusion, Sekula observes that the antimony of documentary and art photography is unhelpful and misleading and suggests that the two categories are not mutually exclusive.

Documentary photographs can be spiritually expressive without compromising their validity as documents. Furthermore, Sekula suggests that it is impossible for documentary photographers to escape ‘an expressionist structure’. All photographs rely on the formal elements of composition, colour, line, tone, texture and chiaroscuro and evoke established pictorial conventions. Regardless of the photographer’s intentions, the semiotic effect of the photograph unavoidably evokes a ‘mystical’ response. In interviews, Hedges was reluctant to discuss his photographs as aesthetic objects. When asked about the formalist qualities of his photographs (their undeniable compositional balance, considered viewpoints and striking chiaroscuro) he dismissed their significance, commenting ‘I believe that photographers can be artists, but I chose not to be’. Again, the gap between intentionality and effect opens up. Regardless of Hedges’ decision to reject a tradition of art photography, the photographs themselves attest to a series of aesthetic choices, which in turn provoke an expressive/spiritual response in the viewer.

Returning to the photograph (Fig. 66), it is interesting to note the contrast between the figure of the mother holding the baby, and the two other children who appear in the photograph. The uncertainty and incompleteness of the two children seem at odds with the wholeness and security evoked by the pairing of the mother and baby. In the foreground, a little girl crouches awkwardly in an armchair, hiding from the camera, behind a door. In the background, a boy stands half-naked, leaning against a mantelpiece. Both children are fragmented, an assemblage of eclectic limbs, lacking complete bodies.

When asked about this apparent dissection of the children’s bodies, Hedges attributed it to chance:

267 Ibid.
268 Sekula concludes that the photographer fulfils two roles simultaneously: firstly, that of ‘witness’ in producing a photograph as a ‘report’; secondly, that of ‘seer’ in producing a photograph invested with spiritual and expressive meaning (‘On the Invention of Photographic Meaning’, op. cit. p. 108).
‘Pure accident. Basically, he is standing in her shadow, his torso is hidden by her shadow and his bottom half is not, and he looks fragmented, but it’s not a deliberate ploy. Basically, that's just the way they stood. I expect the child by the doorway is thinking, ‘I'm getting out of the way of the camera’.270

Perhaps, to some extent, it is unavoidable in Western culture that a photograph of a mother and baby shares some visual resonance with the ubiquitous icon of the Madonna and Child. However, Hedges' agency in this evocation must be recognised. In making photographs of poor housing conditions, he repeatedly chose to include single women holding babies or children. A survey of his work reveals that, alongside the single child, the single woman holding a baby is the most prevalent trope in his photographs of homelessness. Contact prints reveal Hedges’ deliberate intervention at the editing stage in order to transform photographs of family groups into photographs of single women and children (Fig. 69). Perhaps he felt that the aesthetic appeal and impact of his photographs would be enhanced by referencing this iconography? Perhaps he (or Shelter) recognised the potential of the Madonna and Child as a universally recognised symbol of homelessness? By presenting the homeless mother and child in the guise of the Madonna and Child, a narrative of guilt and blame was avoided. The homeless mother as Madonna (pure and blameless) was a worthy object of pity. Later in the same year Shelter’s Christmas advertisement (featuring a photograph by Donald Silverstein) overtly invoked the same pictorial convention, both through text and image. The photograph of a young girl holding her baby was placed above a paragraph that read: ‘Christ knows what Christmas is like without a home. It’s hell. Just like it was for the first homeless Christmas family 2,000 years ago’271 (Fig. 70)

270 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 394.
271 The advertisement was published in both The Times (29 November 1971, p. 5) and the New Statesman (17 December 1971).
It is possible to surmise that Hedges’ decision to make this kind of photograph was a response to several factors. Firstly, after spending some time at Shelter he realised that of all the photographs that he made, this type of photograph was the most successful: a photograph of a single woman with a baby or child was the most likely to be published as part of a report, or to feature in an advertising campaign. Hedges came to understand that this was what the charity wanted, and recognised that it was his job to provide this. In limited circumstances (Hedges was only able to spend a finite amount of time with each homeless family), it was necessary to make photographs that fulfilled Shelter’s criteria. Secondly, at a practical level, Hedges was more likely to come across single women and young children when he visited slum homes during the day (it was necessary to make photographs during the day, due to lighting requirements). Invariably, older children were at school and men were at work. If a baby was present, it would be both natural and necessary for the mother to hold it as she showed Hedges around her home. Thirdly, Hedges found it much easier to photograph women and children. In an interview he stated that men, even when present, were difficult and often unwilling to be photographed:

Hedges: I think, in general, men were more threatened by photography than women.

Hall: That's interesting.

Hedges: Because I think they felt more responsible. Don't forget this is 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971 and they felt responsible, in terms of bringing an income in.

Hall: Being a provider?
Hedges: Being a provider, yes. I think it was just a matter of patience. I think it was more difficult to unwind any tension with men. They were more defensive of their situation. You had to be prepared to spend more time talking to them. They felt that you were being critical of them, or judgemental.\footnote{272}{Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 389.}

Fourthly, Hedges was aware of the pictorial convention of the Madonna and Child and perhaps believed that, by evoking this convention, his photographs would be in some way more resonant and appealing. Fifthly, I would suggest that Hedges’ photographs evoke the pictorial conventions employed by the British documentary photographers of the 1930s in their representations of slums and their inhabitants. Rose observes that photographs of this period made in the East End of London ‘repeat the poses and gestures of women close together, almost always holding their children’\footnote{273}{Rose 1997, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 287.} and interprets this as a deliberate attempt to feminise the slums: ‘Documentary photographs produce their bodies as non-threatening figures: mothers caring for children, neighbours helping each other’.\footnote{274}{\textit{Ibid.}} By repeatedly using this trope in his photographs, Hedges represents the slums of the twentieth century in the same vein, as feminised, maternal and non-threatening.

The ubiquity of the stereotype of the ‘Mother and baby (Madonna and child)’ and its defining role in Hedges’ early career is evident in the critical and public response to his photographs. Much of the debate surrounding Hedges’ practice in the 1970s hinged on the fact that he had made this kind of photograph. As illustrated by Spence’s article, Hedges’ name became synonymous with photographs of victimised mothers and children. Moreover, his practice was interpreted as a double victimisation by some leftist photographers: vulnerable people were further damaged by his photographic representation of them. Hedges’ photographs were...
judged as exploitative, passé and ethically unsound in their perpetuation of stereotypes of homelessness. Hedges’ professional reputation came to stand on a handful of the 980 photographs that he made for Shelter. Of these published photographs, a significant proportion showed the ‘Forlorn Child (innocent victim)’ or ‘Mother and baby (Madonna and child)’. Depending on the critic’s ideological point of view, this kind of photograph attested either to Hedges’ humanity and talent as a socially concerned photographer, or to his deliberate exploitation of the homeless. The remainder of Hedges’ photographs (the negatives, contact prints and final prints that were not published by the charity) were not assessed.

One particular photograph of a mother and child was central to the critical debate that surrounded Hedges’ work in the 1970s. Hedges made the photograph of Mrs Tandy and one of her children in Sheffield in May 1969 (Fig. 71). Surprisingly, the photograph was not published in its original form by the charity. It was translated into a graphic image made up of dots and featured in an advertisement that explained ‘each dot equals 100 unfit houses’ (Fig. 72). This photograph, both in the details of its making and publication, encapsulates the contested nature of Hedges’ practice. A full-page version of the photograph dominated the earliest review of Hedges’ work, published in *The British Journal of Photography* in December 1970.\(^{275}\) First published in Liverpool in 1854 as *The Liverpool Photographic Journal*, the magazine had a long and established tradition.\(^{276}\) It was printed monthly until 1857 when it became the bi-weekly *Liverpool and Manchester Photographic Journal*. In 1860 it assumed its present name and became a weekly publication (since 2010, it has reverted to a monthly publication). The journal published in-depth articles about

\(^{276}\) In her 1977 article ‘The Photograph: An Annotated Bibliography for Archivists’, Lilly Koltun describes the journal thus: ‘This weekly is the oldest and one of the best photographic magazines published in England. Well-written articles on the history of British photography appear periodically, as well as reviews and portfolios of contemporary British photographers of all types. An extremely useful magazine in which the writing is generally at a high level. Its orientation is almost exclusively British’ (Lilly Koltun, ‘The Photograph: An Annotated Bibliography for Archivists, *Archivaria*, no. 5, 1977, pp. 124-40 (p. 138).
photography, profiles of photographers, reviews and technical information. An overview of its content suggests that it catered to the mainstream, and was somewhat conservative in terms of contemporary photographic practice. Its format relied heavily on the single image, accompanied by an explanatory text. It showcased the work of celebrated photographers (both past and present) whose work exemplified a traditional approach to the genres of art photography, landscape, portraiture and documentary. Technical advice regarding photographic processes and equipment was offered to readers who wanted to achieve the same kind of results for themselves. Ideologically, it was the antipode of leftist photographic journals such as *Camerawork* and *Ten.8*.

The article on Hedges entitled ‘Things As They Are’ was authored by Ainslie Ellis, who wrote a weekly column for the journal. Ellis has been described as a ‘populist’ and is recognised as one of the leading writers on British photography during the 1970s. He dedicated a paragraph of the article on Hedges to the technical details of his practice: his choice of camera, lens, aperture and film. Hedges’ middle-class credentials were highlighted (he was described as ‘unusually well-read’ and it was revealed that he had intended to study English Literature and Sociology at university). Ellis observed that ‘The pictures that he takes are fired by a singular passion and compassion…that make them not only distinguishable but distinguished’ and concluded that ‘Shelter have a photographer of great talent and integrity’. Ellis interpreted the ‘eloquent and familiar’ photographs as a manifestation of Hedges’ ability to see ‘the human situation as it really is’.

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278 Ellis *op. cit*., p. 1269.
279 *Ibid*.
281 *Ibid*. 
Two readers’ responses to the article were published in later editions of the journal. Robert J. Vickers attacked Ellis’ blinkered interpretation, and cynically dismissed Hedges’ photographs as clichéd and predictable:

‘The photography depicted in the article epitomises the full-time photographic students ‘don’t-pose-‘em, don’t-light-‘em, all-my-pictures-have-meaning’ approach’. 282

Notably this reader was, like Hedges, a photography graduate (from the Birmingham School of Photography). As a trained photographer, his response to Hedges’ photographs was qualitatively different to that of a critic or layperson. His letter betrayed insider knowledge of the way that photographs were made and dispelled the myth of the creative genius that Ellis evokes: ‘Anybody with a camera which sports a wide-aperture wide-angle lens could have taken the pictures. All that is required is an index finger capable of pressing the shutter release’. 283 By way of response, Ellis defended his initial judgement by reasserting Hedges’ ability to make compelling photographs ‘without posing his unfortunate subjects and by a real familiarity with their way of life’. 284 Vickers’ letter revealed the condemmatory opinion of one of Hedges’ peers and stood in stark contrast to the more favourable views of another respondent, Mr Attfield, who introduced his letter as follows: ‘I have been a reader of your excellent weekly for more years than I care to remember and have also been a lifelong amateur photographer of modest talents’.

Mr Attfield shared Ellis’ viewpoint, and appeared equally enraptured by Hedges’ photographs:

283 Ibid.
284 Ibid.
…the mother and child shot is so outstanding I have still left it lying on a table in my lounge and keep looking at the hidden beauty in it…Look at this poor, feckless woman, unkempt and in god knows what circumstances, and then look at the child in a seventh heaven of security and love. 285

His critique epitomises the romantic aesthetic attitude, characterised by its foregrounding of ‘unique essences within things and people which are ordinarily concealed…but which artistic genius can reveal’. 286 Hedges’ ability to reveal the ‘hidden’ beauty of such an unlikely scene stems from his consummate skill as a photographer. 287

The article, and the letters that it provoked, reveal a divided reaction to Hedges’ practice and the way in which he represented the homeless. It is significant that Hedges’ photographs of homelessness continued to generate this kind of response years later. In 1985 Hedges’ photograph of a man holding his child was exhibited in Manchester at the Cornerhouse Gallery’s inaugural exhibition entitled Human Interest: Fifty Years of British Art About People, held between 3 October and 17 November (Fig. 73). The exhibition catalogue echoes Mr Attfield’s sentiments in its description of the photograph:

‘We look through Nick Hedges’ plangent photographs of people in the Gorbals and elsewhere, living in the most appalling conditions, helpless victims of the quick buck and a society good at averting its eyes, and an image leaps out. A man, seated, his lap

287 For further discussion of the tendency of documentary to aestheticize poverty and the working class, see Andrew Higson’s ‘Space, Place, Spectacle: Landscape and Townscape in the ‘Kitchen Sink’ film’ published in Screen, vol. 25, issue 4-5, 1984, pp. 2-21. Here Higson observes how ‘the beautiful tragedy (the ‘beauty out of squalor’) of such images serves to illicit our sympathy for a particular social condition, and our gaze is thus authorised’. Higson traces this tendency to the documentary tradition of the 1930s, when ‘slums became seductive, fascinating: vide, for instance the street shots in Housing Problems…Visually fascinated we can at the same time rest assured that our gaze is morally sanctioned’ (pp. 9-10).
and arms cradling his little boy. They engage our sympathy; their beauty almost disrupts the squalor in which we see them.

To sum up, it is apparent that the ubiquity of photographs of homeless mothers holding their children in Hedges’ work attests to the success of this trope regarding Shelter’s remit. In invoking the pictorial convention of the Madonna and Child, these photographs recast the homeless mother and child as worthy objects of both charity and pity. This pictorial convention serves to distance the homeless, often single, mother from a narrative of fecklessness, irresponsibility and blame. The iconic image of the mother holding her child further suggests the possible existence of love and security within the unlikely setting of the slum home. By referencing an established art historical convention, Hedges’ photographs succeed in representing homelessness in a more appealing way.

This sanitisation of the homeless lay at the root of Spence’s critique of Hedges’ practice: homeless women and children were only worthy of help if they appeared as saintly and anodyne as a contemporary Madonna and Child. Spence interprets this kind of representation as exploitative and immoral. Her critique is met by Hedges’ refusal to see his photographs as anything other than factual documents, and his subsequent rejection of any artistic interpretation of them. The stand-off between critic and photographer attests to the irreconcilable conflict generated by Hedges’ practice. Ultimately, Hedges’ authorial intentions jar uncomfortably with the semiotic effect of his photographs. The photographer says one thing; the photographs (and critics) seem to say another.

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A Real Familiarity?

Hedges’ ability to make ‘authentic’ and ‘familiar’ photographs of the homeless was similarly lauded in reviews of an exhibition of the Shelter photographs at the groundbreaking Impressions Gallery in York in 1973. Set up by two young photography graduates Val Williams and Andy Sproxton a year earlier, the gallery was the major photographic gallery in the North dedicated solely to the medium (Fig. 74). The impact of the gallery and its ethos on the history of British photography cannot be underestimated. It provided a previously non-existent arena in which to showcase a socially engaged and politically motivated photographic practice. Martin Parr later recalled the significance of the gallery’s opening:

‘Going over to York with my fellow student Daniel Meadows to meet Andy and Val at the newly established Impressions Gallery was a revelation. Although we were both studying photography, the emphasis was more commercial, so going to York we suddenly felt the excitement of meeting fellow enthusiasts for photography. Those early days, shows and meetings were like pioneer days. There has never been anything as stimulating in my entire photographic career’.  

Held between 1 January and 3 February, the Shelter exhibition featured more than eighty of Hedges’ photographs. An article in The Guardian referred to ‘a big show by Nick Hedges,

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289 Andrew Sproxton was a key figure in the establishment of photography as an independent art form in Britain. In 1972, shortly after leaving Kent University, he and Val Williams set up Impressions Gallery, one of the first specialist photography galleries in Europe. Impressions moved into The Shambles in an old part of York and quickly became a meeting place for emerging and established photographers alike. While Impressions became best known for its support of contemporary photography, from the outset the two co-directors also shared a keen historical interest in British photography, showing the work of Cecil Beaton, Herbert Ponting and Frank Meadow Sutcliffe, a renowned Victorian photographer who was based in the nearby fishing port of Whitby. Impressions also hosted the first exhibition of Hill and Adamson’s nineteenth-century calotype photographs. At the same time, the co-directors were deeply committed to supporting and promoting the work of up and coming photographers, both exhibiting their work and providing the facilities for them to produce it. Impressions became one of the first galleries to show the work of now established photographers such as Daniel Meadows, Nick Hedges and Martin Parr, [http://www.sproxtonphotographyaward.org/background/](http://www.sproxtonphotographyaward.org/background/) accessed May 2010.

commissioned by Shelter’ as one of the gallery’s most notable exhibitions of the year.291 A review of the exhibition stated ‘not only does he (Hedges) produce fine photographs, but he has a deep understanding of people’s emotional lives and of their social relationships’.292 An equally glowing review in Photo News featured a full-page reproduction of one of Hedges’ photographs (Fig. 75) and stated: ‘We strongly recommend this rare blend of powerful humane imagery’.293 Another review entitled ‘Cameraman’s eye on slum world’ described Hedges as ‘one of Britain’s top photographers’.294 Hedges’ way of making photographs of homelessness seemed to be hitting the mark across the board. At this time any published criticism of Hedges’ work (such as Robert J. Vicker’s letter to The British Journal of Photography) appears to have been in the minority. Reviews in the national press and other journals praised Hedges’ photographs for their insight and humanity. Positive responses to Hedges’ photographs foregrounded his ability to empathise with the homeless, and to translate this emotional connection into moving images. Reviews emphasised the closeness of photographer to subject through the use of words such as compassion, integrity, familiarity and understanding. Hedges was painted as an insider, whose photographs resulted from a personal, as well as professional, relationship with his subjects.

To some extent, this interpretation was justified and echoed Shelter’s radical approach. The ethos of the charity was that of sustained support, built on the potential to foster relationships with homeless families. In an interview, Hedges recalled that the job had given him the freedom to ‘discover things’ and to make photographs intuitively.295 He contrasted this with the limited scope of photographers working in television and journalism who, as a result of

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293 Review, Photo News, January 1973, scanned newspaper clipping from Impressions Gallery’ archive sent in personal e-mail from Angela Sheard (Gallery Assistant), 3 March 2012.
294 ‘Cameraman’s eye on slum world’, unknown source, scanned newspaper clipping from Impressions Gallery’ archive sent in personal e-mail from Angela Sheard (Gallery Assistant), 3 March 2012.
prohibitive production costs and tight deadlines, had to plan their photographs in advance. Hedges valued the flexibility and time that the Shelter commission afforded him. He was able to spend time talking to the people that he photographed in order to gain a deeper understanding of their experience of homelessness. In interviews, Hedges emphasised the importance of getting to know his sitters as a fundamental part of how he made his photographs. He contrasted this approach with that of other photojournalists. On one occasion *The Observer* commissioned Hedges to photograph a Birmingham street scene. Hedges recalled how he spent days both talking to, and photographing, the residents. The newspaper subsequently decided not to use his images. Instead they sent their own photographer (Tony McGrath) to make the photographs. Hedges described how McGrath took a taxi from New Street station to the end of the street and used a long lens to make his photographs. He never got out of the taxi and promptly returned to London, job done. Both Hedges and his critics equated the amount of time spent with the homeless with the production of authentic photographs. Authenticity seemingly depended on familiarity. It was implied that the ‘truth’ could only be photographed by someone who was embedded in the world of the homeless themselves. Hedges’ methodology was to a certain extent based on this philosophy.

It must be remembered, however, that Hedges joined Shelter immediately after graduating from Birmingham College of Art in 1968. He was twenty-four years old. Hedges’ belief that it was possible to make authentic and truthful photographs of homelessness was perhaps a reflection of his youthful idealism at this time. During the summer holidays of his second year at college, Hedges came across a copy of Walker Evans and James Agee’s *Let Us Now

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296 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 373.
297 As Shelter’s only in-house photographer, Hedges enjoyed a degree of independence. To a certain extent, he organised his own timetable and developed his own photographs in the darkroom that was already installed at 86, The Strand in London, where Shelter had its first headquarters. In 1976, the charity moved to 157 Waterloo Road in London. In 1986, it moved to its current premises at 88 Old Street in London.
Praise Famous Men in his local library in Bromsgrove. In an interview, he recalled the impact of this discovery:

‘I came across a book which I’d never heard of, but it had got some photographs in, so that was a good thing. It was called Let Us Now Praise Famous Men and it was by James Agee and Walker Evans. It’s probably a book you know, and I was absolutely knocked out by it and not only by the photographs, but by the arguments that James Agee puts in the beginning about the responsibilities that people have, as journalists and photographers, towards their subject matter. It seemed to me that he stated a particular kind of relationship, which is one which is uncommon in terms of the media’. 299

On entering his third year at college, Hedges was given the opportunity to make photographs that permitted the formation of this kind of relationship. From 1966, Birmingham College of Art ran an annual placement scheme for student photographers with the Birmingham Housing Trust. The students made photographs of the slums in, and around, Birmingham for use in local newspaper advertising campaigns (Fig. 76). In 1967, Hedges volunteered for the placement and spent the last six months of his degree making photographs of families in poor housing and ‘getting to know people in the way that Agee and Evans had suggested was the right way of doing things’. 300 His photographs subsequently appeared in newspaper advertisements and other campaign material for the Birmingham Housing Trust (Fig. 77). 301

In his 1979 article, Hedges reflected on the naivety of his belief in Evans and Agee’s methodology. He stated that he had had ‘a naïve motive and intent’ when he joined Shelter and added ‘I thought that by presenting to the general public the ‘real’ world of bad housing

300 Ibid., p. 394.
301 This photograph for the Birmingham Housing Trust was also published in Ainslie Ellis’ article ‘Things As They Are’, op. cit., p. 1268.
that the truth of these observations would effect a change in their attitudes. Retrospectively, I was confusing many things’.\textsuperscript{302} Evidence of Hedges’ commitment to making authentic photographs of homelessness was his refusal to photograph scenes that had been set up for the camera. Since its formation in 1966, Shelter and its advertising agency had relied on fabricated images. Des Wilson, its Director, expected Hedges to continue this practice (Fig. 78). During his first weeks of employment, Hedges complied and made photographs of child models in a studio (Fig. 79). Subsequently, he refused to make any more photographs in this way. He insisted on making photographs of genuinely homeless families in their own homes. Des Wilson’s acquiescence to this demand implies that Hedges enjoyed a certain level of autonomy in his position as Shelter’s first, and only, full-time in-house photographer.

Hedges believed that photographs of the truth would be far more effective than any attempt to reconstruct it. His intention to make authentic photographs was a non-negotiable tenet of his practice. Why was this perceived authenticity so important to Hedges? Why was it important enough to lose his job over? Did this authenticity benefit the subjects of his photographs, or was it more relevant to Hedges’ own identity as a documentary photographer continuing in the footsteps of Evans? In retrospect, the homeless child who appeared in his photographs ultimately gained little from this authenticity. The semiotic meaning of the photographs was little altered by a shift from the photographic studio to the slum home. In Hedges’ own words, many of his published photographs invariably represented the homeless child as a ‘forlorn’ and ‘innocent’ victim (just as Shelter’s carefully orchestrated scenarios had done). Perhaps it would have been better for Shelter to have maintained their use of child models? Perhaps homeless children would have been better protected by concealing their true identities? A seemingly noble desire to represent an authentic situation must be balanced against the meanings that were generated by the resulting photographs. In hindsight, Hedges’

\textsuperscript{302} Hedges 1979, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 161.
insistence on making photographs of genuinely homeless children only served to stereotype real children, as opposed to models in a studio.\textsuperscript{303}

In order to make authentic images of homelessness, Hedges believed that he had to fit in with the people and spaces that he photographed. He had to make the families comfortable with his presence in their homes. He had to build a trust with them. In an interview he commented, ‘You’ve got to develop a rapport and it takes time’.\textsuperscript{304} He had to embed himself in surroundings that were alien to him. The poverty and working-class culture that confronted him in the slums of Birmingham and Manchester were far removed from his own upbringing and experience. As a white middle-class man he was an outsider, despite critics’ claims to the contrary. His position echoes the photo-essayists of Picture Post, assigned to document the slums of the East End in the 1930s, whose ‘heroic entrance into alien spaces’ depended on ‘a certain kind of white masculinity’.\textsuperscript{305}

Hedges rejects this view and believes that class plays no part in the making of photographs:

‘Some people said that you shouldn’t take these pictures; you should give the cameras to the people themselves to take the pictures. As a photographer, I've been set up on a number of occasions by Marxist lecturers who wanted to demolish me and what I’d been doing because they saw me as a parasite of the state. There's a very hardline left point of view which says that, as a white middle-class person, I shouldn’t be making photographs of factories or black communities, because I'm not from there, I'm not part of them. I don't understand it, and I can’t be part of it, because I didn’t grow up

\textsuperscript{303} Today Shelter, and other charities, employ models in advertising campaigns in order to protect the identities of vulnerable adults and children in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
\textsuperscript{304} Nick Hedges interview, 15 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 410.
\textsuperscript{305} Rose 1997, op. cit., p. 287.
with it. I believe in a socialist agenda, which says that we are all equal and I am my brother’s keeper’. 306

‘One of the great gifts of being a photographer is it can make you classless’. 307

Hedges’ practice, however, cannot be assessed independently from a discourse of class and power, as observed by Foucauldian theorists of photography writing in the 1980s:

‘Documentary realism, in its effacement of the often middle-class position of the photographer and viewer, voyeuristically offered up the working-class body as a spectacle of passivity and unselfconsciousness. A whole regime of representation, typified by the naturalism of the black-and-white, grainy, and naturally-lit photograph, was reserved for those lower down in the social and class hierarchy’. 308

Socially concerned documentary photographers such as Humphrey Spender, working as part of the Mass Observation movement during the 1930s, had given the practice a bad name. Spender used a concealed camera to make his photographs: ‘the point of view was covert: that of the voyeur, the eavesdropper who overheard and oversaw’. 309 Tom Harrison, one of the founders of the project, encouraged Spender to ‘figure himself in the role of exploring ethnographer in a foreign country’. 310 The dividing line between ‘them’ and ‘us’ was clearly drawn. Photographs of the Northern poor were used to mobilise a discourse of difference. The very nature and medium of Hedges’ practice carried cultural associations predicated on social inequality. In spite of Hedges’ noble aims, was his way of making photographs ultimately so different from the covert tactics of Spender? Although his camera was not

308 Evans (ed.) op. cit., p. 27. See also Martha Rosler’s assessment of documentary photographic practice: ‘Documentary testifies, finally, to the bravery or (dare we name it?) the manipulativeness and savvy of the photographer, who entered a situation of physical danger, social restrictedness, human decay or combinations of these and saved us the trouble’ (‘The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems’, Martha Rosler, 3 Works, op. cit., p. 77).
310 Ibid., p. 135.
concealed under his coat (as Spender’s had been) I would suggest that Hedges cultivated a modus operandi that made him, and his camera, to a certain extent invisible.\textsuperscript{311}

It is interesting to compare this effacement of the photographer and its resulting pictorial effects with the photographs made by Edith Tudor-Hart in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{312} In her 1932 photograph entitled \textit{Family Group, Stepney, London}, the relationship of photographer and subject is emphasised, rather than concealed (Fig. 80). Ostensibly, Tudor-Hart’s photograph shares similarities to those made by Hedges: she represents a poor mother and her four children in a slum room. The setting prefigures that favoured by Shelter forty years later: the rickety bedstead, peeling wallpaper, cramped space and bare floorboards of a slum bedroom. However, Tudor-Hart’s photograph seems to reject a narrative of victimhood and pity. The mother looks knowingly at the camera; the child on her knees smiles, despite her worn shoes and the paucity of her surroundings. The other children seem equally contented and well presented: the older daughter is neatly dressed and her hair is carefully arranged; the two boys busy themselves with their comics. The family appears clean, tidy and dignified.

Unlike the ‘objects of pity’ that inhabit so many of Hedges’ photographs, the family appears to have prepared itself for the camera’s lens. The mother’s expression signals her permission for the photograph to be made. Tudor-Hart’s pronounced visibility permits this family’s dignity. A fundamental component of the image is the inclusion of the window frame on the left and lower boundary of the photograph. Tudor-Hart reveals, rather than effaces, her presence at the moment of making the image. She leaves an imprint of herself as a polite

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\textsuperscript{311} The exhibition Exposed: Voyeurism, Surveillance and the Camera, curated by Dr Simon Baker (Tate’s first Curator of Photography) at Tate Modern, between 28 May and 3 October 2010, explored this theme. It offered ‘a fascinating look at pictures made on the sly, without the explicit permission of the people depicted’. The exhibition featured 250 works, from the late nineteenth century to the present day, by a range of celebrated photographers including Brassai, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Nan Goldin, Lee Miller, Man Ray and Weegee.

observer, situated beyond the threshold of the room. She does not violate the family’s space. She is seen, acknowledged and known by the subjects. She is granted permission to make the image. That is not to say that Hedges did not have permission to make his photographs. However, there is a qualitative difference between an image selected from a continuous stream of photographs, made somewhat surreptitiously, and a single, orchestrated image.

Physically, Hedges adopted strategies that promoted his invisibility. He deliberately wore unassuming clothes to blend in with his surroundings. An article published in 1970 observed that ‘Nick dresses at all times very casually and he tries to get to know the people very well that he is to photograph’.\(^{313}\) Perhaps this was a necessary, and obvious, way of making it easier for Hedges to approach the people that he wanted to photograph. Perhaps Hedges’ intention was to keep a low profile, as a stranger in unfamiliar surroundings. Undoubtedly a non-threatening appearance was essential in creating a good first impression. Hedges was not alone in adopting this strategy. Many British independent photographers of the 1970s employed similar tactics:

‘Mostly middle-class and highly educated, they sought to justify their presence in communities so different from the ones they came from…The adoption of a ‘hippy’ lifestyle and dress by many gave them class anonymity. Meadows and Parr…certainly adopted this style of dress, masking their backgrounds in the classless clothing of hippydom ensuring that although they could never be ‘Us’, they could certainly never be mistaken for ‘Them’.\(^{314}\)

Once inside the home to be photographed, as a tall and distinctive-looking man, Hedges recognised the need to make himself as small and unobtrusive as possible. This was of particular relevance in confined domestic spaces that served to emphasise his height. In an

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\(^{313}\) Ellis *op. cit.*, p. 1269.

interview, he described the physical performance that developed instinctively as he made the photographs:

‘We were working in very tight, intimate spaces with people in situations where they might feel threatened or invaded. It’s a tricky and difficult thing for a photographer, and indeed a journalist, to do. One of the things I feel quite strongly about is the relationship that photographers develop with the subjects they’re photographing. It’s really significant and I think that it’s something that photographers don’t talk about. Often they just take it for granted, or it’s not something they think about. If you can imagine you’re in a room which is probably 12 feet by 10 feet say, or 4 metres by 3 metres. You’re in a very intimate situation with someone, and you need to allow them to be articulate and in charge of the situation themselves. You’ve invaded their inadequate house, inadequate room so you’ve got to make yourself quite small, you’ve got to somehow reduce your presence. I did this to start with instinctively and I used to smile to myself when I found I was crouching again.’ 315

The necessity of reducing his physical imprint on the scene that he was photographing is remembered as a way of making his subjects feel less threatened. Hedges presents his methodology as evidence of compassion for his subjects. He tailored his approach to make them feel more comfortable. However, it must be remembered that this way of working was also self-serving. Like Spender, Hedges’ practice was ultimately voyeuristic and dependent on his ability to blend into his surroundings. By crouching down he was less visible. His gravitation towards the floor was a physical manifestation of his desire to embed himself in the space and to become part of the scenery.

On rare occasions, Hedges allowed the tables to be turned. Sometimes he gave his camera to a child so that they could make a photograph of him (Fig. 81).

In an interview, he talked about these images:

‘I appear in a number of photographs which they took. Kids asked, ‘Can I have a go?’

I used to put the camera round their neck on a strap so it didn’t drop. Those photographs are very different. They weren’t made into final prints. It was a way of making yourself the same, at the same level. You’re taking part in it, you see?’

In addition to physically embedding himself in the space, the camera could be used to fulfil a similar function, ideologically and emotionally. Hedges momentarily swapped places with his subjects and tried homelessness on for size. For a few seconds he crossed the divide between observer and observed. For a few seconds he assumed the role of homeless child and the camera became an instrument of fun, rather than a tool of scrutiny. Hedges briefly stared into the lens of the camera from the other side and shed his invisibility. Whatever he felt at that moment, Hedges understood that literally making oneself part of the scene made children, in particular, feel less self-conscious in front of his camera and promoted a unique kind of intimacy with them.

Fundamental to Hedges’ practice was his choice of a Leica camera. Invented in Germany in 1913, the Leica was the first practical 35mm compact camera. In the 1950s, the Leica M series was introduced. It became the camera of choice for photojournalists due to its durability, reliability, lightness, integrated viewfinder and superior quality lens. Hedges cited the quietness of the camera, ‘like a whisper’, as one of its key advantages. It allowed him to make photographs almost imperceptibly. It also allowed him to make photographs in very

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317 Whilst working for Shelter, Hedges used 35mm Leica, Nikon and M2 cameras with Kodak Tri-X film.
poor lighting conditions without using a flash: its slow shutter speed made it possible to get a sharply focused image in dark conditions. Another advantage was its ability to make clear photographs at very close range. By using a 28mm wide-angle lens, Hedges could record a whole scene ‘top to tail’ at a short distance from the subject. In the cramped, dark surroundings of slum rooms, the Leica produced high quality photographs efficiently, unobtrusively and quietly.

Making photographs in such small domestic spaces necessitated a close and intimate photographic practice. Hedges made photographs from between a metre and two metres away from his subject. The Leica’s wide-angled lens permitted Hedges to include a significant amount of surrounding space, even from such close proximity. This was essential in making photographs that documented the appalling physical conditions of slum interiors, and portraits of their inhabitants, simultaneously. In such conditions, it would seem ridiculous to suggest that Hedges’ way of making photographs was anything other than transparent and overt: it was impossible for Hedges to disguise a camera that was, quite literally, pointed in people’s faces. Any initial comparison between Hedges and Spender seems unfounded and misjudged. However, it is feasible to make this comparison. The way that Hedges made photographs resulted in the camera’s invisibility, if not physically (as it had been with Spender), then psychologically.

In 1968 cameras were not part of everyday life as they are today. Hedges’ practice relied on his ability to naturalise the somewhat alien presence of a camera. He attempted to make it as benign as possible. The camera became part of his persona. He wore it round his neck at all

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320 In his 1971 book Relations in Public, Microstudies of the Public Order, sociologist Erving Goffman identifies this methodology as an ‘overdetermination of normalcy’ by which photographers, keen to avoid appearing sneaky or suspicious, ‘carry cameras where they can be seen’ or use wide lenses that often require them to be close to their subjects’ (p. 256). For further discussion of strategies employed by photographers see Lisa Henderson ‘Access and Consent in Public Photography’ in Larry Gross, John Stuart Katz and Jay Ruby (eds.), Image Ethics, The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film and Television, op. cit, pp. 91-107.
times. When asked by curious children, he occasionally handed it over to them so that they could make their own photographs (Fig. 82). It was especially important to make children comfortable with the presence and use of the camera. Its mystery was dispelled through its accessibility and functionality. In an interview, Hedges reflected on the relative ease of making photographs of children in 1968, as compared to today:

‘If you’re outside kids get very excited about you being there, because you’re different. I’m talking now about 1968 to 1972. I’m not talking about 2010. Now, they would probably consider you to be a paedophile. It’s totally different now for people taking pictures. Back then, outside, you were a novelty, you certainly weren’t a threat’. 321

Hedges’ camera also served to single him out as a figure of authority, however casually dressed. Unaccustomed to professional photographers or the process of being photographed, the homeless may well have felt unable to resist Hedges’ subtle intrusion into their lives and homes. Seemingly friendly, approachable and accommodating, Hedges remained a slightly strange and alien figure. Perhaps the homeless felt that their cooperation with Hedges was a requirement of Shelter’s intervention? A refusal to be photographed may have stigmatised them further as difficult or obstructive, the kind of family that was somehow less deserving of Shelter’s help.

Strange as it may sound, the cultivation of the camera’s invisibility depended on its pronounced visibility in Hedges’ practice. Hedges used it incessantly. During a single visit to a homeless family (perhaps lasting a couple of hours) Hedges could shoot three or four rolls of film, the equivalent of 150 photographs. 322 From these, perhaps only one or two would be used by Shelter. Hedges’ practice yielded a vast surplus of photographs. It was not necessary

322 Ibid., p. 416.
to make every photograph count. The sheer volume of his output, and the potential to make further adjustments in the darkroom, guaranteed at least a handful of successful photographs, suitable for publication. Hedges even made photographs while he, or a journalist, spoke to the subjects about their lives and living conditions, a technique that became second nature to him. The making of the photographs was embedded in a flow of conversation and interaction. This methodology resulted in the desensitization of the subject to the camera’s presence. It meant that the homeless lowered their guard as both the camera, and Hedges, started to go unnoticed.

In an interview, Hedges explained his methodology of making photographs en masse as a means of ensuring the probability of at least a few good photographs:

‘You get yourself into a situation and you start taking photographs and you continue taking pictures. It’s maybe of a group of people, and they’re doing something together, or maybe it’s a mother and a child, and you take four or five images. It’s not posed, it’s not set up, you don’t know what’s going to happen. You take one, you take two, you take three, and then you take four and you think, ‘That’s the one’. And you take five and then you take six and it dies away. The key image is probably number four, it might be number two or it might be number six’.³²³

There were two main advantages of making photographs in this way: it increased the probability of getting a good shot in unpredictable circumstances, and it also normalised the presence of the camera, resulting in less self-conscious subjects.

Hedges’ repeated assertion that his photographs were not set up in any way reveals his unerring commitment to the concept of documentary truth. The term ‘documentary’ was coined by the British film producer John Grierson in 1926 to describe films and photographs

³²³ Ibid., p. 427.
that represented the ‘facts’ of the matter. Roy Stryker, the head of the FSA photography unit, reasserted the primacy of fact, stating that ‘Truth is the objective of the documentary attitude’. Any deviation from a truthful representation would seem to call into question the authenticity of a documentary photograph. In 1936, when it was discovered that Arthur Rothstein, a photographer working under Stryker, had moved a cow’s skull whilst making photographs of the parched landscape of the Dust Bowl, there was a public outcry. Rothstein’s manipulation of the scene had violated the spirit and ethos of documentary photography. In an interview, Hedges commented, ‘When Rothstein moved that skull, he was stupid. He shouldn’t have done it. He should have let that skull just sit there’. It is therefore unsurprising that Hedges vehemently denies any such interventions in the scenes that he photographed and presents himself as a strictly hands-off observer:

‘I don't think my imagination is anywhere near as rich as what actually happens in life. It’s not false modesty. I feel that real life is far more rich and diverse than my imagination could ever make it, therefore let’s just see what happens. Some photographers are completely different, because they have a much stronger sense of direction and stronger sense of...It might be narrative, or it might be to do with their imagination. They’ll construct things far more, but I don't do that, and I'm not claiming either way is right, but I just know what's right for me.’

324 Grierson first used the term in a 1926 New York Sun review of Robert Flaherty’s non-fiction film Moana, which documented the daily life of a Polynesian youth.
326 Rothstein moved the cow’s skull several feet from its original position and photographed it against two different backgrounds, resulting in two different photographs. On making this discovery, critics mockingly referred to the photographs as images of the ‘perambulating skull’ and the controversy dogged Rothstein for the remainder of his career. For further discussion of the incident, see Miles Orvell’s The Real Thing: Image and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989, pp. 230-31.
328 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 397.
His comments echo those of his contemporary David Hurn, a British photojournalist and documentary photographer:

‘I consider myself as simply a recorder of whatever I find interesting in the world about me. I have no desire at all to direct or stage-manage ideas. If a photographer wants to control anything, he cuts himself off from life’. 329

The documentary genre relied on the concept of the detached observer as witness to the unexpected and revelatory moment. Any documentary photographer that interfered in this process risked reputation, credibility and respect.

This model of detached observation supports a narrative of documentary neutrality and reassures us that a photographic ‘truth’ is possible. However, it is disingenuous for Hedges to claim that his photographs were completely unmediated. Although he did not overtly construct the scenes that he photographed, he certainly shaped them with deliberate intent. In January 1969, Hedges made his first set of photographs for Shelter in Balsall Heath in Birmingham (Figs. 83 - 87). 330 He went to Vincent Crescent to photograph Mrs Milne and her four children. On arriving at the house, guided by his exposure meter, Hedges realised that it would be impossible to make clear photographs in such a poorly-lit interior. 331 He left empty-handed. He returned the following day, armed with a more powerful light bulb, which he fitted in the overhead light of the slum bedroom. Hedges refusal to use an artificial flash and his reliance on natural light from windows, coupled with a suitably powerful overhead light bulb, echoes the practice of one of his heroes, the American photojournalist W. Eugene

330 Hedges’ photographs of the Milne family proved to be some of his most iconic images and were widely used by Shelter. They were published in The Shelter Story (1969) (front cover and p.7). One of these photographs (Fig. 83) dominated the publicity for the 2014 exhibition of the Shelter photographs entitled Make Life Worth Living.
Smith. Hedges then proceeded to make a number of photographs of the Milne family. Retrospectively, looking at the photographs it is possible to discern an artificial atmosphere in the harshly-lit room that features in the final prints. The sterile glare of the replacement bulb casts unnaturally harsh, somewhat clinical, shadows which seem to jar with the squalor of the domestic space.

Moreover, the arrangement of the figures around the room appears contrived and unnatural. This is perhaps most noticeable in the disconcerting posture of the girl in the foreground, who sits on the edge of the bed with her legs pulled up in a pose reminiscent of an odalisque. Of all the figures in the photograph, she is the only one who averts her gaze from the camera. She looks demurely downwards, her hair falling coquettishly across one eye. This set of images stands out amongst the rest in terms of their peculiarly bright lighting and the strange immobility of the subjects. When compared with the contact prints that proved unsuitable for publication (Figs. 86 and 87), the sense of unnatural lighting and posture are even more pronounced.

On other occasions, Hedges deliberately chose viewpoints that omitted certain undesirable features from rooms. Whilst he drew the line at physically altering the environment by introducing or removing ‘props’, he edited the appearance of rooms through deliberate omissions: ‘What you had to try to do was not prejudice people’s points of view by including certain things. I might shift two paces to the right, so I didn't get the television in’. Some scenes were more or less reconstructed. Hedges returned to homes at pre-arranged times (usually later in the evening) to make photographs of children’s bath times or bedtimes in

333 Shelter realised that it was detrimental to show homeless families with ‘luxury’ items, such as television sets, as this contradicted the desired narrative of poverty and need.
order to avoid setting up a scene during the day. Such photographs, whilst not completely rehearsed, must be understood as fundamentally affected by the photographer’s expectations, intervention and influence.

Hedges’ photograph of Mrs Tandy and her child (Fig. 71) is undoubtedly striking in its apparent intimacy. Supportive critics, such as Ainslie Ellis, claimed that the photograph showed Hedges’ ‘real familiarity’ with the experience of homelessness. Granted, Hedges was committed to spending as much time as possible with the homeless families that he photographed. The constraints of his position as Shelter’s only photographer, however, meant that this time was limited. In spite of Hedges’ intentions and critics’ opinions, it is misleading to think that he had more than a fleeting brush with homelessness. He did not live with the families; he did not spend more than a couple of hours at a time with them on each visit.\footnote{Hedges’ fleeting brush with homelessness stands in contrast to the methodology employed by a later generation of social documentary photographers such as Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, Chris Killip and Graham Smith, who became a part of the communities that they photographed, often living amongst their subjects for prolonged periods of time (notably Finnish photographer Konttinen, who lived in Byker in Newcastle for seven years from 1969, and has since returned there on numerous occasions).}

He may only have visited a family once. An awareness of how the photograph was made (just one of a whole series of images) implies that it resulted less from Hedges’ familiarity with the situation, than from his ability to make photographs continuously and unobtrusively, and to put people at ease in the presence of his camera.

In a 1979 article entitled ‘Contemporary Portraits’ published in *Camerawork*, the photograph of Mrs Tandy and her child appeared again, this time accompanied by a short text written by Hedges.\footnote{Anonymous, ‘Contemporary Portraits’, *Camerawork* no. 12, January 1979, pp. 8-9. The article reviewed a HMPW touring exhibition of contemporary photographic portraiture that aimed to analyse photographic portraits ‘in terms of their social use’}. Here he described the photograph as ‘typical in its stereotyping of badly housed families’. In his article ‘Charity Begins At Home: The Shelter Photographs’, Hedges revealed how his methodology, rather than a deep familiarity with the Tandy family, had led to the photograph being made. Unusually, alongside the photograph he published the contact prints
of other photographs that he had made of the family (Fig. 88). In the light of these other images, Ellis’ interpretation of the photograph as evidence of Hedges’ ability to see ‘the human situation as it really is’ is called into question. Hedges’ other photographs of Mrs Tandy and her children showed a variety of alternative human situations, each equally valid. Mrs Tandy’s despair at her housing conditions was real, yet it was not the sum total of her experience. In an interview, Hedges described the narrative of the single image, so favoured by Shelter and his critics, as ‘an incomplete picture’. In contrast to Ellis’ assessment of the photograph as insightful and candid, Hedges later understood the photograph as a highly selective version of the truth (it was the only photograph of Mrs Tandy ever to be published by Shelter). Its ubiquity in the critical discourse that surrounded Hedges’ practice attested to its enduring power as a ‘one-dimensional’ representation of homelessness.


The 1970s marked a sea change in how photography was perceived in Britain. The medium enjoyed a renaissance as galleries and institutions began to collect and exhibit the work of photographers, both past and present. Photography was officially recognised as an art form by the Arts Council, making photographic exhibitions eligible for funding for the first time. In 1968, the National Portrait Gallery in London held its first photography exhibition of Cecil Beaton’s work. Three years later, The Photographers’ Gallery opened in London. In 1972, Colin Ford became Curator of Photography at the National Portrait Gallery, the first appointment of its kind in a British national museum. Institutions championed the medium in

337 Ellis op. cit., p. 1278.
339 Ibid.
groundbreaking exhibitions. In 1972, the V & A exhibited *From Today Painting is Dead — the Beginnings of Photography*, funded by the Arts Council. In 1975, the Hayward Gallery in London showed *The Real Thing: an Anthology of British Photographs 1840-1950*, which subsequently toured to four further venues in Britain. Dedicated photography galleries also emerged outside London, notably Impressions Gallery in York (1972), Stills Gallery in Edinburgh (1977) and Side Gallery in Newcastle (1977). Photography enjoyed an unprecedented level of interest, both culturally and economically. Sotheby’s hosted its first photography auction in London in 1971, with Christie’s following suit in 1972. Concomitant with the heightened public profile of photography was an increase in publications on the medium: the *Gordon Fraser Photographic Monograph* series showcased the work of photographers from the Victorian to the modern era. Similarly, articles published in the glossy Sunday supplements included eye-catching colour reproductions and brought the medium, and its practitioners, to a new audience. Amidst this clamour for all things photographic, traditional discourses on photography and its representations were challenged, enlarged and revised.

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342 Held between 16 March and 14 May 1972, it was heralded as the exhibition that re-launched Victorian photography. Only photographs produced prior to 1885 were featured, sourced from a diverse range of British photographic collections. The show also featured photographically illustrated books.

343 The exhibition was held at the Hayward Gallery between 19 March and 4 May 1975. It was subsequently shown at Graves Art Gallery in Sheffield (21 June – 27 July, 1975); Bolton Art Gallery (9 August – 13 September, 1975); Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (27 September – 9 November, 1975) and Bristol City Art Gallery (22 November 1975 – 3 January 1976).

344 The *Gordon Fraser Photographic Monograph* series was published in the early 1970s. The majority of volumes focused on contemporary photographers, but there were notable exceptions, including the following editions: *Frank Sutcliffe* (Michael Hiley, 1974), *Roger Fenton* (John Hannavy, 1975), *Julia Margaret Cameron* (Helmut Gernsheim, 1975) and *Victorian Photography* (Colin Ford, 1979).

345 *The Sunday Times Magazine* was launched in 1962. Antony Armstrong-Jones (Lord Snowdon) was appointed the Design and Photographic Editor. In 1971, Bruce Bernard was appointed Picture Editor. In this capacity, he published seminal articles on photography and also published the noteworthy book *Photo-discovery: A Century of Extraordinary Images 1840-1940*, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1980.

346 In the early 1970s, photography was introduced as an A-level subject in schools and practical photography became a mainstream subject in higher educational institutions. This increased engagement with making photographs coincided with a shift in theoretical approaches to the medium. The canon of photographers, established by Beaumont Newhall and Helmut Gernsheim, was challenged and alternative ways of thinking about photography and visual culture were introduced in seminal texts such as *Ways of Seeing* (Berger, 1972), *On Photography* (Sontag, 1977), ‘Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)’ (Sekula, 1976-78) and *Camera Lucida* (Barthes, 1980).
By the late 1970s, photographs that presented marginalised groups as victims were rejected by leftist photographers as exploitative and unethical. Hedges’ way of making photographs of homeless children and families were seen at best as naïve, and at worst, as degrading. In 1976 Jo Spence singled Hedges out as a photographer who lacked integrity. Three years later, Hedges himself accepted that his photographs (moreover, the way in which they were edited and used by Shelter) had ‘failed to preserve the dignity and human-ness of the reality’ that they illustrated. However, despite this admission, it is simplistic to suggest that Hedges lacked integrity in making the Shelter photographs, or that he consciously intended to make photographs that demeaned the homeless. Rather, it is possible to suggest that Hedges’ photographs for Shelter reflected an acceptable, and even politically engaged, way of picturing poverty in 1968. Writing from the vantage point of 1976, Spence may have felt justified in her dismissal of his work as passé and clichéd. This judgement, however, must be qualified by an awareness of how socially concerned photography had changed in the intervening eight years. The publication of leftist photographic journals such as *Camerawork* and *Ten.8* at this time reflected this change.

Published between February 1976 and June 1985, *Camerawork* marked a shift in the field of leftist photography in Britain and was ‘central to debates about the use of the visual image within popular culture’. The first and only UK magazine devoted to a critical and contextual study of photography, it was received as an ‘authoritative source for challenging hallowed ideas about photography and photography education’. The magazine introduced a new understanding of what constituted socialist photography. It challenged the existing criteria of socially concerned photography, and framed the debate in political, namely

349 See Kathy Myers’ article ‘Camerawork’ (pp. 85-94) and John Taylor’s article ‘Ten.8 quarterly magazine’ (pp. 95-99) published in Stevie Bezencenet and Philip Corrigan (eds.) *Photographic Practices: Towards a Different Image, op. cit.*
350 Evans (ed.) *op. cit.*, p. 11.
Marxist, terms. Appearing four years after Hedges left Shelter, the magazine seemed to articulate the retrospective uneasiness he later expressed, regarding how his photographs of homelessness had been presented. *Camerawork* offered an alternative way of both making and contextualising photographs. An overview of the journal traces the evolution of alternative photographic practices during the 1970s. It proposed that community photography groups replace the professional photographer, and was dedicated to the formulation of a coherent theory of socialist/alternative photography.\(^{352}\) It also foregrounded the establishment of alternative photo news agencies, such as Report, Format and the Rentasnap Photo Library, in the left’s reappropriation of photographic meaning.\(^{353}\) The underlying premise of *Camerawork*’s rhetoric was an exploration of how photographs propagated a politics of representation.\(^{354}\)

Inspired by *Camerawork*, the Birmingham-based quarterly magazine *Ten.8* also explored the potential of an alternative leftist photography. Established in 1979, the magazine’s aim was ‘to get as many pictures as possible seen, and to stimulate debates about the implications of photography’.\(^{355}\) Founded by three Birmingham-based photographers (Derek Bishton, John Reardon and Brian Homer), the collective aimed to establish a regional photographic identity rooted in local concerns. Hedges was a member of the editorial group which worked on issues number seven/eight, number nine and number ten of the journal.\(^{356}\) Throughout the

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\(^{352}\) Although present from the first issue of *Camerawork*, the shift to a theoretical approach was fully established after issue eighteen, following a change in the magazine’s editorial team. In issue twenty, the magazine announced a new manifesto: ‘*Camerawork* is a journal for the politics of photography. It is designed as a forum for analysis, critique, theory and information in order to provide the basis for using photography within the socialist and feminist practices and to develop and encourage socialist strategies within the politics of representation’ (Evans (ed.) *op. cit.*, p. 30).

\(^{353}\) In her essay ‘The Politics of Photography’, Jo Spence outlined the importance of alternative photo news agencies to the establishment of a leftist photographic practice in their concentration on ‘industrial and community action, showing solidarity among people, unlike the mass press which often depicts only the struggle of the individual’ (Spence 1976, *op. cit.* p. 1).

\(^{354}\) Writers that contributed to this discourse included John Berger, Rosetta Brookes, Victor Burgin, Gen Doy, Kathy Myers, Don Slater, Jo Spence and John Walker.

\(^{355}\) John Taylor, ‘*Ten.8* quarterly magazine’, Bezencenet and Corrigan (eds.) *op. cit.*, p. 95.

\(^{356}\) The other members of the editorial group were Ed Barber, Derek Bishton, Brian Homer, Paul Lewis, John Reardon, John Taylor and Belinda Whiting.
1980s, the magazine showcased the work of documentary photographers in the West Midlands, alongside the work of community arts groups in the city. Notable projects included Handsworth Self-Portrait (1979) and Home Front (1984), both of which explored themes of identity, racism and multiculturalism. Articles by writers such as Stuart Hall, John Taylor and Dick Hebdige (associated with the CCCS at the University of Birmingham) explored the role of photography in debates about racism, nuclear proliferation, unemployment, social unrest and cultural identity. As in Camerawork, image and text were combined to powerful effect in articles underpinned by photographic montage and collage (Fig. 89).

In his seminal text of 1931, ‘A Short History of Photography’, Walter Benjamin cites Brecht in his rejection of documentary photography as a neutral transcription of the real, an insight contemporaneously visualised in the work of artists such as El Lissitzky, John Heartfield, Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch under the auspices of the Dada movement. These artists juxtaposed contrasting images in photomontages that demanded the viewer make a decision in their interpretation: the viewer had to make a choice between two or more possible readings suggested by the composite image. The photomontage was thus the antithesis of the fully-resolved, single explanatory documentary photograph. Henceforth, leftist photographers recognised the power of photomontage as an anti-positivist, oppositional

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357 The Handsworth Self Portrait project was organised by Derek Bishton, John Reardon and Brian Homer who set up a temporary studio on the street outside their workplace. Members of the public could make their own self-portraits by standing in front of a camera and pressing an automatic shutter release. Home Front was a collection of photographs by Derek Bishton and John Reardon of black and Asian people in Birmingham, published as a book in 1984.

358 The CCCS was a research centre at the University of Birmingham, founded in 1964 by its first Director Richard Hoggart. The centre was a focus for what became known as British Cultural Studies. It produced many key studies and established the careers of many notable researchers and academics. Its output was the subject of the exhibition 50 Years On, The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, held at mac birmingham between 10 May and 29 June 2014.

359 This photomontage was published in an article by Paul Lewis on photo-collage entitled ‘Construction Work’, Ten.8, no. 7/8, pp. 42-45. See also ‘Photography, Peace and Protest’, Ten.8, no. 10, p. 9.


361 For further discussion of the political uses of photomontage see Su Braden, Committing Photography op. cit., pp. 44-46.
and transgressive practice able to disrupt a conventional documentarian approach. What did an alternative photographic practice, championed by Camerawork and Ten.8, look like? How did it differ from the kind of photographs made by Hedges?

In her introduction to The Camerawork Essays Jessica Evans observes that,

‘as the late 1970s work of Spence, The Hackney Flashers and Victor Burgin shows, montage was firmly entrenched in the juxtaposition of opposites, showing media fiction counterposed to fact, or challenging a photograph’s meaning through the assemblage of ironic or disturbing texts’.

Camerawork highlighted the inadequacy of the untitled and decontextualized single-frame photograph (the default format for socially concerned photography) to document or explain a situation. A similar impulse emerged concurrently across the field of art photography. The aim of leftist photography was to ‘make the invisible social relations visible, to present reality from more than one point of view’. From the late 1970s onwards, Camerawork published articles on alternative ways of using photographic imagery, specifically within a political context. Rejecting the single image, the journal championed the deconstructed and manipulated photograph as an alternative to a conventional documentarian approach. Images produced through photomontage, collage and sequence shots proved a more effective way of

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364 Martha Rosler observes: ‘The end of the still image as the unit of art photography – part of the transformation of the field of art by the deluge of mass images and the growth of what Situationist Guy Debord, famously, had named the society of the spectacle in the 1960s – had helped underline contextual bracketing, provided by other images as well as the more obviously definitive one of textual narrative, including captions’ (‘Afterword: A History’, Martha Rosler, 3 Works, op. cit., p. 100).
describing complex social, economic and political issues (Fig. 90). The manipulated photographic image pointed to a reality that was ‘constructed, masked, and dynamically produced through the mystifying veil of ideology’. Furthermore, its intention was to ‘connect the image with the social and economic relations that are not obvious within it’. The deconstructed photograph thus interrupted a neutral reading of the image as a ‘message without a code’. In opposition to conventional documentary, the photographic process was exploited (rather than concealed) as a way of making meaning and, whilst finding favour with leftist photographers, it was rejected by theorists of modernist photography.

In his book *From the Centre, Living through Change in an Industrial Society 1965-1990* (co-authored by Hedges), Paul Lewis comments, ‘Hedges has never used the more extreme devices of alternative photography, such as photo-collage’. Whilst ostensibly disengaged from progressive practice, Lewis claims however that Hedges shared its aims, and expressed his ‘kinship’ with other photographers through ‘the collaboration with subject and writers and the publishing of pictures with text. It is here that sitters gain voice and become more than objects of scrutiny’. Lewis also points to Hedges’ lesser-known experimental photographs which represented slum rooms, devoid of people. His photograph of a worn couch, insufficiently covered by a white sheet, suggests its use as a bed (Fig. 91) and prefigures Raymond Depardon’s haunting 1979 photograph of an empty bed in San Clemente’s

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367 This photomontage was published in ‘Montage’, Lomax and Leeson *op. cit.*
368 Solomon-Godeau, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
370 See Solomon-Godeau’s analysis of photomontage in ‘Reconstructing Documentary’, *Photography at the Dock, Essays on Photographic History, Institutions and Practices, op. cit.*, p. 188. Here she quotes American historian, sociologist, philosopher of technology and literary critic, Lewis Mumford, who stated: ‘As for the various kinds of montage photography, they are in reality not photography at all but a kind of painting, in which photography is used – as pastiches of textiles are used in crazy-quilts – to form a mosaic. Whatever value the montage may have derives from painting rather than the camera’.
371 Hedges and Lewis *op. cit.*, p. 37.
372 Ibid.
373 Unsurprisingly, Shelter never published Hedges more experimental photographs. Hedges’ photographs of slum environments, rather than the human subjects that inhabit them, also prefigure Martha Rosler’s representations of abandoned spaces in ‘The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems’ (1974-75), *op. cit.*
psychiatric hospital in Venice.\textsuperscript{375} Both betray the human imprint of their absent inhabitants in the disarray of crumpled bedding, a residual marker of suffering in the silent and abandoned rooms. Despite Lewis’ claims, it is clear that Hedges stood somewhat apart from a cutting edge movement centred on innovative techniques and the rejection of the single, resolved, documentary image.

How was the new, leftist photography of the 1970s used in the fight against homelessness? Both strands of radical leftist practice (community photography groups and proponents of the deconstructed image) tackled the problem. Both were markedly different to how Hedges had made photographs of homelessness. Community photography groups taught people how to make their own photographs.\textsuperscript{376} They provided cameras, darkrooms and technical expertise. This approach was particularly suited to tenants’ associations which were empowered to make photographs of poor housing conditions as evidence to present to the authorities.\textsuperscript{377} Tenants mounted exhibitions of their photographs and displayed them in the local community. The North Paddington Community Darkroom, based at the 510 Centre in London, was the subject of two articles in \textit{Camerawork}.\textsuperscript{378} Amongst other projects, this community group made photographic exhibitions for local housing associations. One supported the Lanhill and Marylands tenants’ association (Fig. 92).\textsuperscript{379} Another was created


\textsuperscript{376} Community photography was discussed in special issues entitled ‘Working in the Community’, \textit{Camerawork}, no. 13, March 1979, pp. 2-13 and Don Slater’s ‘Community Photography’, \textit{Camerawork}, no. 20, pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{377} See Noni Stacey’s (Photography and the Archive Research Centre, University of the Arts London) doctoral research entitled ‘Community Photography: Radicalism and a Culture of Protest in the London-based Photography Collectives of the 1970s’.

\textsuperscript{378} The 510 Centre was a meeting place and an information and advice centre. The darkroom had two part-time workers who provided darkroom equipment and cameras. They also taught photography and made photographs for community projects.

\textsuperscript{379} ‘Working in the Community’ \textit{op. cit.}, p. 3.
for Kilburn Housing Action (Fig. 93). Their different approach to homelessness and its photographic representation was highlighted by critics:

‘We can compare this approach with that of Shelter described by Nick Hedges. Where the Shelter photographs are aimed at the well-lined pockets of the middle class and their rhetoric is one of pity and guilt…here the audience consists of the tenants themselves…The rhetoric is not one of pity, but of description, explanation, and methods of action. The images give a more complete picture, they are more positive. They relate much more closely to the tenants’ lived experience of themselves and each other’.  

The methodology of community projects, based on inclusiveness and participation, was rooted in the concept of authenticity and a commitment to telling the whole story. The photographs were made by, and for, the people whose lives they documented. The intended audience were the tenants themselves. Hedges and his ilk were deemed obsolete as people began to produce self-authored images. The photographs were not meant to evoke pity or generate funds, but to deepen an understanding of the problem and to promote action. Community exhibitions located on-site in communal spaces, used words and photographs, often in the form of montage and collage, to create interesting and multi-dimensional panels. Press cuttings, individual case studies, striking graphics and photographs were combined to communicate a comprehensive view of the problem. Photographs focused on the material conditions of poverty, rather than wallowing in emotive scenes of human misery. The exhibitions were functional and educational, as opposed to merely voyeuristic. The photographs were not there simply to be looked at. The intention was to use them in the struggle for better housing.

381 Ibid.
In *Committing Photography*, Su Braden proposes that the defining feature of a truly socialist photographic practice is ‘the quality or aesthetic which includes the participation of the subject’.\(^{382}\) Community photography projects depended on the active contribution of children in the documentation of their lives and experiences. Children were given cameras and taught how to use them. They developed their own projects and explored subjects that affected them: school, friendship, housing, family and work. The child’s agency was central in projects that attempted to look at issues from the child’s point of view. Community photography projects were perceived as offering children a way of making themselves seen and heard. The image of the child thus remained central to a community-based photographic practice. It was, however, markedly different to that which underpinned Hedges’ photographs for Shelter. Children were no longer pictured as innocent victims or defined by their visual appeal and silent entreaty. The child that featured in community photography projects was often the antithesis of the passive and vulnerable child that characterised so many of Shelter’s campaigns. Wendy Ewald’s work with disadvantaged children, both in Britain and America, epitomises this methodology and is an interesting foil to Hedges’ representations of similar subjects.\(^{383}\)

A photograph entitled *Self-Portrait*, made as part of the Bootle *Art in Action* community project, illustrates this divergence (Fig. 94).\(^{384}\) The subject of the portrait, Eddie Johnson, did not actually make the photograph: he directed his friend in the role of photographer. The

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\(^{382}\) Braden *op. cit.*, p. 89.

\(^{383}\) Wendy Ewald (b. 1951) is an American photographer and educator. Her work aims ‘to help children to see’ and to use the camera as ‘a tool for expression’. Ewald was one of the founders of the HMPW in London in 1972. Between July 2005 and November 2006 the project *Towards a Promised Land* documented Ewald’s work with twenty-two children new to the seaside town of Margate in England. Over an eighteen-month period Ewald photographed the children and interviewed them about their lives, whilst teaching them how to make their own photographs. Ewald’s portraits of the children were displayed along Margate’s Sea Wall as huge banners. The photographs made by the children were exhibited at a local gallery.

\(^{384}\) Founded in 1978, Bootle *Art in Action* grew out of a community association newspaper project. Members documented the slum area of Liverpool in which they lived, and the photographs and texts were published as an illustrated pamphlet entitled *Bootle – A Pictorial Study of Dockland Community*. See the article ‘Arts and Action’, *Camerawork*, no. 22, p.18.
photograph is full of expressive energy. Here, the homeless child is represented as a vital and dynamic entity. Pinned against a concrete wall, Eddie battles against the barrier of barbed wire that threatens to contain him. He grasps the writhing coil with his outstretched hands and pushes it away. His face crumples into a violent grimace that denotes a range of possible emotions: anger, frustration, grief and stubbornness. His mouth opens to emit an unheard, yet effectively registered, cry. His eyes do not meet those of the spectator. He does not seek approval, pity or understanding. Positioned slightly above the eye-line of the spectator, he assumes a position of authority. Eddie fills the photographic space and refuses to be defined by either the barbed wire, or the boundaries of the photograph. He seems almost too big for the picture. Everything within the frame snaps into sharp focus, forcing foreground and background up against the picture plane. This compression of space (further enhanced by the uniformly bright light across the image which precludes the formation of shadow) thrusts Eddie forward, projecting him outwards from the photograph’s surface. The brightness of the image seems to emanate from Eddie himself, like a halo of static electricity generated by his irrepressible life force. He encroaches on the privileged space of the spectator. He transgresses the boundary between observer and observed. The photograph is a portrait of Eddie’s feelings, as much as his physical appearance. It is an assertion of his identity, and testament to his struggle in difficult life circumstances. His representation is the antithesis of Shelter’s passive, silent and diminutive homeless child, surrounded by hopeless blackness.

Community photography projects undoubtedly gave children the opportunity to make their own photographs about subjects that were important and relevant to them. They had a choice in how they represented themselves. However, despite the best of intentions, this sense of ownership was often tempered and diluted by the necessary involvement of adults. There was a limit to the degree of self-determination that was available to children. Braden comments on the ‘technical and design barriers’ that faced children and young adults who were not
professionals in the field of photography and publishing. In many cases, projects adapted over time into collaborative ventures between children and suitably qualified adults. It proved unavoidable that images, text, layout and even the choice of project were, to a certain extent, hijacked by adult contributors (teachers, photographers and designers). The technical illiteracy of children thus hindered a truly autonomous self-representation. In her essay ‘Post-Documentary, Post-Photography?’ Martha Rosler expresses her concerns regarding the limitations of children’s self-authored images, observing that, ‘relying on giving the camera to the subjects underestimates the shaping effect of institutions and the context of reception, which are likely to reimpose the unequal power relationship banished from the photographic transaction’. Ultimately, photographs made by children about their own lives, whilst attesting to their agency may prove ineffectual in changing the system. In line with other representations of vulnerable and disempowered groups, children’s photographs may offer a ‘preferred picture of the social victim’, providing testimony but limited analysis.

Within the genre of social documentary, representations of the homeless also reflected a more engaged, leftist agenda. In 1978 British photographer David Hoffman followed in Hedges’ footsteps in his work for the homeless charity Crisis at Christmas. For three years, Hoffman made photographs of the visitors to the derelict churches in London, provided by

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385 Braden op. cit., p. 98.
388 Ibid.
389 Roughly a contemporary of Hedges, Hoffman has worked as an independent social documentary photographer from the 1970s onwards. He primarily makes photographs for his own photo library, rather than working to commissions. His work has explored issues of state control, racial and social conflict, policing, homelessness, drugs, poverty, social exclusion and environmental protection. He is a founding member of Editorial Photographers UK and Photo-Forum London. See http://spitalfieldslife.com/2015/12/22/david-hoffman-crisis-at-christmas/, accessed December 2015.
the charity during the festive season. In contrast to the Shelter photographs, Hoffman’s images convey the dignity, humour and personality of the subjects. He gave final prints to the homeless people he photographed. His work seems to reflect the unorthodox approach of the charity: Crisis at Christmas was run as a co-operative, with no hierarchy. The homeless were to a certain extent self-sufficient, organising cooking, cleaning, medical care and daily routines within the shelters. They even provided Christmas decorations, dances and parties which were documented in some of Hoffman’s most joyous images.

In 1982, the Exit Photography Group (comprised of the British photographers Nicholas Battye, Chris Steele-Perkins and Paul Trevor) published *Survival Programmes in Britain’s Inner Cities*. The material for the book was gathered over a period of five years between 1974 and 1979 in response to the failure of the Urban Programme launched by Harold Wilson in 1968. The preface to the text outlined their ethos: ‘Documentary photographers have traditionally been concerned with ‘the human condition’. But to document a condition is not to explain it’. Fundamental to the book was the relationship between image and text, described in the preface as ‘complex, uneven and open to different interpretations’. Divided into four sections (*Growth, Promise, Welfare* and *Reaction*), the book consisted of a series of identical double-page spreads (a full-page photograph on the right coupled with the transcript of an interview on the left). The subjects of both photographs and interviews were a variety of people encountered in the inner cities of London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Glasgow, Newcastle and Belfast. A similarity with Shelter’s agenda was apparent: both aimed to record poor housing conditions and poverty in identical locations. Both used photographs to reveal previously hidden spaces of deprivation. Both relied on the

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391 The Urban Programme aimed to direct extra resources to ‘areas of serious social deprivation in a number of our cities and towns’ (statement by Home Secretary to the House of Commons, 22 July 1968, *Hansard*, col. 40). By the 1970s it was clear that such programmes were not working.
393 Ibid.
interdependence of text and image. Both were the result of collaborations between photographer and writer. Both intended to effect change through their interventions.

However, despite such parallels, the Exit Photography Group sought to distance itself from a documentary tradition that presented the poor as ‘Other’ and passive. The subjects of interviews were varied and, for the most part, focused on issues other than deprivation. There was the desire to go beyond a mere description of poverty: ‘in the way we present the material in this book we are as much concerned to indicate processes as to record conditions’. Many of the photographs in the book were positive: people were shown smiling, talking and moving. A comparison of two photographs of a similar scene (a mother drying her child after washing it in a kitchen sink), one made by Hedges (Fig. 39), the other by the Exit Photography Group (Fig. 95), illustrates this difference. The latter was made in Bordesley Green in Birmingham in 1975. In the book, the photograph is entitled Single-Parent Family and the accompanying text reveals that the woman in the photograph is Linda Parker with one of her two sons. We learn that she is in her late twenties and has been divorced for seven years. Her sons are called Sean and Billy. The family are ‘soon to be rehoused on a new estate’. The interview with Linda and her sons, printed next to the photograph, is full of humour and anecdote. There is no discussion of their housing conditions, or the family’s poverty. The photograph is an equally positive representation. In contrast to the dark and threatening space represented by Hedges, the Exit Photography Group captures a happy scene which emphasises the closeness of mother and child. The photograph shows an affectionate moment as Linda hugs one of her sons tightly. Their intimacy and smiles are the antithesis of the restrained interaction between mother and son in Hedges’ photograph.

394 Ibid.
395 Ibid., p. 18.
The book received mixed reviews. Ed Barber and Paul Trevor’s review in *Ten.8* highlighted the Exit Photography Group’s conscious decision to omit ‘photographs that they feel undermine or infringe upon people’s dignity’. Unsurprisingly, as a member of the group, he defended the book’s presentation of the poor. However, Neil Martinson’s review in *Camerawork* condemned the book’s failure to present a different view of poverty, despite claims to the contrary:

> ‘The pictures are firmly in the tradition of poverty photographs so well-worn by Shelter and McCullin among others…This book will sit snugly with all those others that plead on behalf of the poor to ‘do something for them’.

Retrospectively, the photographs of the Exit Photography Group have been interpreted as positive representations of poverty. In their book *How We Are, Photographing Britain from the 1840s to the Present*, Val Williams and Susan Bright describe the photographs as ‘raw, challenging yet also hopeful. They showed people kicking against adversity, rather than submitting to it’. As ever, opinion on what a truly socialist photography should look like was, and remains, divided.

The Shelter Photographs: A Displaced Photographer, An Overlooked Archive

Hedges’ marginalisation in writing on the history of British photography, and his exclusion from the canon of British photography from the late 1960s onwards remains, at present, a little discussed topic. Whilst the nature of the Shelter commission may have initially identified Hedges as a commercial, rather than documentary, photographer later independent projects such as the *Born to Work* photographs and those that documented the declining

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398 Williams and Bright *op. cit.*, p. 137.
fishing industry in the North East have been equally overlooked in the literature. That is not to say that Hedges’ work has not been recognised: it simply hasn’t been granted equal significance in a history of British photography to other comparable projects. Ostensibly, Hedges was a key player in the field of socially concerned photography in Britain during the 1970s. He exhibited his photographs at many of the venues that have come to be viewed as central to the establishment of a new photographic practice at this time. He moved in the same circles as, and rubbed shoulders with, many of the doyens of the young independent photography movement.

In an interview, Hedges’ recalled a meeting with Sue Davies in 1970 to discuss a potential exhibition of his work at the newly established Photographers’ Gallery the following year. They ‘explored the possibility’ of exhibiting the Shelter photographs in the gallery’s inaugural show. However, the renovation of the gallery site at the Lyon’s Tea Bar at No.8 Great Newport Street in London’s Covent Garden took longer than expected. Keen to publicise the Shelter photographs over the Christmas period, Des Wilson could not wait for the gallery to open, and organised an exhibition of Hedges’ work in the Conference Room of the Royal Photographic Society instead, to run between December 1970 and January 1971. In January 1970, the photographs of both Hedges and his fellow Shelter photographer Margaret Gathercole, were exhibited in the basement gallery of Dixon’s shop at 27 Oxford Street in London. The subject of the photographs, commissioned by the mental health charity Mencap, was a twenty-one year old mentally handicapped man. On leaving Shelter, Hedges undertook several further freelance commissions for Mencap. In 1973, Hedges exhibited the Shelter photographs in a one-man show at Impressions Gallery in York. In 1974,

399 Nick Hedges interview, 2 August 2010, Appendix III, p. 443.
400 Ibid., p. 445.
402 The exhibition ran between 1 January and 3 February 1973.

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Hedges’ photographs were included in the *Real Britain Postcards* project under the auspices of The Co-optic Group, a London-based collective conceived in 1972 and officially launched in June 1973.\(^{403}\) Its aim was ‘to combine the new, independent photography with the style and forms of 1960s photo-journalism to establish a more authentic representation of contemporary life in Britain’.\(^{404}\) In the essay ‘Real Britain 1974: The Co-optic Project’, Hedges is listed, along with Martin Parr, Daniel Meadows, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, Fay Godwin, Paul Hill, Ron McCormick and Gerry Badger, as an ‘emerging practitioner of the time’.\(^{405}\) Throughout 1974, Hedges’ Shelter photographs were shown alongside those of Sylvester Jacobs and Cristóbal Melián in the V&A travelling exhibition entitled *Three Photographers*.\(^{406}\) The exhibition catalogue states: ‘Hedges pictures in no way exploit his subjects – people caught in the ‘poverty trap’. His compassion is not pity’.\(^{407}\) At the close of 1975, he exhibited his work in the exhibition *Problem in the City* at the ICA in London, alongside that of Larry Herman and Ron McCormick. Commissioned by the Royal Town Planning Institute, the exhibition explored the social, economic and political landscape of urban Britain.\(^{408}\) In 1976, Hedges made over 300 photographs, predominantly of the West Midlands, for the Community Development Programme (CDP), then based in Saltley in Birmingham.\(^{409}\) In May 1978, funded by the West Midlands Arts Association, Hedges’

\(^{403}\) Co-optic was founded by businessman and photographer Stephen Weiss. The group’s executive committee included Gerry Badger, Peter Baistow, Neil Gulliver, Peter Turner, Martin Stanley and James Fahey. Co-optic wanted to provide a forum for photographers to discuss ideas and activities, and it ran a program of seminars, exhibitions and publications. Most members were based in London, although some came from Germany, Sri Lanka, Sweden and America. At its peak, Co-optic had 120 members, including Bill Brandt, Dorothy Bohm, David Hurn, Paddy Summerfield, Ken Baird, Nick Serota, Barry Lane, Paul Hill and Bill Gaskin. Monthly newsletters were the main form of communication. A slide archive was set up which contained over 700 slides by 1975. The group disintegrated in April 1977, after the withdrawal of Arts Council funding.


\(^{405}\) Ibid.

\(^{406}\) The exhibition was arranged by the Circulation Department of the V&A.


\(^{408}\) The exhibition ran between 12 December 1975 and 6 January 1976.

\(^{409}\) The CDP was a Home Office funded initiative in twelve British cities to fund local regeneration activities and undertake extensive research on the socioeconomic problems of inner city areas like East Birmingham. The Birmingham CDP produced extensive research on the Saltley area between 1972 and 1977. Photographers Nick Hedges, Brian Homer and Derek Bishton documented the area, and their photographs were published in the end
factory photographs were shown at the Half Moon Gallery in London, alongside Daniel Meadows’ exhibition *Shuttles, Steam and Soot – A Cotton Mill in Lancashire*, both commissioned by *Camerawork*.  

In a scathing review of the factory photographs in *The British Journal of Photography*, fellow photographer Walter Nurnberg commented,

‘Hedges shows a bizarre inclination to select individuals who manage to look unusually tired, ineffective, uncommitted and often unwholesome, whilst the camera angles frequently hide the product or the really important aspect or moment of an operation’.  

The photographer Fay Godwin subsequently defended Hedges in an open letter to the journal:

‘I was horrified to see Mr Nurnberg’s swingeing and biased attack on Nick Hedges’ exhibition of *Factory Photographs* at Half Moon Gallery…Nick Hedges’ work is painstakingly truthful…He has distilled some of the experience of factory work and it is all the more convincing because he does not appear to have approached the work with foregone conclusions. His use of taped captions adds enormously to the value of the pictures…It is well worth taking note of what Nick Hedges has to show us in his fine photographs’.
The following year, Hedges responded to Nurnberg’s criticism in his lecture *Working in Depth*, presented at the Half Moon Gallery on 16 October 1979.413

In 1978, Hedges’ work was also included in the exhibition *Art for Society: Contemporary British Art with a Social or Political Purpose* held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London414 and was published in the exhibition catalogue of the same name.415 Hedges’ has a long history of exhibiting at the Side Gallery in Newcastle in association with the Amber Collective.416 In 1978, his work was exhibited there alongside that of Ken Baird, Daniel Meadows and Derek Smith in the *Northern View* exhibition. In 1979, Hedges’ photographs were shown again at the Side Gallery, alongside those of Robert Golden, in an exhibition entitled *Work and Unemployment* and in 1981 Hedges’ photographs of the North East fishing industry were the subject of a solo exhibition there. In 1985, Hedges’ photograph *Untitled: Baptism* from his *I’m a Believer* series was included in an exhibition at the Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool.417 A selection of Hedges’ work, including the Shelter photographs, was shown at the Side Gallery in 1994 in an exhibition entitled *From the Centre*.418 In 2006, one of Hedges’ series of photographs of Mrs Milne and her children (Fig. 85) was exhibited at Liverpool Tate in the exhibition *Making History: Art and Documentary in Britain from 1929 to Now*.419 In 2009, six of the Shelter photographs were included in the *Birmingham Seen, Art* ...
and Photography 1820-2009 exhibition, held at BMAG.\textsuperscript{420} In 2012, five of the Shelter photographs were exhibited in the Children’s Lives exhibition, also at BMAG.\textsuperscript{421} Hedges’ Born to Work photographs were exhibited at Wolverhampton City Archives in 2013, and in 2014 they featured alongside the work of photographers John Bulmer and Peter Donnelly in the exhibition Black Country Echoes: In Pictures held at the Light House Media Centre in Wolverhampton. In 2014, the Shelter photographs were exhibited en masse for the first time in the Make Life Worth Living exhibition at the Science Museum in London. In 2015, one of Hedges’ photographs of the North East fishing industry was included in the Side Gallery’s For Ever Amber exhibition (Fig. 236).\textsuperscript{422}

Despite this convincing and ongoing set of credentials, Hedges’ work has not received the same critical acclaim as that of many of his peers. Invariably, Hedges is not included in the extensive list of young British independent photographers of this era: Keith Arnatt, Nicholas Battye, John Benton Harris, Vanley Burke, Ian Dobbie, Brian Griffin, Chris Killip, Daniel Meadows, Peter Mitchell, Tish Murtha, Martin Parr, Tony Ray-Jones, Graham Smith, Chris Steele-Perkins, Homer Sykes, Paul Trevor \textit{et al.} For whatever reason, Hedges is not associated with British social documentary photography to the same extent as those listed. Whilst ostensibly sharing similarities of subject matter, style and intention, Hedges’ photographs have not fared as well in terms of their legacy. Whilst the work of his peers now attracts considerable praise and recognition, Hedges’ photographs have not been viewed as positively in retrospect.

Perhaps his photographs are perceived as qualitatively different? The specific nature of the Shelter commission identified him as a commercial photographer, as opposed to an

\footnotesize{Hope Kingsley, ‘Making History: Art and Documentary in Britain from 1929 to Now’, \textit{Photoworks}, no. 6, March-June 2006, pp. 58-61. See also \url{http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/making-history/making-history-exhibition-guide/making-history-1}, accessed 23 July 2015.\textsuperscript{423} \textit{Birmingham Seen, Art and Photography 1820-2009} was held between 31 October 2009 and 31 January 2010. \textsuperscript{421} \textit{Children’s Lives} was held at BMAG between 24 March and 10 June 2012. \textsuperscript{422} \textit{For Ever Amber} was held at the Side Gallery between 27 June and 19 September 2015.}
independent social documentarist. He made propaganda photographs for the housing cause. Whilst ostensibly documentary in nature, the Shelter photographs were very different from the independent projects undertaken by Daniel Meadows, Martin Parr, Graham Smith et al. Hedges’ work lacked the critical distance that underpinned the work of the independents. Leftist critics like Spence equated this with a lack of integrity. Whatever his personal intentions, Hedges understood that the Shelter photographs had a specific job to do: to sell poverty to the masses through large-scale advertising campaigns in newspapers and on billboards. The squalid rooms, homeless children, dirt, decay and hopelessness all took precedence over Hedges’ preferences as a photographer. He was the invisible creator of slick advertising images seen by millions as they opened their newspapers and glanced at advertising hoardings. At this time ‘the division between personal and commercial work was a deep one’.423

Hedges’ practice was the antithesis of the young independent photographer whose personality stood centre stage, nurtured by the limelight of recognition. Hedges seems at odds with Val Williams’ description of the new British photographers as ‘reliant on their own self-promotional abilities’.424 Indeed, David Manley’s explanation for Hedges’ effacement rests on a refusal to promote himself to the detriment of the Shelter commission: ‘Virtually forced underground and out of the equation, the work of Nick Hedges refused to elevate the personality of the producer above that of the subject and the message conveyed’.425 Furthermore, the distinction between documentary and street photography (a long-standing documentary subgenre) is important in distinguishing Hedges from ostensibly comparable photographers of disadvantaged children in the 1960s and 1970s such as Shirley Baker, Pete

423 Williams 2011, op. cit., p. 142.
424 Ibid., p. 15.
Davis and Daniel Meadows. Hedges’ commission was inherently tied to a personal, social and political agenda and both his methodology and photographs were shaped by a responsibility to the homeless. In contrast, street photography is characterised by its ‘non-responsibility’ to the subject.

As observed by Martha Rosler,

‘Despite its often acute revelations of social power differentials in what it observes, street photography does not incline toward a calculus of rectification’. 427

In street photography the spectator identifies with the photographer, rather than the subject, and the emphasis is on observing, exploring and experiencing, rather than intervening.

Despite the pronounced visibility of his photographs in the late 1960s and 1970s, Hedges has remained a peripheral figure, perhaps even an outsider. In many ways, he is an awkward figure whose seeming displacement perhaps stems from his lack of belonging to any definable group. The canon of British photography of this era tends to deal with groups, rather than individuals. British photographic practice of the 1970s can be divided into three main factions: the photojournalists, the independents and the radicals. 429 Significantly, and perhaps to his cost, Hedges did not form allegiances with any of these groups. The demands of his job at Shelter prevented him from becoming more involved with the new photographic initiatives:

426 Dr Pete Davis’ photographs of 1970s Cardiff show children playing in the slums following the closure of the steelworks. His photographs of the suburb of Splott document the crumbling working-class terraces before demolition, http://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/nostalgia/, accessed 1 August 2015.
428 Photojournalism in the 1970s centred on publications such as The Sunday Times and The Observer. Key figures of this group were British photographers such as Ian Berry, David Hurn, Philip Jones-Griffiths, Don McCullin and George Rodger, all of whom were members of Magnum photo agency. They were also generally of an older generation than the independents.
429 Centred on leftist radical aesthetic theory, agitprop and community photography, this group encompassed collectives like the HMPW, The Hackney Flashers and The North Paddington Community Darkroom. Photographers such as Jo Spence, Victor Burgin and Philip Wolmuth visualised the countercultural theories of writers such as Stuart Hall, Allan Sekula and John Tagg.
‘The problem, if you’re employed full-time as I was and I wasn’t freelancing, was I didn’t have that much spare time, so I was not immersed in it as much as some, but I was where I could be, I was involved a bit. I used to contribute articles to *Camerawork* and attend meetings and sometimes be on an advisory panel, and things like that. I wasn’t a key, active member.’

Location may also have played a part in Hedges’ marginalisation. Hailing from Bromsgrove in the West Midlands, Hedges was never truly a part of the London scene during the 1970s, despite being based there during his four years at Shelter. On leaving Shelter, Hedges’ photographs of factory workers documented the dying industries of the Black Country. His later study of the fishing industry was based in Tyneside. Whilst his work was shown at the Side Gallery and fleetingly in London at the ICA and the Half Moon Gallery, he failed to establish a reputation in the capital. Despite the early approach of Sue Davies, he never exhibited at The Photographers’ Gallery, perhaps the most iconic venue of the day, unlike many of his peers. The West Midlands’ lack of a dedicated independent photography gallery in the 1970s may have played a part in Hedges’ peripheral status. Unlike London (Photographers’ Gallery, ICA, Half Moon Gallery), York (Impressions), Newcastle (Side Gallery) and Edinburgh (Stills Gallery), Birmingham had no platform for the dissemination

430 Nick Hedges interview, 2 August 2010, Appendix III, p. 446.
of the work of independent photographers. In the Midlands, Hedges and others were thus excluded from a London-centric network of exhibiting, publicising and promoting their work. Hedges’ lack of engagement in an established network of independent photography extends beyond exhibition venues. Although his work was the subject of numerous articles and reviews in *Camerawork* and *Ten.8*, it was not picked up by *Creative Camera* to the same extent.\textsuperscript{432} The importance of Bill Jay, the editor of the latter, cannot be underestimated, as observed by Val Williams: ‘The world of independent photography in the 1970s was a very small one…If Ray-Jones was the photographer-hero, then Bill Jay was the *eminence grise* of this ragged, under-financed and disparate group’.\textsuperscript{433} Both Jay and his publication were hugely influential.\textsuperscript{434} Hedges’ apparent distance from the publication and its circle of contributors and practitioners may also have contributed to his marginalisation. It is equally significant that Hedges’ work has not been purchased for either of the two major national collections: the Arts Council Collection (ACC) and the British Council.\textsuperscript{435} This explains his omission from David Alan Mellor’s book *No Such Thing As Society*, which features photographs from these collections and was written to accompany the Hayward Gallery’s touring exhibition of the same name.\textsuperscript{436} Although Hedges received Arts Council funding for his *Born to Work* project,
this was a one-off collaboration. In comparison with photographers such as Daniel Meadows and Martin Parr, who consistently accessed funding from both the Arts Council and Regional Arts Associations from the 1970s onwards, Hedges’ dealings with established funding bodies appear somewhat scant and sporadic. Hedges’ comparative lack of visibility, specifically regarding the Shelter photographs, may also stem from the inaccessibility of his archive. Unrepresented in both the collections of the Arts Council and the British Council, Hedges’ work has not been subject to the same level of publicity as that of his peers. In the introduction to the catalogue accompanying the 2014 exhibition of the Shelter photographs at the Science Museum in London, Greg Hobson and Hedy Van Erp (the show’s curators) comment on this lack of public exposure:

‘The work is little known outside Shelter’s annual reports and occasional reproductions in publications…Yet as a body of work it is one of the most important documentary photography projects of the 20th century’.  

Historically, access to the four complete sets of the Shelter photographs has not been easy. Hedges’ photographs are deposited at the NMM, the V&A, BAHP and Shelter’s headquarters at 88 Old Street in London. Prior to its transfer in 1983 from the National Portrait Gallery to the ‘more appropriate venue’ of the NMM, access to the archive was somewhat limited. Likewise, the Shelter photographs were only deposited with BAHP and Shelter in 2001. In the early years of the 1970s, following their production, the photographs were simply not

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Exchange, Penzance (12 September-1 November, 2008); Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, Poland (14 November 2008-4 January, 2009); Arbetets Museum, Norrkoping, Sweden (31 January-31 May, 2009); National Museum and Gallery, Cardiff (4 July-4 October, 2009); Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle (31 October 2009-24 March 2010).

437 Inclusion in the Arts Council Collection continues to shape the legacy and exposure of British photographers. In the recent exhibition History is Now: 7 Artists Take on Britain at the Hayward Gallery (10 February – 26 April 2015), curator Hannah Starkey selected photographs from the Arts Council Collection from the 1970s to 1990s, in order to explore the ways in which British visual culture has been shaped by photography.


439 Nick Hedges, personal e-mail to author, 17 November 2014.
available to be accessed, discussed or exhibited widely, beyond their use as functional images as part of Shelter’s picture library. Public access to Hedges’ other photographs has been equally problematic. Neither the *Born to Work* photographs, nor those of the fishing industry, have been acquired in any representative sense. The elusive nature of Hedges’ photographic archive may thus have had an impact on its public circulation. Curators and academics tend to access major archives and collections before searching out individual photographers, perhaps even more so in the case of British independent photography which is a relatively new and emerging field of enquiry.

Given the inaccessibility of the archive, Hedges’ obscurity becomes less of a mystery. Indeed, he is not the only British photographer of this era to suffer such a fate. Euan Duff also stood apart from the group that came to be recognised as the British independents. Duff’s work was only exposed to a large, international audience with its inclusion in Tate Britain’s 2007 exhibition *How We Are, Photographing Britain*. Homer Sykes’ photographs of English folk customs similarly resurfaced after inclusion in the same exhibition. Other bodies of photographic work made during this period also became obscured, only to reappear at a later date. John Myers’ *Middle England* photographic portraits only came to the attention of a new audience after their 2012 exhibition at Ikon Gallery in Birmingham. Janet Mendelsohn’s documentary photographs of Balsall Heath in Birmingham, made between

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440 A handful of the *Born to Work* photographs entered the Photography Collection of BAHP when Peter James inherited the *From the Centre* archive from the Light House Media Centre in Wolverhampton in 2013 (Nick Hedges, personal e-mail, 17 November 2014).
441 Val Williams, personal e-mail to author, 12 November 2014.
442 Duff was highly critical of the independent group. In a series of articles published in *The Guardian*, he attacked their work, accusing them of ‘working in a vacuum’ and describing them as ‘self-deluding in regarding themselves as the vanguard of a new movement, when they are in fact the rearguard of a tired old movement that reached its peak before many of them were born’. Duff also attacked the Arts Council for supporting their work (Mellor and Alexander op. cit., p. 52).
443 Duff’s work was exhibited alongside other photographers of the 1970s including Homer Sykes, Paul Trevor and Daniel Meadows.
444 This was the first major exhibition of the work of Midlands-based photographer John Myers. Made between 1970 and 1974, Myers’ *Middle England* portraits featured both individuals and families living in, and around, Stourbridge and the Black Country. The exhibition featured seventy-five silver bromide prints. The John Myers’ Photographic Archive (1972-1981) forms part of the Library of Birmingham’s Photographic Collection.
1967 and 1969, were exhibited for the first time at Ikon Gallery in Birmingham in 2016. Shirley Baker’s work received little attention throughout her sixty-five year career: a retrospective of her documentary photographs of the urban clearance programmes of Manchester and Salford, made in the 1960s, were exhibited in 2015 at The Photographers’ Gallery.

Other British photographers, the majority of them still living and practising, have been equally overlooked in a history of British photography. Gerry Badger’s urban landscapes have never been discussed or exhibited. The work and legacy of John Benton Harris, Tony Brock, Larry Burrows, John Darwell, Geoff Howard, Ron McCormick, Charlie Meecham, Sue Packer and John Stoddart equally remains an unexplored area. There are countless British photographers whose work has never been given the attention it deserves, notably the majority of the forty-three photographers that exhibited in Serpentine Photography 73 and the extensive list of names involved in the Real Britain Postcards project for Co-optic in 1974. In this context, Hedges’ apparent lack of exposure assumes a new perspective and becomes less surprising and intriguing, if equally regrettable.

445 Janet Mendelsohn – Varna Road was exhibited at Ikon Gallery between 27 January and 3 April 2016. American academic and documentary filmmaker, Mendelsohn made a photo-essay as a student at the CCCS at Birmingham University, between 1967 and 1969. The photographs depict life in Balsall Heath and focus particularly on the life of ‘Kathleen’, a sex worker, with whom Mendelsohn formed a close relationship. By using photography as ‘a tool for cultural analysis’, Mendelsohn’s photographs document issues of race, immigration, poverty and slum clearance. Her archive of 3,000 photographs and related material (including transcripts of interviews with the people who appear in her photographs) was deposited at the Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham in 2014.

446 Shirley Baker: Women, Children and Loitering Men was exhibited at The Photographers’ Gallery between 17 July and 20 September 2015.

447 Daniel Meadows, personal e-mail to author, 12 November 2014.

448 Serpentine Photography 73 was an Arts Council exhibition held at the Serpentine Gallery in London between 28 July and 19 August 1973.

449 The majority of participants remain obscure, with only a handful of photographers being recognised. These include: Martin Parr, Daniel Meadows, Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, Nick Hedges, Fay Godwin, Paul Hill, Ron McCormick, Gerry Badger and Stephen Weiss.
Conclusion

To conclude, it would appear that Spence’s assessment of Hedges’ photographs (which became synonymous with Shelter’s campaign photographs) in terms of later developments in radical leftist photography, is ultimately unfair and unhelpful. In relation to the progressive photographic aesthetic heralded by *Camerawork* and *Ten.8*, Hedges’ photographs do indeed seem paternalistic, old-fashioned and firmly entrenched in the reformist tradition. Working within the remit of the Shelter commission, Hedges’ job was to make photographs that represented the spaces of homelessness, and the people that occupied them. In some cases, the photographs reference pictorial conventions that suggest certain pejorative ideological and historical associations. Perhaps this was unavoidable when making photographs of women and children in dark domestic space (often the bread and butter of Hedges’ daily encounters).

However, when assessed synchronically, as opposed to diachronically, at the moment of their making, the photographs appear somewhat differently. In some respects they could even be seen as radical in their challenge to the criteria that defined charity photography prior to 1968. Hedges refused to construct photographs of slum housing (using sets, props and models) which was an established way of representing poverty in charity advertising at this time. Through interviews and repeat visits to homeless families, Hedges attempted to establish a relationship with the subjects of his photographs, unlike other photographers of the snap-and-run school of thought. As contact prints reveal (Fig. 88), Hedges made photographs that showed both the positive and negative aspects of homelessness. Whilst his decisions as a photographer undoubtedly shaped Shelter’s representation of the homeless, he cannot be held wholly responsible for an editing process that ultimately reduced their experience to a one-dimensional and unrepresentative single image in the mass media.
However, these innovations in the actual process of making the photographs had little bearing on the way that the photographs ultimately looked. Regardless of Hedges’ authorial intention to adopt a more authentic methodology (consisting of a sustained interaction between himself and genuinely homeless families), his photographs still conformed to a dominant pictorial convention regarding the representation of poverty and the poor. His authorial intentions had little bearing on the semiotic effect of the photographs that he made. On the whole, his photographs seemed to support a narrative that represented the homeless, and specifically the homeless child, as forlorn and innocent.

Throughout the 1960s, the era of the Kitchen Sink drama, representations of the marginalised Northern working class were ubiquitous in literature, film and photography, and Hedges’ photographs merged seamlessly with this discourse. Photo-spreads on poverty and social inequality were frequently published as human interest stories in the glossy Sunday supplements of The Sunday Times and The Observer. Here, photographs of the ‘underclass’ appear little different to those made by Hedges for Shelter (Fig. 96). Ken Loach’s visualisation of poverty and homelessness in the 1966 film Cathy Come Home (fortuitously broadcast just days before Shelter was launched) appears almost like a blueprint for the kinds of scenes that Hedges would photograph a couple of years later: slum rooms, unemployed fathers, abandoned mothers and neglected children (Fig. 97). This, in turn, simply reworked slum scenes that had appeared in Stefan Lorant’s Weekly Illustrated in 1934, and John Grierson’s 1935 documentary film Housing Problems, albeit within a narrative framework (Fig. 98).

Recalling the slum spaces represented in Picture Post in the late 1930s, Hedges’


451 Funded by the Gas, Light and Coke Company, Grierson’s documentary explored the problem of slum housing and its impact on residents. The film was characterised by direct-to-camera interviews with working-
photographs equally echoed stills from Michael Goodger’s two-part documentary film chronicling the slum clearance program of Salford entitled The Changing Face of Salford (1968-1970) and prefigured the kind of domestic spaces visualised by the CCCS in the 1970s. Within the context of his time, Hedges’ representation of homeless children (despite its alternative methodology) was institutionalised, widespread and unproblematic. He made an accepted, and acceptable, kind of photography. His photographs did not challenge the status quo, yet neither were they intended, or expected, to do so.

Hedges’ previously unexamined and unacknowledged exclusion from the canon of British photography can also, to a certain extent, be understood in the light of the Shelter commission. The historical inaccessibility of his archive, coupled with the contemporaneous ‘distance’ of his practice (both ideologically and geographically) from the relatively close-knit community of independent photography in Britain in the 1970s, goes some way to explaining his omission from writing on photography both on, and of, this period. Although undoubtedly damaging, both personally and professionally, Spence’s 1976 attack on Hedges’ integrity and practice cannot be held accountable for his subsequent marginalisation in the history of British photography. Born in 1943, a decade later than celebrated British photojournalists and street photographers yet earlier than the independents, Hedges seems to fall between two stools, an individual who occupies a unique space somewhere beyond the neat taxonomies of photographic historians. Lacking critical exposure since the

class people that were unscripted and unrehearsed. Made on location, film cameras and sound recording equipment was taken inside the slum homes of ordinary Londoners.

452 Between 1968 and 1970 Goodger, a sociology lecturer at the University of Salford, made a film record of the living conditions and community of Ordsall in Salford, which was in the process of being demolished. Under the title The Changing Face of Salford the film was in two parts: Life in the Slums and Bloody Slums. Echoing many of the scenes in Cathy Come Home, the film revealed that poverty and poor housing were not confined to London.


454 Don McCullin was born in 1935.

455 Shirley Baker was born in 1932.

456 Daniel Meadows and Martin Parr were born in 1952.
1970s, the Shelter photographs are now coming to the attention of a new audience able to make up their own minds about integrity, legacy and an unwritten history.
Chapter Two: ‘To understand a charity’s photographs you need to understand its intentions’

A New Representation of the Homeless Child?

In his 1998 book *The Burden of Representation*, John Tagg observes how photographs can be used to visualise the difference between those in power and those subject to it:

‘There are bodies and spaces. The bodies – workers, vagrants, criminals, patients, the insane, the poor, the colonised races – are taken one by one: isolated in a shallow, contained space…subjected to an unreturnable gaze; illuminated, focused, measured, numbered.’

The chapter begins with a photograph of a young, homeless girl that is evocative of Tagg’s description (Fig. 99). In this photograph, the girl’s naked body is framed by a shallow, contained space and she is subject to the unreturnable gaze of the viewer. At first, it is a slightly ambiguous image: a naked girl stands next to an oven and a woman bends down by her legs. These signs quickly fall into place to form a scene of poverty and necessity: the peeling walls, the makeshift washing line and the cramped space tell the viewer that this room functions simultaneously as kitchen and bathroom, and that the girl is being dried, having been washed. Seen from behind, the girl is seemingly unaware of the photographer’s presence, as is the woman who does not look up.

The photograph was made in London in June 1969 by Nick Hedges whose work, and its framing in the publications of the homeless charity Shelter, is the subject of the chapter. It is

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458 Tagg 1988, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
argued that Shelter’s use of Hedges’ photographs in reports and advertising campaigns presented a somewhat contradictory construction of the homeless child to the public. On one hand, Shelter’s campaigns were innovative, radical and hard-hitting, characterised by the ostensible realism of Hedges’ photographs of children in squalid domestic space. On the other, Shelter’s campaigns reverted to a well-worn template that relied on photographs of the homeless child as vulnerable, appealing and attractive. It is important to note from the outset that Shelter’s campaigns did not rely on a single representation of the homeless child. The particular type of homeless child that was represented (predominantly through Hedges’ photographs) depended on the specific requirements of an advertisement, publication or campaign. An overview of Shelter’s campaign material attests to the diversity of this representation. Shelter’s output was prolific and resulted in a large amount of advertising and published material. In response to this demand, Hedges made a large number of varied photographs. In these images the homeless child assumed a number of guises: feral delinquent, appealing orphan, innocent victim, self-sufficient latchkey kid or disillusioned teenager.

Shelter’s publications and campaigns made the domestic spaces of the hidden homeless visible on a mass scale for the first time and, in doing so, permitted a new and more complex understanding of the child’s experience of homelessness. Concomitant with this greater engagement with the lives of homeless children was the innovative representation of the homeless child in relation to a wider family structure. Hedges’ photographs were some of the first to document the relationships that were formed by, and lived out within, the domestic space of the homeless family. The chapter focuses on the way in which these relationships were presented by Shelter, and how the photographs were used to draw out key debates that shaped an understanding of the homeless child, its family circumstances, its attributes and its potential. The discussion of Shelter’s campaign strategy is framed by an awareness of the
social policy issues centred on the homeless child at this time, and their coverage in the social reportage journal *New Society* during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The chapter proceeds to measure Shelter’s deployment of Hedges’ photographs against negatives and contact prints that raise questions about the nature of photographic ‘truth’, and explores the gap that separates the public from the private image. Finally, taking an inverted trajectory to the production of the photographs (from negative to contact print to final print to published image) the chapter excavates other identities for the homeless child, and examine the tensions that exist between them. Throughout the chapter, the photographs are referred to as three discrete categories: the contact prints, final prints and those published by Shelter.

Images of children have always been successful in prompting an emotional and financial response from the public. In the 1992 book *What is a Child?: Popular Images of Childhood*, Patricia Holland comments on the ambiguity of the viewer’s response to images of disempowered children:

‘Children are seen as archetypal victims: childhood is seen as weakness itself. As the children in the image reveal their vulnerability, we long to protect them and provide for their needs. Paradoxically, while we are moved by the image of a sorrowful child, we also welcome it, for it can arouse pleasurable emotions of tenderness, which in themselves confirm adult power’.

Holland’s observation is predicated on an imbalance of power and a dynamic of contrast: the powerful adult is defined by the weak child. In line with Holland’s observation, it is perhaps unsurprising that the dominant (although not sole) narrative that shaped Shelter’s campaigns was that of the homeless child as sorrowful victim. It is equally unsurprising that the photographs most likely to be published by Shelter were those that visualised the homeless child.

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child in this way. As a consequence, regardless of the diversity of Hedges’ output across the 980 images that he made for Shelter, his published repertoire and public legacy (the images by which he would be known) were, to a certain extent, preordained. Despite Shelter’s desire to appear radical and unique amongst the charity field in the 1960s, it ultimately failed to find a more honest, less stereotyped, way of representing the homeless child.

The chapter explores the extent to which Hedges’ photographs were able to operate as independent texts within the wider framework of Shelter’s advertisements and reports. Taking Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen as a case study, it examines the ways in which the child’s body, specifically its nakedness, was utilised to lend a singular appeal and traction to the photograph as an advertising image. By reinserting the photograph into a series of related negatives and contact prints an alternative, less restricted, view of the child’s life emerges and calls into question many of the charity’s preferred narratives. By tracing the genealogy of Hedges’ representation of the homeless child, the chapter explores the ideological implications generated by his photographs and how they were deployed by Shelter. It also analyses Hedges’ photographs in the light of contemporaneous social and political debates surrounding the homeless child, and examine how these shaped Shelter’s campaign strategy.

Political Innovations, Visual Traditions

Shelter undoubtedly altered a public and political understanding of homelessness. Its breakthrough was a successful campaign to achieve a legal redefinition of homelessness following the general election of 1970. Shelter demanded recognition for the hidden homeless: people living in slums, as opposed to vagrants and hostel dwellers. Under existing
legislation this group was described as housed and was omitted from official homelessness
statistics and from welfare provision. Shelter introduced the concept that a home was more
than a physical structure of four walls and a roof: an adequate home was a domestic space
that provided fundamental human needs (warmth, light, security, privacy and sanitation) and
in which relationships could be sustained. Shelter’s *Face the Facts* report, published in 1969,
was subtitled *Who Are the Homeless?* (Fig. 100). The question highlighted an underlying and
widely held misconception of the issue. In response, Shelter listed seven scenarios that it
believed constituted homelessness:

1. Families ‘on the streets’ (sleeping in vehicles or in the open).
2. Families living in squalor.
3. Families living in chronically overcrowded conditions.
4. Divided families (this included those with children ‘in care’).
5. Families living with family or friends.
6. Families living in physical danger due to unsafe properties.
7. Families living without basic amenities (toilets, washing and cooking facilities,
electricity, water, heating).  

The ruling Labour government attempted to defend an earlier misrepresentation of the
homelessness problem. The Conservative Party pledged to ‘redefine the homeless to take
in all families living in conditions unacceptable in a civilised society’ if it was elected to
power. The Liberal Party likewise promised to redefine homelessness. During the
following party conference season, Shelter’s report and the problem of homelessness was a
priority for all three parties and was included in each of the parties’ Leaders’ speeches.

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Recognising the political expediency of tackling such a high-profile issue (given huge publicity by Shelter’s campaigns), each party jumped on the homelessness bandwagon.\(^{464}\) When the Conservative Party won the general election in 1970, it honoured its pledge to redefine homelessness and introduced legislation that expanded the definition to include Shelter’s recommendations.

Shelter also changed the public face of homelessness in mass media campaigns that departed from an established format. In line with their political redefinition of homelessness to include inadequate domestic space, at the root of its advertising strategy was a reassessment of what homelessness looked like. Des Wilson, the Director of Shelter between 1966 and 1971, highlighted this innovation. He commented that ‘the popular view of the homeless in 1969 fell somewhere between heavy-breeding, heavy-drinking, heavy-gambling, unemployed layabouts and smelly, meths-drinking tramps’\(^{465}\) a stereotype captured in Don McCullin’s iconic photographs of homelessness made in Spitalfields in East London in 1969 (Figs. 101 and 102). Hedges made a comparable photograph in Glasgow in 1970 (Fig. 103), significantly the only one of his archive to visualise this ubiquitous trope.\(^{466}\) In contrast, Hedges’ Shelter photographs were the first to show the newly recognised slum home as a site of homelessness.

As outlined by Holland, the child was central to the efficacy of Hedges’ photographs to provoke powerful feelings in the viewer. The representation of the child in the slum home became Hedges’ forte. Shelter used Hedges’ photographs to introduce a new construction of

\(^{464}\) In an interview, Hedges explained the timing of Shelter’s reports: ‘Des (Wilson) recognised that there were times of the year when publicity was an extremely good thing…He realised that the Political Party season or the Conference season, which is usually September, was very significant. He decided to publish Shelter’s main reports every year in September to coincide with Party Political Conferences’ (Nick Hedges interview, 15 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 411).


\(^{466}\) This photograph was used to illustrate the New Society article ‘No Fixed Abode’, 21 December 1972, pp. 690-91.
the homeless child into the charity arena photographing it, for the first time, within domestic space. The tradition of slum photography, beginning in the nineteenth century with the work of photographers such as Thomas Annan and Jacob Riis, did not consider the homeless, or their children, of particular note. People were peripheral elements in images that focused on material deprivation. They were incidental to the photographer’s primary concern of documenting dilapidated buildings and were often blurred, shrouded in shadow and pushed to the boundary of the photographic plane, accidentally caught by the camera’s gaze. Technical limitations, such as a lack of adequate flash and poor quality low exposure film, also made it difficult to photograph dark domestic spaces. Hedges’ photographs of slum interiors were made possible by technological developments that permitted clear photographic representations of dark interiors to a publishable standard (Hedges did not use flash lighting).

Prior to Shelter, an ideological construction of the homeless child had simply not existed in this representational space. From 1968 onwards, Shelter used Hedges’ photographs to shift the focus from an absent home and family, to the existing ‘problem’ home and family, as the root cause of childhood trauma. However, this innovation must be balanced against the perpetuation of established visual and textual tropes apparent in charity campaigns from the nineteenth century onwards. Both Hedges’ photographs, and their deployment in Shelter’s campaigns, clearly reference an earlier visual tradition as has been noted by Grosvenor and Hall: ‘The visual vocabulary used by Shelter drew on a range of documentary conventions and campaigning traditions dating back to the late nineteenth century’.

Before the legal redefinition of homelessness in 1970, the homeless child was defined independently of a home and a family in institutional or foster care. The National Children’s Home campaigns that appeared in *New Society* throughout the 1960s visualised this notion of

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the displaced child. The advertisements were characterised by photographs of single, isolated children (Fig. 104). Their surroundings are effaced and their disembodied forms float in white space. The photographs are crudely cropped and fragmented, suggesting corresponding absences in the violated snapshots of broken families. The photographs show children who appear happy and healthy. There is little evidence of neglect or emotional trauma, and the images provide little idea of a child’s experience of homelessness. The accompanying narratives support this rosy picture:

‘National Children’s Homes goes much further than just ‘keeping body and soul together’ for needy and neglected children. Our aim is to restore to them the richest possession of all – normal family life. This means specialised individual care’.  

Another advertisement for Dr Barnardo’s Homes presents an equally idealised picture of homelessness (Fig. 105). Published as part of a Christmas campaign, the advert features an artist’s illustration, rather than a photograph. The drawing represents a close-up view of a smiling little girl. She is unusually pretty and appealing. Her hair is neatly brushed, her face plump, her eyes shining and bright. She cradles a doll lovingly against her cheek and stands in front of a festive backdrop, possibly a Christmas tree. At first glance, she appears to be a perfectly happy little girl enjoying Christmas, as all children should. It is only on reading the text beneath the image that her true circumstances emerge:

‘They ask for so little but need so much. At Christmas time over 7,000 children in our care look to us to make their Christmas a happy one. Will you help us this year? You can give Christmas happiness so easily to those who need it so much’.

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468 Every Mite Counts, National Children’s Homes advertisement, New Society, 30 October 1969, p. 692.
469 Ibid.
470 They ask for so little but need so much, Dr Barnardo’s Homes advertisement, New Society, 12 December 1963, p. 25.
The text reveals that the little girl lives in care and is in need. She is just one of seven thousand children in this position. The picture does not fit with the text. Throughout the 1960s, advertising campaigns for Britain’s leading charities such as the National Children’s Home and Dr Barnardo’s represented the homeless child as healthy, happy and attractive.

Other charities adopted an alternative approach to homelessness by separating it completely from the realm of the child. A 1964 advertisement for the Homeless in Britain Fund, launched by Christian Action, features a photograph of a furnished room above a description of its features: ‘rotten floors; rat infested; an open fireplace the only facility for cooking; lavatories flushed with a bucket of water’ (Fig. 106). The text reveals the extent of the problem, ‘There are 6,000 homeless men, women and children in the London area alone’. The reader is told that children live in such spaces, but the fact is not visualised. The impact of homelessness on the child is not shown. An empty room is photographed, devoid of the homeless themselves and the problem is presented in terms of physical space, rather than human experience. Three years later, Christian Action produced another advertisement that presented homelessness in more human terms. A dramatically-lit photograph of a woman was headed by the caption ‘Two o’clock in the morning’ (Fig. 107). The text explains that the woman was found walking the streets of Paddington at this time, ‘one of the many women who are homeless every night of the year in London’. Here homelessness is framed in terms of the adult vagrant, situated outside domestic space: the woman is photographed literally on the streets. Homelessness is visualised as an exclusively adult experience, separated from the domestic space of the family.

In contrast, from the outset Shelter used photographs to present homelessness in terms of the child, situated in impoverished domestic space. Its launching advertisement of December

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471 *Call this home!*, Homeless in Britain Fund advertisement, *New Society*, 19 November 1964, p. 22.
1966 placed the motif of the homeless child right at the centre of things (Fig. 108).

Shelter was committed to an unsentimental and authentic representation of this child’s experience. Hedges’ intervention was fundamental to this ethos. The launching advertisement, produced prior to Hedges’ employment at the charity, had been orchestrated by a London advertising agency and features models. Hedges subsequently refused to photograph reconstructions of homelessness and suggested that Des Wilson, the Director of Shelter, focus instead on the real slums that surrounded their London headquarters. From the start of Hedges’ time at the charity, there was a desire to show actual children and families in their own homes. There was also a willingness to show the physical and mental consequences of homelessness in photographs of children that often appeared distressed and dirty.

For the first time in the history of British charity advertising, the white Western child became a locus of harrowing mass media imagery. Prior to this, images of suffering children had been limited to charity campaigns for foreign aid relief, notably those of Oxfam, or those aimed at preventing the physical abuse of children. From the late nineteenth century onwards, organisations such as the NSPCC had commissioned shocking photographs of white children subjected to neglect and abuse (Fig. 109). However, such images were seen by a limited and select audience. They were circulated amongst professionals in the field: medics, social workers, eugenicists and board members. Shelter’s campaigns presented this kind of imagery to a mass audience for the first time and revealed that child poverty was a universal condition that had to be addressed in Britain, as well as abroad. It showed that poor housing constituted a different, but equally damaging, kind of child abuse. This revolutionary campaign strategy changed the face of British charity advertising and introduced a new way of visualising child

475 Hedges later made photographs in regional cities, including Birmingham, Bradford and Glasgow.
poverty, homelessness and neglect. Idealised images were abandoned in favour of ostensibly more truthful representations of children in difficult circumstances. Following Shelter’s lead, other organisations such as The Salvation Army, introduced aggressive advertising campaigns underpinned by disturbing photographs of vulnerable, suffering, white British children (Fig. 110).  

Shelter’s instantaneous commercial triumph, and its ability to capture the public imagination, must also be understood in relation to the specific moment of its launch. Its advertising strategy was unleashed on an audience already primed and eager to intervene. A fortuitous twist of fate played a large part in the charity’s immediate success. On the evening of 16 November 1966, BBC One screened a play entitled Cathy Come Home as part of its Wednesday play series. Written by Jeremy Sandford, produced by Tony Garnett and directed by Ken Loach, the play employed a Realist documentary mode. It mapped a young couple’s descent into poverty and homelessness and dealt with the issues of unemployment, eviction, illegal squatting and family disintegration. The play was notable for its gritty realism, particularly evident in the final scene in which Cathy’s two young children are wrenched forcibly from her arms by two male and two female social workers (Fig. 111). J. W. D. Davies, a Birmingham Children’s Officer and President-Elect of the Association of Child Care Officers commented,

‘The final scene where the children are taken into care really goes against every principle that Child Care Officers are taught in their training and vocational work…It

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477 For God’s sake care, give us a pound, Salvation Army advertisement, Sunday Times Magazine, 11 June 1967, p. 5.
478 Filmed on location using 16mm black and white film, the play stood apart from the majority of BBC productions of the time, which were recorded in the television studio.
479 The two children were played by the actress Carol White’s sons, Steve and Sean White. The emotional impact of the scene resulted from the authentic distress of the children, who were too young to understand what was happening as they were taken from their mother’s arms and removed from the set.
is very upsetting if the general public think that children are taken into care in the way this film shows’.\(^{480}\)

Watched by twelve million people on its first showing, *Cathy Come Home* had a huge impact: the problem of homelessness became a subject for national debate.\(^{481}\) Many city councils and welfare departments reacted with hostility and anger to the film which ‘sparked off a flood of protests from city social workers and local government officials’.\(^{482}\) Partly filmed on location in Winson Green and Ladywood in Birmingham, the film hardly showed the city, or its housing services, in the best light. Councillor Tom Matthews, Conservative member for Soho, Birmingham commented on the film’s ‘gross distortions and exaggerations’.\(^{483}\) The following year, when the prospect of a sequel to *Cathy Come Home* (this time commissioned by Shelter) raised its head, Alderman Anthony Beaumont Dark, chairman of Birmingham’s Housing Committee, made his position clear,

> ‘We will not allow Shelter to come into Birmingham and upset our citizens…We do not want Birmingham being used for this type of thing, when it is not true…The *Cathy Come Home* film gave a totally distorted picture and if this is their intention, they will not find a welcome in Birmingham’.\(^{484}\)

Although the sequel was never made, in 1969 another documentary entitled *Our Generation* was filmed in Birmingham for the Save the Children Fund.\(^{485}\) John Beacham, the film’s director and co-producer, commented that the main reason for choosing the city was its ‘very

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\(^{481}\) The play was subsequently screened on 10 January 1967, 11 August 1976, 31 March 1993 and again in 2006.

\(^{482}\) ‘Unfair to show Cathy again – housing chief’, *Birmingham Mail*, 10 January 1967.

\(^{483}\) ‘Verdicts on Cathy’ op. cit.

\(^{484}\) ‘Birmingham will not let Shelter film homeless’, *Birmingham Post*, 23 October 1968.

\(^{485}\) The fourteen-minute colour film was released in London on 27 May 1969 with the intention of later showing it in Birmingham. Although Birmingham was not mentioned by name in the film, the director John Beacham commented that ‘it was pretty obvious where it had been shot’. The film shows local children playing amongst the debris of half-demolished houses.
bad past housing record’. Shot on location in Ladywood, the film showed ‘housing conditions and the effects on children of slum clearance and redevelopment’. Unsurprisingly, Alderman Dark’s response was far from positive, ‘To say that Birmingham has a bad record shows a depressing ignorance of what we have done’.

Although totally unconnected to Shelter, which was launched two weeks later on 1 December 1966, *Cathy Come Home* provided the perfect context for an initiative to help the homeless. The British public, left in a state of disbelief and outrage by Sandford’s play, were ready and eager to take action. In his book *Memoirs of a Minor Public Figure*, Des Wilson recognised the serendipity of the situation:

‘Would Shelter have succeeded without *Cathy*? I believe so, but it would have been much harder work and it would have taken much longer. *Cathy* helped Shelter immeasurably. It set the scene…it was a scream of pain from the homeless so authentic that it was not only heard but believed’.

*Cathy Come Home* also tapped into a contemporaneous cultural fascination with the working class, epitomised by the genre of Kitchen Sink Realism. From the late 1950s onwards photography, plays, novels, films and television programmes scrutinised the domestic mores of Northerners, most often framed by the cramped and impoverished space of the slum

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487 Ibid.
488 Ibid.
490 In her book *Daniel Meadows: Edited Photographs from the 70s and 80s*, Val Williams highlights the significance of social realism for the work of young British independent photographers. She observes: ‘In the late 1960s and early ’70s the common man became a preoccupation, in performance (kitchen sink dramas and films); in broadcast (*The Radio Ballads*); in music (the return to folk themes) and in photography’ (p. 11).
home.\textsuperscript{491} In the late 1960s and the 1970s the photographs of Hedges and his peers echoed many of the scenes already familiar to an audience steeped in this visual culture.

To sum up, Shelter’s innovations (politically and representationally) were centred on the reinstatement of problematic domestic space as a central tenet of homelessness. This problematized domestic space defined Shelter’s campaigns and was the setting for the majority of Hedges’ photographs. Primed by the gritty realist drama \textit{Cathy Come Home}, the British public were keen to support Shelter in its fight against the shocking housing conditions that they had glimpsed briefly on their television screens. The charity succeeded in shifting the focus from the lack of a home, to the problems of an unsuitable slum home.

Concomitant with this ideological shift was the way in which domestic space was tied to a narrative of childhood and the child’s experience lived out in this space. Shelter’s exposure of children’s experiences in such spaces made the problem impossible for the public to overlook or ignore. Shelter’s campaigns repeatedly explored the way children’s lives were blighted by living in slum homes, often in upsetting detail. Case studies and interviews printed in reports provided explicit and moving accounts of how children were forced to live. When allied with Hedges’ graphic photographs of children in these spaces, such campaigns provoked extensive media attention. Shelter repackaged homelessness as the blight of British children and used Hedges’ photographs to visualise it as a crisis of childhood, as opposed to one of housing.

Returning to Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen, the chapter examines how it was mobilised as part of this strategy. It explores the nature of this crisis and examines how a construction of the child as ‘innocent victim’ was used by Shelter, and to what ends. What

\textsuperscript{491} Kitchen Sink Realism predominantly focused on the Northern working class. The genre was characterised by an interest in regional dialects and accents. Narratives centred on the home and the factory as key loci of working-class life. Novels and screenplays were adapted for television and film. Notable examples include: \textit{Look Back in Anger} (1956), \textit{Room at the Top} (1957), \textit{Spring and Port Wine} (1957), \textit{A Taste of Honey} (1958), \textit{Saturday Night and Sunday Morning} (1958), \textit{Billy Liar} (1959), \textit{A Kind of Loving} (1960), \textit{Up the Junction} (1963) and \textit{A Kestrel for a Knave} (1968).
did it mean for a child to be represented as a victim at this time? How did Shelter package this narrative to effect change and to raise funds?

The Girl in the Kitchen

Two photographs of the girl in the kitchen were published three times by the charity: on page forty-five of Shelter’s 1970 report *Face the Facts: Who Are the Homeless?* (Fig. 112), as a diminutive, yet prominent, component of a photomontage on the back cover of *The Shelter Story* (a 1970 publication that traced the history of Shelter) (Fig. 113) and as an illustration in Shelter’s twenty-fifth anniversary report *Building for the Future*, published in 1991 (Fig. 114). In the photomontage, the photograph forms part of a patchwork of images: it is framed by a white border, the geometric shape of which echoes and enhances the girl’s naked form. The photograph’s multiple publications, spanning twenty-one years, attest to its continuing power to deliver what Shelter wanted in a photograph of homelessness. It stands in contrast to a ‘useless’ photograph of homelessness, as defined by Des Wilson in relation to a surprise encounter with a homeless family:

‘I saw one family in one room – mother, father and four children...There was one light bulb hanging from the ceiling, wallpaper peeling off the wall, no heating in the room at all and for cooking, just one gas ring. It was in chaos’.  

On returning to make a photograph of this suitably abject scene, Wilson was disappointed to find that the family,

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‘…had cleaned, washed and polished until that room shone. The children were lined up in their Sunday best like a football team...It was a stunning transformation from squalor and despair to a show of pride. But...for my purposes it was useless’. 493

In contrast to this ineffectual photograph of homelessness, Hedges’ photograph captures the essence of how Shelter wanted to present the problem. Its success depends on the considered way in which it presents a child’s naked body in a slum room, and how the viewer interacts with this body and this space.

Shelter was committed to protecting the identities of the homeless people who featured in their reports and advertising campaigns. In their report entitled Condemned, published in September 1971, a paragraph states:

‘These families allowed SHELTER to interview and photograph them, and in some cases to survey their homes during June, July and August 1971. Their names have been altered and their exact addresses withheld. Their words have been edited, but are otherwise unchanged’. 494

Despite the anonymous nature of the published photographs, images in the both the Shelter archive and the Hedges Collection provide clues about the girl’s life and her circumstances. In the Shelter archive, a handwritten note by Hedges on the verso of a photograph of the same girl (this time shown standing outside, amidst a pile of rubbish) provides a context for the image: ‘4.2 (II) /4 The rubbish surrounding the R’s basement flat, London E.1, Aug 1969’ (fig 115). At BAHP, a contact print features the same girl, alongside two men and two women (Fig. 116). Hedges’ typed notes relating to the contact print contain important facts about her life:

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493 Ibid., p. 51.
‘41/13, London E.1. June 1969. The stairway outside the R’s flat. Mr and Mrs R lived with their 6 children in a damp basement flat of the decaying Rothschild Dwellings. The flat was tiny and very dark. 3 girls (13 years, 5 and 3) shared one bed, the boys (11 and twins aged 1) shared the other bedroom. Mr and Mrs R slept in the living room. There was no bathroom, no hot water, the kitchen was only big enough for 2 people to stand up in. One of the twins had a hole in the heart condition. SHELTER rehoused the family in Peterborough where they are buying their own house’.

In interviews, Hedges identified the girl as belonging to the Rump family and spoke about making the photograph of her:

‘The Rumps were a family that I’d come across in the East End of London and they weren’t in contact with anyone at all and in the end we were able to get them rehoused to Peterborough, to a new town and into a new house. They were living in a basement flat in Soho’.

‘There was Pauline and Michael and there were two twins, and I can’t remember the twins’ names, but they didn’t have a bathroom, so the bath was a plastic bath, which was next to the sink. I said it would be good to take pictures of bath time, if they didn’t mind, and they thought about it and they said, ‘Yeah, that's alright’, so I came back one evening and did the photographs’.

The ostensible simplicity of the photograph of the girl in the kitchen belies a complex process regarding its production and the meanings embedded within it. In the Face the Facts report there is no caption, date or identification of the subjects. Uniquely in a Shelter report, the image fills the page. The photograph stands alone: it is not slotted into the text. The

496 Ibid., p. 397.
distancing function of the margin is removed and the viewer is invited into the space. Directly opposite the photograph, a line of text stands out in bold type: ‘Mice on the Ground Floor and Rats on the Top Floor’. A connection is forged between this information and the image – is this the space which is being described? In his 1961 essay ‘The Photographic Message’ Roland Barthes comments on the dialectical relationship that links photograph and text, ‘the structure of the photograph is not an isolated structure; it is in communication with at least one other structure, namely the text: title, caption or article’. In line with an earlier tradition of charity campaigns, Shelter’s reports and advertisements relied on the interplay between text and image to generate meanings beyond those carried by photographs alone. Moving beyond this established model, Shelter introduced the innovation of using words, not only alongside images, but superimposed on the photographs themselves, as part of the photographic composition. This hybrid form is particularly evident in their 1967 report Back to school...from a holiday in the slums! Returning to the photograph of the girl in the kitchen, the reference to rodents is, in fact, unrelated to the image. It is a quotation taken from an interview with an unidentified Glasgow M.P. and describes the slum housing in his own constituency. The report features numerous case studies of homeless families, and details the myriad problems of poor housing. Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen becomes part of this fluid narrative and provides a visual, if directly unrelated, counterpart to the written accounts. An intellectual understanding of homelessness is supplemented by a visual/experiential encounter with the kind of domestic space described throughout the report.

The frame of the door, half ajar, implies a moment of intrusion, as though the viewer has opened the door without knocking. The viewer does not enter the room but hovers at its threshold in a liminal space of suspended connection with the inhabitants. The gaze is

498 For further discussion of this publication, see Ian Grosvenor and Alison Hall, ‘Back to school...from a holiday in the slums!: Images, Words and Inequalities’, op. cit., p. 25.
voyeuristic in nature with the elevated angle of the photographer/viewer creating an unequally weighted relationship between active observer and passive subjects. The motif of the homeless child is fundamental to the impact of the photograph. The vulnerability of the child’s body underpins the scene, both compositionally and emotionally. As an icon of the innocent child, cherubic and blonde, her body is a space of softness and a locus of touch amidst the cold, decay and disorder of the dilapidated room. The harsh, somewhat clinical, lighting in the room gives way to softly diffused gradations that sensually describe her fleshiness in velvet tones of warm grey. The girl’s form is threatened on all sides by the harsh edges of doorways, the glinting steel of utensils and the abrasive surface of damp plaster. Her body appears fragile and her skin is almost translucent, a permeable layer that offers little protection. The glare of the overhead light source seems to trace the skeletal structure of her tiny frame. In its evocation of an x-ray, the photograph reveals ribs, vertebrae and pelvis. The girl’s body dematerialises to form a negative space, an inverted afterimage. She seems to blend into the space that surrounds her. Her tousled hair echoes the peeling texture of the wall’s surface and the bleached whiteness of her right forearm merges seamlessly with the cooker’s ceramic surface. The girl appears unstable and rests her forearms on the woman for support. The photographic frame is cropped above her knees and the floor is obscured. She balances precariously in an unknown space, disorientated and displaced. This disorientation is emphasised by the oblique angle of the open door that frames the girl on the left. She is literally uprooted with no visible means of supporting herself. The girl is presented as dependent, vulnerable and trapped. Unable to extricate herself from this space, she becomes one with it. The photograph conflates the body of the homeless child with a problematic domestic space to imply a thwarted childhood.

A discussion of the photograph thus far prompts several questions: What constituted a thwarted childhood at this time, and how did Shelter use Hedges’ photograph to visualise
this? How did this photograph create meaning within the context of the Shelter report? What did Hedges’ photograph tell the historical viewer about the life of the girl, and the home that she lived in? In addressing these questions, it is pertinent to explore the genealogy of Hedges’ photograph, and the associations that it generates, regarding the construction of the homeless child in circulation at this time via photographic tradition, social policy debates, mass media representations and Shelter’s wider representation of homeless children. This contextual framework refers specifically to the representation of the homeless child in the journal *New Society*, published between 1962 and 1988, and to other of Hedges’ photographs that appear in Shelter’s campaigns and reports. *New Society* was dedicated to an examination of social policy issues that affected children in terms of education, health, criminality and the family and it functioned as a touchstone for professionals who worked with children: it published the latest research in the field and was the main platform for job vacancies in this sphere. The journal was also distinguished by a rich visual content, including photographs, drawings and cartoons.

How was Hedges’ photograph used to make meaning about the girl’s domestic space? It pictures a room that is overcrowded, dark, damp and cold. The setting is a kitchen that, through necessity, functions as a bathroom, a ubiquitous scene in working-class houses. Jack Smith’s painting entitled *Mother Bathing Child* of 1953 (Fig. 117) prefigures Hedges’ photograph in its representation of an exhausted mother washing her child in a Belfast sink in a cold, bare kitchen.499 The limited palette, expressive brushstrokes, angular style and strong

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499 This painting was one of a series of the same subject painted by Smith in 1953. The artist subsequently destroyed the other paintings. Smith later commented ‘The art of the 1940s in France and England didn’t excite me. I reacted against its lack of creative energy. So like many artists before me I turned to my own environment for subject matter…I wanted to make the ordinary miraculous. This had nothing to do with social comment. If I had lived in a palace I would have painted chandeliers’. This ethos led to the term Kitchen Sink painting amongst a group of British artists working during the 1950s, who represented ordinary people in scenes of everyday life. The term was originally used as the title of an article by the critic David Sylvester in the December 1954 issue of the journal *Encounter*. The article discussed the work of the Realist artists known as the ‘Beaux Arts Quartet’ which included John Bratby, Derrick Greaves, Edward Middleditch and Jack Smith. [http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks smith-mother-bathing-child-t00005](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks smith-mother-bathing-child-t00005), accessed 23 July 2015.
black outlines convey the emotional and physical privation of the space. Hedges’ photograph equally reveals the child’s complete lack of privacy as it stands naked in a communal space which is inadequate and unsuitable, struggling to function either as a kitchen or a bathroom. The makeshift washing line hanging from the ceiling suggests another unsatisfactory adaptation of domestic space. The photograph intimates that there is no garden in which to dry washing, no bathroom or bath and little space for effective, hygienic or comfortable food preparation. The lack of light, both natural and artificial, suggests that there are few windows in the house and little money for electricity. The occupants cannot afford to light or heat their home effectively.\textsuperscript{500} The vast expanse of peeling, uneven wall that forms the backdrop of the scene suggests extensive damp, poor ventilation and mould. Its juxtaposition with the pots and pans on the cooker creates an unpleasant association between food, dirt and decay.

Hedges’ photograph shows a space that is repellent. The viewer lingers in the doorway, but does not enter. The gap between the inhabitants of the space and the viewer is established almost instantaneously. Shelter uses the photograph to perform a dual function. It reveals the hidden space of the slum home and simultaneously protects the viewer from it. It is the feel of the space that is most striking in the image. The compression of spatial depth is emphasised. The photograph’s large depth of field brings everything into sharp focus, from the edge of the doorframe in the foreground to the stained gas pipe in the far corner of the room. The gaps between the constituent elements of the composition collapse in on one another, making it impossible to imagine moving or breathing in the space. The room is sliced into consecutive planes: the doorway, the girl, the woman, the cooker and the back wall. The air separating them is extracted from the photograph, like a vacuum-packed reality. The viewer appropriates the claustrophobia of the girl as she attempts to steady herself. The damp and cold of the

\textsuperscript{500} See Molly Nesbitt’s analysis of Atget’s photographs for a more detailed discussion of how photographs of domestic interiors are interpreted as markers of class and social position in her book \textit{Atget’s Seven Albums}, New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 1992.
stained plaster wall suggests a slight shiver in her frame. The frustrated activity of the woman is captured as a photographic blur; she is hemmed in by the encroaching walls and the body of the child. This is a space which inhibits action, growth, expression and the fulfilment of potential. This is a space in which the most basic human needs (food, cleanliness, warmth and ventilation) become problematic and unattainable.

In its report, Shelter used Hedges’ photograph as an index of the practical issues of homelessness and to illustrate the difficulties of living and functioning in inadequate domestic space. Overcrowding was one of the main problems confronted by those living in slums. The impact on the child was presented as particularly detrimental, and was shown to stifle their transition into adulthood. A lack of space meant that children had little or no room in which to develop effectively. Shelter addressed this issue in its first advertisement which featured a photograph of an overcrowded room (Fig. 108) framed by the caption:

‘Mrs T. and her five children live in one room and a cubby hole, in an overcrowded and crumbling house. The room is their kitchen, bathroom, living room and bedroom. Sixteen people use the lavatory’.501

A 1973 report by the National Children’s Bureau entitled Born to Fail? cited a lack of space as the main problem faced by the homeless child.502 It revealed that over ninety percent of disadvantaged children shared a bedroom, with over half of these forced to share a bed.503 The results of this were disturbed sleep and cross infection, leading to chronic tiredness and absence from school. Educational progress was also hampered by a lack of private space in which to do homework. The report was illustrated with G. A. Clarke’s photographs which were reminiscent of those made by Hedges for Shelter (Figs. 118 and 119). Shelter’s 1967

report Back to school...from a holiday in the slums! examined the same problem and quoted directly from The Newsom Report, a government white paper of 1963, which cited the slum home as a direct cause of educational failure, ‘…under the conditions in which some families are obliged to live, it is asking the impossible of parents and children to expect homework to be done satisfactorily’. Illustrations in New Society equally represented the insufficient spaces of slum houses. A 1962 article entitled ‘Juvenile courts: A conflict of interests’ was illustrated by a pen and ink drawing of a crowded slum interior (Fig. 120) and in 1964 a similar scene illustrated an article on the limited prospects of the working-class child entitled ‘Salvaging Wasted Talent’ (Fig. 121). The similarities with Hedges’ photograph are evident in the mise-en-scène of the kitchen, the crowded composition, the lone mother and the absence of a floor and linear perspective. It is likely that Hedges would have seen this kind of ubiquitous scene circulated in the media. Perhaps it influenced his vision of how to represent a slum interior?

Inadequate domestic space was not only linked to educational failure for the homeless child. The Report on the Committee on Children and Young Persons (The Ingleby Report) of 1960 examined the connection between deprivation and depravation. Two government white papers: The Child, the Family and the Young Offender of 1965 and Children in Trouble of 1968 explored the links between a dysfunctional domestic space and maladjusted children. The Children and Young Persons Acts of 1963 and 1969 extended the powers of local authorities to prevent the neglect of children in their own homes. Children from slum homes were presented as nascent criminals and victims of domestic abuse. In these discourses, the

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504 Back to school...from a holiday in the slums!, Shelter report, September 1967, p. 16.
507 Home Office (1965), The Child, the Family and the Young Offender, Cmd 2742, London: HMSO.
508 Home Office (1968), Children in Trouble, Cmd 3601, London: HMSO.
poor family, located in the slum home, was posited as the fundamental source of societal collapse. One of Shelter’s most powerful advertisements from 1971 addressed this fear. Hedges’ made two photographs of a young boy playing on wasteland in Glasgow (Figs. 122 and 123). One of the photographs shows the boy sitting on a grass verge with a glass bottle in his hands. Enlarged and cropped, this photograph was subsequently used in the advertisement (Fig. 124). In this new format, a caption beneath the photograph reads: ‘You could turn your back on him today. But what about tomorrow?’ The ambiguity of the question is clarified by the accompanying paragraph that identifies the boy as one of the five million people living on, or below, the poverty line:

‘His house is squalid, his health is at risk. The chances are that his attitude to a society that doesn’t seem to care will get steadily worse. He’s a problem now. But you haven’t seen anything yet’.

The homeless child is presented as a current threat and a future monster. In this instance, the figure of the child is used to instil fear, rather than pity, in the audience, a framing that invokes self-preservation, rather than altruism, as the principal motivation for donating to Shelter. The simmering threat of working-class discontent is embodied by the homeless child and presented to a middle-class audience as their worst nightmare.

The advertisement prompted the only case of legal action taken against the charity. When the mother of the child saw the advertisement, she successfully sued Shelter and it was withdrawn. Unaware that a photograph of her son had been taken, the woman was horrified to see him demonised in the national press. Hedges, too, was shocked to discover how his photograph had been reinterpreted by the advertising agency:

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‘I came back and found that the advertising agency had been into the offices and gone through the files, selected this photograph and published it, in a two-week period this was, with a byline or a headline which was something like, ‘Would you want your child to grow up in a life of crime?’ And they published it in a magazine or a newspaper in Scotland, which is where the picture is taken, and the mother of the child saw it and she sued Shelter for misrepresentation. The picture was being used in a noxious way to suggest something about the child that was simply untrue, and the photographer, me, had no...No one asked me, no one said, ‘Can you tell us a bit more about this picture?’ It was just picked up and used. I was furious’. 

With little control over the final framing and presentation of his photographs, Hedges’ position was problematic. Whilst recognising the value of his work within an organisation that improved the lives of homeless people, he was also increasingly aware of the way his work was compromised by Shelter’s agenda. In his article ‘Charity Begins at Home: The Shelter Photographs’, published in 1979, Hedges commented on this tension. He stated that he had ‘failed to preserve the dignity and human-ness’ of the people that he photographed, but added that he was not there to do that. 

Written seven years after he left the charity, Hedges’ article conveys a retrospective wisdom. In 1979, if not in 1968, Hedges understood that his photographs were filtered, edited and recontextualised to maximise donations, sometimes at the expense of the homeless themselves. Regardless of Hedges’ intentions, Shelter used his photographs to visualise the child’s daily experience of living in a slum home and to suggest the possible damage (physical, mental and societal) that resulted from this kind of upbringing.

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512 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 379.
The Child’s Body as Contested Site

Returning to Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen, much of its impact stems from its representation of a child’s naked body. The photograph is unique amongst Shelter’s published images: it is the only one that shows a naked child. In 1969, Hedges’ was able to make this photograph freely and without legal restriction. It is unlikely that the photograph could be made today without controversy. Given current sensitivities regarding paedophilia and the proliferation and dissemination of pornographic images of children, the photograph would not be used as part of a national advertising campaign.\(^{514}\) It is equally unthinkable that it would be published in a report on homelessness. A photograph of a naked child can no longer be used to visualise a social crisis. Today, the making and publication of a photograph of a naked child itself constitutes a social crisis.

Current debates surrounding the sexualisation of the child and child pornography did not restrict Hedges, or Shelter, in their representation of the homeless child in 1969. Shelter used Hedges’ photograph to generate powerful, contradictory and possibly disturbing feelings in the viewer. The photograph’s representation of a naked child was fundamental to its ability to provoke these feelings. Above all, the child’s body is beautiful. Hedges’ photograph surprises the viewer with its beauty. It is at odds with the squalor of the space that surrounds it. The photograph of the girl pulls the viewer in two directions: the viewer is charmed by the body of the child, yet simultaneously repulsed by the space which it occupies. This flux of contradictory feelings electrifies the image, making it almost hypnotic. Out of the pages of a report mired in filth, poverty and desolation emerges a moment of quiet, complete perfection.

\(^{514}\) Under the section regarding the welfare of children and young persons, the Advertising Standards Code states: ‘Advertisements must not portray children in a sexually provocative manner. Scenes in which children appear partly or fully naked require particular care’.

Hedges’ unearthed a scene of mesmeric beauty in the unlikely surroundings of a London slum.

In publishing this photograph, Shelter rejected the established and routine use of photographs of the child’s naked body in charity campaigns as a corporeal text of suffering. In the late nineteenth century, the NSPCC introduced the use of photographs of the unclothed child as a way of visualising child abuse.\textsuperscript{515} The charity contrasted near-naked photographs of emaciated children with clothed photographs of rehabilitated children (Fig. 125). Cruelty was made visible in the broken bodies of abused children. Nakedness was used to expose the physical imprint of neglect.\textsuperscript{516} Photographs of naked, or near-naked, children were also ubiquitous in charity campaigns for foreign aid relief. In the 1950s and 1960s, Oxfam’s advertising campaign featured photographs of naked and emaciated babies (Fig. 126). Historically, photographs of naked children in charity campaigns have been used to generate horror rather than beauty. Shelter’s use of an appealing photograph of a naked girl creates confusion: it is deployed to enchant, rather than repel, the audience.

It is pertinent to explore the associations generated by Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen. A precedent for the image can be found in the Pictorialist photographic tradition of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this era, naked children were an acceptable and commonplace subject for photographers. Their bodies were photographed and displayed without qualm. An article from 1907 entitled ‘Child Photography and the Nude’ observes:


\textsuperscript{516} The NSPCC used ‘before and after’ photographs of children (reminiscent of those deployed by Dr Barnardo’s) on subscription cards for \textit{The Child’s Guardian}. Such images were also presented to the Society’s members and the public at the NSPCC’s seventh annual general meeting (Flegel, op. cit, p. 7).
‘A child’s charm lies as often in its body as in its face. No long years of civilised clothing, occupation, or habit have affected its shape, no years of worry and strain have made it too thin, nor ease and self-indulgence too fat; it is...as near perfect as we can wish it...Self-consciousness is the one thing to make a child stiff, but if you take away a child’s clothes you take away that too, so near nature are most children’.\textsuperscript{517}

Representations of the child’s naked body were a commodity to be photographed, discussed, circulated, published and sold. There was little sense of the child’s right to privacy, or ownership of its own body. It was ‘natural’ for children to be naked, and for adults to look at and represent this nakedness. In 1917, the journal\textit{Photography and Focus} published\textit{The Bathers} by J. B. B. Wellington as its picture of the week (Fig. 127).\textsuperscript{518} Wellington’s photograph shows two young girls, one seated and one standing, by a garden pond. The editor’s review of the photograph focuses on the beauty of the girls’ bodies in detail: ‘Particularly beautiful is the line that comprises the circle of the upper girl’s head, the falling tresses joining up to the arm, the bent wrist, the lower girl’s thigh, knee and left wrist’.\textsuperscript{519} The language used to analyse the photograph emphasises the sensuality of the girl’s bodies and borders on the erotic:

‘...the climax of light upon the taller girl’s back and hair is a passage that would prove of exciting interest to any good painter...One should notice...the perfect texture of the skin, and the silkiness of the hair...The gentle sunlight is a great enhancement to the various tones and to the appearance of the little girl especially, giving her flesh a very agreeable shining quality’.\textsuperscript{520}

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[519] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 414.
\item[520] \textit{Ibid.}
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Photographs of naked children, especially female children, were prized as artefacts of beauty and taste. The photographer’s skill in capturing the subject’s unselfconsciousness was applauded and encouraged. Whatever the motivation for making such photographs, children’s bodies were routinely portrayed and consumed under the aegis of Art Photography.

A more overt sexualisation of the child in photography dates back to the nineteenth century, appearing almost as soon as the medium was invented. A photograph album ‘containing many explicitly erotic scenes with children and perhaps the finest nude studies of young girls during the nineteenth century’ was compiled by J. T. With in 1847. During the 1860s, Oscar Gustave Rejlander made photographs of naked and semi-naked young girls. In his 1973 book *Victorian Erotic Photography*, Graham Ovenden observes that erotic postcards were a ‘much-used vehicle for the nubile image, with the girl child outnumbering the adult pin-up nearly five to one’. Charles Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, was a notable child photographer of the late nineteenth century. His portraits of little girls such as Alice Liddell and Evelyn Maud Hatch are some of the most controversial photographs of children in the history of photography. He photographed the female child in various roles and states of undress: as reclining odalisques and beggar maids, naked and semi-naked (Fig. 128). A large body of work has been devoted to the debate surrounding these images: were they innocent or erotic? Was Dodgson a harmless eccentric, or were his motives more sinister? The

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521 The sexualisation of children was not limited to the photographic medium. Paintings such as Millais’ *Cherry Ripe* (1879) have also been interpreted as evidence of the eroticisation of the child’s body. For a fuller discussion of this theme see ‘A Golden Age’, chapter three of Anne Higonnet’s *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, op. cit., pp. 50-72.


photographs continue to be contested sites of meaning, at the centre of which lies the body of the child and the photographer’s, and viewer’s, response to it.524

Photographs of naked children continued to cause controversy into the twentieth century, now framed by a discourse of paedophilia and child pornography. Over the last century, the practice of making and publishing photographs of naked children has been redefined and problematised. There has been a sea change in how the naked body of a child is perceived. At one time presented as an icon of innocent beauty, the naked child is now framed by a discourse of sexuality. With the rise of the internet and the digital manipulation of images in the 1980s, came the threat of an uncontrolled proliferation of child pornography. It was no longer acceptable for photographers to represent the naked child. Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs of Jesse McBride and Rosie, both made in 1976, generated controversy in America when they were displayed in the travelling retrospective exhibition Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment in 1988.525 In each, a naked child was shown, their genitals exposed. Mapplethorpe’s photographs provoked a similar reaction in Britain. In 1996, the Hayward Gallery in London staged an exhibition of his photographs amidst a storm of media protest. The gallery’s decision to self-censor two images before opening (Rosie and Marty and Hank), after consultation with the Vice Squad, attests to the confusion attached to photographs of children’s naked bodies. A photograph of a little girl’s unselfconscious

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525 The Director of the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) of Cincinatti, Dennis Barrie, was accused of displaying child pornography. The exhibition was organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts in Philadelphia. It received a $30,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The exhibition had been shown at three major art institutions without objection, before the scandal at the CAC. In an obscenity trial lasting less than two weeks, a jury found the CAC and Barrie not guilty.
exposure was equated with an explicit image of adult male sexuality and both were deemed obscene and unsuitable for public display.\textsuperscript{526} In another high-profile incident in April 1990, the studio of San Francisco photographer Jock Sturges was raided by FBI agents who confiscated files, photographs, negatives and photographic equipment. Sturges was accused of producing child pornography. His photographs of naked young girls were interpreted as sexualised and depraved. There have been several cases of female photographers whose decision to photograph their own naked children has led to charges of child exploitation and pornography.\textsuperscript{527} Most notable amongst these is the photographer Sally Mann. Her photographs of her naked children were interpreted as seductive, disturbing and more importantly sexual (Fig. 129).\textsuperscript{528}

Despite this ideological shift in the way that photographs of naked children have been understood, an assessment of Hedges’ photograph, and the way it was used by Shelter, is grounded in its time and not coloured by a retrospective fear of child nudity. The girl’s body, as it appears in Hedges’ photograph, is particularly effective in generating a powerful response in the viewer. The photograph of the girl in the kitchen stands out amongst Shelter’s published images as a peculiarly moving and memorable representation of the homeless child. The photograph’s singular appeal is used to heighten the viewer’s emotional response

\textsuperscript{526} In 1998, a final year student from Birmingham City University attempted to develop photographs taken from the book \textit{Mapplethorpe} (1992) to illustrate an essay on the photographer. The chemist informed the West Midlands Police of the controversial nature of the images. The police subsequently confiscated the library book from the student and informed the university that it would have to be destroyed. The university’s Vice-Chancellor, Dr Peter Knight, defended the right of the university library to hold the book, and denounced the actions of the police as a serious infringement of academic freedom. As a result the Vice-Chancellor was interviewed by the police and faced prosecution under the terms of the Obscene Publications Act. After six months, the Director of Public Prosecutions informed Dr Knight that no action would be taken against him as there was insufficient evidence to support a prosecution. The book was returned to the university library.

\textsuperscript{527} The photographs of Tierney Gearon, Ellen Brooks, Cynthia MacAdams, Starr Ockenaga and Alice Sims have been the subject of similar controversy.

to the shocking details recorded in the text of the report. The photograph functions as a haptic space that interrupts its flow: the viewer is momentarily suspended in a state of sensation defined by touch, temperature and texture. The photograph is notable for its representation of a wide variety of surfaces and materials and their contrasting feel: soft, warm flesh; cold, hard metal; silky, tousled hair; sodden, heavy material; smooth, varnished wood; crumbling, damp plaster; sharp steel corners and crumpled, peeling paper. To look at the photograph is a synesthetic experience that elides sight with touch. The most inviting sensations emanate from the girl’s naked body. The fluid undulations of her form, curvaceous and plump, are described by translucent veils of tone, ranging from brilliant white to deep, rich charcoal. The sensation of smooth skin pressed against skin is distilled along the delicate crevice that delineates thighs and buttocks. The photograph forges a tangible connection between the child’s body, her space and the viewer. The push and pull of the photographic space destabilises the viewer. The image puts into play a set of binary oppositions: attraction and revulsion, closeness and distance, touch and separation. The viewer tries to make sense of this ambivalence and to forge a meaningful way of responding to the child’s body and the space that it occupies.

Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen is somewhat reminiscent of Julia Margaret Cameron’s photographs of children. Cameron’s photograph entitled Divine Love of 1865 (Fig. 130) is characterised by a ‘half-naked, angelic, androgynous child with an abundance of flowing hair, pressed close to the body of the mother...there is an emphasis of skin touching skin...and skin touching fabric’. \(^{529}\) Both the representations of Cameron and Hedges privilege the sense of touch. Both are captivating. Both depend on the contrast of light and dark, and the meeting of the two across the topography of a child’s flesh. Both use heightened

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chiaroscuro and amorphous shadows to accentuate and conceal the child’s form, making it both otherworldly and solidly fleshly at the same time, simultaneously accessible and inaccessible. Both favour profile views of the child’s body in relation to a maternal figure. Both foreground the mother/child relationship.

In her 1998 book *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, Anne Higonnet discusses the ways in which images of children have been used to perpetuate certain constructions of childhood.\(^\text{530}\) Alongside Marilyn R. Brown’s 2002 edited volume *Picturing Children: Constructions of Childhood Between Rousseau and Freud*, Higonnet’s survey contributes to a visual ontology of childhood that includes the romantic child, the innocent child and the knowing child.\(^\text{531}\) These texts are just two of many that explore the notion of childhood as a shifting social and cultural construction, rather than an essentialist state.\(^\text{532}\) Fundamental to this reassessment of childhood is an awareness of its commodification and exploitation by adults: children are constructed in ways which validate, justify and confirm adult identity. Shelter used Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen to suggest one such construction of childhood: that of the innocent child. How is the innocence of this child visualised? How can a metaphysical state be made visible?

In his 1992 book *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*, James R. Kincaid observes that the child’s naked body was particularly effective in confirming a state of innocence: ‘the child’s innocence is figured as shamelessness; like Adam and Eve in the garden, naked and proud of it.’\(^\text{533}\) Higonnet observes that the desirability of the child’s naked

\(^{530}\) Higonnet *op. cit.*


\(^{532}\) Perhaps the most famous survey of childhood as a historical and cultural construction is Philippe Ariès *Centuries of Childhood, A Social History of Family Life* (1962). Other useful texts on the representation and construction of childhood include Hugh Cunningham’s *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (1991), *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (2005) and *The Invention of Childhood* (2006).

\(^{533}\) Kincaid *op. cit.*, p. 223.
body is intrinsic to its innocence. Its attractiveness promotes a desirability rooted in ‘innocence itself as the object of desire’.

The girl in Hedges’ photograph is desirable: seen from behind, she is the object of the viewer’s voyeuristic gaze. The contour of waist and hip, highlighted against her mother’s dark form, is somehow womanly and at odds with a notion of childishness. Her pose recalls the trope of the objectified classical female nude, appropriated by the gaze of the (male) spectator. Hedges’ photograph blends desire and innocence. Echoing a Victorian sensibility, it engenders a ‘photographic passion’ for the innocent body of a child.

Shelter recognised the efficacy of this visualisation of innocence in securing funding. Furthermore, the child’s nakedness acts as a signifier of difference that separates it, in a graphic and unequivocal way, from the realm of the adult. This separation of the homeless child from its family was fundamental to Shelter’s strategy.

The Homeless Child versus the Homeless Family

A narrative of innocence had particular currency for Shelter. In the late 1960s, homelessness was perceived by many as a lifestyle choice. The homeless (those on the streets and living in slums) were seen as the authors, rather than victims, of their circumstances. Homeless families living in unfit housing were believed to be feckless, insolvent and slovenly. This stereotype was particularly applicable to large homeless families with numerous children. A doctor from South West London responded to a Shelter advertisement featuring a photograph of a homeless family by attaching the photograph to a contraceptive and posting it to Des Wilson. Wilson later interpreted this as the doctor’s way ‘of making the point that homeless families with a number of children have only themselves to blame’.

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534 Higonnet *op. cit.*, p. 132.
groups, the large working-class family was pilloried in the national press. Poor housing was presented as a corrupting environment. A *New Statesman* article on the slums of Liverpool published in 1960 observed how ‘where families are constrained to live like cattle, the results include drunkenness, delinquency, prostitution and quite often incest’. A eugenicist discourse suggested that the respectable middle class was threatened by the uncontrolled reproduction of an underclass located in the slums. Shelter engaged with this discourse in an advertisement of 1971 which described the slums as ‘a breeding ground of misery, disease and delinquency’ (my italics).

This antipathy to large working-class families was evident in journals such as *New Society*, which illustrated articles with derisory and unflattering visual representations of the ‘undeserving’ poor. An uncontrolled birth rate was pathologised within the context of the working class: a group that was perceived as having too many children that it was unable to look after. A cartoon illustrating an article entitled ‘Mothers, Fathers and Social Class’ contrasted the cosseted existence of the single middle-class baby with that of the multiple offspring of the working class (Fig. 131). The correlation between large numbers of children and parental neglect was persistent throughout the periodical. A cover article on ‘The Plight of the Large Family’ was illustrated by a drawing of a masculinised and overweight female figure who seemed oblivious to the three children that cowered behind her imposing frame (Fig. 132). Another article, ‘The Low Wage Problem’, conflated the problems of poverty and unplanned pregnancy in its representation of families unable to manage either their finances or fertility. It was illustrated by a drawing of an overweight mother and father with their five children (Fig. 133). In the drawing the family is reduced to a

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538 *This kid can’t wait to get to school*, Shelter advertisement, *New Society*, 14 October 1971, p. 725.
caricature of the feckless poor: obese, unattractive, grubby, defiant and smug. Yet another article entitled ‘A new plan for child poverty’ was headed by an unflattering photograph of a rotund mother surrounded by seven children, presumably hers (Fig. 134). Central to this culture of blame was the unfit, incompetent and fecund mother who had little interest in her numerous progeny. An article entitled ‘Children as scapegoats’ included a scathing description of one such mother:

‘Mrs Clancy is 29, pregnant with her ninth child, and looks extremely shabby and much older than her years. She seems to be of poor intelligence, is quite unable to manage money, of which she has too little, or children, of whom she has too many’.

Des Wilson’s response to the debate surrounding large homeless families was somewhat contradictory. On one hand, he defended the right of individuals to have large families and claimed that a discriminatory housing policy lay at the root of the problem:

‘Because the majority believe that two or three children is a sensible and convenient number, the institutions that serve the majority cater for that size of family...having discriminated against the larger family by not creating housing for it, we then turn on it and say: ‘Well it’s their fault they’re homeless – they had too many children’.

The housing shortage was compounded by the private sector and its reluctance to build larger houses, catering instead for ‘the Sunday colour supplement dream family of the Pill generation – mother, father, boy and girl’. On the other hand, Des Wilson made a clear distinction between the wider family unit and the homeless child, emphasising the guilt of the former and the blamelessness of the latter: ‘Even if one dislikes the parents, can one ignore

542 A comparable caricature of the impoverished working class features in the work of British photographers Nick Waplington (b. 1965) and Richard Billingham (b. 1970).
four or five little individuals whose characters are being formed, or malformed, by the conditions they have been brought into, through no fault of their own?'. He laid the blame firmly at the foot of the parents: ‘Ideally, no one will have more children than they can properly look after, but...the simple fact is that many people are just not bright enough to do what is best for themselves’.

Shelter’s response to this demonisation of the large family was to avoid all photographic representations of it. Hedges’ photographs of large families were not published (Fig. 135). Advertisements and publications were often constructed around textual case studies of families who had numerous children, yet the vast majority of Shelter’s advertising campaigns used photographs of a more acceptable nuclear family unit of two parents and two children. The front cover of a report Notice to Quit featured this (quite literally) ‘model’ family (Fig. 136). Published in September 1968, before Hedges had voiced his concerns over the use of set up photographs, the image is somewhat unconvincing. In an interview, Hedges explained that he had not made the photograph, and commented on the artificial nature of the scene and the well dressed, attractive appearance of the models:

‘If you notice in one of the earlier reports, which I think you’ve seen, it’s blatantly obvious that they’re posed photographs. There’s a rather elegant man and woman sitting on a doorstep, with a piece of brand new luggage which has even got the shop label on it, and it’s blatantly obvious they’ve been chosen from an agency catalogue. They’re sat on the doorstep to pose in an eviction photograph. It’s just ridiculous’.

548 Wilson ‘Think Big’ *op. cit.*, p. 11.
549 That is to say Hedges’ photographs of large families that included both adults and children.
550 *Notice to Quit*, Shelter report, September 1968.
551 The report was reprinted in April 1972.
When large families were photographed, only those images that showed the children were published. In this way, Shelter shifted the attention away from irresponsible and culpable adults, towards the innocent child victims of poor housing. Shelter’s rhetoric established an ideological difference between the guilty homeless adult and the innocent homeless child. This deliberate strategy of separation and difference is evident across Shelter’s campaigns and highlights the way in which the image of the innocent child was used as an acceptable personification of homelessness (Fig. 137). A similar strategy continues to be applied to representations of children in relation to contentious circumstances such as war, famine and genocide. The child repeatedly features as ‘the suffering subject’ in fundraising campaigns.553

In her 1994 article ‘Innocents abroad: Western Fantasies of Childhood and the Iconography of Disaster’, Erica Burman observes how photographs of children function to neutralise and contain blame: ‘images of children reproduce the dynamic of abstracting children from their historical, cultural and political location’.554 In the same way, Shelter used the image of the isolated and abstracted innocent child, distanced from a stigmatized social group, as a highly effective marketing tool.

The Absent Father

One way of making the homeless family more acceptable and appealing was through its reframing as a compromised and vulnerable demographic in the guise of the single-parent family. In Shelter’s reports and advertising campaigns, the homeless family was often represented by photographs of a single parent with children. In the majority of cases, these photographs show a mother with children. In some cases, photographs were edited to

perpetuate a narrative of single parenthood. One photograph in the Hedges Collection shows a mother seated alone next to her sleeping child (Fig. 138). Related contact prints, however, reveals the presence of the father (Fig. 139). It is possible to detect a visual trace of the father in the final print: his cropped arm, hand in pocket, is just visible on the right of the image. Seven final prints of the woman and child were made, none of which feature the father. The photograph was used in an article on the Gorbals, published in the charity’s newspaper Shelter Now alongside an interview with the family, which consisted of John, Mary and three children. Although the father’s voice is included, visually he is absent from the scene. The divergence between text and image is significant. An authentic representation of the family (two parents and three children) is acceptable and necessary in the text: the facts are recorded in a journalistic register and the interview furnishes the reader with a detailed account of who the family are, and how they feel. Shelter’s case is strengthened by a comprehensive and thorough discussion of both the mother and father’s points of view and experiences. The misery of their living conditions is communicated two-fold. The text sticks to the facts of the matter. In contrast, Hedges’ photograph tells a different story, and suggests an alternative narrative. Its currency is not in truth, but in emotion. It functions to extract the maximum possible emotional impact from the scene. The photograph is polysemic in a way that the text is not. It makes meaning independently from the factual circumstances of its production. Its implications are fluid and slippery and prompt a multitude of unanswered questions: Where is the father? How does the woman cope alone? How does she support her child? Is this her only child?

Likewise, Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen leaves the viewer to speculate on the whereabouts of her father and the existence of siblings. An overview of Shelter’s reports and advertisements confirms a predilection for this kind of ambiguous image. In the photograph

555 Shelter Now, April 1971, p. 19.
the sole indicator of a male presence is the pair of shabby underpants that hang conspicuously above the girl’s head on the makeshift washing line. Flaccid, pathetic and overlooked they function as a visual metaphor for their absent owner. This lacuna of male subjects characterises many of the photographs used in Shelter’s publications. In his 1979 article, Hedges commented on how his photographs of men were edited by Shelter.\textsuperscript{556} Moreover, he identified a recurrent stereotype in the photographs that were selected for publication: that of the ‘Resigned father (victim of society)’.\textsuperscript{557} Shelter carefully distanced itself from the visualisation of a powerful male identity. When photographs of men were published, they invariably appear vulnerable, emasculated and impotent. One image that encapsulates this representation shows a hopeless father with his family (Fig. 140).\textsuperscript{558}

Hedges remembered making the photograph:

\begin{quote}
Hedges: Well, this was a very sad family. I felt really sorry for him, because he worked for the council. Mr and Mrs Bell-Smith. This was Liverpool 8 and he worked for the council. They had no running water and they had to cook on that little Belling oven.

Hall: What were the buckets for?

Hedges: For the water. They used to have to fill them up with water from over the road.

Hall: I thought they were for a leaking roof.

Hedges: No, they used to have to walk over the road to get water. It was terrible.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{556} Hedges 1979, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 162.
\textsuperscript{557} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{558} In his article ‘Charity Begins At Home: The Shelter Photographs’, Hedges selected this photograph to illustrate the stereotype ‘Depressed family group (object of pity)’.
Hall: Did they just have this room or a whole house?

Hedges: They had this room and another room, a little tiny room, where the kids went to sleep, I think.

Hall: So the parents slept in this room?

Hedges: Yes.559

Alternatively, men featured in moving and intimate photographs of paternal care, holding children or engaged in childcare (Fig. 141).560 Either way, men were shown in situations that downplayed their identity as a potent and active force. The pronounced absence of an assertive masculinity in Shelter’s campaigns signalled a problematic negotiation of the homeless male figure. This was a deliberate strategy that permitted Shelter to disassociate itself from a wider culture of male aggression that defined parallel campaigns against homelessness in the late 1960s.561

Shelter maternalised the problem of homelessness and perpetuated a notion of domestic space as feminised. The omission of men from images of homeless families shifted the public’s attention to the less confrontational entreaty of women and children. An illustration for an article in *New Society* entitled ‘Homeless? You can’t come here’ showed a vulnerable mother and child being banished by the Welfare Department (Fig. 142).562 The latter was personified by a male figure reminiscent of George Cruikshank’s nineteenth-century anti-Semitic caricatures, perhaps evoking the narrative of the Nativity and Mary’s exclusion from the inn.

559 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 404.
561 A more aggressive and proactive campaign against homelessness emerged with the squatting movement of the late 1960s. This was characterised by direct action and violent confrontations between the squatters, police and government authorities.
The icon of the itinerant mother and child resurfaced in Shelter’s most ubiquitous photograph of homelessness. The photograph was made in 1974 by an unknown photographer and featured Anne Saunders (who was seven months pregnant at the time) and her toddler. It shows her clutching a battered suitcase and pushing a pram along an isolated country lane. In 1988, Shelter’s housing magazine Roof described Anne as ‘a homeless megastar...without doubt, the most famous homeless person in the land. Or rather, her photograph is the most popular image of homelessness in circulation’. The photograph has been deployed in several formats and contexts: on the front cover of a Shelter report on bed and breakfast accommodation, in a billboard campaign under the caption Homelessness is Hell (Fig. 143), in a leaflet publicising a Housing Aid centre in Liverpool (here the figures were cropped from their rural setting and superimposed on a photograph of a Liverpool terraced street), in the 1984 Homeless in Hamilton report (here the image was adjusted to a Scottish setting, with the addition of high rise flats and driving rain) and in publicity material for the 1987 International Year of Shelter. The image is ‘the number one choice...from the thousands of alternative images of homelessness in the Shelter picture library’. Echoing Hedges’ identification of an iconic stereotype in his 1979 article, it is suggested that the reason for this trope’s ubiquity is its representation of ‘an acceptable image of homelessness...a stereotypical Madonna and child without a roof over their heads’.

In The Burden of Representation, Tagg argues that an imbalance of power is intrinsic to the genre of documentary photography: the active male viewer surveys the passive female subject. The camera functions to feminise, subdue and objectify those placed before its lens:

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564 Ibid., p. 3.
565 Ibid., p. 4.
‘Documentary photography traded on the status of the official document as proof and inscribed relations of power in representation...it spoke to those with relative power about those positioned as lacking, as the ‘feminised’ Other, as passive but pathetic objects capable only of offering themselves up to a benevolent, transcendent gaze – the gaze of the camera and the gaze of the paternal state’. 566

In Shelter’s published material, a double emasculation takes place. The ideological feminisation of the homeless instigated by the camera’s gaze is mirrored by a literal feminisation, as men were largely excluded, or effaced, from photographs. Hedges’ photographs thus courted an empowered male gaze, regardless of his intentions. With inequality historically and ideologically embedded in the very act of making a documentary image, his photographs represented the homeless as inherently diminished, the antithesis of a potent masculinity.

Shelter distanced itself from contemporaneous militant groups who were tackling the problem in a different way. These male-dominated groups espoused anarchist beliefs and used direct action and violence as a means of achieving their goals. A precedent was set with the battle between homeless men and the authorities at King Hill Hostel in West Malling in July 1966, five months before Shelter’s formation. 567 Henry Grant’s 1966 photograph of the conflict, entitled Child protester with billboard highlighting evictions at King Hill Hostel, presented an anodyne and appealing snapshot, centred on the innocent child (Fig. 144). 568 On 14 November 1968, The London Squatters Campaign was established when fifteen people

567 The King Hill Hostel action took place between August 1965 and July 1966. This hostel for homeless families was run by Kent County Council who imposed a strict, somewhat antiquated, policy. The primary cause of the uprising was the separation of men from their wives and children: only the latter were allowed to stay at the hostel and the men’s visits were limited and brief. In protest, a group of husbands moved into the hostel and refused to leave. The siege lasted for several months and ended with the council’s defeat and a change in the hostel’s rules. Illegal direct action had proved successful and effective.
568 Henry Grant (1907-2004) was a British freelance photographer. In 1986 his archive of 80,000 photographs was purchased by the Museum of London.
met at the house of its future leader Ron Bailey, who later claimed that its aim was ‘the rehousing of families from hostels or slums by means of squatting’. Whilst recognising Shelter’s achievements, Bailey believed that direct action was the only way forward. Over the next two years the group initiated numerous squatting occupations across the capital. On 18 January 1969, Mrs Maggie O’Shannon and her two children illegally occupied No. 7 Camelford Road in Notting Hill with the help of a splinter group, the Notting Hill Squatters. After six weeks of publicity, Mrs O’Shannon was granted occupation of the property. She was the first person since the 1940s to obtain permanent housing through squatting. A *New Society* article ‘Homing In’ featured a photograph of Mrs O’Shannon by John Walmsley, alongside the caption ‘Mrs Maggie O’Shannon in her newly occupied home’ (Fig. 145). Widely associated with men, here the squatting movement was visualised in terms of a female experience.

This representation of a homeless woman is far removed from that deployed by Shelter. Maggie O’Shannon appears unashamedly confrontational and formidable. She is the antithesis of the frail, vulnerable and abandoned women favoured as subjects for Shelter photographs. Her children are not shown in the photograph. She stands with her hand defiantly on her hip, fingers firmly spread, her other hand territorially planted on the mantelpiece of her hard-won home. Her body blocks entry into the room and transects all four boundaries of the photographic plane. Her presence fills the space, physically and psychologically. She stares directly out at the photographer/viewer, unsmiling and tight-lipped. This woman does not need charity or pity. She challenges the viewer with a look that warns, ‘Don’t mess with me’. The image provides an alternative view of the homeless

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571 The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) which owned the house stated that ‘this kind of forced entry into private property is tantamount to an attempt to jump the housing queue’ (Richard Boston, ‘Homing In’, *New Society*, 6 March 1969, p. 354). It subsequently emerged that the whole of Camelford Road was condemned and there was no intention of using the houses.
572 Boston *op. cit.*, p. 353.
woman’s experience framed by a narrative of self-sufficiency, independence, aggression and direct action. A similar narrative is visualised in an anonymous photographer’s representation of Birmingham women marching in 1966 in protest against their poor housing conditions (Fig. 146). This representation of a militant female agency is notably absent in Hedges’ photographs.

Cases like Mrs O’Shannon’s gained public support and garnered positive press coverage. Squatting was presented as a necessary evil in a spiralling housing crisis. However, in 1969 the tide of public opinion turned, in response to the occupation of No. 144 Piccadilly, a disused but privately owned mansion at Hyde Park Corner in London. On 21 September, less than three weeks after the squat began, the police evicted the squatters. With this incident, squatting became synonymous with violence, drugs and anarchy. Another of Henry Grant’s photographs entitled Squatters Outside the ‘London Street Commune’ No. 144, Piccadilly is the antithesis of his earlier documentation of the King Hill Hostel siege (Fig. 147). In place of the passive child and victimised families, the photograph captures the active trespass of young men, shown entering the property via a makeshift drawbridge intended to keep the police out. Other photographs of the squat similarly represented male rebellion and rarely included women or children. An article in The Times entitled ‘Clear up the law on squatting, MP says’, highlighted the damaging effects of illegal action on the genuine homeless. In the article the Liberal MP for Orpington Mr. Eric Lubbock warned that,

‘…misguided exhibitionism would provoke a backlash against the homeless they pretended to support...The majority of decent, hard-working citizens resent the antics of drop-outs, whose contribution to society is a minus quantity’.

573 The London Street Commune, who orchestrated the occupation of No. 144 Piccadilly in September 1969, was a loosely organised group of predominantly young people, labelled ‘hippies’ by the press.
Des Wilson was equally uncomfortable with any association with the squatting movement, commenting that ‘more direct action could do more harm than good because it could cause anger against the homeless population’. The emergence of the squatting movement conflated homelessness and criminality in the public imagination. Shelter thus separated its campaign from notions of lawlessness by excluding all reference to a powerful male identity. A decade later in 1978, the housing crisis resurfaced as a popular subject for young, socially engaged photographers with the establishment of the HMPW Squatting Project.

Angry Words, Acquiescent Images

Shelter’s response to the somewhat confused picture of homelessness that emerged in the late 1960s was expressed in a carefully considered strategy that achieved certain ends: it negotiated a hostile public response to squatting, it represented the justifiable anger of the homeless and it demanded change and action without alienating a sensitised public. Shelter’s feminisation of the homeless, and by extension the working class, made the issue non-threatening to middle-class donors who were vital to effective fundraising. Moreover, Shelter’s campaign was innovative in its attempt to appeal simultaneously to both a young, radical audience and also to the more conservative tastes of an older middle class. It attempted to tap into a contemporaneous mood of youthful rebellion, embodied by the

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576 Despite Des Wilson’s desire to distance Shelter from the squatting movement, he (along with his successor from 1971, John Willis), persuaded Shelter’s trustees to provide a grant of £5,000 for the establishment of the Family Squatting Advisory Service on 1 December 1970 (see Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 168).
577 The Squatting Project was the HMPW’s first project group. It was formed in response to enquiries from young photographers, looking for some kind of group activity that would develop their own photography, whilst concentrating on socially relevant subject matter. Members of the group included Mike Goldwater, David Hoffman, Ray Morris, Tony Sleep, Dave Walkling and William Wise amongst others. See Ed Barber and Paul Trevor, ‘Inside Squatting’, *Ten.8*, no. 7/8, 1978, pp. 46-49.
578 In the book *From the Centre, Living Through Change in an Industrial Society*, Paul Lewis observes: ‘The campaigns concentrated mainly on images of the young and they were aimed at a prosperous middle class, a class with a conscience as thought to be represented by Guardian readership’ (p. 28).
squatting movement, whilst maintaining its appeal to an established, affluent middle-aged audience. This was achieved through a marketing strategy that depended on aggressive words paired with non-threatening images. Angry and confrontational captions and headlines in Shelter’s advertisements and reports were tempered by a photographic acquiescence. Hedges’ photographs generate meanings that often sit uncomfortably with the textual framework that surrounds them. The anger and discontent of the homeless is diluted in photographs that represent a docile, even complacent, response.

This contradiction was evident in Shelter’s second Christmas campaign of December 1967 entitled ‘House a family for Christmas’. Des Wilson later described this campaign as ‘the turning point’ for the charity in terms of brand identity and media presence.\(^{579}\) Headed by the tagline ‘Christmas? You can stuff it for all we care’, the campaign was devised by the advertising agency Napper, Stinton and Wooley (Fig. 148).\(^{580}\) The employment of this new agency, from June 1967 onwards, introduced an aggressive tone into Shelter’s advertising which soon became its hallmark. In reality, this innovative aggression was not new: the angry taglines and aggressive tone of Shelter’s campaigns had been seen before in the pages of *Picture Post* in the 1930s.\(^{581}\)

Made a year before Hedges joined the charity, the advertisement features a photograph made by an unknown photographer. Despite the aggression of the tagline, the photograph that appears in the advertisement represents a pathetic scene. It shows a family (mother, father and two children) that looks tired, hopeless and powerless. They cower in the doorway of their dilapidated home, hands crossed submissively, feet together and eyes lowered. Safely

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\(^{580}\) Bruce Kenrick, the Director of the Notting Hill Housing Trust which was Shelter’s predecessor, had used the advertising agency Dunkley and Friedlander Ltd. On becoming the Director of Shelter in 1967, Des Wilson replaced this agency with Napper, Stinton and Wooley (the favourite of the four agencies that had been shortlisted) whose creative team was led by Peter Hodson and John Booth. They came up with highly successful ideas which communicated an ‘angry, cutting-edge message’ (Les Burrows’ interview with Des Wilson, 20 March 2009, Shelter archive).

\(^{581}\) For example in the *Picture Post* article ‘Enough of All This!’, *op. cit.*
contained behind the threshold of poverty, the family appears almost fearful of stepping beyond their allocated space. Their expressions are careworn, scared and desperate, but certainly not angry. The advertisement provides no information about the family or its circumstances. The photograph was later republished as a full-page illustration under the heading ‘Families Saved’ in *The Shelter Story* (1969).582 Here identified as the Cook family, the image was contextualised by a detailed account of their plight.583 On joining the charity in 1968 Hedges’ photographs were used in much the same way. In Shelter’s reports and advertising campaigns, his photographs often seem to contradict the written text that frames them. Although undeniably intertwined with the text, they must be understood as far more than mere illustrations. His photographs generate their own, often oppositional, narratives. It is their dislocation from the text that is most revealing. Regarding Barthes’ assertion that ‘the photograph...is in communication with...the text: title, caption or article’, Hedges’ photographs make meaning primarily through their mis-communication with the text.584 An exploration of the divergence between image and text permits a fuller understanding of Shelter’s agenda. The charity’s brand identity came to depend on photographs of passive, disempowered people, the vast majority of whom were women and children. It equally courted the radical fringe in its employment of an anti-establishment rhetoric. In the gap between image and text, in the mis-communication of photograph and word, Shelter constructed a slippery narrative all of its own.

582 *The Shelter Story*, 1969, p. 22.
583 A paragraph under the photograph reads as follows: ‘Mr and Mrs Cook and their five children were packed into one room. They were one of four families living on the third floor of a Glasgow tenement, sharing one toilet and one cold water tap – in the kitchen of one of the families. The parents slept with a seven-year-old boy in one bed, and there were two little children in each of the other beds. The strain was telling, they were getting depressed, and the family broke up to a few weeks. Their need was urgent. The Cook family has now been rehoused. SHELTER sent the money to the Christian Action Glasgow Housing Association and the family now lives in a comfortable flat and is able to call on the advice and help of the housing association’s experienced social worker. Just one of the families for whom SHELTER has brought fresh hope’ (*The Shelter Story*, 1969, p. 22).
What was the response of the press and the public to this strategy? Shelter’s 1966 inaugural campaign was lauded in the World’s Press News, a journal aimed at advertising professionals that covered the latest developments in the field. In a review entitled ‘The charity campaign that could become a classic’ Shelter’s advertising strategy was described as ‘a blueprint for others’. 585 The article described Shelter’s masterful use of the media and its introduction of a distinctive, hard-hitting approach in glowing terms. Shelter’s success was highlighted by way of contrast with the approach of another charity for the homeless that had failed miserably. Launched during the same week as Shelter, ‘Lend a Hand’ was unable to generate any press attention. Its small-scale advertisements, characterised by hand-drawn illustrations, were the antithesis of Shelter’s polished and striking photographic campaigns (Fig. 149). Shelter’s ‘House a family for Christmas’ campaign was the subject of a lengthy article by Colin McGlashan in The Observer who described it as ‘brutally direct’ and noted its difference from the usual Christmas charity appeals:

‘The photograph in the advertisement is raw: poverty without pathos. The headline is blunter still...The campaign is a world and a half away from the conventional tinselly images of the fundraiser’s best season’. 586

He went on to describe Shelter as ‘a current pioneer in the whole charity field’ that represented ‘a new, young, aggressive face of charity’. 587 Des Wilson’s campaign strategy was deemed ‘dramatic and unforgettable’. 588

In defence of Shelter’s shocking advertisements, Wilson stated:

587 Ibid.
‘In the war against poverty we must get out of the charity straightjacket of jumble sales and bazaars and middle-aged ladies in funny hats. Poverty is too desperate and tragic a thing to be left to well-meaning amateurs’.  

An article published in the Evening Standard on 22 July 1969 equally praised the charity’s distinctive approach:

‘It has been rightly said that SHELTER is the current pioneer in the charity field, in the same way as Oxfam was in the late fifties. It indeed represents a new aggressive form of charity, more drawn to protest and stinging attack, than to handing round the collecting box. Thanks to SHELTER’s scathing publicity, the squalid conditions of the hidden homeless are no longer hidden’.

From the outset, Shelter employed avant-garde advertising agencies to create a brand identity that was unique in the charity field at the time. As with Shelter, such agencies were magnets for young, idealistic people who understood the mindset of their peers. They marketed the charity as youthful and rebellious. Cryptic headlines and captions introduced a tone of indignant entitlement into a narrative of homelessness. Shelter’s campaigns were notable for their omission of the word ‘please’. Tongue-in-cheek advertisements seemed to mock the establishment and highlighted the alienation felt by the young (Fig. 150). However, despite the ostensibly anti-establishment ethos of Shelter’s campaigns, the charity was aware of the financial consequences of stepping too far out of line. Certain campaigns were deemed too aggressive, and management minutes record a decision to abandon an early advertisement that was described as ‘too bitter’.

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589 Ibid.
591 Management Meeting minutes, August 1969, Shelter archive.
In contrast to its reactionary advertising campaigns, the charity appeared conservative in its use of tame photographs. Shelter’s anger and aggression was limited to the incendiary taglines of its advertisements, words that did not translate into comparable photographs or actions. Shelter was keen to remain within the law: its response to the squatting wave of the late 1960s was an attempt to legalise it.\footnote{On 1 December 1970, Shelter launched the Family Squatting Advisory Service (Campaign for Legal Squatting). Ron Bailey, the leader of the uprising at No. 144 Piccadilly, was brought on board and made part of the Shelter establishment. Des Wilson made it clear that Shelter was sitting firmly on the fence regarding the spectre of direct action: ‘I should emphasise that Shelter is not underwriting illegal squatting, either financially or with moral backing, although it understands the motivation behind such activity’ (‘Shelter backs campaign for legal squatting’, \textit{The Times}, 20 October 1970, p. 2).} Shelter suffered from an identity crisis: it wanted to cross the line without stepping out of line. It wanted to be young, radical and revolutionary whilst remaining inoffensive and paternalistic. Shelter’s innovative abandonment of child models and its demand for a new authenticity in photographic representations of homelessness cannot be taken at face value. Whilst Shelter did move towards a more realistic representation of the homeless, it was still a long way off from representing an accurate picture of the problem. The defiance of Shelter’s taglines was carefully distanced from the image of a militant working class. Shelter may have given the homeless an angry voice, but they still looked the same: infantilised, feminised, impotent, hopeless and defeated.

\textbf{The Isolated Child and the Uncanny}

Shelter’s extraction of the innocent child from the guilty family suggested another construction of childhood: that of the isolated and abandoned child. The lone child implies an unnatural state, the antithesis of a happy childhood framed by the presence of family and friends. In her 2007 article ‘Narratives of liberation and narratives of innocent suffering: the
Karen Wells discusses how photographs of single children disrupt expectations of a normal childhood:

‘In general, the child alone is a forlorn image. Key themes of the discourse of childhood, including the family as the ideal site of childhood, converge so that the image of the lone child symbolizes abandonment.’

Shelter’s reliance on this trope continued an established pictorial tradition, often allied to charitable concerns, of representing poor children alone or as orphans. Oscar Gustave Rejlander’s iconic image of child homelessness Poor Jo (1860) was exhibited by the Royal Photographic Society and subsequently used in the publicity campaigns of the Shaftesbury Society for more than a century to advertise the conditions of homeless children (Fig. 23).

To a certain extent, Hedges’ photographs for Shelter rework Rejlander’s formula for a successful photograph of a homeless child. Many of them echo Rejlander’s archetypal image of a lone, shabbily-dressed child, framed by dark space. The child is often positioned beneath the elevated gaze of the viewer. It appears isolated and vulnerable. Its smallness is consistently exaggerated by wide-angled views of the spaces that define it. Physically weak, its body is exposed to a pernicious environment.

Such photographs construct a domestic space that is the antithesis of ‘home’. Drawing on the Freudian concept of the uncanny (Das Unheimliche, ‘the opposite of what is familiar’), the photographs represent spaces that are unnerving and dissonant with an accepted cultural understanding of what a home should look and feel like. Freud’s theory stands in opposition to a definition of the homely as ‘intimate, cosily homely; arousing a pleasant feeling of quiet contentment, of comfortable repose and secure protection, like the enclosed, comfortable


This photograph was so successful in generating a response from the public that it is still used by the charity today.
The homely was defined by a feeling of well-being, generated by a safe and secure domestic space. In contrast, the uncanny denoted a sense of insecurity and fear, of strangeness, alienation and entrapment. Freud likened it to the experience of ‘groping around in the dark in an unfamiliar room, searching for the door of the light switch and repeatedly colliding with the same piece of furniture’.

In his 1992 book *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, Anthony Vidler discusses the manifestation of the uncanny in domestic space, providing an historical catalogue of its visual signifiers, which include boarded up windows, concealed spaces, shadows, crumbling and discoloured walls, crooked structures and mysterious staircases. Many of the photographs used by Shelter evoke the uncanny in their representations of dilapidated buildings: they consistently focus on dark interiors, broken or boarded up windows, peeling walls and shadowy, concealed doorways. Hedges’ photographs of slum interiors draw on a repertoire of uncanny motifs in their depiction of uncertain spaces that are disorientating and confusing, both physically and ideologically. Furthermore, the disorientation of such spaces is enhanced by the viewpoint of the camera that often produces exaggerated perspectives and disconcerting spatial effects.

The insertion of the child into such spaces compounds the sinister effect of the photographs. Identifying the child as the original site of anxiety and childhood space as the locus of identity, Freud traces adult anxieties and fears (both conscious and subconscious) to childhood, identifying the factors of ‘solitude, silence and darkness’ as the most frequent causes of fear in infancy. Childhood experiences and memories are assimilated into the psyche, resurfacing as screen memories that repress the initial trauma of an event, whilst

598 Freud [1919], 2003 *op. cit.*, p. 159.
recalling apparently insignificant details.\textsuperscript{599} The photographs used by Shelter evoke these long-forgotten sites of childhood trauma and anxiety. The motif of the doorway as a liminal space within the domestic environment is repeatedly used by Hedges in relation to the figure of the child (Figs. 151, 152, 153, 154 and 155\textsuperscript{600}).

In an interview, Hedges explained his predilection for doorways in purely practical terms,

> ‘We’re sitting here and there are one, two, three doors within about three foot of you. Doorways in a small flat are important. They seem quite significant in terms of space. The thing with kids is that they will hang around doorways quite a lot. They're a sort of space in between aren’t they? Children think, ‘I don't want to come right into the room because then I’ll be involved as well, so I’ll just hang around on the outside’.”\textsuperscript{601}

Although the physical properties of the domestic spaces that Hedges photographed must be acknowledged, it is pertinent to recognise the semiotic effect of this repeated trope in his photographs. Inserted into these non-spaces, children appear somewhat displaced and unsettled as they hover at the margins of unknown rooms, shrouded in darkness. The effect is one of uncertainty, apprehension and foreboding, the antithesis of home as a site of security and stability.\textsuperscript{602} Whilst clearly operating in a different register, the Surrealist photographic

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\textsuperscript{600} Fig. 155 is unusual in that it features a black child. Although Hedges frequently made photographs of non-white families and children, they were rarely published by Shelter. Hedges later observed, ‘A guideline which was employed was ‘try not to include too many immigrants as they will affect the fundraising’ (Hedges 1979, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 164).

\textsuperscript{601} Nick Hedges interview, 15 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 430.

\textsuperscript{602} For further discussion of this trope as a ‘meaningful convention that encodes the nature of the relationship between photographer, subject and audience’, see Didier Aubert’s article ‘The doorstep portrait: intrusion and performance in the mainstream American documentary photography’, \textit{Visual Studies}, vol. 24, no. 1, April 2009, pp. 3-18.
self-portraits of Francesca Woodman equally exploit the uncanny in their representation of the vulnerable body framed, and often subsumed by, menacing domestic space (Fig. 156).  

Hedges’ photograph of Mr Owen and three of his children, made in Liverpool in March 1969, is distinctive in its representation of the uncanny (Fig. 157). It featured in an advertising campaign for the charity later that year (Fig. 158), a newspaper advertisement published in The Times on 28 May 1969 (Fig. 159) and (in a cropped format) on the cover of The Shelter Story in 1969 (Fig. 160). The photograph was also published as a full-page illustration in Des Wilson’s 1970 account of the charity. In The Times advertisement, the chiaroscuro of the original print was heightened, emphasising its harsh tonality. The photograph was juxtaposed with a paragraph that read:

‘SHELTER Case No. 2641. Mr and Mrs O. Liverpool. May 2, 1969. Mother, father, four children. Living in two crumbling rooms above elderly grandmother. Forced to move here by landlord of previous flat who attacked and harassed mother – now suffering from nervous breakdown. No bath. Outside lavatory. The roof leaks, and the walls are damp. Miserably dark – only one tiny skylight. Rent: £3 p.w. Prospects: 13,000 families on council waiting list. No chance for years’.

This kind of photograph references a nineteenth-century pictorial tradition visualised in Doré’s engravings, that represented the poor and the homeless as ‘Other’, existing in a twilight domain, segregated from ‘respectable’ people. Huddled together in their attic room, the Owen family seem to exist outside of space and time. A related contact print reveals the existence of a skylight which has been cropped from the final print (Fig. 161). The

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603 Francesca Woodman (1958-1981) was an American photographer, best known for her black-and-white photographs featuring herself and female models. Between 1975 and 1976 she produced a series of photographs in Providence, Rhode Island, that focused on the representation of the body in domestic space.
605 The Shelter Story, 1969, front cover.
ambiguous spatial structure of the room is emphasised by the strange, almost upturned, perspective of the wooden chair in the lower right-hand corner of the photograph. The room is reminiscent of a medieval dungeon, a place of punishment and confinement, rather than a home. Homelessness has made the family reclusive outcasts. The darkness perhaps implies a sense of shame, particularly discernible in the hunched figure of Mr Owen. The social stigma of homelessness is made visible in the inky shadows caught by Hedges’ camera. At BAHP, the archive record relating to the photograph reveals the extent of the Owen family’s marginalisation:

‘Mr and Mrs O lived with their three children on the first floor of his mother’s condemned house. Mr O was unemployed and had been forced to give up his new council flat in Kirkby because he could not afford the rent. They had lived in rooms, but the landlord had harassed Mrs O and threatened the children physically, so that they moved into his mother’s house. The council withdrew their offer of rehousing Mr O’s mother until Mr O and family moved out of her condemned house’. 608

In an interview Hedges recalled making the photograph:

Hall: What about this photograph? It’s almost all black.

Hedges: Mr Owen. There’s just no light in that room.

Hall: They didn’t have any windows?

Hedges: A skylight.

Hall: Was it a basement?

608 Nick Hedges, Hedges Collection, d/file, MS 2399, BAHP.
Hedges: It was a multi-occupied house and I suspect it was a room made out of a room. It wasn’t a proper room, no.

Hall: So they just had the one room and a shared bathroom or something?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Do you remember where it was?

Hedges: Yes, that’s Liverpool 8 and it’s quite near…What’s the name of the street? It’s not Parliament Street…It might be Hope Street, but it runs towards the new Roman Catholic Cathedral.

Hall: I like it because it shows a man holding a child. Where was the mother?

Hedges: They were separated. He’s bringing those kids up. 609

In this photograph, and others of its kind made by Hedges, darkness operates as a metaphor for social alienation and annihilation. The children in the photograph are literally swallowed up by the darkness that engulfs them. They seem to be in the process of dematerialising. The figure of the girl on the left of the photograph is reduced to a strange collection of disparate shapes and limbs. The blackness of her hair merges with shadow, leaving the white oval of her face to float like a detached mask above the void of her body. At first glance, she appears to have only one leg (on closer inspection it is apparent that her legs are crossed). The darkness of her jacket blends with the blackness of the space, leaving her hands to float disjointed on either side of her body. One hand is concealed by the extended sleeve of a

609 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 403.
jumper, adding to the lopsided strangeness of her body. The bodies of the other children are equally compromised and problematic. The head and hands of the boy in the background are only just discernible behind the figure of the girl. The baby in the foreground of the photograph seems more like a bundle of rags than a child. Its face is distorted by the extreme chiaroscuro that hollows out its eyes to leave two gaping sockets. The bodies of these homeless children are characterised by dislocations and disturbing lacunae. They are not represented as whole children. The shadows seem more substantial than their bodies. Homelessness has reduced the children to malformed phantoms, uprooted and unstable as they struggle to exist at the margins of society. Like the shadowy, anonymous figures in Doré’s engravings, they are suspended in a liminal space of physical and social exclusion.

It is also possible to interpret the darkness in Hedges’ photographs as a signifier of isolation that jars with a construction of a normal childhood. In the photograph each figure is isolated from the next, cocooned in an impermeable chamber of shadow. Despite the ostensible compactness of the family group, at no point does one figure appear to touch another. Shadow settles like heavy soot in the creases and spaces between father and child, brother and sister, to form an impenetrable boundary of blackness. The baby held by his father is delineated by a thick border of darkness that dampens any contact of flesh or clothing. The sense of familial touch and warmth is absent in the photograph.

The sensory isolation of each figure is compounded by a psychological introspection that equally holds the figures apart. Each seems absorbed in their own melancholy thoughts; they do not look at each other and seem oblivious to the presence of others. Initially, the photograph appears to be a composite image, constructed from four individual portraits that have been cut and pasted together, an unconvincing parody of a real family portrait. The image is an assemblage of strangers, collaged together, but remaining disparate and detached. The thick coating of shadow that clings, intangible yet debilitating, to each figure visualises
the psychological and emotional barriers that stifle expression, closeness and love. However, this single photograph is not an accurate representation of the Owen family. Related contact prints provide a visual counterpoint in their representations of different domestic spaces and familial interactions (Figs. 162, 163 and 164). Mrs Owen is reinserted into the family group, as is a pet dog. These photographs show daily family life sustained in spite of poverty and poor housing conditions.

In Susan Sidlauskas’ analysis of John Singer Sargent’s painting The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit (1882) (Fig. 165), dark space equally functions as a concrete presence, as opposed to an absence, which serves to separate and contain each figure in their own ‘spatial envelope’.\textsuperscript{610} It becomes ‘a pictorial shape for loss and dislocation’.\textsuperscript{611} In Sargent’s painting, each daughter remains aloof and isolated, both from each other and the spectator.\textsuperscript{612} Dark space shuts down communication and interaction. Sidlauskas suggests that when it frames the figure of a child, darkness represents psychological detachment and inaccessibility: ‘interiority, privacy, the deepest place inside: not to be found’.\textsuperscript{613} Hedges’ photograph represents a containment of feeling within the family unit and the subsequent alienation of the homeless child within the setting of the broken home. Through its representation of dark space, it visualises the social and psychological effects of homelessness on children, so thoroughly documented by Shelter in their reports. The homeless child was statistically much

\textsuperscript{610} Susan Sidlauskas, \textit{Body, Place and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting}, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 63. Sidlauskas borrows the phrase from Edward Hall, as quoted in Judith Fryer’s \textit{Felicitous Space: The Imaginative Structures of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather}, University of North Carolina Press, 1986. On page forty-nine Fryer writes: ‘Hall believes that each of us has a spatial envelope: an internalization of fixed space learned early in life, a mould into which a great deal of behaviour is cast. Linking space and behaviour, he sees one’s orientation in space as ultimately tied to survival and sanity: to be disoriented in space is to be psychotic’.

\textsuperscript{611} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 77.

\textsuperscript{612} For further discussion of the psychological implications of the representation of domestic space, see Francesca Berry, ‘Inside the Psychologised Interior’, \textit{Oxford Art Journal}, 25, 2, 2002, pp. 156-61.

\textsuperscript{613} Sidlauskas \textit{op. cit.}, p. 64.
more likely to ‘slip through the net’ to become an isolated and alienated outcast of society in both childhood and adulthood.614

Hedges’ photographs for Shelter repeatedly focused on the homeless child located in uncanny spaces as an emotive icon of pity. Shelter’s 1970 report entitled Happy Christmas! used two of Hedges’ photographs on its front and back covers. Much of the photograph on the front cover is black (Fig. 37). The girl’s face emerges from the gloom as if under a spotlight and her large eyes are the focal point of the image. Her expression is ambiguous: is she afraid? The darkness is ominous, perhaps implying the presence of another unseen person in the space? In the published version, the photograph’s contrast is heightened and the ragged, torn style of the title’s typography suggests an ironic and sinister undertone to its festive greeting (Fig. 166). The overriding impression is one of vulnerability: the girl is alone in a dark, shadowy and threatening space. Inside the report, on page eleven, there is a second photograph of the girl (Fig. 167). This time she is shown with her grandmother and a sibling. Seated around a coal fire, they share a physical and emotional closeness, exemplified in the intimate gesture of the baby who grasps the girl’s leg. Two further images of the girl, existing at BAHP as contact prints, likewise reveal the presence of the girl’s grandmother behind her (Figs. 168 and 169). The girl is not abandoned, isolated or fearful, as suggested by the report’s cover. Hedges recalled how the original contact prints were underexposed in order to blacken out the background of the photograph (as requested by Ian Mattingly, Shelter’s graphic designer) in order to create a blank space in which to insert the report’s title.615

The back cover of the report features a photograph of another young girl who holds her hands up to her face in an anxious gesture (Fig. 170). Positioned between two doorways, she is pushed up against a crumbling and exposed brick wall. The unknown spaces that lie beyond

614 Shelter’s reports and campaigns foregrounded the detrimental and long-term effects of homelessness on children. These included ill health, neglect, abuse, educational failure, criminality and psychological trauma.

the doorways are shrouded in shadow. In 1971, the photograph was republished both as a newspaper advertisement (Fig. 38) and a poster (Fig. 171) to publicise Shelter Week. In the former, the photograph is framed by a narrative that identifies this kind of space as hell: ‘This kid can’t wait to get to school…because home is nothing but hell’. The accompanying text describes the girl’s home as ‘a breeding ground of misery, disease and delinquency’. Published several times in different formats, Hedges’ photograph was evidently considered successful in conveying the horrific domestic spaces that some children occupied. In the image the damp and decay of the brick wall converges with the girl’s body and threatens to seep across the boundary of flesh that separates them. As if by osmosis, the thin membrane of the child’s skin becomes permeable to the erosive conditions of squalid domestic space.

In many of Hedges’ photographs, children’s bodies seem to absorb the domestic space that surrounds them. The photographs suggest bodily contamination. A fear of disease dominated much of Shelter’s discussion of homeless children in case studies and advertisements. Photographically, this preoccupation is conveyed by images of children’s bodies that suggest dirt or pathology. Shelter’s 1971 *Condemned* report included an arresting photograph of a child’s damaged body (Fig. 172). The graphic representation of the sudden exposure of the boy’s scar is shocking, as is his stunned expression. The accompanying case study provided an account of how the boy had been injured, whilst playing in a derelict house:

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616 Shelter Weeks were a means of publicising the charity’s work, raising awareness of homelessness and fundraising. The first one took place in 1968. By the autumn of 1968, Shelter had organised nearly 200 support groups and many of these played a major part by organising local Shelter Week activities. As time passed, the role of Shelter groups diminished, partly because of the decreased need to fundraise for direct housing subsidies via Housing Associations (because Shelter's campaign won a far better government funding base), partly because Shelter's move to the provision of Housing Aid work was more difficult to raise money for and partly because involvement in local groups was less attractive to supporters. There was also the administrative issue. The campaign became more centralised and the mid-1970s were tough financially. The role of groups also became more problematic strategically. The number of Shelter groups gradually reduced until only a handful remained by the late 1980s and early 1990s, when they were formally dissolved. Shelter Weeks continued until then, but they too lost significance, as Shelter's central fundraising became increasingly comprehensive and substantial over time (Les Burrows, personal e-mail to author, 22 February 2015).
‘Sybil had her five-year-old son Andrew with her: ‘It happened a week on Saturday. He fell on a nail, and the cut was no bigger than a spot. You’d have thought it was only in need of a bit of plaster, but they had to operate on it because it damaged his liver. Punctured it. That’s why they had to cut him like that. I’d reported the house it happened in five weeks previously, because my nephew, who’s also five years old, fell through the floor’. 617

A narrative of physical harm equally framed Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen. The brief text opposite the photograph makes five references to ill health, all caused by poor housing: ‘Gastro-enteritis...chronic chest troubles...wheezing ...coughing...chronic bronchitis’. 618 This narrative of illness is conflated with the graphic language used to describe the slum home, suggesting unpleasant and invasive physical sensations: ‘stagnant filth and stink...flea-ridden...rotting green pool...invaded...rotting...black damp patch...contracted’. 619 It is possible to transpose the decay of domestic space onto the body of the child through a linguistic slippage: ‘filth, stink, rotting, green, rotting, black’. 620 The words evoke a progressive putrefaction of flesh as the physical disintegration is chronicled in its olfactory and chromatic stages.

The material decay of the slum is elided with that of the child’s body. Hedges’ photograph of the latter functions to visualise the creeping threat of physical decomposition and makes a viral, air-borne contagion visible. The marmoreal beauty of the girl’s flesh disintegrates at the boundary between body and slum room. There are moments of indistinct exchange between flesh and environment where her body merges with the festering space that surrounds it. The tousled texture of her hair blends with the fractured plaster surface behind it. The bleached

617 Condemned, Shelter report, September 1971, p. 55.
618 Face the Facts, Shelter report, September 1969, p. 45.
619 Ibid.
620 Ibid.
The whiteness of her right arm is indivisible from the ceramic surface of the cooker. The shadowy darkness of her left arm coalesces with the black dampness of the peeling wall. The outline of the child’s form thus evaporates, leaving her exposed to infection. The heightened and pronounced shading that plays across her flesh suggests discoloration and contamination. The blotchy and speckled tones of her back, contrasted with adjacent areas of whiteness, appropriate the text’s suggestion of decomposing flesh. The girl’s body is further pathologised and medicalised through the photograph’s evocation of an x-ray. In this context, Hedges’ photograph exposes a hidden and insidious decay.

A similar narrative of decay is found in Steve Edwards’ 1984 article ‘Disastrous Documents’.621 Examining documentary photographs of the working class in the 1930s, Edwards analyses the photographic representation of the ‘dirty’ and ‘decaying’ North in contrast to the ‘clean, managed and efficient order’ of the South.622 His discussion focuses on the way in which the ‘contaminated body’ of the worker functions as an index of decay, substituted metonymically for the industrial North.623 His analysis of a photograph entitled Slum Dwellers Home: One of the Rat Holes (originally published in Wal Hannington’s The Problem of The Distressed Areas of 1937)624, is particularly pertinent to an interpretation of Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen.

Edwards’ describes the image thus:

‘The ‘slum dweller’ stoops to indicate the rat hole, a dark cavity surrounded by mould...He stretches out his index finger until it is almost in contact with the offending chasm, from which it appears that the very ‘filth’ that is associated with the

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622 Ibid., p. 12.
623 Ibid., p. 16.
rodent, seeps up the finger, into the pores of the hand, and on up the arm, connecting and contaminating the body with the vermin that resides there’ (my italics).  

Edwards’ proceeds to suggest that this slippage between environment and body characterised documentary photographs of the North in the 1930s: ‘the bodies of the Northern inhabitants became implicated in the disease and congestion of the North, the children with the rubbish they played amongst, the residents with their slum dwellings’. The physical decay and poverty of the North was expressed photographically in the decay of the human body, which further functioned as a metaphor for the wider decay of the social body. Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen forges the same connections between environment, human and social body in the late 1960s. Within the context of the slum, the girl embodies homelessness, dirt, poverty, disease and social unrest.

Shelter used the representation of the child’s contaminated and damaged body to reconfigure homelessness as a wider social problem. Continuing in the vein of Picture Post and the Mass Observation movement, Shelter’s publications used photographs, especially those of children’s bodies, to suggest an underlying degeneration of the social body, and the proliferation of a potentially hostile and debased underclass. A similar narrative frames Philipp Osten’s 2010 article, ‘Photographing Disabled Children in Imperial and Weimar Germany’, which discusses the way in which early twentieth-century photographs of children’s compromised bodies operated within a discourse of degeneracy and deprivation. Physical conditions caused by poverty and malnutrition, such as rickets and tuberculosis, ‘beset both children’s bodies and the social body of the nation’.  

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625 Ibid.  
626 Ibid.  
628 Ibid., p. 523.
photographs of the naked bodies of disabled children were used ‘as metaphors visualising the fear of national degeneration’.  

In the 1930s, the contaminated and pathologised body of the child was further contrasted with its healthy counterpart in a cultural discourse that conflated the health of children’s bodies with that of the nation. A retrospective review of the 1936 National Baby Week Exhibition was subtitled ‘Two hundred ideally healthy children’. Photographs were selected for their ability to show the public ‘how a healthy child ought to look at given ages’. The exhibition was given royal approval and photographs of Princess Elizabeth, Princess Margaret Rose and Prince Edward were included as examples of healthy specimens. A panel of judges selected 200 of the 400 photographs of children under five years old. Those chosen were then screened by a further panel of doctors who judged the images on medical criteria. Many of the photographs showed naked children.

It is interesting to compare Hedges’ photograph of the girl in the kitchen with that used for the exhibition’s publicity poster (Fig. 173). Made in 1936 by Paul Shillabeer, Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society, the photograph featured his daughter, four-year-old Joanna Shillabeer. Both photographs show a young girl’s naked body, viewed from behind. Despite the different settings (a bucolic idyll contrasted with an urban slum), each represents the child’s body as a ‘fantasy object’, onto which different meanings and associations are

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629 A public exhibition on cripple care was held in the lobby of the upper house of the Prussian parliament in 1919. Photographs of disabled children from the Oskar-Helene Home featured in this exhibition. The photographs showed naked children, suffering from rickets and tuberculosis. The underlying motive of the exhibition was to show the way that children were damaged by the deprivations of the First World War. The Versailles Treaty was held to account for damaging the health of these children (Osten, op. cit., p. 524).

630 ‘National Baby Week Exhibition 1936’ review, Record, Institute of British Photographers, Vol. XXX, Number 4, April 1951, pp. 44-51.

631 Ibid., p. 44.

632 The children’s bodies were assessed as indices of health, as indicated by: ‘Well-balanced development of the frame; no bent knees or in-turned ankles. Firm posture; no hint of spinal curvature. Head well supported; fine forehead. Well-developed mouth, showing the right number of teeth for the age of the child. Well-formed eyebrows and well-developed hair. Alert expression’ (Ibid.)
projected. In one, the child’s body is a symbol of good health surrounded by fresh air, green fields and sunshine. In the other, it becomes an unstable and threatened site, framed by decay, disease and dampness. Both, however, use the child’s naked body as an appealing emblem of nationhood: a *tabula rasa* that can be adapted to suit the specific ideologies of both patron and audience alike.

**An Incomplete Picture**

In the Hedges Collection at the Library of Birmingham there are eleven final prints that feature the girl in the kitchen and her family. They are not arranged in any discernible order and are scattered across the six archive boxes in which the collection is stored. The family also appear in twenty-three related contact prints: photographs-in-waiting, uncatalogued and disconnected from the official collection. The majority of the contact prints were never converted into final images, either by Hedges or Shelter, and effectively remain the private property of the photographer. In the context of these related images, it is possible to insert the single image of the girl in the kitchen into a sequence which clarifies its meanings. The photographic moments prior to, and following, its making are brought into view, albeit partially. Although it is unclear whether all the photographs were made in the same room (the Belfast sink does not appear in the published photograph), the published image shows the end of a prolonged interaction between mother, child and photographer, during which the child has been washed in a Belfast sink and then lifted onto a chair to be dried. This narrative framework explains the unstable and elevated position of the girl as she appears in the published photograph.

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633 In her article ‘Cupid’s Pencil of Light: Julia Margaret Cameron and the Maternalization of Photography’, *October*, vol. 76, Spring 1996, Carol Armstrong describes the body of the naked child as a ‘fantasy object on which the evidence of the means of photographic production is displayed’ (p. 126). Here, I have adapted the metaphor to my own ends.
Five contact prints (Figs. 174-178) and two final prints (Figs. 179 and 180) relate to the published image. One contact print in particular introduces a tone of tenderness and dignity into the tale of the girl in the kitchen (Fig. 178). The girl acknowledges the presence of Hedges and smiles shyly at the camera. In turn, the woman smiles at her and grasps her hands protectively, steadying her on the chair on which stands. A circuitous gaze links the woman, child and photographer/viewer in a reciprocal exchange of seeing and being seen. The space of the kitchen expands as the photographer crosses the threshold and enters the room. The viewer becomes part of the scene, as opposed to a voyeur. A subtle, yet noticeable, difference in the exposure of the contact print makes the space appear lighter and reduces the range of contrast, resulting in softened shadows and an airier feel to the room. A shift in the angle of the camera, repositioned slightly higher and to the left, reveals the kitchen floor and elucidates its spatial structure. The child’s feet are brought into view, firmly planted on the seat of the chair. Many of the implications of the published photograph are thus called into question by the contact print. The room seems less cramped and threatening. The child, although still naked, does not appear as exposed or vulnerable, and much of her form is concealed by shadow. The interaction between the woman and the child suggests a positive relationship of love and support.

A survey of the eleven photographs and twenty-three contact prints that Hedges made of the girl and her family reveal the components of the girl’s home life. She is one of six children with a mother and a father. Her house, although basic, is not dirty or unkempt and consists of more than one room. Photographs of the girl’s family en masse only appear in the contact prints, reflecting Shelter’s strategy of avoiding representations of the extended homeless family. The narrative of the girl in the kitchen is brought to a happy conclusion in contact prints that show her in a new home in Peterborough (Fig. 181). These later photographs, and the follow-up report on the Rump family’s progress, were never published by Shelter. The
family is photographed in the doorway of their new home, yet somehow even now they do not quite seem to fit the space: literally, in their cramped arrangement, and experientially, in their negotiation of a new way of living. They seem to pose at the threshold of someone else’s house.

Another contact print shows the family arranged in domestic space in the tradition of a group portrait (Fig. 182). Everyone is smiling. There is a clear familiarity between Hedges and the sitters. The children are arranged in order of height in accordance with the conventions of portrait photography. Although informal, the image invokes the practice of surveillance photography. Its resonance with Lewis Hine’s portrait of the Doffer Family, made in Georgia in 1909, suggests a similar dynamic of observer and observed (Fig. 183). In her book *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social documentary photography in America 1890-1950*, Maren Stange analyses Hine’s photograph in Foucauldian terms as an image of detached, almost scientific, scrutiny. The photograph’s format (dependent on a strict frontality and vertical arrangement) presents the family as a scientific specimen to be ordered, investigated and displayed. The photograph shows the family as an ‘object of information’ rather than as a ‘subject of communication’. A similar analysis could be applied to Hedges’ seemingly impromptu photograph of the girl’s family in their living room. The family’s rehabilitation from slum dwellers to well-adjusted citizens is ethnographically documented and archived. Shelter’s intervention is repackaged as an example of restorative social engineering.

Another contact print shows the girl and two of her siblings in a comfortable interior, smiling and grouped closely together in front of a glowing fire (Fig. 184). The children are wearing new clothes and appear tidy and clean. The girl is shown playing dress up in a nurse’s uniform. This suggests one of many futures now open to her as a result of her new

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surroundings, and implies a reinstated educational aspiration and potential success. These later images function as the ‘after’ to the ‘before’ of the published photograph. As in Dr Barnardo’s photographs of transformed street urchins, the children are dressed up to play the part and assume a new identity, contingent on the new domestic space that defines them. Framed by unfamiliar space, they appear somewhat uneasy, despite the congeniality of their surroundings: their poses are rigid and controlled, their bodies are carefully positioned and their hands are neatly held motionless on laps or hidden behind backs. Smiles are somewhat forced, with lips held tightly together. The photographs follow the conventions of middle-class studio portraiture in which sitters are carefully posed and presented to suggest aspiration, affluence and success. There is a sense that the family do not quite know how to behave or move in this new domestic space and the photographs are permeated with this uncertainty. Such images reveal a different moment in the girl’s life, but are no less constructed or conventionalised than the published photograph.

The journey from a single published image, through the final prints of the Hedges Collection, to the unseen images of the negatives and contact prints reveals a variety of constructions of the girl in the kitchen, some public and some private. In John Berger’s 1978 essay ‘Ways of Remembering’, he discusses the gap that exists between private and public photographs,\(^635\) predicated on the decontextualisation of the private moment in its transformation into a public image. He describes this transplantation as a ‘violence that destroys meaning’.\(^636\) By separating the image from its context, its original meaning is emptied out. The success of the girl’s photograph as a public image, published as part of a Shelter report, depends on this erasure. Berger suggests that the public image is seen in a unilinear way: it is ‘used tautologically, so that the photograph merely repeats what is being said in words’.\(^637\) In

\(^{636}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 44.
\(^{637}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 46.
contrast, he suggests that a photograph must be perceived ‘radially’ if its authenticity is to be preserved. Like a memory, it must be understood in relation to the ‘enormous number of associations’ that shaped it. Hedges’ negatives and contact prints permit an alternative way of remembering the girl by allowing the viewer to reinsert her published image into a radial narrative. A single decontextualised moment, published as a public image, now becomes one of many experienced over time, its interpretation contingent on a past and a future.

Conclusion

Several concluding observations can be made about the nature of Hedges’ photographs and the way they were deployed in Shelter’s campaigns. Firstly, it is apparent that Shelter introduced a new way of visualising the problem of homelessness in Britain in the late 1960s through its use of photographs that were unsentimental and shocking in their exposure of slum conditions. An overview of Shelter’s campaign strategy, and the way that Hedges’ photographs functioned within it, reveals the centrality of the photographic image to a public perception of homelessness in the 1960s and 1970s. Although his photographs were not completely candid (Hedges altered the lighting in some rooms, experimented with the exposure of negatives to achieve desired effects and chose viewpoints that emphasised the deprivation of slum rooms), they did achieve a new authenticity in their representation of unidealised homeless children and unfit domestic spaces. For the first time in the history of socially engaged photography, actual homeless children photographed in their own homes became the subject of advertising campaigns. In this respect, Shelter’s approach was innovative. However, this innovation must be measured against the charity’s reliance on a

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638 Ibid.
somewhat traditional, even retrograde, representation of the homeless child. Paradoxically, Shelter’s strategy was simultaneously groundbreaking and clichéd.

Secondly, Shelter’s campaigns placed homelessness at the centre of Britain’s political agenda in the late 1960s. It adopted a unique strategy that positioned child homelessness within a wider network of social policy debates and legislative reforms: homelessness was no longer presented as an isolated symptom of poverty but as a fundamental issue that affected all aspects of children’s lives. Referencing government papers on the family, education and delinquency, Shelter’s reports highlighted how homelessness damaged society in general, and children in particular.

Thirdly, the radicalism and aggression of Shelter’s campaigns, albeit limited to captions and taglines, signalled a commitment to change that tapped into the revolutionary climate of the late 1960s. Regrettably, this radicalism did not extend to the way that the homeless were photographed.

Fourthly, Shelter was the first homeless charity to use photographs paired with case studies and direct quotations from the homeless themselves in their reports. Hedges’ photographs gave children without a home an identity and Shelter’s campaign strategy gave them a voice. Whether this was their own identity and their own voice is questionable.

Finally, Shelter’s reliance on photographs of children served to infantilise a universal condition: homelessness was embodied by the motif of the suffering child. The child’s body functioned as a blank screen onto which a variety of meanings and associations could be projected, including those of innocence, victimhood, vulnerability, anxiety and contamination.
Retrospectively, it is clear that Shelter’s campaign strategy, predicated on powerful advertisements featuring Hedges’ photographs, was groundbreaking. Its immediate impact, built on the furore generated by *Cathy Come Home*, was followed up with impressive fundraising statistics: it raised £50,000 in its first month and £125,000 in its first six months. A comparable financial success followed in subsequent years. Although Shelter’s advertisements were published in *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *New Society* (publications that were predominantly aimed at a middle-class readership) its target audience was not limited to a specific demographic or class and it garnered loyal support from a broad spectrum of the population. Shelter’s success depended on Hedges’ photographs, framed by innovative advertisements: between 1968 and 1972 (the period of Hedges’ contract) the charity was at its zenith. Acknowledging the effectiveness of early campaigns from 1966 onwards (predicated on the juxtaposition of documentary photographs with arresting texts), Hedges’ photographs continued in the same vein. From 1968, Shelter’s campaigns and reports, constructed around Hedges’ photographs, generated an unprecedented level of funding and media attention. The four Shelter reports that featured

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639 Gavin *op. cit.*
642 By May 1967, Shelter was halfway towards reaching its 1967 fundraising target of £250,000. By September 1967, more than £150,000 had been raised. By November 1967, more than £200,000 had been raised. During its first financial year (1 December 1966 to 31 January 1968) Shelter’s fundraising target was £270,000 and £373,041 was raised. During its second financial year (1 February 1968 to 31 January 1969) the target was £600,000 and over £700,000 was raised. During its third financial year (1 February 1969 to 31 January 1970) the target was £800,000 and this was exceeded. In April 1970, it was announced that Shelter had raised over one million pounds for the homeless in 1969 (the first year that this had been achieved) and that in the three years since its launch, Shelter had raised over two million pounds (Les Burrows, *Shelter Fundraising History*, Shelter archive).
643 Fundraising initiatives such as Shelter Weeks, Shelter Walks, Shelter Rallies, jumble sales, Shelter’s Halfpenny Appeal and the Shelter Tycoon competition were embraced by all ages and all walks of society through local Shelter groups, churches, hospitals, youth groups and schools (Les Burrows, personal e-mail to author, 14 December 2014 and Les Burrows’, *Shelter Fundraising History*, Shelter archive).
644 From 1968, the combination of Hedges’ photographs and a cutting-edge advertising strategy (introduced by the agency Napper, Stinton and Wooley) resulted in Shelter’s most successful advertising campaigns. Hedges’ close collaboration with the graphic designer Ian Mattingly also proved extremely fruitful.
Hedges’ photographs (Notice To Quit, 1968; Face the Facts, Who Are the Homeless?, 1969; Happy Christmas!, 1970 and Condemned, 1971) were the most successful ever published by the charity.

When Hedges left the charity in 1972, Shelter’s reports and campaigns became notably weaker, both visually and conceptually. The compelling single image format of Hedges’ era was replaced, either by a purely textual format (Fig. 185), or one composed of multiple images by unknown photographers pulled from the Shelter picture library (Fig. 186). Hedges’ departure coincided with the employment of the advertising agency McCann Erickson, which was unable to replicate the cutting-edge campaigns of their predecessors, Napper, Stinton and Wooley. Weaker photographs, coupled with a lacklustre advertising strategy, resulted in less arresting campaigns.

In an interview, Shelter’s Housing Director David Bebb commented on this decline:

‘There was a change between Nick Hedges’ representation of children and that of McCann Erickson. Everything changed because Hedges’ photographs were really strong. After Hedges, publicity went out of house to McCann Erickson, but it wasn’t the same’.

Moreover, the charity’s decision to employ freelancers, as opposed to a full-time in-house photographer (evidently not considered cost effective), after Hedges’ departure, inevitably

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646 Notice to Quit, op. cit.
647 Face the Facts, Who Are the Homeless? op. cit.
649 Condemned, op. cit.
650 This shift in aesthetic may have been in response to a leftist photographic practice, emerging in the 1970s, which rejected the single image photograph as an adequate means of explaining social problems.
651 After 1972, photographers who worked on later campaigns included George Marshman, Ron Bailey and Stuart McPherson. On occasion, earlier photographs by Nick Hedges would also be appropriated (Les Burrows, Shelter Reports History Summarised, Shelter archive).
652 David Bebb worked at Shelter between 1971 and 1973. Initially, he was the Housing Officer and Secretary to the trustees. Later he became the Housing Director. His main role was to administer Shelter’s support to specific Housing Associations (Les Burrows, personal e-mail to author, 14 December 2014).
weakened the bond between photographer and subject. After 1972 it became problematic for Shelter photographers to nurture any kind of meaningful or sustained relationship with the homeless people who featured in their photographs.654

An overview of Shelter’s deployment of Hedges’ photographs reveals how advertisements and reports presented an edited and highly constructed image of the homeless. Text and image worked together to construct narratives that altered the meaning of individual photographs. Despite a textual framework that often implied anger and demanded change, photographs represented the homeless as anodyne and hopeless. Images that showed the homeless in a more positive and empowered light were simply not published. Embedded in case studies of dire poverty and despair Hedges’ photographs accrued associations that did not exist at the moment of their making. Spence’s 1976 attack on Hedges’ integrity was a response to how his photographs appeared in Shelter’s reports and advertisements. Unaware of other, less stereotyped images (the majority of which remained as negatives and contact prints), Spence’s verdict was unfounded and inaccurate.

Whatever Spence’s moral concerns surrounding the production of the Shelter photographs, their legacy is the thousands of homeless people’s lives that were transformed as a result of them. The homeless children that featured in Hedges’ photographs were given the chance of a better future as a result of Shelter’s campaigns. Many of them, although later interpreted as ‘forlorn victims’ by Hedges, were able to become something different because of his photographs. When viewed as part of this bigger picture, the ethical dilemma that faced Hedges in making the Shelter photographs seems somewhat peripheral and perhaps even irrelevant: ultimately, the ends justified the means.

654 Hedges expressed his opposition to this decision in a letter that he wrote to Shelter’s management in 1972. He explained the importance of fostering relationships with the homeless, and suggested that freelance photographers simply could not nurture this kind of relationship (Nick Hedges’ Letter to Management Committee, Management Meeting minutes, Shelter archive). Nick Hedges interview, 15 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 436.
Chapter Three: ‘Archives tell life stories, but only partially. Absences and gaps cannot be explained and we can make no sense of silences’ 655; A Photographic Archive

Introduction

At the time of writing, the photographs that Nick Hedges made for Shelter between 1968 and 1972 are deposited at BAHP in the Library of Birmingham, alongside other renowned photographic collections.656 Hedges donated the series of 980 photographs to the library in 2001. This chapter examines how Hedges’ photographs are understood and re-presented within the wider context of the archive, and to what extent the issues raised in chapters one and two of the thesis impact on a contemporary engagement with them.

Alongside the photographs, Hedges attached a set of terms and conditions pertaining to the collection:657

1. Nick Hedges is donating this archive set of approximately 980 prints to Birmingham Central Library on the basis that the series will remain intact and not be broken up. It is requested that the series will remain in the public domain, and be made accessible (free of charge) for viewing to any member of the general public, to the academic and photographic community, and to any other body that the library deems fit.

2. The set of archive prints is the first part of the Shelter collection. It will be followed by the entire film negative stock (of Nick Hedges) with supporting contact prints and other supporting documentary material. This will be donated to the Birmingham

656 Notable amongst these are the Exit Photography Group Collection, the Paul Hill Collection, the John Myers Collection, the Benjamin Stone Collection, the Warwickshire Photographic Survey Collection, the Birmingham Portrait Collection, and the Modern Photographic Collections.
657 Nick Hedges, Terms and Conditions, 14 August 2001, Hedges Collection, d/file, MS 2399, BAHP.
Central Library as soon as Nick Hedges has finished using the negatives, or upon his death.

3. The anonymity of the individuals portrayed in the photographs should be protected.

4. Birmingham Central Library will be able to use the photographic materials for non-commercial purposes in whatever way it sees fit. The photographer would however like to be advised or consulted about this in his lifetime.

5. If the library is approached (or decides itself) to use the material for commercial, and or, publication purposes, and the library judges the request to be appropriate, the library should negotiate an appropriate fee. During his lifetime the photographer would expect to receive 50% of any income after costs. Upon his death this income should be divided equally between his two daughters, Ruth and Annie Hedges.

6. The photographer is happy to assist in providing any further documentary or historical information that the library considers useful.

7. Any use of the material by the library or other organisations should be accompanied by due acknowledgement to both Shelter and the photographer.

Hedges’ terms and conditions focus on the way in which the photographs are to be accessed and used, once deposited in the archive. There is an expectation on the part of the photographer that his photographs will be seen, reproduced, circulated and displayed, by both the library and the public. His terms and conditions impose certain limits on, and restrictions to, this use. The archive is presented as a space of interaction, consultation, interrogation and dissemination in which the photographer intends his work to play an important, albeit regulated, part. The terms and conditions of his bequest to the Library of Birmingham suggest that Hedges intended that his photographs be seen free of charge by anyone who so desires.

Hedges explained his reasons for choosing to deposit the photographs in a public library:
'The reason I gave the Shelter archive to Peter James at Birmingham was that I felt it should remain in the public domain. I did it at that time because of my health. I just wanted to make sure it was done and sorted out before I had a major operation. I knew Pete from having worked with him, and I respected his attitude towards photographs. It was not a matter of passing the archive onto the highest bidder, it was a matter of just simply saying, ‘Look, these people, the people I photographed, they own the photographs as well, they should be in the public domain, it’s their history’.

Chapters one and two of the thesis analyse Hedges’ photographs of homeless children as far from straightforward historical documents. In the terms and conditions, Hedges’ description of the photographs as a representation of the ‘history’ of the homeless, housed in an official archive, perhaps belies this complexity. Chapter three explores how the act of depositing the photographs in the archive not only shapes their meaning, but also functions to efface the constructed nature of the photographs and to silence debates regarding Hedges’ representation of the homeless, raised by leftist critics in the 1970s.

At the outset, it is pertinent to say something about the distinctive nature of the archive in which Hedges chose to deposit his photographic collection. BAHP is funded by Birmingham City Council and is a fusion of Birmingham City Archives and the former Local Studies and History Service. Located on the fourth floor of the new Library of Birmingham, it houses a diverse range of collections that relate to the city of Birmingham and its history (Fig. 187). BAHP ‘collects and preserves both original and printed records of historical significance relating to the city of Birmingham, its people, businesses, institutions and societies dating from the 12th to the 21st century’. Collections are ‘sorted, catalogued and indexed to make them available for public research’ and include ‘religious records, letters, diaries, title deeds,
estate papers, manorial records, council records, legal papers, maps, plans, photographs and oral history recordings’. Many of the archives are now electronically catalogued and can be accessed online. The Library of Birmingham is distinctive amongst UK public libraries for a number of reasons, above and beyond the depth and range of its collections. It is unusual in that it houses an archive within a public library. This unique status was recognised by the council of Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA), who awarded six of the library’s collections ‘designated status’, in recognition of their ‘national and international significance’ as library and archive collections.

The photography collection is one of these. BAHP houses over two million photographs and uniquely constitutes the only national collection of photography deposited in a local public library. In contrast to the museum and art gallery, the library or archive is not a natural site of display. This difference is reflected in the scholarship that surrounds the theory of display. Whilst little has been written about display policy in archives, a rich body of literature focuses on this aspect of Museum and Gallery Studies. Whilst Hedges could have deposited his photographs at a range of other institutions (the Shelter images are also part of the collections of NMM and the V&A), his decision to donate them to BAHP was not

661 Although many of the BAHP collections are now electronically catalogued, in the majority of cases it is only the catalogues that are available online. The majority of individual photographs and documents are only accessible by BAHP staff and can be viewed by private appointment only.
662 The Library of Birmingham is perhaps comparable to The Wellcome Institute in its incorporation of academic research, diverse archival collections, public engagement initiatives and exhibition spaces within one institution.
663 These collections are the Photography Collection, Early Print Collection, Fine Print Collection, Literature Collection, Birmingham Collection and the Music Collection, [http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/designatedcollections](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/designatedcollections), accessed 15 July 2015.
664 From 2005 the Designation Scheme was expanded to include archives and libraries as well as museums. Nationally thirty-eight collections were designated in twenty-eight institutions, which included only two other public libraries (Bristol and Westminster) who were designated for just one collection each. In May 2012, the MLA was abolished and its functions were transferred to the Arts Council England and the National Archives.
arbitrary. Attracted by the distinctive nature and ethos of the archive, Hedges’ association with the Head of Photography, Peter James, also contributed to his choice: ‘I knew Pete from having worked with him and I respected his attitude towards photographs’. The avowedly public nature of local government-funded BAHP, as opposed to more academic and specialised institutions such as The Photographers’ Gallery, may also have influenced his decision. The unique ethos of BAHP as a centre of innovative outreach and community engagement initiatives also distinguishes the archive as an important resource, not only in terms of content, but regarding a proactive and inclusive philosophy. BAHP’s Collection and Access Policy Statement reflects this commitment:

The aims of Birmingham Archives, Heritage and Photography is: To collect and preserve the historic records of the City of Birmingham, its people, businesses and institutions; To make these records available for research to the public; To promote the use of archives to support learning, citizenship and community identities.

The guidelines of best practice (Appendix I) are intended for use by archivists charged with the display of photographs, specifically those of children, in the BAHP archive. More specifically, the guidelines are intended for use by a broad range of staff working with photographic collections at BAHP (as opposed to those who work specifically with photographs, for example members of the Photographic Department). Centred on a study of Hedges’ photographs of homeless children, but not limited to them, the guidelines promote a greater understanding of the complexities of photographic representation, and how the archive can best represent them. Their intention is to enable archive professionals to display photographs in a way that reveals the, often contested, nature of their production.

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It is important to clarify the nature of the audience for which these guidelines are intended. They are not aimed at photographic historians, for whom many of the issues they raise will seem like second nature. Likewise, they are not intended for professionals trained in visual literacy (art historians, historians of visual culture, photographers or semioticians). The intended audience is the archive professional who, whilst highly skilled in their own field, is likely to have little, or no, specific training in visual literacy or photographic interpretation. Research for the guidelines derived both from a study of Hedges’ photographic practice and a series of fourteen interviews, each roughly of one hour’s duration, conducted with BAHP staff. The interviews reveal that currently, the overriding concern of archive professionals working with photographs is that of access: which photographs can be seen, in what circumstances, and by whom? 668 The intention of the thesis is to move beyond the question of access as a dominating theme in archivists’ interactions with photographic collections, and to widen the debate regarding access, interpretation and display policy.

To sum up, the aim of the chapter is to identify, examine and discuss the issues raised by Hedges’ photographs of homeless children within the setting of the archive. As archivists contend with a growing amount of visual and non-textual material, the chapter examines how photographic collections make meaning in this context, and how current practice hinders an effective engagement with photographs. More specifically, it examines how photographs of homeless children can prove particularly problematic in terms of archival display. Following on from an earlier examination of Hedges’ practice in chapter one, and analysis of the deployment of his photographs by Shelter in chapter two, chapter three explores the impact of an archival setting on the issues raised by this research. It assesses the current guidance that exists for archivists faced with the ‘visual turn’ and the efficacy of recent academic theory in

668 At present, archivists convene an Access Panel for the purposes of reaching decisions regarding the access restrictions imposed on ‘problematic’ photographs. A group of archive professionals meet to discuss the photograph in question, in order to reach a consensus agreement on issues such as access, data protection, closure periods and display policy.
providing them with an efficient professional strategy. Constructed around the case study of the Shelter photographs, the guidelines deal specifically with images that raise difficult questions concerning data protection, consent, stereotyping and ethics.

*Archive Fever* and the Visual Turn

Before thinking about how Hedges’ photographs continue to make meaning at BAHP, it is useful to consider the purpose and role of the archive, and the discourses that currently define it. In his 1986 article, ‘Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital’, Allan Sekula observes:

‘Archives are not neutral; they embody the power inherent in accumulation, collection and hoarding as well as that power inherent in the command of the lexicon and rules of a language…any photographic archive, no matter how small, appeals directly to these institutions for its authority’.  

Employing a Foucauldian framework, Sekula presents the archive as a disciplinary institution that exerts an influence on the materials (in this case, photographs) that are deposited therein. He asserts the power of the archive to shape photographic meaning. Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever*, published in 1995, similarly raises questions about the nature of the archive as a neutral space where ‘facts’ and ‘truth’ are stored for posterity. Derrida’s deconstruction of the archive presents an alternative space which actively shapes meaning: ‘Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives’.  

Central to Derrida’s thesis is the concept of inscription:

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669 Sekula, ‘Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital’ *op. cit.*

‘the processes through which traces of a lived past are ‘archived’ by individuals or societies in ways that make the place of uncovering – the archive – a point of intersection between the actual and the imagined, lived experience and its remembered (or forgotten) image’.  

Derrida suggests that the act of archiving is as much about suppression and forgetting, as it is about uncovering and remembering. For Derrida, the archive functions as a dialectical space where the past wrestles with the present in processes of uncovering which are ‘as much about the complexities of contemporary understanding as about the creation of historical narratives’.  

Concomitant with a postmodern redefinition of the archive is an awareness of the increased presence and role of visual materials deposited therein. In his 1999 book The Domain of Images, James Elkins observes how the visual turn has come to dominate both twentieth and twenty-first century culture. He points out that it is not only the proliferation of the visual image that defines modern culture, but also ‘the kind of images we create and consume’. The result of this has been that ‘the nature of communication…the nature of recorded information, the processes of record creation and the practices of recordkeeping are very different from those of past centuries’. Technological developments now extend the domain of the still image into every aspect of modern life through photomechanical reproduction, film, television, video and the internet. There has been a revolution in the ways in which visual information is gathered, manipulated, transmitted and stored, resulting in an

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671 Blouin and Rosenberg (eds.) op. cit., p. 1.  
672 Ibid.  
674 Ibid.  
ever increasing volume of visual material, preserved in an ever increasing variety of ways. Archives are responding to this sea change by becoming increasingly visual in nature. In order to discover more about current archival practice and how archivists approach photographic collections, I conducted a series of fourteen interviews with BAHP staff. In line with an established legal framework, the interviews revealed two overriding concerns that shaped archive professionals’ engagement with photographs of children: copyright and data protection. This reflects current archival practice and training, both in terms of textual and visual archival materials. Knowledge and awareness of these issues is fundamental to how material is catalogued, accessed and displayed within the archive. On the whole, responses to photographs were descriptive in nature and invariably reverted to an inventory of what a photograph showed, rather than a consideration of how it was made or the implications of a child’s representation. This is unsurprising as the accessioning, documentation and cataloguing of photographic collections demand that archivists, as far as possible, present an objective and descriptive, as opposed to interpretive, account of photographs.

One interviewee’s assessment of Hedges’ photograph of a girl in a slum bathroom (Fig. 32) is representative of this descriptive response to photographs:

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677 The fourteen members of BAHP staff that were interviewed were as follows: Richard Albutt, Head of Digitisation and Outreach (20 October 2010), Janet Brisland, Development Manager for Children’s Services (23 March 2010), Rachel Clare, Cataloguing Assistant, Photography Collection (16 November 2010), Dr Andy Green, Outreach and Research Officer (28 April 2010), Professor Ian Grosvenor, School of Education, University of Birmingham (11 May 2010), Peter James, Head of Photography Department (7 February 2011), Gudrun Limbrick, Oral Historian (19 October 2010), Rachel MacGregor, Senior Archivist (19 August 2010), Izzy Mohammed, Education and Outreach Officer (13 May 2010), Sarah Pymer, Archivist (19 October 2010), Corinna Rayner, Senior Archivist (27 October 2010), Kevin Roberts, Cataloguing Assistant (16 November 2010), Angela Skitt, Head of Public Service (19 October 2010) and Nikki Thorpe, Education and Outreach Officer (21 October 2010).
‘It’s a really interesting picture, powerful, looking at a young lady, young girl, maybe six, in the bathroom, toilet, bathtub. Absolutely terrible conditions, housing conditions, awful. I’m guessing that this is her home and instantly I’m thinking, ‘What became of her?’ I have a rough idea of the section of society that she came from. From the underclass, not even the working class. Is it right to have that image? Is it right to use it? I think, as social documentary, it’s right that it exists but in what context does it exist? I’m not quite sure, but I think that it’s right that it exists because that’s what was going on. I would like to be able to use it in a discussion of poverty and homelessness but I’d be wary…I’d have to go through a whole range of protocols and procedures and discussions, and I don’t know whether I’d be able to use it in the end’. 678

The interviewees’ awareness of ethical and legal issues raised by the photograph attests to the current focus on these issues in training for the archive professional. It is also reflective of wider cultural concerns regarding the institution’s role (as a public servant) in exhibiting ‘appropriate’ material. Interviewees’ responses also reflect an awareness of the contextual implications of Hedges’ photograph: who is the girl and what became of her?

Another interviewee who worked in the Photographic Department was more confident in their approach. This is perhaps unsurprising, given their extensive experience of working with photographs:

‘I would refer to the photographer. How is the photograph going to be used? In what context? Is Nick Hedges happy for the image to be used? There are possible ethical concerns about displaying the image. The girl will still be alive. It would be better if the person in the photograph could be contacted directly and their permission

678 Staff interview, 13 May 2010.
granted…it could cause emotional trauma to the girl if she saw the photograph on display. We would still use it, even if she couldn’t be traced, if the photographer had given his permission. It is a documentary image. The Birmingham Post and Mail frequently use this type of image to illustrate articles about social conditions.\footnote{679}

Although more aware of potential issues raised by the photograph, the interviewee avoids a direct analysis of the way in which the photograph makes meaning: there is no mention of how the photograph is composed or lit or the effect of the photographer’s viewpoint. Little attention is paid to the constructed nature of the photograph, and how this underpins the kind of narrative that frames an understanding of the homeless girl and her life.

The interviews appear to reflect in practice what academics are currently writing about in theory. Recent literature has highlighted the profession’s inability to accommodate photographs and other non-textual material in the traditional archive model.\footnote{680} At present, the most widely circulated journals aimed at archive professionals outside the UK include Archivaria (the journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists), The American Archivist and Archival Science. A survey of the journals reveals a substantial number of articles, published from the 1970s onwards, dedicated to a theoretical discussion of photographic material in the archive.\footnote{681} They examine the varied ways in which photographs make

\footnote{679} Staff interview, 20 October 2010.


meaning in the archive, and how archivists can facilitate, or frustrate, this process. Between 1975 and 2012, the journal Archivaria alone published over 300 articles on the subject of photography and archives. Despite this apparent glut of information, the ideas and theories expounded in journal articles seem of little practical use to the archivist charged with organising and interpreting a display of photographs. As academic journals, it is equally unsurprising that the vast majority of these articles are authored by academics in the fields of archive studies, photographic history, visual sociology and philosophy. Few, if any, of the articles published in these journals are written by practising archivists. The kind of language used in the articles is therefore aimed at a certain kind of audience, equipped to decipher numerous references to academic theories, texts and systems of thought.

In his 1999 article ‘Declining Derrida: Integrity, Tensegrity and the Preservation of Archives from Deconstruction’, Brien Brothman suggests that, despite its popularity amongst academics, Derrida’s text Archive Fever has had little impact on the archival community, and has been largely ignored by archivists themselves.\(^\text{682}\) Brothman suggests that there are three main reasons for this neglect: the archival community’s lack of interest in philosophy, the difficulty of reading Derrida’s work, and the fundamental difference between Derrida’s postmodern concept of an archive as a site of ‘textuality’, versus the archivist’s commitment to a concept of ‘recordness’.\(^\text{683}\) Brothman suggests that Derrida’s text is far removed from, if

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683 For postmodernists and literary theorists, the concept of the text is central. The notion of the text is not limited to a specific kind of written document; almost any kind of communication (both visual and literary) can
not completely irrelevant to, the daily experience of most archivists. This gap between academic theorisation and a hands-on experience of working in the archive, is not limited to scholarship on Derrida. It would appear that most academic writing about the visual turn, both theoretical and practical, is somewhat distanced from the daily experience of archive professionals working with photographic collections. In his 2010 article ‘Modes of Seeing: Digitized Photographic Archives and the Experienced User’, Paul Conway comments on this disconnect between theory and practice:

‘As presented in the literature, archival theory often reads to even the most experienced and capable archivists as excessively abstract. Archivists may sometimes find it difficult to grasp the relevance of archival theory to the management of archival programs or to detect the motivations of those proposing new ideas’.

Significantly, literature aimed at archive professionals in the UK is more experiential in nature. Journals focus on the practical demands of the archive and are distinguished from their American, Australian and Canadian counterparts by a lack of theoretical discourse. Between 1947 and 2010, the Society of Archivists (the principle professional body for archivists, archive conservators and records managers in the UK and Ireland) published a bi-annual journal entitled The Journal of the Society of Archivists. An overview of this journal reveals a dearth of articles engaging with the visual turn as a theoretical concept. Echoing

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be considered a text. In his book Of Grammatology (1967), Derrida famously stated: ‘There is nothing outside the text’ (p. 158). Alongside this openness of definition, there is a rejection of the authorial voice in any assessment of the text. As posited by Barthes, authorial intention and control have no bearing on the text. This concept of textuality seems at odds with the archivist’s strict definition of the record and its reliance on a single, definable provenance and meaning.

Conway op. cit., p. 460.

In 2010, the Society of Archivists merged with the National Council on Archives (NCA) and the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government (ACALG), to become the Archives and Records Association (ARA). In 2012, the journal was subsequently renamed the Journal of Archives and Records. The Society of Archivists also published a monthly newsletter ARC (Archives, Record Management, Conservation).

A survey of the journal identified seven articles that dealt with photographic material in the archive. These were as follows: Gareth Haulfryn Williams, ‘Local Archives and the Media’, Journal of the Society of Archivists, vol. 10, no. 2, April 1989, pp. 57-65; Susie Clark, ‘The Preservation of Photographic Material’, Journal of the Society of Archivists, vol. 11, no. 1, January 1990, pp. 41-44; Dr Margaret H. B. Sanderson,
the UK literature on archives, a practice-led model is equally evident in the kind of training offered by British institutions.

At the time of writing, there are six institutions in the UK that provide postgraduate training to archive professionals.\(^{687}\) A survey of course content reveals a lack of specific training in visual literacy and interpretation: few or no modules are dedicated to the study of non-textual material. When the latter is considered, it is usually in terms of conservation, digitalisation and technological developments. For example, the MA course in Archives and Records Management, offered at UCL, comprises seven taught modules and the completion of a dissertation. Five of the seven modules are mandatory: *Concepts and Contexts, Creation and Capture, Curation and Stewardship, The Record-Keeping Professional* and *Access and Use of Archives and Records*. None include a dedicated study of visual materials or visual literacy skills. Of the ten optional modules, only three incorporate visual materials as a subject of study: *Digital Resources in the Humanities, Encoded Archival Description (EAD)* and *Digitisation of Archives and Standards for Digital Recordkeeping*. However, these do not teach archivists how to interpret or contextualise visual materials. It is thus possible for a student undertaking the MA to qualify as an archive professional having had little, or no specific training in visual literacy skills, or the interpretation of photographic and visual material. That being said, there appears to be little demand for training in this area. At present, the archive profession does not seem to recognise visual literacy or interpretive skills.

\(^{687}\) Postgraduate training for archivists in the UK is offered by Aberystwyth University, Dundee University, Glasgow University, Liverpool University, Northumbria University and UCL.
as relevant to the primary role of the archive as a place where photographic collections are catalogued and conserved, rather than interpreted and displayed.

Enquiries to UCL and the University of Aberystwyth (the leading course providers in the UK) regarding the provision of visual literacy and photographic interpretation skills on their MA courses were revealing.

The course leader at UCL replied:

‘We teach about archives and records in all formats and on all media, but we do not have a specific module on photographic or visual materials. They are covered in many of the core modules, for example in preservation aspects of Curation and in Access, alongside records in other formats. However, students with an interest in any specialism can take an individual study, or can choose the topic as the subject of their MA dissertation, which is worth one third of the marks for the whole MA’. 688

It is not mandatory for trainee archivists at UCL to learn specifically about photographs and their particular way of making meaning within the archive.

The response from Aberystwyth University was as follows:

‘I have circulated your enquiry among colleagues on the team and the only one who touches on this is Ms Helen Palmer, the Ceredigion County Archivist, who teaches ILM1720 The Study of Records: Creators and Users. In summary, she covers this aspect in a two-hour session with the Archive students, held in Ceredigion Archives. Using a set of family photographs, they look at the different production techniques, the chemical problems posed by these records, conservation/preservation needs, the

688 Elizabeth Shepherd, Archives and Records Management MA course leader, UCL, personal e-mail to author, 26 November 2012.
development of this genre, the reasons for people taking photographs and the various uses and interpretation of images’. 

At Aberystwyth University, a student can qualify as an archivist having spent a mere two hours studying the specific demands of photographic collections. Of the remaining institutions that offered a similar package of both compulsory and optional modules, none included a mandatory core module in visual literacy or photographic interpretation. Students interested in the visual aspects of archival practice were able to explore it most often through the dissertation. Despite an increasing amount of visual and photographic material being deposited in archives, and the ubiquity of visual communication in twenty-first-century culture, archival training courses in the UK seem reluctant to engage with the visual turn as a defining aspect of effective archival practice. Visual literacy skills are not considered an integral part of a UK archivist’s training. More worryingly, this is accepted as a given, both by training providers and trainee archivists. It is not identified as a gap in knowledge, or a problem that needs to be addressed.

To sum up, it is clear that in recent years the institution of the archive has undergone significant changes, both ideologically and culturally, concomitant with the rapidly growing visualisation of its collections. Moreover, academic journals are not catering for the practical needs of the archive professional faced with these seismic changes. The concept of the archive as an inert space is now deemed obsolete: the archive and its processes are widely understood as complicit in the creation of meaning. Photographs are further identified as peculiarly problematic artefacts. In her article ‘Records of Simple Truth and Precision: Photography, Archives and the Illusion of Control’ (2000), Joan M. Schwartz draws a

\[689\] Dr Julie Mathias, Archives and Records Management Team, Aberystwyth University, personal e-mail to author, 29 November 2012.
methodological parallel between the constructed nature of both the archive and the photograph, proposing that each stems from a ‘shared paradigmatic origin’.  

‘The ritual act of photographic commemoration was a valorisation of what in the present was thought to be worth remembering…in the future. In this way, a subjective decision was objectified, since neither ‘History’ nor photography, but individuals with agendas, were responsible for the process of selection’.  

Schwartz conflates the function of the photograph with that of the archive. Both enact a conscious process that determines what is to be remembered, and what is to be forgotten. Both, formerly understood as transparent and neutral records of reality, are now exposed as highly constructed and nuanced entities. Both produce specific kinds of social knowledge that benefit some and marginalise others. A dual destabilisation of archival and photographic ‘truth’ attests that, despite appearances, neither practice is natural, objective or organic. The photographic archive is thus a uniquely contested site: a construction within a construction, an infinite series of mirrors where the truth declares and denies itself en abyme.

Moving Beyond a Crisis of Childhood

Between 24 March and 10 June 2012 the exhibition Children’s Lives was on display at BMAG. Organised in collaboration with BAHP, the exhibition:

‘contributes to a debate over what it means to be a child…It explores how childhood in the past was constructed by adults, how those constructions shaped childhood experience and how traces of the past still shape childhood today…Children’s Lives

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690 Schwartz 2000, op. cit., p. 5.
691 Ibid., p. 19.
presents source material which allows us to hear children’s voices and to see them as independent social actors.692

The exhibition was organised around seven themes: *What is a Child?*, *At Home*, *Outside*, *In Care?*, *On the Move*, *Imagined* and *It’s All About Us*. As part of the *At Home* section, I selected five photographs from the Hedges’ Collection for display.693 My role as curator of this small section of the exhibition was a stipulation of the CDA which supported the research on the Shelter photographs. Made by Hedges at different times and in different locations, the photographs showed a variety of scenes: *Child in Basement*, Liverpool, July 1971 (Fig. 151), *Man and Family in Attic Flat*, Liverpool, March 1969 (Fig. 157), *Boy with Sibling*, London, June 1969 (Fig. 188), *Children Asleep*, Hackney, London 1971 (Fig. 189), and *Two Girls*, Notting Hill, London 1971 (Fig. 190). As none of the Shelter photographs at BAHP are individually titled, I titled the selected photographs retrospectively.694 This in itself impacted on the meaning of the images: broadly descriptive in nature, the titles did little to engage with their individual narratives or circumstances.695 In hindsight, leaving the photographs untitled would have avoided this, perhaps unnecessary, intervention.

694 None of the photographs in the Hedges Collection at BAHP are individually titled. However, in the Shelter archive at 88 Old Street in London, some of Hedges photographs do bear typed titles, attached to the verso of the images. These titles may have served a functional purpose: titles were sometimes printed alongside Hedges’ photographs in Shelter’s reports. In an interview, Hedges discussed the titling of his photographs (Appendix III, p. 390).
695 Although Hedges rarely titled individual photographs, he did make contemporaneous, detailed notes about many of his photographs. These notes and observations, occasionally including direct quotations from the photographic subjects, were often published alongside his images in Shelter reports. Hedges’ notes, although not held in the BAHP archive, are accessible via the Shelter archive, where they are pasted on the verso of some (but not all) of his photographs. The *Make Life Worth Living* exhibition of Shelter photographs at the Science Museum displayed the photographs alongside Hedges’ notes, which were made available to the curators. As in *Children’s Lives*, photographs were also retrospectively titled in the exhibition.
Children’s Lives created an opportunity to display previously unseen Shelter photographs. The choice of images, and the way in which they were contextualised in interpretation panels, could either resist or support the narrative of the homeless child as ‘victim’ that dominated Shelter’s mediation of Hedges’ photographs. In interpretation panels, the archive’s foregrounding of the ‘truth’ of the documentary photograph was challenged by emphasising its constructed nature.

One caption described how Hedges constructed a particular scene and revealed the children’s collusion in this (Fig. 189):

‘One of the main problems that faced homeless families was overcrowding. Whole families were often forced to live in one room that functioned as the living room, bedroom, bathroom and kitchen. Hedges did not use a flash: this photograph was taken with the light on, and it is unlikely that the children were really asleep’ (my italics).

Another drew attention to what was not shown in the photograph, and how this contributed to its disconcerting semiotic effect (Fig. 157):

‘This photograph shows a father and his three children in their one room attic flat. Liverpool 8 was one of the worst slums in the UK and many people were forced to live in squalid rooms in multi-let properties. Much of the photograph is in shadow: the only light source was a skylight that was not shown in the photograph’ (my italics).

The choice of images was also a deliberate attempt to dispel the assumption that homeless children must be unhappy or neglected in some way. Two of the photographs were
distinguished by their positivity which was foregrounded in the associated interpretation panels:

‘Hedges tried to capture the human face of homelessness. This photograph shows the positive familial relationships that existed, despite difficult material circumstances. The boy and his sibling are shown under the watchful eye of their mother, whose reflection is seen in the mirror above them’ (Fig. 188)\(^696\)

‘Hedges tried to show the positive, as well as the negative, side of homelessness. The girls are photographed in their one room flat. They are smiling and the room is homely and inviting. However, it is clearly overcrowded (it is possible to see a bed behind the girl on the left)’ (Fig. 190)

The selection of photographs, and the wording of interpretation panels, prompted the spectator to ask questions about Hedges’ practice, and his representation of homeless children. The intention was to present the photographs in a way that destabilised an uncritical acceptance of the photograph as an indexical record of truth. This reflexive approach to photographic meaning subsequently formed the basis of the guidelines, produced as part of the institution-based element of the thesis.

Significantly, the photograph of the girl in the kitchen (Fig. 99) that underpins much of the discussion in chapter two of the thesis was not selected for display. Despite recognising the peculiar power of this photograph as an iconic image in which many of the narratives and assumptions about homelessness seem to coalesce, it was not included in the exhibition. The decision not to display the photograph was reached after a group discussion, involving the curators of the exhibition and myself. The primary reason for this was the photograph’s representation of a naked child. Present sensitivities regarding images of children, as

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\(^{696}\) The photograph shows members of the family of the girl in the kitchen, discussed in chapter two.
discussed in chapter two, meant that displaying the photograph was problematic, primarily in terms of an anticipated negative response from the press and the public. *Children’s Lives* was financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund and exhibited in a museum owned by the local authority. One of the lead curators was employed by the local authority and directly answerable to it. The decision to omit the photograph must also be understood in relation to the exhibition’s specific location: Birmingham has been at the centre of several high-profile cases of child abuse, which have resulted in its social services being repeatedly criticised as negligent. Given these circumstances, Birmingham City Council and its representatives were understandably wary of sanctioning an exhibition that risked a media scandal involving a photograph of a naked child. The act of self-censorship, embodied by the decision not to display the photograph, is understandable and unsurprising given this political backdrop, and the demands of current data protection legislation.

As discussed in chapter two, the photograph of the girl in the kitchen was not problematic when it was made in June 1969. It was published and republished by Shelter without consequence. In 1970, a comparable photograph of the girl from the same sequence was also published as a full-page illustration in *The British Journal of Photography* (Fig. 179).

Moreover, representing the photograph proves less problematic when framed by a different set of circumstances: for example, when published as part of an academic thesis, or exhibited

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697 At the time of writing, Dr Sian Roberts held the position of city archivist at Birmingham Central Library and Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Education.

698 In 2008 in Handsworth, Birmingham, seven-year-old Khyra Ishaq died after being starved by her mother and her partner (her family sued Birmingham City Council for failing to protect her); in 2011 in Birmingham two-year-old Keau Williams died as a result of thirty-seven separate injuries inflicted by his mother; in March 2012 in Coventry four-year-old Daniel Pelka died after sustained abuse by his mother and her partner. In 2009, a damning official report on Birmingham’s child protection services found that its social services were ‘not fit for purpose’ after eight children known to social services died of abuse and neglect within the space of four years, leading to the dismissal of six social workers (‘Who Cares?, Protecting Children and Improving Children’s Social Care’, 13 October 2013, http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny, accessed June 2014). In 2013 Sir Michael Wilshaw, Ofsted Chief Inspector, singled out the city as a ‘national disgrace’ regarding recurrent failures to safeguard children (‘Birmingham branded ‘national disgrace’ for child protection failures’, The Guardian, 15 October 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/oct/15/birmingham-child-protection-failures-ofsted-wilshaw, accessed June 2014.

699 Ellis *op. cit.*, p. 1268.
as an ‘art’ photograph in an independent gallery. That is not to say that a photograph of a naked child can be displayed without an awareness of the discourses that frame both its making and exhibition. In her 1996 article ‘Photography on Trial’, Amy Adler proposes that photographs of children and the photographic ‘portrayal of childhood sexuality’ are the source of a current widespread anxiety over sexuality and sexual expression.\(^{700}\) The article focuses on artists, specifically photographers, and their representation of the ‘most taboo of subjects’: naked children.\(^{701}\) Adler’s defence of photographers such as Sally Mann and Jock Sturges, and her critique of the unwarranted censorship of photographic representations of the child’s naked body is echoed in Anne Higonnet’s 1998 book *Pictures of Innocence, The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*.\(^{702}\) Higonnet’s text includes a comparable argument against the censorship of such photographs which foregrounds the irrational and reactive nature of child pornography legislation and its threat to the freedom of expression.\(^{703}\) Perhaps more importantly, she suggests that such laws ‘allow us to turn away from many real abuses of children in our society’.\(^{704}\)

Despite the consensus opinion of journalists, writers and academics, who argue that photographs of naked children should not be censored, it is clear that such photographs continue to provoke fear amongst the authorities and public alike.\(^{705}\) Regardless of its theoretical harmlessness, the question of displaying Hedges’ photograph of a naked girl posed a very real problem, both for the archivists and curators involved in the

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\(^{701}\) In the article, Adler outlines the moral panic engendered by child pornography in America and the resulting proliferation of laws intended to combat the problem.

\(^{702}\) Higonnet *op. cit.*

\(^{703}\) Ibid., p. 160.

\(^{704}\) Ibid.

Lives exhibition and Birmingham City Council. The curatorial team’s theoretical commitment to the freedom of expression proved ineffectual in practice: the photograph was not exhibited. In this instance, archivists and curators were unwilling, perhaps even unable given the council’s involvement, to display a photograph that posed too many problems. It is questionable whether the guidelines produced as part of the thesis would have altered the outcome: whilst presenting valid reasons why Hedges’ photograph should be displayed, they could not account for the specific circumstances presented by the Children’s Lives exhibition.

Interviews with BAHP staff revealed a keen awareness of the sensitivity that continues to surround photographs of naked children. Alongside copyright and data protection, this issue dominated interviewees’ responses regarding whether or not photographs of children could, or should, be displayed in the archive. Of the ten photographs shown to BAHP staff, two included naked children. Neither photograph showed the children’s genitals, or could be considered remotely pornographic in nature. One of the photographs was made by Emma Barton at the turn of the century (Fig. 191); the other by Lisel Haas in the 1940s (Fig. 192). The former’s photograph of a naked toddler on a beach prompted divergent, often contradictory, responses from different members of staff:

‘You couldn’t just have photographs like this dotted about on the wall because apparently we have huge problems with paedophilia…People are wary of looking at images like this, wary of having possession of images like this…A lot of people would be nervous about seeing this picture…I would definitely not put this photograph on display’.706

706 Staff interview, 13 May 2010.
‘This photograph wouldn’t be made available. It would go through an Access Panel’. 707

‘Is it a family snap? It looks more like an artistic work. I can’t see that this is offensive. It is ok, because it looks like an unposed snap. You can’t identify the boy: he is in profile and in shadow’. 708

‘There is no problem with this photograph. It’s a toddler paddling in a rock pool, a normal scene’. 709

‘The nudity of the child may mean there would need to be restrictions on who could see the image. It would be fine for an exhibition. The photograph is older than 100 years, and the child is unidentifiable, so it should be open. There is no issue with data protection. There may need to be a warning about the nudity, or to impose an access restriction, regarding who could see it?’ 710

‘This is a ubiquitous image, a family snap. It isn’t really problematic, but I would mention the nudity of the child in the catalogue entry. It’s not an inappropriate image, it’s a natural scene. The child is not overly exposed, but perhaps some people would object to the nudity? The photograph is older than 100 years. I would check with someone about any nude images of children, especially more recent ones’. 711

Part of the concern regarding photographs of naked children stemmed from the context in which images were made, displayed and disseminated:

‘This is a very old photograph. There is no issue of data protection, no legal problem.

There is a potential problem with the nudity. In the current sensitive climate, I

707 Ibid., 27 October 2010.
708 Ibid., 19 August 2010.
709 Ibid., 21 October 2010.
710 Staff interview, 16 November 2010.
711 Ibid.
probably wouldn’t use the photograph in a public display, I would err on the side of caution\textsuperscript{712} (discussion of Fig. 191)

‘I probably wouldn’t display this image because of the nudity. I would expect it to generate controversy, and I would want to avoid this. It is a studio portrait, a study, therefore I think that the child’s parents had given permission for it to be made. I would be happy for people to look at it in the Search Room. To display it publicly is a different thing\textsuperscript{713} (discussion of Fig. 192)

‘Is it a studio, posed photograph intended for public consumption? Is it a private family photograph? Did the parents give their consent on behalf of the child? How widely would the image be disseminated? Could it be misused on the internet?\textsuperscript{714} (discussion of Fig. 192)

The aim of the chapter is to expand the current debate regarding nudity and the sexualisation of childhood, to incorporate a broader awareness of how photographs of children can be problematic in much more subtle ways. A current crisis of childhood reflects a misguided obsession with the representation of the child’s naked body and the devastating consequences of this falling into ‘the wrong hands’. The focus is on the potential actions of those who look at the photograph, rather than on the experience of the child who is photographed. Current discourse foregrounds the child’s nudity, rather than its identity and agency. As Higonnet suggests, there is little correlation between the unrelenting hysteria that surrounds photographs of naked children and the actual statistics of child abuse.\textsuperscript{715} Despite this, photographs of naked children continue to provoke visceral reactions of shame and unease.\textsuperscript{716}

The chapter moves beyond nudity as a defining criterion of censorship, in order to address

\textsuperscript{712} Ibid., 20 October 2010.
\textsuperscript{713} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{714} Ibid., 19 October 2010.
\textsuperscript{715} Higonnet \textit{op. cit.}, p. 175
\textsuperscript{716} Ibid., p. 181
less sensational, yet equally significant, dilemmas that shape current methodologies of cataloguing, displaying and interpreting photographs of children.

The Disciplinary Space of the Archive

Today, the 980 photographs of the Hedges Collection are stored in six archive boxes which are, in turn, stored in a temperature-controlled strong room, accessible only by members of the Library of Birmingham staff. When Hedges deposited the photographs with BAHP on 16 August 2001 they were initially stored in thirteen boxes. Once accessioned by BAHP, two members of staff proceeded to make a handwritten record of the order in which the photographs were stored, and the details pertaining to each. The record includes the original print number of each photograph (as recorded by Hedges in pencil on the verso of each photograph) and their box location.

The photographs were initially arranged as follows:


Although the scribes of this initial catalogue are anonymous, it is possible to discern two sets of handwriting.


On 5 October 2001, BAHP archivist David Bishop wrote to Nick Hedges informing him of this initial stage of cataloguing:

‘Please find enclosed two copies of our Deposit Agreement; you will note from them that the prints have been assigned the accession number 2001/162 and the collection reference MS 2399…Please also find enclosed a draft box list for the Shelter archive. Currently, it just details which prints are in each box, along with their captions’. 718

Hedges’ satisfaction with this arrangement was signalled by his signing of the Deposit Agreement, which he returned to BAHP on 24 December 2001, along with apologies for the delay in his response. 719

At some point since 2001, the Shelter photographs have been reorganised by BAHP. The content of thirteen boxes has been compressed into the six archive boxes that hold the

718 David Bishop, Letter to Nick Hedges, 5 October 2001, Hedges Collection, d/file, MS 2399, BAHP.
719 Deposit Agreement, 24 December 2001, Hedges Collection, d/file, MS 2399, BAHP.
photographs today. The photographs are still arranged in print order, but the number of photographs per box has approximately doubled.

The current arrangement is as follows:

Box 1: MS 2399, Nick Hedges, ‘Shelter’ series, Nos. 5/20 – 30/2a
Box 2: MS 2399, Nick Hedges, ‘Shelter’ series, Nos. 30/3a – 136/2
Box 3: MS 2399, Nick Hedges, ‘Shelter’ series, Nos. 137/35 – 188/36a
Box 4: MS 2399, Nick Hedges, ‘Shelter’ series, Nos. 189/4 – 234/26a
Box 5: MS 2399, Nick Hedges, ‘Shelter’ series, Nos. 235/9 – 352/12
Box 6: MS 2399, Nick Hedges, ‘Shelter’ series, Nos. 353/16 – 400/37

There is no record of BAHP seeking Hedges’ approval or permission for this rearrangement. The result of this redistribution of the photographs means that the handwritten record of the collection is now rendered somewhat obsolete. It is no longer possible to identify the box location of a specific photograph from the record. The record is, however, still essential in identifying the location and date of a photograph once it has been accessed, as it links the print number to the details of its production.

The loss of the photographs’ original configuration has repercussions beyond that of breaching the terms of deposit as initially understood, and agreed to, by Hedges. It impacts upon an understanding of how Hedges worked and the nature of his commission for Shelter. The original order organises Hedges’ photographs in terms of time and place: it begins in Birmingham in 1968 and concludes in Cardiff in 1972. This order maps both a geospatial and

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720 On entering the archive, the Hedges Collection was transferred into the standard archive boxes used at BAHP. Evidently six boxes were considered sufficient to hold the photographs.
721 When referring to the locations of specific photographs, the thesis references the current archival arrangement, citing both the box number and individual reference number.
temporal structure onto Hedges’ practice. The handwritten document chronicles the trajectory of Hedges’ photographic career, and the particular demands placed on him by Shelter. It reveals the cyclical pattern that underpinned the commission: each year Hedges visited and revisited the same locations, namely Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, London and Glasgow. He repeatedly photographed the same locations, in response to Shelter’s annual demand for images of urban poverty to coincide with their schedule of reports and advertisements. The erasure of the original order serves to conceal this carefully considered and tightly governed routine, and in so doing disavows the highly controlled nature of Hedges’ commission. The subsequent rearrangement of his photographs underplays the demands that Shelter placed on Hedges. Dislodged from their original pattern of production and squeezed into the six boxes that now contain them, it is tempting to interpret the photographs as spontaneous, perhaps even random, records made by an independent, itinerant and autonomous photographer.

The power of the archive to shape meaning thus infuses the very boxes in which the photographs are stored. A similar observation is made by Elizabeth Edwards in her 2009 article, ‘Photography and the Material Performance of the Past’, where she states:

‘Boxes in archives are arguably invisible players in historiographical analysis. However, they are not neutral spaces…They are not merely pragmatic tools of taxonomic performances, but are entangled in shifting sets of values derived from and embodying specific institutional and affective engagements with users’.

Edward notes that the storage of photographs cannot be dismissed as a merely practical concern of the archive, but must be understood as capable of exerting an ideological influence. Her assertion echoes that of Allan Sekula who observes that the filing cabinet,
rather than the camera, is the ‘central artefact’ of a ‘bureaucratic-clerical-statistical system of intelligence’.

The archive’s imposition of rigid storage systems, altered at will, serves to shape the information, photographic or otherwise, deposited therein.

Once the archive box is brought into the larger space of the Search Room, a hyperawareness of the corporeality of both body and artefact dominates the interaction between researcher and photograph. The ‘objectness’ of the photograph is heightened by a strict series of rules and regulations. The myriad requirements that shape a researcher’s interaction with photographic collections emphasise the materiality of the photograph and its identity as a precious object. Each photograph is presented as a complete, and fully resolved, artefact at risk of damage and alteration. The Wolfson Centre for Archival Research at the Library of Birmingham is a highly controlled and surveyed space (Figs. 193 and 194). It is a unique area within the library in terms of the restrictions that govern it.

It is a closed space, located in a separate and secure room. Researchers are only permitted entry after making an appointment in advance. Members of staff are situated like sentries at a service desk at the boundary of the space. Before gaining access to archival material, researchers must read and comply with a series of conditions which cover both practical and ethical matters. They are required to sign in and out of the space. They must have clean hands and wear latex gloves. Personal details (name, address, institutional affiliation and purpose of research) are recorded and filed. They must agree not to reproduce any images (by photographing or circulating them online) in accordance with copyright restrictions. All bags and personal items are stored in lockers outside the Search Room. Only pencils are allowed. Food, drink and chewing gum are prohibited. Silence is enforced. The handling of

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724 The Library of Birmingham Search Room is titled The Wolfson Centre for Archival Research.
725 Researchers have to make an appointment in advance to view archival material. Catalogue references can be found via Calmview (the public access module for CALM), or through paper catalogues and card indices in the Wolfson Centre. References are given to archive staff in advance in order for material to be retrieved and prepared, ready for the researcher’s visit.
photographs is similarly regulated: researchers must avoid touching the surface of prints (even with gloved hands); photographs should be turned over carefully, by their edges or mounts; photographs must not be bent, folded or marked in any way. Access to photographic collections is limited to a maximum of ten photographs at one time. If permission to access a complete box of photographs is granted, the box is weighed before and after use by a member of staff. Photographs must be returned to the box in the same order in which they were removed.

The workings of the archive seem to inhibit, rather than facilitate, the presentation of the photograph as an accessible, albeit complex artefact, reflecting an inherent tension at the heart of archival practice. The necessity of storing, listing, monitoring and controlling large numbers of photographs demands a highly ordered and somewhat inflexible approach. Archivists’ hands are tied regarding many of the demands of the archive. Rules and procedures must be adhered to if the archive is to function effectively, and satisfy the demands of its designated status. Archivists dealing with photographs have little leeway regarding their accessioning, cataloguing and accessibility. Although current archival processes may seem to hinder researchers’ attempts to identify, access and interact with photographs, this is an unavoidable and necessary state of affairs. By nature fragile, unstable and irreplaceable, photographs must be subject to the strictest controls in terms of storage and handling. If photographic collections are to be effectively preserved for future generations then it is the remit of the archive to conserve and protect them, regardless of the frustrations that this duty of care entails.

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726 This measure prevents a single photograph from being removed from a box (the highly sensitive scales detect the slightest difference in the weight of an archive box and register the absence of a single photograph).
727 Exceptionally, I was granted access to the complete Hedges Collection of 980 photographs at one time, a privilege denied most users. Without access to this overview of Hedges' oeuvre, it would have proved almost impossible to gain a clear understanding of the Shelter commission, or the breadth of Hedges' practice. Academic researchers are permitted special access to collections in certain circumstances, including doctoral research.
Likewise, textual cataloguing systems are, at present, the most effective way of ordering, classifying and monitoring photographs deposited in the archive. On reflection, current methodologies governing photographic collections, although far from perfect, are undeserving of much of the criticism directed at them. It is important to recognise that the photograph in the archive is just the beginning: accessing a photograph is not the same as answering the question, ‘What does this photograph mean?’ Moreover, it is not the responsibility of the archivist (whose primary concern is to conserve, catalogue and provide access to collections) to provide the answer. It is unrealistic to expect archivists to do the job of academics and researchers. Moving forward, it is in the interpretation of photographs that a more flexible and innovative approach may prove useful. Whilst unable to circumvent many of the rigid frameworks that govern the archive, archivists may find more freedom at the point of presenting photographs to the public. The interpretation, arrangement and exhibition of photographs offer archivists the potential for a creativity that currently appears anathema to the institution of the archive.

**Word versus Image: The Linguistic Grid**

Extant writing on photographs in archives suggests that, on being deposited in an archive, the meaning of a photograph is shaped by a systematic process of classification. After it is accessioned, a photograph is catalogued and subjected to a series of classificatory schema that, whilst perhaps varying slightly between archives, results in a standardised process of assimilation. At its most basic level, a photograph is assigned a catalogue number that accesses a physical description (medium, dimensions and date), a succinct visual description (what the photograph shows) and the name of the photographer, if known. This taxonomic ordering has been interpreted as an attempt to exert some kind of control over the
photographic image, which by nature is fluid, shifting and unstable. Postmodern discourse asserts that this attempt to classify and order photographic collections ultimately results in a destruction of photographic meaning:

The archive functions as a vast linguistic grid enmeshing otherwise volatile images within what it hopes is a structuring certainty…The language of the archive, having filled in the blank spaces of the photographs, erases the undecidable nature of the image.\textsuperscript{728}

This erasure of photographic meaning stems from the loss of context that occurs when a photograph is deposited in the archive. In his essay ‘Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital’, Allan Sekula observes:

‘in an archive, the possibility of meaning is ‘liberated’ from the actual contingencies of use. But this liberation is also a loss, an abstraction from the complexity and richness of use, a loss of context.’\textsuperscript{729}

Sekula suggests that the initial meanings embedded in a photograph at the moment of its making are subject to erasure and distortion as it enters the archive as an isolated artefact alongside myriad other photographs. Gillian Rose presents a comparable argument in her article ‘Practising Photography: An Archive, a Study, some Photographs and a Researcher’ published in 2000.\textsuperscript{730} Here, Rose discusses her experience of looking at Lady Hawarden’s mid-nineteenth-century photographs in the confines of the Print Room at the V&A. In a reworking of Sekula’s argument, she analyses her experience in relation to the linguistic grid that the archive imposes upon the photographs, and the disciplined routines that shape her

\textsuperscript{729} Sekula 1983, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 444.
\textsuperscript{730} Gillian Rose ‘Practising Photography: An Archive, a Study, some Photographs and a Researcher’ published in the \textit{Journal of Historical Geography} no. 26, 2000, pp. 555-71.
interaction with them. She notes the impossibility of engaging with photographs outside the linguistic grid. Each time a photograph is requested by the mandatory archive ‘order slip’, a certain way of understanding the image is reiterated through a series of data fields: *Artist, Short Title of Work, Accession Number, Pressmark, Date* and *Signature of Researcher*.

This access process,

‘mobilizes a number of different conceptual orders – numeric, alphabetic, locational, generic, national, chronological, technological – which give a photograph particular meanings at the moment of ordering’.  

BAHP’s record for the Hedges Collection describes it as follows:


This initial classification identifies the photographs as ‘documentary’ and establishes the criteria by which an image is admitted into the collection. Drawing on a historical understanding of the term as factual, objective, unsentimental and unmediated, the linguistic grid emphasises the ‘reality effect’ of the Hedges’ photographs and privileges their indexicality above all else. The researcher must work hard to move beyond this designation in order to open up a space for other possible, less insistent, narratives. It is necessary to interrogate labels such as ‘documentary truth’ and ‘homeless child’ in order to reach a more

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732 Calmview, Hedges Collection description, internal database accessible to BAHP staff.
733 See William Stott ‘What is Documentary?’, chapter one of *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, op. cit.
734 See Charles Sanders Peirce’s 1894 text ‘What is a Sign?’ in which he proposes that the unique status of the photographic image stems from its indexicality (resemblance through physical connection), rather than its iconicity (resemblance through similarity). See also Barthes’ discussion of the photographic referent in *Camera Lucida*, op. cit., pp. 76-77.
genuine understanding of who these children were, how the photographs were made and for what purpose.

It is pertinent to refer to a specific photograph by Hedges in an analysis of how the catalogue at BAHP shapes photographic meaning. Hedges’ photograph of a family of homeless children in a slum bedroom is framed in a certain way by the linguistic grid of the archive (Fig. 195). Aside from the initial temporary box list, the photograph is listed in two further textual records that reference the Hedges Collection: a handwritten record of the photographs, and a typed record of related negatives and contact prints. The former is stored alongside the six boxes of Shelter photographs and is accessible by the public; the latter is closed to public access. In the former, the photograph is described as ‘73/25. Manchester, Moss Side, July 1969’. In the latter, it is recorded as one of a group of images: ‘File no: R.E.V 71-76. Manchester. Face the Facts (Pryde, Cunningham, Ward, Falkner, Kinahan & Bradshaw’. This entry links the photograph to its print number at BAHP (73/25) and its publication in Shelter’s 1969 *Face the Facts* report. Perhaps more importantly, it reveals the identity of the children as belonging to the Pryde family. Although this family is only one of six mentioned, interviews with Hedges revealed the connection between the photograph and this particular family:

Hall: And this photograph?

Hedges: That was the family from Manchester. The Pryde family.

Hall: It is pretty shocking.

Hedges: It was horrible.

Hall: Is this one of the most shocking things that you photographed?
Hedges: Yes it was, and that's all the kids.

Hall: Are they all brothers and sisters?

Hedges: Yes.\(^{735}\)

It is important to note that, at the time of writing, the Shelter photographs remain uncatalogued at BAHP. Although generic details of the Hedges Collection have been entered onto CALM (BAHP’s collections management system), an individual list of the photographs does not exist. The CALM entry is only available to members of BAHP staff: it is not accessible via Calmview, the public access module for CALM. The entry contains four data fields: Identity, Context, Content and Access. Identity includes metadata relating to ‘Repository’ (City Archives), ‘Reference number’ (MS 2399), ‘Title’ (Nick Hedges, photographer) and ‘Date’ (late C20th). Context includes metadata relating to the biography and career of Nick Hedges, and details of his other collections held by BAHP (I’m a Believer: Religion in the West Midlands, MS 2478 and Conurbation). Content includes a brief description of the collection: ‘Photographs taken for the Shelter, 1968-1975, and the Conurbation, c. 2000, projects. See accession information for full terms and conditions. Prints and negatives are included’. Access records the current status of the Hedges Collection as ‘partially closed’ and the Access Conditions read:

‘This collection is being re-arranged and access to it is therefore currently restricted. All enquiries relating to this collection should be submitted (in writing) to the Photographic Team so that an appointment may be made…When made available, photographic prints can be viewed in the Archives and Heritage secure area, but the photographer’s permission is required for any other use or ANY reproduction. Please

\(^{735}\) Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 399.
ask staff member for conditions (see d/file). Negatives are closed, for copyright and conservation purposes.\textsuperscript{736} Regarding the status of individual photographs in the collection, 121 have been digitally scanned and are awaiting entry into BAHP’s digital repository which sits alongside the physical archive.\textsuperscript{737} Each of these is available as a thumbnail image and is accompanied by metadata which includes a description of the photograph (what it shows, the name of the photographer and the collection to which it belongs), its reference number, the name of the description writer and associated keywords. A further result of the research has been the creation of online access to nineteen Shelter photographs via the Connecting Histories website.\textsuperscript{738} These include the five photographs that were exhibited as part of Children’s Lives.

As it is currently impossible to discuss a specific catalogue entry for the Hedges Collection, the next best thing is to examine how other, comparable photographs are catalogued at BAHP. J. Cruys Richards’ 1898 sepia-toned photograph of seven boys, clothed in rags (Fig. 196) belongs to the Warwickshire Photographic Survey and documents the activities of the Birmingham Cinderella Club.\textsuperscript{739} The CALM entry for the photograph contains three data fields: \textit{Identity, Content} and \textit{Access}.\textsuperscript{740} The former lists the photograph’s catalogue number (MS 2724/2/B/2363), finding number (WK/S17/98), title (\textit{Children in Sutton Park taken at one of the summer outings provided for poor children by the Birmingham Cinderella Club}), date (1898), format (photograph) and creator (J. Cruys Richards). \textit{Content} contains a

\textsuperscript{736} Calmview, Hedges Collection, Access Conditions.
\textsuperscript{737} I digitised the photographs over four days: 2 November, 3 November, 15 December and 18 December 2009.
\textsuperscript{739} The Cinderella Movement was a British charitable initiative, established in the late nineteenth century, to provide food and entertainment for poor children. Individuals formed ‘Cinderella Clubs’ (named after the fairy tale character), to address specific problems associated with children’s welfare.
\textsuperscript{740} CALM is the collections management software used by BAHP.
description of the photograph (Bromide print. Photographed by J. Cruys Richards, Bournville, Birmingham). Access lists its access status (Open), copyright status (Original copyright holder J. Cruys Richards (Warwickshire Photographic Survey). Copies available for private study purposes. Copies for commercial purposes or display are available at the discretion of Birmingham Archives and Heritage) and location (ST/95/H/1). Although individually anonymous, the children in the photograph are defined by their poverty, an identity supported by the handwritten inscription beneath the original image that reads: ‘Poor children of Birmingham, 1898’. The entry also contains a thumbnail image of the photograph which somehow seems at odds with its textual description. Each child has a broad smile on their face. Despite their poverty and circumstances, the image is an overwhelmingly positive representation of the boys and their camaraderie. The catalogue’s textual data fields prove inadequate in representing such a joyous and uplifting image.

Despite the widely different nature of the photographs, a hypothetical catalogue entry for Hedges’ photograph of the Pryde children in a slum bedroom would share similarities with that of J. Cruys Richards’ photograph. A keyword search (often the first point of contact between the public and the archive) would identify both photographs as representations of poor children, subject to charitable interventions. Beyond differences in date, author, medium and context, the linguistic grid of the archive would not promote any effective differentiation between the subjects of the photographs. Reliant on a general stereotype of the poor child, it is clear that the catalogue fails to communicate anything about the specifics of either image.

It is useful to consider how Hedges’ photograph is catalogued at NMM, home to two sets of the Shelter photographs.741

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741 At NMM, the Shelter photographs are fully digitised and catalogued.
‘Object number: 1983-5235/190; Object name: Photograph; Title: *Night time scene in the bedroom of these children*; Maker: Hedges, Nick; Place Made: Moss Side, Manchester; Date made: 1969-70; Materials: paper (fibre product); Measurements: Support: 203 x 253 mm / Image: 153 mm x 243 mm; Description: Gelatin silver print’.

Whilst the NMM’s catalogue entry provides basic information relating to the photograph, it reveals little of its context, meaning or significance. In line with the arguments of Pinney, Sekula and Rose, textual finding aids appear to communicate little about the specific appearance, circumstances and implications of individual photographs.

However, this generic approach is not necessarily detrimental to photographic collections in archives. Moreover, it is important to recognise that it is not the catalogue’s primary function to engage with the complexities of individual photographs. The catalogue is, as its name suggests, merely a finding aid, the purpose of which is to locate a certain kind of photograph amongst thousands, if not millions, of images. At this initial access stage, the catalogue does not need to do any more than this. Academics’ lamentations about the pernicious effect of the archive’s linguistic grid on photographic meaning seem somewhat removed from the practical demands of accessing and organising large numbers of photographs in a limited physical and digital space. Such criticism does not take into account recent technological developments that permit visual data (in the form of thumbnail images) to sit alongside textual data in catalogue systems. The critical discourse implies that it is only possible for the complex and mercurial nature of photographs to be preserved outside the limitations of

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742 Rebecca Smith, Collections Assistant, NMM, personal e-mail to author, 13 August 2014.
743 Current cataloguing systems routinely include a thumbnail image as part of the artefact’s metadata, although this may not necessarily be accessible by the public. An example of this is the V&A’s Photographic Collection catalogue, a large proportion of which is digitised. A thumbnail image appears on catalogue entries for the internal database but this is not necessarily accessible by the public, due to copyright restrictions. The public-facing catalogue entries for some photographs are therefore accompanied by purely textual metadata (Bronwen Colquhoun, Assistant Curator of Photographs, V&A, personal e-mail to author, 29 August 2014).
textual finding aids. On the contrary, it would be miraculous for the complexity of a
photograph to emerge from the chaos that would ensue from an uncatalogued collection.
Encouragingly, Paul Conway’s 2010 article ‘Modes of Seeing: Digitized Photographic
Archives and the Experienced User’, examines how users navigate the digitized photographic
archive with ultimately little detrimental impact on their access to, and interpretation of,
visual material. Once accessed, keywords seem to exert little residual effect on
photographic meaning, which is by its very nature uncontrollable and unpredictable. At
present, imperfect (yet invaluable) finding aids are a necessary component of photographic
archives, without which many photographs would never even see the light of day.

A Question of Consent

In chapter one of the thesis, the issue of consent emerged as a defining theme in an analysis
of Hedges’ photographs. Criticised for misrepresenting his working-class subjects as icons of
pity, his photographs of homeless children were seen to perpetuate a demeaning stereotype.
Moreover, in an era when data protection, consent and copyright were somewhat alien to
photographic practice, Hedges’ photographs were made without the full consent (as we
understand it today) of his subjects. The children that he photographed were not aware of
how their photographs would come to define Shelter’s campaigns. Homeless families had
little idea of how their photographs would represent them, or how their image would be
framed by Shelter’s reports and advertisements. The consent, or lack thereof, of the
photographic subject has a bearing on both a historical, and contemporary, reading of
photographs in the archive. The issue of consent is not limited to that obtained or neglected at
the moment of making a photograph. Historical photographs, displayed retrospectively

\footnote{Conway op. cit.}
without the permission or knowledge of their subject, raise legal and ethical questions concerning copyright and data protection.

The genre of atrocity photographs has emerged as a catalyst for debate, regarding the ethics of viewing photographs made without the consent of their subject. Although drastically different in nature from Hedges’ photographs of homeless children, many of the issues raised by these photographs are pertinent to a discussion of how, or even if, Hedges’ photographs should be displayed in a contemporary setting. As the subject of contemporary exhibitions and displays, atrocity photographs have prompted a discourse that is innovative in its focus on the subject, rather than the viewer, of the photograph. Concern for their unidentified subject underpins an ethical framework that sanctions or prohibits their photographic display. This methodology provides a useful way of thinking about Hedges’ photographs of homeless children in its shift of focus from viewer to subject.

Holocaust photographs form a permanent and highly visible element of displays in Holocaust museums across Europe and in the US. A notable example is The Wall of Faces in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington (Fig. 197). In her 2008 article ‘Choosing Not to Look: Representation, Repatriation and Holocaust Atrocity Photography’, Susan A. Crane observes:

‘few of the victims of the Shoah…were willing subjects…The bulk of Holocaust photographs…have been rendered inadmissible because they are ethically compromised materials, made without the participants’ consent’.

Crane suggests that the only ethical response to the photographs is not to look at, or display them. In Janina Struk’s 2004 book *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the*

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Evidence, an iconic image is singled out for analysis (Fig. 198). The photograph represents a woman and three children, viewed from behind. Having disembarked at the ramp at Auschwitz moments before, they walk towards the gas chambers. Today, the photograph has been reproduced life-size and is mounted in situ, evoking a ghostly emanation of the past. Stuk considers the implications of this form of display:

‘Whoever they were, they have been condemned to tread the path forever. Returning their image to Birkenau may be their final humiliation. They had no choice but to be photographed. Now they have no choice but to be viewed by posterity’. 747

Stuk contends that the act of viewing the photograph promotes a repeated victimisation and dehumanization of the subject. It is only in choosing not to look that this final insult can be avoided. The 2007 book Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain examines many of the ethical questions raised by viewing photographs of human suffering. 748 In the introduction, Reinhardt and Edwards question whether it is ever possible to view this kind of photograph in a way that is not detrimental to both subject and spectator alike:

‘What forms of picturing…respect the dignity and agency of those shown? What forms assault the integrity of the spectator? What will mobilize useful action and what will, instead, exacerbate the injury?’ 749

Although vastly different in subject matter, many of the ethical questions that pertain to the display of atrocity photographs can be applied to Hedges’ photographs of homeless children. None of the children in Hedges’ photographs gave their consent for the images to be made. As is the case today, parental consent was given on behalf of the child.

747 Ibid., p. 328.
749 Ibid., p.9.
As observed by Hedges,

‘In all cases, the families were given the opportunity to either agree to the use of their photographs or not. Their anonymity was protected when pictures were published by the use of pseudonyms or initials’. 750

However, unlike today, it is doubtful whether the homeless families who agreed to be photographed really understood the implications of their decision. They were not provided with a detailed explanation of how the photographs would be contextualised, or the kind of photographs that would ultimately be selected for publication. Families were not aware that their photographs would be stored indefinitely in Shelter’s picture library (still active today), available for access by a variety of other news agencies and charities. There was no discussion of copyright, or the subject’s legal position regarding the reproduction of the photographs. No written consent forms were signed. No time limit was placed on the circulation of the photographs, or the number of times that they could be reprinted by the photographer. There was no discussion of the possibility that photographs would resurface as the subject of exhibitions or academic studies of Hedges’ work. There was no concept of a future in which the photographs would be accessible and subject to infinite reproduction via a platform called the internet. Struk’s observation regarding the photograph at Auschwitz seems surprisingly apt when applied to the homeless children photographed by Hedges who ‘had no choice but to be photographed’ and now ‘have no choice but to be viewed by posterity’. Forty years later, Hedges’ representations serve to re-enact a narrative of poverty and victimhood.

750 Nick Hedges statement, August 2001, Hedges Collection, d/file, MS 2399, BAHP.
One Shelter photograph in particular highlights the ethical debate surrounding the issue of consent (Fig. 199). Hedges made the photograph in Moss Side in Manchester in July 1969. In two separate interviews, he commented on the circumstances surrounding the photograph:

Hedges: You see the little baby? That baby died five weeks later.

Hall: Really?

Hedges: Hepatitis, so we said we wouldn't use the photograph.

Hall: Did they let you know that the baby had died?

Hedges: We found out through the housing association.751

Hedges: There was a family in Manchester that we were photographing for a Shelter report. We discovered that one of the babies in the photograph had actually died two or three weeks later from some stomach illness, so we didn’t include that in the report. That would have been left out.752

Hedges’ memory of the Pryde family and their eight children was shaped by the knowledge that, some weeks after making the photograph, the baby had died. On discovering this, Hedges decided not to use the photographs.753 The commercial use of photographs that featured a recently deceased homeless child could not be sanctioned. Despite Hedges’ intention to withdraw these photographs, this never happened and the photograph was published extensively by Shelter. In *Face the Facts* (published in September 1969, just two

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751 Nick Hedges interview, 3 June 2010, Appendix III, p. 400.
752 Nick Hedges interview, 2 August 2010, Appendix III, p. 454.
753 In the archive at BAHP there are four final prints (Box 2: 73/11, 73/19, 73/25 and 73/31a), and seven contact prints, of the Pryde family.
months after Hedges had made the photograph) it appears as a double-page spread at the centre of the report. Contact prints reveal that an enlarged version of the photograph was prominently displayed at Shelter’s *Face the Facts* campaign rally in London in 1969. The larger-than-life image, propped up against the base of Nelson’s Column in Trafalgar Square, formed a backdrop for the speeches delivered in front of it (Fig. 200). The photograph also features prominently in *The Shelter Story* (1971), the aim of which was to provide ‘a brief history of the first three years of Shelter’s national campaign for the homeless’. A cropped version of the photograph (showing the baby and two of the children) is arguably the most striking image that appears on the front cover, placed below the publication’s title (Fig. 160). On opening the booklet, an unedited version of the same photograph takes up almost half of the first page, placed above the question ‘Who are the homeless?’ (Fig. 201). The importance of this image for Shelter’s campaign is supported by its inclusion (amongst only a handful of Hedges’ photographs) in both of Des Wilson’s retrospective accounts of Shelter: it appears as a full-page illustration in *I Know it was the Place’s Fault* and as a half-page illustration in *Memoirs of a Minor Public Figure*.

The impact of this particular photograph was not lost on the media of the day. In an interview, Hedges remembered seeing the photograph during the live television coverage of the Liberal Party Conference in 1969:

‘I remember sitting down one evening, and all of a sudden there was a report from this particular Party Conference, I can’t remember if it was Liberal or Labour, and this bloke on the platform got up and he opened the Shelter report and said, ‘This is a scandal.’ And it was one of my photographs.’

I pressed Hedges further about the incident:

Hall: Do you remember which report and which photograph it was?

Hedges: I think it was the Condemned report, which came out in 1971. It was a double-page spread photograph.

Hall: I think it was the photograph featuring the baby that died afterwards.

Hedges: Is it really?

Hall: I think it is, because I've seen that as a centrefold.

Hedges: Right, oh that sounds right, yes.\textsuperscript{758}

Seemingly convinced that it had never been used by the charity, Hedges failed to make a connection between the photograph and the televised incident. His memory of the ethical withdrawal of the photograph served to eclipse that of Shelter’s mass circulation of the same image. In both the Shelter archive and BAHP, this iconic and repeatedly published image is presented as a documentary truth: its success predicated on its ability to show how homeless children were living in the slums of the late 1960s. However, despite its ubiquity in Shelter’s history, the photograph is never contextualised: it functions as an ‘orphan’ image without a history. Information about the children, their family, their location and their fate is not accessible in either archive.

Recent cases have highlighted how archives have negotiated the display of non-consensual photographs, often of unknown provenance. Between 2005 and 2007, BAHP was faced with the practical implications of restrictions (both legal and ethical) pertaining to the exhibition of

\footnote{\textsuperscript{758} Nick Hedges interview, 2 August 2010, Appendix III, p. 458.}
its photographic collection. Over an eighteen-month period, three complaints were made regarding the display of photographs of unidentified individuals from the Ernest Dyche Collection. As the photographs in question were already in the public domain, having been published on various occasions, staff at BAHP assumed it was permissible to display the images in the archive. However, after identifying their relatives in photographs, three members of the public asked that they be removed from public display. As a result of the complaints, access to the collection was reassessed. Photographs that had not yet been identified, and for which copyright was unknown, were subsequently closed to public access. A member of BAHP staff is currently involved in an ongoing project, the aim of which is to identify unknown individuals and to make contact with them (or their relatives) in order to secure copyright permission. The ultimate goal is to have full access and display rights to this important collection.

In 2012, an album of police mugshots made in the 1930s was donated to Tyne and Wear Archives and Museum. The people in the photographs were named, and the details of their crimes recorded. Although unable to display the album itself (as it contained some photographs that were made within the last 100 years), archivists decided to upload thirty-one of the photographs to the institution’s Flickr page. A member of the Archives Enquiry Team explained how the Data Protection Act had influenced their choice of which photographs to make public:

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759 Peter James and Jim Ranahan, BAHP, joint personal e-mails to author, 10 January 2013, 5 February 2013 and 27 March 2013.

760 Ernest Dyche (1887-1973) was a self-taught photographer, initially specialising in theatrical portraits of music hall artists who performed in Birmingham. Dyche opened his first studio in 1910 in Bordesley Green. A few years later, he opened a second studio in Balsall Heath. During the 1950s Dyche’s clientele changed significantly: he began to specialise in portraits of migrants who came to Birmingham from Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent. The studio closed in 1980s, and the Ernest Dyche Collection was donated to BAHP in 1990.

761 George Sandeman, ‘Here’s looking at you Sunderland Kid: 1930s mugshots go online’, The Guardian, 23 August 2012. The album was donated to the archive by a member of the public who had bought it in a junk shop.
‘The requirement under data protection is to protect sensitive data relating to people who are, or might reasonably be, still living. It is normal to assume a maximum lifespan of 100 years. The information included in the record includes year of birth, so it was very easy to ensure that only those pages for individuals born before 1912 were included in the Flickr set. Although I think some re-use of the images may only have included photographs, each page includes the name of the subject (plus any aliases), along with birth year and other information - none are anonymous.’

Within hours of being uploaded, the photographs had been viewed by 32,000 people. As a result of the Flickr page, a relative of one of the photographed criminals contacted the archive and is currently working with them to unearth more details about the image and its circumstances. With little or no information about the photographs, the possibility of contacting relatives was one of the archive’s main reasons for publishing them online.

The viewing of digitised photographs in The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford has been subject to curatorial intervention. Data regarding initial patterns of online viewing of the photographic collections, primarily consisting of ethnographic images, revealed a sinister trend: a small number of photographs of young, naked girls from South Sudan were subject to an unusual amount of interest. After ethical consideration of the implications of making these photographs so openly accessible online, curators altered initial search routes, making it more difficult for users to isolate them. In a handful of cases, particularly graphic images have been completely removed from the museum’s online database. At present, a field on the internal database indicating ‘sensitive material’ blocks access to images via the public-facing

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763 Sandeman op. cit.

764 See Devorah Romanek’s (University of New Mexico) doctoral research, presented in the paper ‘Pillows and Posters: Re-distribution of Photographic Images of Indigenous Peoples’ at the annual conference of the Photographic History Research Centre, ‘Photography in Print’, De Montfort University, Leicester, 22-23 June 2015.
online database. Equally, the Pitt Rivers’ online catalogue is not indexed by search engines, and is made accessible on the basis that it contains historical material that some may find upsetting.\textsuperscript{765} Before curating exhibitions, both in situ and online, curators consult on the issues of nakedness and lack of consent as ‘important areas of concern for both individuals and communities’.\textsuperscript{766} These cases provide some idea of the potential reactions, both of curators and audiences, faced with the display of unauthorised and sensitive photographs, be it of themselves, a loved one or an anonymous stranger.

To sum up, although the display of non-consensual photographs is undoubtedly problematic, it is also immensely worthwhile. Due to their uniquely indexical nature photographs, perhaps more than any other kind of document, provide the spectator with an immediacy of experience that is powerful and affective.\textsuperscript{767} Photographs can provide an insight into the lives of others that it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve through the written word alone. However, regardless of the photographer’s permission, the consequences of displaying photographs made without the consent of the subject must be carefully considered. If displayed, the non-consensual nature of the photographs must be made clear. This is especially true in the case of photographs that depict particularly sensitive or harrowing subject matter, or where the subject is unable to give consent. The latter is exemplified in the representation of patients in institutions or asylums, notably in the photographs of Larry Herman\textsuperscript{768} and Raymond Depardon.\textsuperscript{769} In conclusion, it is pertinent to consider how the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[	extsuperscript{765}] Dr Christopher Morton, Curator of Photograph and Manuscript Collections & Departmental Lecturer in Visual and Material Anthropology, Pitt Rivers Museum, personal e-mail to author, 15 July 2015.
\item[	extsuperscript{766}] Ibid.
\item[	extsuperscript{767}] For further discussion of the affective power of images, see Erika Doss’ article ‘Affect’, \textit{American Art} vol. 23, no. 1, Spring 2009, pp. 9-11.
\item[	extsuperscript{768}] Born in New York in 1942, Herman moved to the UK in 1968 at the age of twenty-six. His documentary projects include: \textit{The People’s Republic of Mozambique}, \textit{A Northern Family}, \textit{Clydeside}, \textit{We’re from There: The Jamaican Brummies}, \textit{Land, Land, Land!} and \textit{Waged London}. One of Herman’s most controversial photographs entitled \textit{Rehabilitation Ward} was made at All Saint’s Hospital in Birmingham in 2001. The photograph shows a patient in a hospital bed, covered head-to-toe in a bed sheet. The man was clearly unaware that his photograph had been taken and subsequently published in the book \textit{We’re from There: The Jamaican Brummies} (2001). Critics have interpreted the photograph as unethical in its extreme voyeurism, particularly with regards to the representation of a mental health patient.
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children that feature in Hedges’ photographs would feel today, on seeing their image on public display in an archive, museum or gallery. They may never have seen their photograph, either as children or as adults, and may have distanced themselves emotionally, psychologically and geographically from a difficult childhood experience. The single image snapshot of poverty and deprivation may not represent a childhood that they remember, welcome or identify with.  

Make Life Worth Living: Exhibiting the Shelter Photographs

Between 2 October 2014 and 1 March 2015, 100 of the Shelter photographs were exhibited at the Science Museum in London. The exhibition, entitled Make Life Worth Living, was displayed in the Media Space Gallery on the second floor of the museum. Curated by Hedy Van Erp (Independent Curator) and Greg Hobson (Curator of Photographs at NMM), the exhibition resulted from the former’s accidental encounter with Hedges’ photographs during an unrelated research project at NMM in 2007. The exhibition was the first time the photographs had been displayed en masse since their creation ‘following a forty-year restriction to protect the anonymity of the subjects’. Displayed alongside ‘edited texts from Hedges’ detailed written notes of his travels and encounters’ the identities of the subjects

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770 At the time of writing, it has not been possible to trace or make contact with any of the homeless children who were photographed by Hedges and these questions thus remain unanswered and hypothetical.
771 Opened in June 2013, the Media Space Photography and Art Gallery is a collaborative venture between the Science Museum and NMM, the home of the National Photography Collection. The gallery offers a programme of exhibitions and events showcasing the National Photography Collection. Its principal founding sponsor is Virgin Media.
774 Ibid.
were not revealed.\textsuperscript{775} This closure period is somewhat at odds with the usual 100 year restriction applied to photographs of unknown subjects in archives. Greg Hobson explained that the decision to exhibit the photographs was made in consultation with Hedges as the creator of the images, rather than in reference to any existing legal guidelines regarding data protection. Unrestricted by the latter to the same extent as government-funded archives, museums and galleries are more at liberty to use photographs of unknown subjects in exhibitions and publications.\textsuperscript{776}

Interpretation panels bookended the exhibition. The introductory panel outlined the nature of the Shelter commission and the purpose of the photographs, both of which provided a context for the images (Fig. 202).\textsuperscript{777} Another panel, located at the exit of the exhibition, brought the narrative up to date with an overview of the current housing crisis, reminding visitors that things have not changed significantly since Hedges made the photographs.\textsuperscript{778} The exhibition

\textsuperscript{775} Although the exhibition did not reveal the identities of any of the subjects, the \textit{Daily Mail} discovered the identities of two subjects (the Gallagher family and Mrs Chichockjy) from Hedges’ previously published notes, and published them alongside photographs in their article covering the exhibition’s launch ‘Austerity? We don’t know how lucky we are!’ (\textit{Daily Mail}, 3 October 2014, pp. 36-37). The newspaper also invited people to come forward if they recognised themselves, or others, in the photographs. To date, no one has come forward (Greg Hobson, personal e-mail to author, 6 January 2015).

\textsuperscript{776} I e-mailed Greg Hobson regarding this apparent discrepancy between archives and museums and galleries. He replied as follows: ‘I am not aware of any museum or collection that applies this restriction to access, exhibition or publication. I have been unable to locate legislation that specifically restricts the use of photographs in this way. It would be hugely prohibitive and completely change the landscape of photography display if it were legislated. For example, Pete James has shown material from the Library of Birmingham Photography Collection and in touring exhibitions that include unidentified individuals in photographs less than 100-years-old. Library of Birmingham also exhibited the Daniel Meadows exhibition last year which has unidentified subjects in some of the works, \textit{Suburbia}, for example. I think individual images are assessed on a case by case basis and the Data Protection Act is ‘interpreted’ to support any decisions’ (personal e-mail to author, 7 May 2015).

\textsuperscript{777} An excerpt from the introductory panel read as follows: ‘In 1968, the national housing and homeless charity SHELTER employed Nick Hedges to document the oppressive and abject living conditions experienced in poor quality housing in the UK. SHELTER commissioned the work in an effort to raise consciousnes about the extent of unfit living conditions and to illustrate, in human terms, the real cost of bad housing. Hedges travelled the UK for four years between 1968 and 1972, photographing in many towns and cities, including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford and Glasgow. His photographs were used in campaign advertising, magazines, annual reports and on posters’.

\textsuperscript{778} Entitled ‘Shelter today’, the panel read as follows: ‘Every eleven minutes a family in Britain loses their home. Shocking, isn’t it? But you won’t see them huddled in shop doorways or sleeping on park benches. They’ll be hidden away. On sofas, in spare rooms and emergency hostels. Families and children in temporary, overcrowded or dangerous accommodation – all without a place to call home. And it can happen to anyone. Just one crisis – job loss, serious illness, a relationship breakdown – is often all it takes to tip someone into a spiral of debt and arrears. For those living in bad housing or facing homelessness, the future is bleak. But there is
featured Hedges’ most iconic images of homelessness, arranged in a conventional single-hang format that snaked around the gallery’s peripheral walls and four intersecting partitions, placed in the centre of the gallery space (Fig. 203). The first and last photographs on display provided a sense of continuity in their parity of subject matter: a young homeless boy in the slums (Figs. 204 and 205). The remainder of the photographs were somewhat eclectically arranged in terms of chronology, location and theme. Photographs were not grouped according to date or region. Scenes of rural Welsh villages were juxtaposed with domestic urban interiors; harrowing images of childhood poverty were displayed alongside shots of exuberant children playing in city streets; the catchy promises of advertising hoardings (Fig. 206) sat in contrast to the disillusioned faces of adolescents photographed in a Liverpool youth club. This comprehensive approach to Hedges’ work revealed the full range and diversity of his practice, attesting to its significance as a documentary record of late 1960s Britain, as much as a photographic account of poor housing.

Hedges’ photograph of Mrs Milne and her four children, made in Balsall Heath in 1969, assumed a special prominence in the exhibition (Fig. 83). A cropped version of the photograph was published in a variety of formats as the exhibition’s key publicity image. It appeared on the cover of the exhibition catalogue and in advertising posters displayed on the London underground (Fig. 207). A larger-than-life sized digital incarnation of the photograph, reproduced as a series of fifteen acetate panels, adorned the wall outside the gallery (Fig. 208). Within the exhibition, the photograph was equally singled out from the rest. Extracted from the regimented flow of uniform images positioned equidistantly around the room, the photograph occupied its own alcove. It was also distinguished by Hedges’ particularly detailed and lengthy account of its making, conveyed across two interpretation

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hope. Shelter helps millions of people struggling with bad housing and homelessness every year through our telephone, face-to-face and digital advice services, legal representation and specialist support services. And we campaign to prevent it in the first place. We’re here so no one has to fight bad housing and homelessness alone’. 

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Based on contemporaneous notes made by Hedges, these panels enlarged the narrative of the image to include previously unpublished information regarding the family and its circumstances. It is significant to note Hedges’ revelation of his intervention in the scene, information which literally, and metaphorically, casts new light on his practice: ‘The bedrooms had no floor covering, no means of heating and no light bulbs (so I put in one of my own)’. Although this account varied slightly from that conveyed in my interviews with Hedges (in which he admitted replacing an existing low wattage bulb with a more powerful one), it foregrounded the constructed nature of the scene, and provided a unique insight into how the photograph was made.

An equally iconic image was notable in its absence from the exhibition. Hedges’ photograph of a mother and her three children made in Balsall Heath in Birmingham in June 1969 was not on display (Fig. 66). It was published, however, as an illustration in the exhibition catalogue, alongside the following description:

‘One of Hedges’ best pictures summarises the wretchedness that he met on his travels.

It is an image of a young mother photographed through a door on a hot day in Birmingham. A bare light bulb hangs from a rotted ceiling. Clad in her slippers, she

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779 The first interpretation panel read as follows: ‘Balsall Heath, Birmingham, January 1969. Mr and Mrs M and their four children lived in a council owned house in Vincent Crescent, Balsall Heath. Apart from the poor state of the property – no bathroom, no hot water, outside lavatory, inside walls running with damp – these children were sleeping in the middle of winter, on two sodden seat cushions covered by a couple of old ‘macs’. There was no heating in the room, the snow lay thick outside and the windows were broken’. The second interpretation panel read as follows: ‘Mr and Mrs M, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, January 1969. I met Mr and Mrs M walking along a street and noticed the state of disrepair their house was in. Inside, the front room was unused, the house smelled of decay and the back room was a cluttered living space. The kitchen, with its cold water tap, led off this room. Mrs M and the children went up the narrow stairs which led off the living room. The bedrooms had no floor covering, no means of heating and no light bulbs (so I put in one of my own). I took pictures as we talked about life in the house. The little girl kept holding her arm up as if to protect herself from physical violence. Mrs M was 23, her face, well the pictures show the stresses. I returned at the weekend to do some more pictures. By this time heavy snow had fallen and I decided to take some pictures of the children going to bed. The boys had no pyjama bottoms, the window in their room had a large broken pane, Mrs M covered them with a blanket and an old coat, it was a pathetic sight. As soon as I was able I put them in touch with a social worker working with one of the church sponsored agencies in Balsall Heath. They provided blankets, mattresses, some furniture and started the long process of recovery, but it was broken. One day they called round and discovered that the family had disappeared without trace’.

peers into the camera, like a contemporary Madonna holding a baby daughter on her arm. Two other children are just visible in the photo: a young girl partially hidden by the door, with a dark eye staring at the lens. The face of a boy, three years old at most, is obscured by his mother’s shadow. He’s wearing only a jumper; the rest of his body is naked. This is the reason why this photo may not be exhibited in Britain today – the saddening downside of new truths: one that says that previously acceptable child nudity might be censored for fear of controversy’.  

Greg Hobson explained the decision to exclude the photograph from *Make Life Worth Living*:

‘The photograph was not included in the exhibition. Hedy and I debated at length about it and the decision not to include it was based on a number of factors. Firstly, I think it is important to frame the decision in the context of the prevailing circumstances at the time and now. Hedges never obtained permission to use his photographs, which was obviously the norm then. However, with all the photographs, we were mindful that children were included in many of them and that it would be likely that most would still be living today. This is partly why the photographs have remained unseen – in an exhibition context certainly – for so long. While in virtually every case we felt that it was appropriate to display them now, in one or two and with this one in particular, the decision was that it was not appropriate, despite the fact that it is a very powerful image. The photographs were originally taken for Shelter’s annual reports, which had a specific function for the charity. In this respect, re-showing the photograph in a publication is less problematic than on a gallery wall, where the subtleties of the contexts are not visible. Furthermore, we were mindful of media responses to the exhibition (and I point you in the direction of the *Daily Mail*).’

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double-page spread as an example), that might have focused on this image to create a
newsworthy story from the show. This would have been counterproductive to Hedges’
aims and objectives for the work, and our efforts as curators to focus attention on this
body of work as one of the most important postwar British photography documents.\textsuperscript{782}

As in \textit{Children’s Lives}, the decision to omit the photograph from the exhibition highlights
contemporary sensitivities surrounding images of naked or partially-naked children. It also
points to the significance of context: the photograph was published in the exhibition
catalogue, yet excluded from the exhibition itself, the former permitting the contextual
‘subtleties’ of its production to frame its display. Whilst the curators’ decision to exclude
such an iconic image is regrettable, it is also understandable and perhaps unavoidable, given
the circumstances in which the photograph was made. Recognising the particular sensitivity
of a photograph that shows a naked child, it was deemed necessary to protect the identity of
the unknown subject, at least in terms of public display.

The public response to the exhibition was overwhelmingly positive and centred on a disbelief
that such terrible housing conditions could have existed in Britain a mere forty years ago. The
emotional impact of the photographs, described as ‘powerful and moving works’ was
foregrounded.\textsuperscript{783} Reviews highlighted the centrality of Hedges’ commentary, taken from his
original notes and included alongside the photographs in interpretation panels, in
contextualising the images. One reviewer noted the similarity between Hedges’ work and that
of contemporary photographer Jim Mortram.\textsuperscript{784} Another commented, ‘I would be interested

\textsuperscript{782} Greg Hobson (Curator of Photographs, NMM), personal e-mail to author, 5 January 2015.
\textsuperscript{783} \url{http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/Plan_your_visit/exhibitions/make_life_worth_living.aspx}
\textsuperscript{784} Mortram documents rural poverty in Norfolk. His ongoing project \textit{Small Town Inertia} (2006), shot close to
his home in East Anglia, features intimate portraits, juxtaposed with the subjects’ stories, expressed in their own
words.
to know if any of the subjects in the photographs have come forward and made themselves known – what was their story after the photographer left?’.  

The New Library of Birmingham: A Unique Space for Photographic Display

On 3 September 2013, the new Library of Birmingham opened, replacing the 1970s-built Central Library (Fig. 209). Situated between the 1971 Birmingham Repertory Theatre on one side, and the 1930s Baskerville House on the other, the library is a landmark, a ‘public statement of the importance of knowledge’. Having cost an estimated £188.8 million, the library forms a central part of the city’s redevelopment program. At 31,000 square metres it is the largest public library in Europe. The building’s innovative appearance has prompted numerous descriptions, including ‘a cuboid hive’, ‘a pile of enormous geometrically-arranged birthday presents’ and ‘an airy, black-and-gold palazzo of mesh and glass’. A ‘golden box’ of secure, temperature-controlled storage space occupies two levels of the building, and houses key collections, rare books and the Photography Collection. At the summit, a rooftop rotunda contains the Shakespeare Memorial Room, an original part of the city’s Victorian library that has been conserved and reinstalled in the new location. The striking exterior is matched by what is going on inside. Consisting of ten storeys arranged around a central void, the library boasts a gallery, a children’s area, a multimedia centre, two cafes, a music library, a performance space, a theatre, a restaurant and

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787 The new Library of Birmingham was designed by the Dutch architectural practice Mecanoo (under the leadership of Francine Houben), in collaboration with the engineer Burro Happold. [http://www.e-architect.co.uk/birmingham/birmingham-library](http://www.e-architect.co.uk/birmingham/birmingham-library), accessed May 2015.
788 Moore *op. cit.*
terraces with herb gardens. The project has met with much critical acclaim. At the 2014 RIBA West Midlands Awards, the building was awarded building of the year, Mecanoo architect Patrick Arends was named emerging architect of the year and Birmingham City Council won client of the year. In June 2014, the library’s Director Brian Gambles was awarded an MBE for ‘services to libraries’.

Amidst all the accolades and publicity, it is important to consider the impact of the new building on the archives that it houses, specifically that of the Photography Collection. A change of name from Birmingham Archives and Heritage (BAH) to Birmingham Archives, Heritage and Photography (BAHP) signalled the elevated profile of the latter. Another offshoot of the project has been the establishment of GRAIN: The Photography Hub and Network for the West Midlands, the intention of which is to ‘create, facilitate and deliver ambitious, engaging and high quality photography projects, commissions and exhibitions’ and to ‘build the infrastructure and profile for photography’.

GRAIN projects focus on the photographic archive as a catalyst for creativity, expressed in the work of contemporary photographers. Photography and The Archive is an ongoing site-specific collaborative project between the library, postgraduate students of photography at Birmingham City University and photographer Stuart Whipps. Images created in response to the Photography Collection will be exhibited in the library and become the subject of a book, co-published with the Library of Birmingham. The project Mining the Archive: Exploring the Intentional and Unintentional Archive focuses on the changing nature of the twenty-first-century photographic archive. Another GRAIN initiative exploits the new space of the library to full effect. Entitled The Photographers’ Wall, the project refers to a space, rather

795 Funded by one of nineteen AHRC CATH (Collaborative Arts Triple Helix) Projects awarded to GRAIN by the Universities of Birmingham and Leicester, the project is centred on two case studies: the previous and current sites of the Library of Birmingham, and the area of Longbridge (once home to the British Leyland automobile factory).
than a body of work. Launched in January 2014, it comprises ‘a space in the Library of Birmingham dedicated to photography and photographers’. Featuring the work of both ‘emerging and established fine art photographers’, its intention is to showcase the region’s best photographers. In addition to practical photography projects, GRAIN runs a series of lectures by artists and photographers that complement and inform the library’s exhibition program. Notably, between 12 and 14 June 2014, the sixth National Photography Symposium (NPS6) was convened at the Library of Birmingham.

The most significant development for the Photography Collection has been the creation of a dedicated exhibition space within the library (Fig. 210). Located on the third floor, the Discovery Gallery is the only space of its kind to be found in a UK public library. Since opening, the gallery has hosted three photographic exhibitions: Reference Works (3 September–29 December 2013), Album 31 (3 April–30 June 2014) and Daniel Meadows: Early Photographic Works (16 May–17 August 2014). Both the inaugural exhibition and its successor exhibited the work of contemporary photographers, created in response to the new library building. A review in The British Journal of Photography assessed the impact of

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797 Ibid.
798 The list of speakers to date is as follows: Mat Collishaw, Faye Claridge, Nathaniel Pitt and Donnall Curtin, Tom Hunter, Sophy Rickett and Bettina von Zwehl, Bruce Gilden, David Birkett, Daniel Meadows and Simon Roberts.
799 Described as a ‘state-of-the-art exhibition space’ the intention is to ‘open up public access to the collections for the first time’ http://www.e-architect.co.uk/birmingham/birmingham-library, accessed May 2015. On the library’s website the discrete nature of the space, situated within, yet completely separate from, the library and its functions is emphasised: ‘Our major exhibition gallery is the perfect place for a private launch party. With a capacity of about 100 people it provides the opportunity for guests to view our current exhibition and enjoy city vistas through the large windows in the area adjacent to the gallery. For balmy summer evenings there is also access to the Discovery Terrace which offers further impressive city views with casual seating amongst the planted areas’ http://www.libraryofbirmingham.com/article/roombooking/discoverygallery, accessed May 2015.
800 For Reference Works Michael Collins, Brian Griffin, Andrew Lacon and Stuart Whipps were commissioned to produce work in response to research, the Photography Collection, the architecture and people of the two library buildings. Considered the largest and most important photography commission ever undertaken in the city, in 2011 the photographers were commissioned to create work inspired by the old Central Library and the new Library of Birmingham. Each of the four focused on a different aspect of the project. Collin’s topographical photographs documented the construction of the new building; Griffin made a series of portraits of those involved in the project; Lacon created sculptures that explored the concept of photographic documentary and Whipp’s photographs recorded the spaces of the old Central Library, scheduled for demolition in early 2015.
the new library, regarding access to, and the exhibition of, the Photography Collection: ‘Since the new multi-million pound Library of Birmingham opened in September 2013, James and his team have been keen to create opportunities for photographers to engage with the library’s photographic archive’. The new gallery thus offers an opportunity to curate an exhibition of the Shelter photographs on the site of the archive in which they are housed, and provides a unique space in which to engage directly with the Library of Birmingham’s photographic archive. Referencing Daniel Meadows: Early Photographic Works at the Library of Birmingham, Make Life Worth Living at the Science Museum in London, and the guidelines of best practice (Appendix I), the thesis suggests how Hedges’ photographs may best be exhibited in the new gallery space. Drawing on the guidelines, these suggestions take into account the responses of photographer, subject and audience, and possible approaches to the contextualisation and interpretation of photographs.

Firstly, the role of the photographer, as the creator of the image, must be made transparent. In exhibitions of the work of both Daniel Meadows and Hedges, interpretation panels explored the photographer’s motivations, concerns and intentions. Both outlined the nature of commissions and juxtaposed contemporaneous material (in the form of written notes and primary source material) with photographs. Details of how photographs were made, who the subjects were and recollections of the moments captured on film, provided a useful insight.

*Album 31* featured the work of artists Sophy Rickett and Bettina von Zwehl. Commissioned by GRAIN, the project was a response to the Benjamin Stone Collection. The title of the exhibition refers to the catalyst for the project: one of Stone’s albums, labelled ‘Miscellaneous’, which contains a seemingly random collection of images. The artists responded to this album by creating ten new album pages inspired by Stone’s photographs and their juxtapositions. These pages were similarly constructed by arranging previously discarded and miscellaneous images made by Rickett and Zwehl.


802 The exhibition, entitled Daniel Meadows: Early Photographic Works, was curated by Val Williams, Professor of the History and Culture of Photography at the London College of Communication and Director of the Photography and the Archive Research Centre (PARC) at the University of the Arts (UAL) in London. Previously shown at the NMM in Bradford (30 September 2011 – 19 February 2012), the exhibition was the first to focus on a single photographer and his body of work in the new gallery space. See Gemma Padley’s review of the exhibition at http://www.bjp-online.com/2014/08/daniel-meadows-at-the-library-of-birmingham/ accessed May 2015.
into the images. The voice of the photographer was foregrounded as a key component in interpreting the photographs. Whilst cognisant of the gap that exists between authorial intention and semiotic effect, it is pertinent to juxtapose photographs with transcripts of interviews, sound recordings, audio-visual material and captions that effectively communicate the views of the photographer, both historically and contemporaneously, if possible. The subjective nature of these views may be highlighted in interpretation panels. Where necessary, the opinions of the photographer may be called into question by curators (this critical engagement was, however, notably absent in *Make Life Worth Living*).

Secondly, a photographic exhibition must take into account the role of the subject. The Daniel Meadows exhibition was particularly effective in this regards: the voice of the subject was represented as a discrete component of the exhibition and made accessible in myriad exciting ways. This approach was less evident in *Make Life Worth Living*, where captions relayed Hedges’ words, rather than those of the photographic subject. The sole exception was a photograph made in Newcastle in June 1971, whose caption read: ‘Mrs M in the living room of her house: “The gas is turned off. We cook on the open fire because the gas rate is so high”. Her husband was disabled after an accident in the shipyards’ (Fig. 211). Of the one hundred photographs on display, this was the only instance in which the voice of the subject was represented in the first person. Whilst the exhibition’s introductory panel included details about Hedges and the Shelter commission, it said little about the people photographed, who appeared as silent ghosts: haunting, inaccessible and anonymous. This oversight could be

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803 The way in which Meadows’ photographs were exhibited was as innovative and exciting as the new gallery space that framed it. Val Williams orchestrated a coherent and multi-faceted display of Meadow’s work that effectively explored the complexities of its sociohistorical significance. The exhibition was an object lesson in how to display photographs as part of a radial narrative. It foregrounded an awareness of the constructed nature of the photograph and placed an emphasis on the making, as opposed to the final appearance, of the photograph. It privileged the voice of both photographer and subject as collaborative partners in the creative process (in line with Meadows’ own methodology) and located the photographs within a rich contextual framework. Interpretation panels featured direct quotations from subjects, recorded at the time the photographs were made. A digital screen showed six short films about the subjects of some of the photographs and included excerpts from Meadows’ recent interviews with them (via newspaper advertisements, Meadows was able to track down a number of the people who took part in the *Free Photographic Omnibus* project between 1973 and 1974).
addressed by a greater awareness of the rights, both legal and ethical, of the photographic subject, and further research into their stories.\(^804\)

Although mentioned briefly in the exhibition catalogue, the issue of data protection was not raised in the exhibition itself. Equally, the implications of the somewhat arbitrary forty year closure period imposed on the Shelter photographs by Hedges were not examined. Regardless of the wishes of the photographer, the position of the photographic subject must also be taken into account in any decision to put photographs on public display. The nature of the Shelter commission and the ubiquity of children as photographic subjects, further complicate the issue. The fact that the majority of the photographs were made without the explicit consent of the subject must be made clear, foregrounding the question: ‘How would the subject feel on seeing their photograph on public display?’ Likewise, where the representation of the subject is used to reinforce a particular narrative or stereotype (as in the ‘innocent victims’ and ‘objects of pity’ preferred by Shelter), this should be examined in relation to how the photographer constructed the photographs. Interpretation panels, rather than solely reflecting the views of the photographer, can be used to raise these issues.

Thirdly, audience response must be carefully considered. The narrative of an exhibition, shaped by the curator’s selection of images, has the potential to perpetuate, or challenge, stereotypes. An ostensibly unorthodox selection of photographs can create unexpected and challenging narratives. The Daniel Meadows exhibition challenged the stereotype of the poor, Northern working class in images that foregrounded the dignity, pride and resilience of the residents of June Street (Fig. 212). Equally, Make Life Worth Living challenged a wholly negative stereotype of the homeless as helpless, depressed and hopeless in the diversity of Shelter photographs on display. By exhibiting photographs that were never published by

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\(^804\) Social media, internet searches and newspaper advertisements offer the potential to trace anonymous photographic subjects as a means of accessing their feelings and recollections of having their photograph made.
Shelter, the curators presented the audience with an alternative narrative. Hedges’ photographs of exuberant children (Fig. 213) and proud families (Fig. 214) stood in stark contrast to Shelter’s most successful campaign photographs. It can be argued however, that Hedges’ representation of the homeless as resilient and stoical (regardless of their dire circumstances) perpetuated an equivalent, albeit positive, stereotype of working-class identity.

Finally, the way in which a photograph is contextualised and interpreted is fundamental to the way it makes meaning. Its implications are shaped by its relationship to other images and texts. The Daniel Meadows exhibition was particularly successful in situating photographs within wider, contextual narratives. The photographs were displayed alongside a letter written by Meadows and Parr in 1973, which invited the residents of June Street to participate in the project.⁸⁰⁵ In contrast to the rigid uniformity of Make Life Worth Living, photographs were presented in a variety of formats and arrangements, illustrating how display methodologies can shape the aesthetic affect and implications of ostensibly comparable images (Fig. 215). Most notably, publications from the 1970s which featured Meadows’ photographs were also on display (Fig. 216).

In retrospect Make Life Worth Living and Birmingham Seen, Art and Photography 1820-2009 (held in the Gas Hall at BMAG between 31 October 2009 and 31 January 2010) failed to

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⁸⁰⁵ The handwritten letter, complete with corrections and revisions, was one of the most poignant artefacts in the exhibition. It read as follows: ‘Dear Householder, We would like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves. We are social documentary photographers and our names are Martin Parr and Daniel Meadows and we are currently working in the Manchester/Salford area. Before redevelopment changes the face of Salford we want to record for future generations the friendly atmosphere that is characteristic of your city. We have chosen your street in particular because of its picturesque qualities. We would like to photograph your family at home and will be very pleased to give you copies of any of the pictures we take. The success of this project relies on your cooperation and we will be calling on you during the evening in the next few days to talk about it and arrange a date to photograph you at your own convenience’.
engage with the contextual framework of the Shelter photographs.\footnote{The free exhibition explored how artists and photographers portrayed the people and changing landscapes, communities and fortunes of Birmingham since 1820. It attracted over 13,000 visitors and featured works from the collections of BMAG and the Library of Birmingham (BAHP), as well as loans from individual artists and galleries. It included many previously unseen works.} \textit{Birmingham Seen} included six Shelter photographs, each accompanied by a diminutive label which featured Hedges’ name and dates, alongside a brief description of the image (location, date and archive reference number). Interpretation panels mentioned Shelter, but did not explain the nature of the commission, and made no reference to the subjects of the photographs. The photographs were interpreted as indices of industrial and topographical change, rather than intimate portraits of homeless people: ‘The photographs were taken during a period when rapid changes in housing…signalled the disappearance of the remaining C19th urban industrial Birmingham and the emergence of a new city’.\footnote{\textit{Birmingham Seen}, interpretation panel for one of Hedges’ photographs.} Displayed amidst an eclectic mix of other, unrelated photographs, the Shelter images were decontextualized and presented with minimal information regarding their commission, production and publication.

Any future exhibition of Hedges’ work in the Library of Birmingham must situate the photographs in a wider network of related negatives, contact prints, Shelter reports and campaign material (posters and advertisements) and possibly audio-visual material (perhaps excerpts from \textit{Cathy Come Home} and interviews with Hedges\footnote{For example, recordings of excerpts of my interviews with Hedges.}). It is also important to locate Hedges’ work within the wider context of 1970s British photography, as a means of exploring how homelessness was represented by other photographers at this time. Finally, by tracing the genealogy of some of Hedges’ representational tropes through reference to earlier images (epitomised by nineteenth-century Victorian visualisations of the waif and the street urchin), the Shelter photographs could be reinserted into a wider pictorial and photographic tradition.
Conclusion

To sum up, it is clear that the way in which photographs are catalogued, stored and displayed within the archive has a profound impact on how they make meaning as visual artefacts. Moreover, it appears that the current system of archiving photographic collections is problematic, due to its reliance on a textual model that does little to engage with the visual turn, and fails to take into account the increasing amount of visual material deposited in archives. Although recognised as a problem by academics, little has been done to address this in practical terms. Moreover, at present there seems little hope of improvement, as training for archive professionals, both in the UK and the US, continues to overlook the particular demands of accessioning photographic material into the archive.

Despite these difficulties, it is possible for archive professionals to engage more fully with the specific demands presented by photographic collections. It is important to recognise that methodologies of cataloguing and displaying photographs belong to discrete disciplines. It is unreasonable to expect archivists, at present primarily trained to accession and catalogue visual material, to possess the skills associated with its interpretation and display. It is, however, possible to provide archivists with guidelines and advice regarding an effective display methodology. The theoretical framework that shapes the interpretation of, and access to, photographs in the archive can be made more transparent and accessible. As BAHP becomes more visual in nature, it is unavoidable that the archivist’s role therein will change. The Discovery Gallery requires a new kind of archive professional. The proliferation of such spaces, where the taxonomic rigidity of the archive merges with the creativity of the gallery and museum, may lead to the creation of a new job description for a ‘visual archivist’, requiring a different kind of training and skill set.
Ultimately, it is perhaps unrealistic to envision a cataloguing or display methodology in which the meaning of a photograph can ever be fully explained or known, if that were even possible. However, it is possible to display photographs in a way that makes them accessible beyond mere tautological description. As suggested by Berger’s model of radial interpretation, it is expedient to locate photographs within wider narrative structures. Photographs can be fruitfully related to texts, images and artefacts. A display methodology characterised by disjuncture, misleading juxtaposition and a lack of contextual information (infamously epitomised by Edward Steichen’s 1955 *The Family of Man* exhibition\(^809\)) must be avoided. Such an approach, highlighting what André Malraux identified as ‘the ‘specious unity of photographic reproduction’, has no place in contemporary photographic exhibitions.\(^810\) A critical awareness of this flawed display methodology provides a template of ‘what not to do’ for contemporary curators.\(^811\)

The creation of meaningful connections lies at the heart of an interactive and interdisciplinary display methodology increasingly dependent on digital technology. Interactive screens allow original images to be enlarged, rotated, cropped and navigated ad infinitum. Individual photographic details can be isolated and magnified. Photographs can be juxtaposed, superimposed and merged with other images at will. Interpretation panels are increasingly replaced by digital screens that provide instant access, via the internet, to myriad related

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\(^{809}\) Curated by Edward Steichen the exhibition opened at MoMA in New York on 26 January 1955. It contained 503 photographs from sixty-eight countries. The work of 273 photographers (163 of which were American) was selected from almost two million submitted photographs. After its initial showing, the exhibition toured the world for eight years, stopping in thirty-seven countries. More than nine million people viewed the exhibition.


\(^{811}\) See C. C. Marsh’s (University of Texas) doctoral research which examines UNESCO’s Human Rights Exhibition, on view at the Musee Galliera in Paris during the autumn and winter of 1949. The exhibition was organised by UNESCO in order to publicise a universal declaration of human rights (adopted by the United Nations on 10 December 1948), and was subsequently published as an album. 12,000 copies were made and circulated to schools, libraries and galleries. Marsh observes how exhibition curators reconfigured the 250 images in the album at will to ‘construct a sophisticated ideological tool’. An outline of this research was presented in a paper entitled ‘Postwar Pliability: Photography in UNESCO’s Human Rights Exhibition Album’ at the Photographic History Research Centre’s annual conference, ‘Photography in Print’, De Montfort University, Leicester, 22-23 June, 2015.
images and resources. Digital technology is inherently suited to facilitating a methodology of radial interpretation: a web of meaning emerges around a photograph at the touch of a button. Although innovative, exciting and useful (especially regarding the display of original photographs that are too fragile to be exhibited), the drawbacks of an increasingly technological mediation of the photographic archive must be recognised. In some cases, the interactive screens do not perform as smoothly as intended and the frustrated spectator refuses to engage with them. In others, the limited number of screens makes information less, not more, accessible to visitors. The transformation of the photograph into a digital image presented on a screen further distances the spectator from the materiality of the photograph and its properties as a crafted object: creases are smoothed over, subtleties of tone are erased and imperfections are airbrushed. The use of such technology can never be a substitute for viewing original photographs.\textsuperscript{812} The Discovery Gallery will prove an interesting arena in which these scenarios are played out, negotiated and perhaps resolved.

\vspace{10pt}

Conclusion

The purpose of the thesis is an examination of Hedges’ photographs of homeless children, commissioned by Shelter between 1968 and 1972, in the light of social, political and aesthetic discourses current in Britain at this time. Within this remit, its specific focus is the representation of the homeless child in domestic space. Previously overlooked as a subject for academic study, the Shelter photographs have, until recently, remained for the most part out of the public eye and consciousness. Showcased in exhibitions and reviews at the time of their making, they have since been forgotten, and to a certain extent written out of the history of British photography. The thesis addresses this effacement by reassessing the photographs in the context of the Shelter commission and how this shaped a critical response to Hedges’ work from the early 1970s onwards. The thesis further examines how photographs make meaning within the context of the archive as a site of accession and display. Examined via the case study of the Hedges Collection, deposited at BAHP, it assesses historical and current archival practice in relation to photographic collections, their storage and accessibility. A product of the research is a set of guidelines (Appendix I) to be used by archive professionals who work with photographic collections.

Across the three chapters, several themes emerge as unifying narratives in a discussion of Hedges’ photographs, the Shelter commission and the photographic archive. Questions, ostensibly limited to discrete aspects of the research, retrospectively merge and expand to shape the thesis as a whole. Issues pertaining to Hedges’ photographic practice find their parallels in the workings of the Shelter commission, and questions raised by Shelter’s use of the photographs reappear in a discussion of how the archive shapes the meaning of photographs today. Hedges’ work thus forms the nexus of a series of discourses and debates.
that explore the repercussions of making, and displaying, a certain kind of photograph, namely that which represents people (specifically children) as disempowered victims. In examining these issues and their interconnections, the thesis presents a new model for the interpretation of the Shelter photographs, and explores its impact on current access, interpretation and display methodologies.

Firstly, the thesis examines the gap that exists between authorial intention and the semiotic effect of the photograph. In relation to the Shelter photographs, this emerges as a defining narrative of Hedges’ career, repeatedly referred to by both Hedges, and critics, alike. Hedges’ beliefs and intentions were consistently frustrated and undermined by images that seemed anathema to them. In interviews, he emphasises the authenticity of his photographs with repeated claims that none of them were set up in any way. He talks about his commitment to Socialism and his desire to change things for the better through his photographs. He speaks passionately about the methodology of Walker Evans and James Agee, which he aimed to emulate in his own practice. He recalls the homeless families that he photographed with respect and affection.

Cognisant of the 1970s backlash of critics and peers that branded him exploitative and lacking in integrity, Hedges recognised the negative repercussions of the Shelter commission, both in terms of his career and the people that he photographed. Chapters one and two of the thesis examine this gap, balancing Hedges’ assertions against a detailed visual analysis of the photographs, resulting in a more reflective, although not fully resolved, interpretation of his work. The thesis interrogates Spence’s damning article of 1976 and examines the claim that Hedges lacked integrity. Research reveals that Hedges’ integrity was apparent throughout, both in his commitment to improving the lives of the homeless, and his sensitivity to how his photographs were often misused and misrepresented by Shelter. In exploring the constrictive nature of the Shelter commission, the charity’s predilection for certain kinds of photographs
and Hedges’ lack of agency in the control of how his photographs were used, the thesis proposes a new understanding of Hedges’ moral character that has hitherto been eclipsed by Spence’s public dismissal of his work. In retrospect, it suggests that, whilst Hedges’ photographs certainly did, on occasion, perpetuate a stereotypical representation of the homeless, this must be balanced against their use in highly successful advertising campaigns that raised large amounts of money for Shelter’s cause.

The gap between authorial intention and semiotic effect equally underpins chapter three in its analysis of how photographs are interpreted in the archive. The chapter explores how the methodologies by which photographs are catalogued, accessed and exhibited affect photographic meaning. In many cases, meaning is erased by an archival system that isolates photographs from significant narratives relating to their commission, construction, production and dissemination. Authorial intention (the original purpose, effect and meaning) is translated into a different, sometimes oppositional, semiotic effect, as photographs assume new frameworks of reference and contextualisation. Consolidating research in the field of Archive Theory from the 1970s onwards, the chapter concludes that little has changed in the intervening years: many archivists remain ill-equipped to deal with the unique properties of photographs in their collections. Whilst it is not the remit of the thesis to solve these problems, the guidelines of best practice will prove beneficial to archive professionals currently working with photographs. The thesis thus highlights an area for further research, most pertinently in the field of Archive Theory, the result of which may be a new methodology of cataloguing and exhibiting photographs.

Secondly, the gap between the public and the private image, discussed by John Berger in his 1978 essay ‘Ways of Remembering’\textsuperscript{813}, equally emerges in all three chapters as a recurrent motif. Chapter one examines how the critical response to Hedges’ work in the 1970s was a

somewhat misguided response to a fraction of the nine hundred and eighty Shelter photographs that he made. Moreover, Hedges’ defence of his practice equally focused on this misrepresentation. His 1979 article, ‘Charity Begins At Home: The Shelter Photographs’, foregrounded the highly selective and reductive nature of the Shelter commission in the creation of five stereotypes of homelessness: ‘Forlorn child (innocent victim)’, ‘Mother and baby (Madonna and child)’, ‘Anxious old age pensioner (helpless innocent)’, ‘Depressed family group (object of pity)’ and ‘Resigned father (victim of society)’. Hedges was judged solely on the photographs that became public images. The majority of his photographs were not seen by his critics or peers. This remains the case today: the unseen Shelter photographs have not been the subject of an exhibition or publication until now. In his article, Hedges highlights the importance of the contact prints that he made, the majority of which never became final prints. These abandoned images represent the homeless in a different way. They show happy families and smiling people. They represent children who were loved and protected, and domestic spaces that were well kept, clean and warm, regardless of poverty and crumbling walls.

Hedges recognised the mismatch between the Shelter photographs that were made public and those that remained private, and expressed his regret at the former’s misrepresentation of the homeless. Likewise, chapter two’s discussion of how Shelter used Hedges’ photographs reveals a similar disjuncture between the public and the private image. Photographs that appeared in advertisements and publications were selected, often after careful editing, for their perpetuation of certain narratives. When a public image, such as the iconic photograph of the girl in the kitchen, is reassessed in the light of related private images (in negatives and contact prints) it becomes clear that Shelter consistently failed to present an authentic picture

814 Hedges 1979, op. cit., p. 162.
815 An exhibition of 100 of the Shelter photographs, entitled Make Life Worth Living, was held at the Science Museum in London between 2 October 2014 and 18 January 2015.
of homelessness, despite demanding that the public ‘face the facts’ of the problem. Shelter’s ostensibly innovative and radical campaign policy relied on images that were as contrived and one-dimensional as those of its predecessors, attesting to the enduring power of traditional representational tropes (specifically that of the ‘Forlorn child (innocent victim)’ as identified by Hedges) to generate pity, outrage and ultimately funds.

Shelter’s rejection of photographs that failed to perpetuate such stereotypes must be balanced against a highly effective and lucrative campaign strategy that undoubtedly improved the lives of many children and families. Moving to the setting of the archive, chapter three explores the importance of maintaining the links between the private and the public image, both in cataloguing and exhibiting photographs. It concludes that if photographs are to retain their full spectrum of meaning, they must be kept in relationship with related images, even those considered inferior or merely preparatory by photographer, archivist or curator. The relevance of negatives and contact prints, often rendered invisible by the archive, underpins a discussion of how to catalogue and display photographs in ways that preserve, rather than efface, meaning.

A third strand of the thesis explores the relationship that exists between word and image. Referencing Barthes’ observation that the photograph is ‘in communication with at least one other structure, namely the text: title, caption or article’, all three chapters examine how photographic meaning is influenced by a textual framework. Chapter one explores how photo-magazines from the 1930s onwards, in both Europe and America, combined photographs and text to powerful effect. It also examines how charity campaigns from the

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816 Shelter’s 1969 report, entitled *Face the Facts, Who Are the Homeless?*, highlighted the plight of the hidden homeless (those in poor housing) who had previously been considered ‘housed’ and thus ineligible for government help.
817 It is common practice for archives, museums and galleries to close public access to negatives and contact prints, primarily for conservation reasons.
late nineteenth century onwards, specifically for homeless and abandoned children, deployed photographs and text in their advertisements.

Chapter two discusses how such precedents shaped Shelter’s use of Hedges’ photographs in advertisements and publications that relied on hard-hitting taglines and lurid descriptions of poverty. However, it concludes that, in many cases, it was the mismatch between word and image that defined Shelter’s campaigns. Angry words were juxtaposed with photographs of compliant and hopeless people, frequently children. Moreover, publications were misleading in their juxtaposition of discordant texts and photographs: descriptions of homelessness and case studies were routinely paired with photographs of unrelated subjects and locations. The effect was impressive, even though photograph and text may, on closer inspection, have had little to do with one another.

Chapter two equally explores how the words of Hedges’ critics, both positive and negative, served to further shape the meaning of his photographs. Republished in journals and newspapers and allied with a varied critical response, his photographs generated different meanings than those associated with their original commission. By the 1970s, the words of Jo Spence reframed Hedges’ photographs as an outmoded and unethical way of picturing poverty. Moreover, the work of photographers and conceptual artists in both Britain and America (notably that of Victor Burgin, Allan Sekula and Martha Rosler) foregrounded the word-image dyad in an alternative leftist photographic practice.

Chapter three examines how words shape the meaning of Hedges’ photographs in the setting of the archive, and addresses the perennial problem of accessioning visual material into a predominantly textual system. Both catalogues and exhibitions employ methodologies in which words appear to stifle, rather than facilitate, photographic interpretation. It concludes that new methodologies are needed if photographs are to be better served by the archive and
its processes. The exhibitions *Daniel Meadows: Early Photographic Works* and *Make Life Worth Living*, provide useful case studies for how this may be approached. Finally, the thesis examines how the words of Hedges himself, both past and present, continue to shape the meaning of his photographs. A discussion of individual images, juxtaposed with excerpts from interviews with Hedges, results in a new understanding of the photographs. Framed by accounts of how they were made, who the people were and what the spaces were like, the photographs generate new narratives for a contemporary audience.

Fourthly, the thesis highlights the centrality of the photographic subject, rather than its creator, in a discussion of the Shelter images. The homeless child takes centre stage across all three chapters. Chapter one examines how Hedges’ practice relied on his ability to make successful photographs of homeless children, and proposes that he cultivated a specific methodology that enabled him to win their trust. Interviews with Hedges reveal his awareness that photographs of children were particularly suited to Shelter’s needs as opposed to other, less lucrative, subjects. They also attest to children’s ignorance regarding the Shelter commission and Hedges’ attempt to shield them from the implications of his presence. Keen to work as a photographer who was somehow making a difference, and in spite of his reservations, Hedges provided the charity with what they wanted: plentiful photographs of homeless children.

The chapter also explores more searching questions regarding the child’s agency, or lack thereof, in this scenario, and asks whether Hedges’ insistence on photographing actual children was ultimately of any benefit to them. It highlights the homeless child’s lack of control over how they were photographed, and to what ends. This theme continues into chapter two, focused on the specific case study of the girl in the kitchen and how Hedges’ photograph shaped a narrative of her life and experience. It concludes by considering how the
girl would respond to her photograph today, as an adult. Unfortunately, at present, this remains an unanswered question.

Following in the steps of Daniel Meadows, who tracked down the original subjects of his 1973 project the *Free Photographic Omnibus*, further research could potentially address this lacuna through interviews with the children (now adults) who featured in Hedges’ photographs.⁸¹⁹ In an age of social media, it would not prove too difficult to trace these children especially as the names, dates and locations of many of the subjects are known.⁸²⁰ The ethical justification for revisiting photographic subjects must, however, be carefully considered.⁸²¹ The final chapter emphasises the primacy of the photographic subject in a discussion of the ethics of displaying Hedges’ photographs in archives, galleries and museums today. It suggests that the ways in which photographs are contextualised and displayed play a huge role in the kind of narratives that are generated, concluding that a narrative of victimhood can be transformed into something positive, empowering and victorious.

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⁸¹⁹ As of October 2015, Hedges has attempted to trace the subjects of the Shelter photographs. See the BBC online article, ‘Do you know the people in these pictures of tenement life?’ at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-34593382](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-34593382), accessed December 2015.

⁸²⁰ Attempts to contact the subjects of historical photographs via social media and newspaper articles have proved remarkably successful, as in the case of Caroline Edge’s (University of Bolton) doctoral research on Bolton’s Worktown Mass Observation archive. In 2012, Edge placed an advertisement in the *Bolton Evening News* asking for help in identifying the subjects and locations of some of Humphrey Spender’s photographs. She received hundreds of responses. In one case, it led to the identification of two brothers who had been photographed by Spender seventy-five years earlier. Edge subsequently interviewed the brothers, now in their eighties, and made another photograph of them in exactly the same spot as that of Spender’s original, [http://boltonworktown.co.uk/uncle-bob-and-his-friend-billy/](http://boltonworktown.co.uk/uncle-bob-and-his-friend-billy/), accessed May 2014.

⁸²¹ The ethical justification for tracing and rephotographing original subjects is examined by Martha Rosler in her essay ‘In, Around and Afterthoughts (on Documentary Photography)’, 3 Works, op. cit. Here, Rosler questions the craze for ‘re-photographing sites and people previously seen in published photographs’ notably Scott Osborne’s photograph of Allie Mae (Burroughs) Moore, the subject of Walker Evans’ iconic FSA photograph, originally published in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* in 1941. Osborne’s photograph of Allie Mae as an old woman living in her trailer home, was published in *American Photographer* in 1979. Other notable examples include the rephotographing of Florence Thompson for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1978 (Thompson was the subject of Dorothea Lange’s *Migrant Mother* photograph of 1936) and that of the identical twins originally photographed by Diane Arbus in 1967. The twins were rephotographed in 1980 for an article entitled ‘Arbus Twins Revisited’ for *Modern Photography*. Rosler argues that the act of rephotographing the subject is a further exploitation with the subjects allowing themselves ‘to be twice burned…This new work manages to institute a new genre of victimhood – the victimization by someone else’s camera of helpless persons, who then hold still long enough for the indignation of the new writer to capture them, in words and images both, in their current state of decrepitude’ (p. 83).
Alongside these overarching themes, the thesis proposes a new way of understanding the photographic representation of the homeless child, the landscape of British photography in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the career and legacy of Hedges. Regarding the former, it traces a previously unexamined genealogy of representation linking the Shelter photographs with a deeply-rooted tradition of socially concerned British photography. The resonance of a Victorian construction of the homeless child is traced to the engravings of Doré and the paintings of artists such as Mulready and Kennington. The Shelter photographs’ indebtedness to the work of earlier photographers such as Oscar Gustave Rejlander, Thomas Burke, Thomas Annan, James Burgoyne, Horace Warner, John Galt and Watson is proposed for the first time.

Moreover, a transnational photographic interest in the homeless child, emerging in the 1930s, is cited as a pertinent influence on Hedges. Both the work of the FSA photographers and that of Bill Brandt and Bert Hardy for Picture Post is examined in direct correlation to Hedges’ representation of the homeless child and its deployment in Shelter’s publications. The thesis equally examines the previously overlooked influence of avant-garde photographic tendencies on Hedges’ creative vision. The aesthetic impact of 1930s émigré photographers such as Edith Tudor-Hart, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Felix H. Man and Cyril Arapoff is discussed in relation to the vertiginous viewpoints, unusual compositions and striking chiaroscuro that characterise many of Hedges’ photographs. Similarly, the aesthetic influence of the new wave of American photography from the 1950s onwards, epitomised by the work of Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand and Lee Friedlander, is linked to Hedges’ oeuvre for the first time.

The specific semiotic effect of Hedges’ representation of the homeless child is also explored in reference to its wider visual and cultural construction from the 1950s onwards. The influence of kitchen sink realism (in photography, painting, television and film) on Hedges’ visualisation of homelessness is proposed. Compared for the first time to artists’ illustrations
in *New Society*, Hedges’ photographs are analysed in the light of contemporaneous societal and political debates. The ubiquitous trope of the ‘wide-eyed’ child in photography, painting and charity appeals, equally suggests a germane genealogy for Hedges’ mode of representation.

The thesis promotes a new way of interpreting the formal qualities that define many of Hedges’ photographs. Understood as carriers of ideological meaning often at odds with the authorial intention of their creator, the composition, lighting and viewpoints of the photographs are analysed for the first time. The darkness of the most successful and widely published images is reinterpreted as a deliberately conceived convention that moves beyond the mere description of dark slum spaces. The semiotic effect of darkness, allied with the figure of the homeless child, further ties Hedges’ oeuvre to an earlier pictorial tradition embodied by the engravings of Doré. Hedges’ predilection for elevated viewpoints, particularly in his representations of children, is examined in Foucauldian terms. Citing the pictorial convention of the representation of the ‘Other’, this viewpoint serves to emphasise the vulnerability, and thus the appeal, of the homeless child. Hedges’ claims for the practical necessity of this viewpoint, whilst feasible, are dismissed as somewhat disingenuous and limited.

The representation of the homeless child framed by threatening and *unheimlich* space is further assessed in relation to Freud’s theory of the uncanny: the vulnerability of the child is mobilised to suggest narratives of anxiety, abandonment, hopelessness and entrapment in Shelter’s campaigns. Drawing on an historical representation of the child’s naked body as a *tabula rasa* adaptable to myriad meanings and agendas, the thesis proposes that Hedges’ iconic photograph of the girl in the kitchen encapsulates the tensions that lay at the heart of his practice. The image presents a highly edited version of the girl’s life and illustrates Shelter’s preference for representations of single women and children. Divorced from an
extensive collection of previously unseen negatives and contact prints that picture a large and happy family, the photograph perpetuates a stereotype that bears little relation to the truth of the girl’s experience. Published with no accompanying information, the photographic subjects remain anonymous, silent and disempowered.

By 1976 (the year of Spence’s essay) this kind of photograph was an anachronism. The landscape of British socially engaged photography had changed: community photography and the deconstructed image were championed as the only ethical means of representing the disenfranchised. The semiotic meanings embedded in Hedges’ photographs were perceived as offensive, exploitative and clichéd. By reinserting the Shelter photographs into this wider narrative, the thesis concludes that, given the demands of the commission, Hedges’ had little opportunity to engage with a more progressive approach, regardless of his personal feelings. Photomontage and self-authored images of homelessness were simply not suited to Shelter’s campaigns.

A review of how Hedges’ photographs were used by leftist critics from the 1970s onwards to attack a stereotypical representation of homelessness reveals a misguided and misleading judgement. For the first time the opinions of vociferous and influential critics such as Spence and Braden, are reassessed and challenged in light of the unedited Shelter archive of 980 photographs, as opposed to the handful of Shelter’s published images. Moreover, an examination of the specific demands of the Shelter commission suggests that, in many cases, Hedges had little control over how his photographs ultimately appeared, either as a result of editorial interventions or Shelter’s refusal to print a large swathe of his work. Hedges’ purported lack of integrity is thus dismissed and reframed in reference to a new understanding of the demands of his commission.
Of equal significance is the thesis’ proposal of an alternative understanding of Hedges’ apparent effacement from the history of British photography. Far from being overlooked, it reveals that the Shelter photographs were the subject of numerous exhibitions, reviews and debates at the time of their making. Unconnected to Spence’s attack, Hedges’ subsequent lack of visibility more likely resulted from his relative disinterest (at the beginning of his career) in cultivating an identity apart from the photographs that he made, his lack of affiliation to a particular group, his lack of time (due to the demands of a full-time job with Shelter), his geographical distance from London and the relative inaccessibility of his archive. The thesis also foregrounds the qualitative difference between his work and that of many of his peers: Hedges’ made photographs that had a specific job to do and were shaped by a responsibility to the subject, a context that set them apart from ostensibly similar representations of disadvantaged children produced during the 1960s and 1970s. When understood in this context, Hedges’ marginalisation is less surprising than first appears.
Postscript

It is pertinent to note that, since the completion of the thesis in 2015, the Library of Birmingham has been subject to extensive economic cuts by the city council. These have had a significant impact on staff, services and resources.\textsuperscript{822} From 1 April 2015, the library’s opening hours were reduced from seventy-three to forty hours per week and events, exhibitions and community engagement programs were suspended. Archive services were also substantially reduced. BAHP, the home of the Hedges Collection and the primary case study for the thesis, was particularly hard hit by the swingeing cuts. Of the library’s 188 staff, 116 were made redundant, including all those who worked with the internationally-renowned Photography Collection. The specialist Photography Collection team and Conservation Department ceased to exist.\textsuperscript{823} At the time of writing, the extensive holdings of photographic collections are no longer accessible to the public through an exhibition program, and are available to researchers by appointment only.

The cuts prompted an outcry amongst photographers who had deposited their work with the library. Paul Hill and John Myers sent an open letter to Birmingham City Council, part of which read:

‘The recent news regarding the cuts across a whole swathe of services at the new Library of Birmingham is cause for great concern as it endangers one of the finest, much praised and unique collections of photographs in this country’.\textsuperscript{824}

\textsuperscript{822} Many of the staff roles and department descriptions referred to in the thesis no longer exist due to the restructuring of the Library of Birmingham.
\textsuperscript{823} It is currently uncertain whether a single archivist will oversee the Photography Collection in the future.
The letter was signed by Brian Griffin, Martin Parr and Daniel Meadows amongst others, and the group also launched a petition calling on the council to reconsider the cuts. Whilst these changes are profoundly damaging for the library’s Photography Collection, they ultimately have little bearing on the findings of the thesis regarding the Hedges Collection, or its framing by the photographic archive. Although the guidelines of best practice (initially devised for use by Library of Birmingham staff) will not be deployed as originally proposed by the CDA, it is intended that they will be made accessible to other comparable institutions concerned with the interpretation and display of photographic collections.
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THE SHELTER PHOTOGRAPHS 1968-1972
Nick Hedges, the Representation of the Homeless Child and a Photographic Archive

By
Alison Hall

Volume 2
Appendix I: Guidelines for archive professionals working with photographs

The following guidelines of best practice are a response to the practical demands of the Discovery Gallery at the new Library of Birmingham. They are intended to enable BAHP staff to consider some of the, perhaps less obvious, issues and problems that pertain to the access, cataloguing and display of photographic collections. Fundamental to the spirit of the guidelines is the shift from the archive as a space of individual research and consultation to one of interpretation, exhibition and contextualisation. The guidelines are organised thematically, according to the key concerns that underpin the archive professional’s approach to understanding, interpreting and displaying photographic collections. Although modelled around the case study of the Hedges Collection, the guidelines are equally applicable to other photographic collections, specifically those concerned with sensitive or contentious subject matter such as sexuality, disability or nineteenth-century images of race.

It is important to clarify the nature of the audience for which these guidelines are intended. They are not aimed at photographic historians for whom many of the issues they raise will seem like second nature. Likewise, they are not intended for professionals trained in visual literacy (art historians, historians of visual culture, photographers or semioticians). The intended audience is the archive professional who, whilst highly skilled in their own field, is likely to have little or no specific training in visual literacy or photographic interpretation. Likewise, it is important to state that the guidelines incorporate both existing practice and new suggestions for archive professionals to consider. The former forms the basis for the first three sections of the guidelines (Training for the Archival Professional, The Photographer and The Subject) whilst the latter is presented in the final three sections of the guidelines (The Audience, Contextualising a Photograph and Interpreting a Photograph). This reflects the dichotomy in archival practice regarding the established, less flexible frameworks
(institutional, legal and ethical) that currently govern the accessioning and cataloguing of artefacts versus a more creative and subjective approach to the interpretation and public display of artefacts. It is envisioned that the guidelines will be used as part of BAHP’s training program for archive professionals, either as part of a handbook, or as the subject of workshops.\textsuperscript{825}

\textsuperscript{825} The guidelines were the subject of a workshop convened at the Library of Birmingham on 18 March 2015. Those in attendance were myself, David Bishop (Customer Experience Manager), Geoff Burns (Assistant Photographic Technician), Mike Hunkin (Archivist), Rachel MacGregor (Collections Curator) and Sarah Pymer (Archivist).
1. Training for the Archive Professional

1.1 When exhibiting photographs, archive staff should aim to collaborate with professionals working in the field of museums and galleries, whenever possible. In organising the display of photographs, archivists should be able to consult professionals who have expertise in this area, namely curators and exhibition officers. This relationship should be fostered by a program of on-the-job training, through which archivists can gain first-hand experience of organising displays and exhibitions in a supportive environment.

1.2 It is important to be aware of individuals and resources that offer expertise on the subject of photography. Identify professionals within the archive, or related institutions that may be contacted with any questions or queries. It is beneficial to foster these relationships and to build a network of expertise through correspondence, invitations to exhibitions, conferences and collaborative initiatives.

1.3 In the majority of cases, archive professionals are well-versed in the requirements of data protection. Photographs can be particularly sensitive artefacts with regards to the revelation of an individual’s (either living or dead) sensitive personal data and the consequences of their display must be thoroughly thought through. An awareness of current data protection legislation is essential.
1.4 Professional archive and in-post career development training should contain some element of visual literacy. This can best be supported by reference to literature written by practising archivists on the subject of the visual turn, specifically that which discusses the interpretation of photographs in the archive. The following books and articles may be a useful starting point:

**Books:**


Articles:


1.5 Archivists must distinguish between the different forms and implications of public display. It is one thing to make a photograph accessible to a single individual within the highly controlled space of the archive search room. It is another to exhibit a photograph as part of a public display. Clearly the latter is subject to far less control by the archivist or the institution. There is a very real potential that displayed images will be re-photographed (despite prohibitions) and circulated via the internet, or other unregulated platforms.
2. **The Photographer**

2.1 When a photographic collection is accessioned by the archive and the photographer is still alive, part of the accessioning process and data gathering regarding the photographs should involve consultations with the photographer, whenever possible. Information regarding the photographer’s methodology, philosophy and intentions can be recorded as metadata in the collection catalogue, and made accessible to the public.

2.2 If the photographer is no longer living, or unable to be interviewed, the archivist should consult any available research pertaining to the collection. This may involve collaboration with academic institutions, departments and specialist libraries or archives.

2.3 When depositing a photographic collection, the photographer should be consulted about any potential future use of their photographs. The following details should be covered by the Deposit Agreement, signed by both photographer and a representative of the archive:

i) Does the photographer grant permission for the archive to display their photographs?

ii) Does the photographer grant permission for the archive to publish their photographs in publicity material, advertisements and in-house publications?
iii) Does the photographer grant permission for their photographs to be made accessible online, via the archive’s website or electronic catalogue system?

iv) Is the photographer depositing other material (negatives and contact prints) that relate to the photographs, and are these subject to the same conditions of use applied to the primary collection?

v) If a Deposit Agreement does not already exist, it is important to contact the photographer retrospectively, to formalise the terms and conditions pertaining to a photographic collection. If this is not possible (in the case of the photographer’s death), then it may not be possible to display or use the photographs in a public way.

2.4 Wherever possible, the photographer should be asked about any other material or information that relates to the photographs. This may include details of publications that have printed the photographs, details of exhibitions in which they have featured and primary sources that relate to the collection (catalogues, personal writings and original notes). If appropriate, the photographer should be approached about depositing this material alongside the photographs.

2.5 Before exhibiting photographs, it is essential to have the permission of the copyright holder. In most cases, this lies with the photographer. In other instances, the permission of the donor of the collection must be sought. In the case of anonymous photographs the copyright holder will not be known, and it may not be possible to display the image.
2.6 If copyright on a photograph is unknown, archivists with specific expertise in the area of copyright law and data protection should be consulted. Current copyright legislation regarding closure periods on photographic images must be taken into account.

2.7 Conservation requirements will impact on the display of photographs. Notoriously susceptible to damage from moisture, temperature and unregulated light levels, the benefits of displaying original images must be balanced against potential damage, especially in the case of very old, or rare, photographs. In some cases, the use of a surrogate image can avoid these problems (it should be made clear that a copy, as opposed to the original, is being displayed).

2.8 If recorded interviews with the photographer exist, they could feature as part of the display. Pertinent clips could be made accessible, either through headphones or public broadcast, in the exhibition space.

3. The Subject

3.1 Once issues of copyright and data protection have been settled, it is important to consider the position of the photographic subject. Although the photographer may have granted permission for the photograph to be exhibited, the subject of a photograph may not have given their consent, either for the photograph to be made, or for it to be displayed. If consent was granted, was the subject aware of its implications? In choosing to display a photograph, it is important to be mindful of
the issue of consent and its ethical repercussions. Regardless of the archive’s legal right to display a photograph, it is useful to consider how the subject of a photograph may respond to this.

3.2 In certain cases, the display of photographs made without consent may be justified in exhibitions that explore subjects such as the Holocaust, slavery, disability, women’s rights, racism, poverty, homelessness and conflict. If carefully contextualised, photographs can play a powerful role in such exhibitions. Any photograph made without consent must be identified, and the implications of this explored in interpretation panels. Careful thought must foreground any decision to display photographs that represent the vulnerability, humiliation, suffering or death of the subject.

3.3 If the same subject appears in more than one photograph in a collection, it is preferable to display these photographs in juxtaposition, if possible. This may involve including images from negatives, contact prints or rejected final prints. The effect of this kind of display is to provide a more comprehensive visual representation of the subject and their life. Two or more photographs of the same subject may tell a very different story than a single image. This approach also highlights the selective nature of the photographer’s gaze, and the way in which photographs can present a biased viewpoint.
3.4 In selecting photographs for display, it is important to bear in mind current sensitivities, especially in relation to images of children, most notably issues of nudity and data protection. It is useful to discuss any concerns in an Access Panel.

3.5 If a photograph represents a subject in a certain way, perhaps reinforcing a certain stereotype, it is useful to consider why the photographer constructed it in this way. It is informative to think about how a photograph is shaped by the terms of its commission, and to highlight this in an exhibition.

4. The Audience

4.1 In displaying a photograph, it is important to bear in mind the type of audience at which the exhibition is aimed. Captions, labels and information panels must use language appropriate to this audience, specifically in terms of age. Written captions must adhere to the word limit, font and format criteria applied by the institution.

4.2 The choice of photographs to be displayed is an important way of communicating a narrative to the audience. Photographs can be selected in order to either support, or counteract, cultural discourses. The choice of images has the potential to perpetuate, or refute, stereotypes of class, race, gender and religious or political belief. Widely understood as representations of the ‘real’, photographs are particularly effective in perpetuating stereotypes. A careful selection of photographs can be highly effective in challenging stereotypes and promoting useful debate about controversial issues. The choice of photographs will most
likely reflect the overarching theme of an exhibition, the aim of which may be to challenge certain stereotypes or beliefs.

4.3 In displaying a photograph, it is useful to highlight the potential discrepancy between the way it was understood by a historical viewer (at the time of its making) and the way it is viewed by a contemporary audience. The original meaning and intention of a photograph may contradict the way in which the photograph is used and understood today.

4.4 Wherever possible, it is useful to engage the audience in some kind of dialogue about photographs on display. This may take the form of feedback cards, or the inclusion of questions, rather than statements, about photographs. It may also be possible to organise a program of seminars or discussions related to an exhibition, during which the audience can ask further questions, or verbalise their response.

4.5 As in the case of Holocaust and lynching photographs, there are pros and cons to displaying this kind of image. In deciding whether or not to display an image, it is necessary to consider each photograph on an individual basis. Although ostensibly representing the same sensitive subject matter, it may be less problematic to display some photographs, rather than others. When assessing photographs of children, it is important not to rely solely on the presence or absence of nudity as a prerequisite for display. Sometimes the things that make a photograph suitable, or unsuitable, for display are not visible in the image itself.
5. Contextualising a photograph

5.1 When digitising, cataloguing and displaying a photograph, an awareness of related images (negatives, contact prints and photographs) is useful. In displaying these images alongside the original photograph, it may be possible to present a more critical and comprehensive interpretation of the photograph. It is useful to consider whether other images, either by the same or a different photographer, support or contradict the narrative suggested by the photograph. The juxtaposition of photographs in a display can have an important effect on the kinds of narratives and meanings that are produced.

5.2 In contextualising a photograph, it is important to be aware of the reasons behind its production. Reference should be made to who commissioned it, why and when. Information about how the photograph was used, both at the time of its production and subsequently, should be available. If possible, the connection between the commission and the appearance of a photograph should be explored. Wherever possible, it is useful to display publications and articles in which the photograph has been published.

5.3 It is important to gather information regarding the provenance of a photograph. An awareness of where it was discovered, who previously owned it, where it was stored and whether it was exhibited and catalogued as part of other collections is
useful in establishing its social biography, and mapping changes in its meaning and significance.\textsuperscript{826}

5.4 It is relevant to consider the historical tradition in which a photographer worked. If possible, photographs should be exhibited alongside other images (photographs, paintings, drawings and prints) related to this tradition. Similarities of subject matter and style become apparent, and allow the photograph to be interpreted as one element of a larger picture. This allows the audience to make connections between the photograph and the wider pictorial tradition that shaped it.

5.5 Consider the reception of photographs, both at the time of their production and subsequently. An awareness of how people react to images (both positively and negatively) reveals a lot: were they received as the photographer intended? In some cases, their reception is shaped by a political discourse which identifies the photographer as right or left wing. By displaying evidence of the critical response to photographs (academic research, articles and exhibition reviews), it is possible to locate images in a wider historical discourse.

5.6 An exhibition of photographs can be enhanced by a soundtrack of audio material. This could include recordings related to the photographs’ subject matter, and oral history recordings with both photographer and subject.

5.7 Audio-visual material relating to exhibited photographs, such as television documentaries, could also be included. Hedges’ photographs could be displayed alongside clips from *Housing Problems*[^827], *Cathy Come Home*[^828] or interviews with homeless people (ideally the subjects of the photographs).

### 6. Interpreting photographs

6.1 When interpreting a photograph, it is important to be aware of the technical equipment used by the photographer. The type of camera, lens, film and digital software used is fundamental to understanding how the photograph was made, and why it looks the way it does. If possible, it is useful to display technical equipment (cameras, tripods, film and flashguns) alongside photographs, in order to further contextualise their means of production.

6.2 A discussion of the aesthetic qualities of a photograph (lighting, composition and viewpoint) is central to understanding its constructed nature, and challenging the perception of photography as an unmediated record of the truth. It is useful to consider a photograph’s formal characteristics, and how these impact upon its meaning and interpretation.

[^827]: *Housing Problems* is a 1935 documentary film about poor housing conditions and slum clearance. It was directed by Arthur Elton and Edgar. H. Anstey for the British Commercial Gas Company, and produced by John Grierson.

[^828]: *Cathy Come Home* is a 1966 BBC television play about homelessness by Jeremy Sandford. It was produced by Tony Garnett and directed by Ken Loach.
6.3 The materiality of photographs can also influence interpretation. Techniques (Calotype, Daguerreotype, Ambrotype, salted paper print, albumen print, carbon print, gelatin silver print, platinum print), the choice of paper (glossy or matt), the use of monochrome or colour film, and size, shape and framing, may affect an audience’s response to images.

6.4 If a photograph was initially untitled by the photographer and yet is displayed under a retrospectively-given title, this should be highlighted. The reason for the decision to title the photograph, either for display or cataloguing purposes, should be discussed. The name and job description of the author of the title (if other than the photographer) should be identified.

6.5 When writing titles, captions and interpretation panels, it is important to think carefully about the kind of words and language used. Language that promotes stereotypes, or suggests subjective viewpoints, should be avoided.

6.6 Alongside the consideration of what a photograph represents and how it represents it, it is important to be aware of what a photograph does not show. It is pertinent to discuss why a photographer may have chosen to exclude certain details, objects, people or settings.
7. A Case Study

The guidelines can be applied to a photograph made by Nick Hedges for the homeless charity Shelter. The photograph was made in Winson Green in Birmingham in June 1971.

[Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Box 6, 357/2, BAHP]

The people in the photograph are not identified. This is true of all the Shelter photographs: the anonymity of the subjects was protected, due to the sensitive nature of the photographs and their use in Shelter’s campaigns. Before exhibiting the photograph, several issues should be considered.
7.1 Copyright

The holder of copyright on the image is the photographer. A formal request to use the image in a public display (exhibition, website, publication or lecture) must be submitted to Hedges, and permission must be secured.

7.2 Data Protection

The photograph features a woman and four children. Made in 1971, it is possible that the woman, and highly likely that the children, are still living. The photograph is less than 100 years old, and therefore the identities of the subjects must be protected, unless they have given their consent. However, as the subjects have not been identified, this permission cannot be granted. It would therefore appear that the photograph cannot be displayed, on the grounds of data protection.

However, as in the recent high-profile exhibition of the Shelter photographs at the Science Museum in London (Make Life Worth Living), Hedges’ photographs of anonymous subjects have been displayed and widely circulated, both in print and online. Granted permission by the photographer, it has been judged permissible for the photographs to be made publicly accessible.

The specific nature of the photographs must be taken into account when considering the implications of data protection. Any image that is deemed particularly sensitive or problematic (for example, photographs that represent naked children or children in institutional care) should not be displayed without the specific permission of the subject, regardless of the photographer’s wishes.
7.3 Contextualising a photograph

It would be useful to exhibit the photograph alongside related images, in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the subjects’ lives and circumstances.

At BAHP, a related contact print exists:

In this preparatory image, the woman smiles at two of the children as she looks down at them. She appears far less severe and authoritarian. The mood in the contact print is more relaxed and spontaneous. When compared with the final print, the carefully orchestrated composition and lighting of the latter is evident.
The children are also recognisable as the subjects of another of Hedges’ photographs:

[Nick Hedges, Box 6, 357/0, BAHP]

When displaying the photograph, it is useful to examine how it and related images were deployed by Shelter.

The woman and one of the children appear in another image published in their 1971 Condemned report:
Here, the photograph accompanied by the caption ‘Sarah’, is published opposite a textual account of the woman’s life that reads as follows:

‘I don’t go out much. Just go down to my sister’s. I only smoke. I just sit here in the evenings; talk. I miss the tele. Had to send it back. There are no more teles coming out to Winson Green. Tell them where you’re from and it’s ‘no’. My sister-in-law’s having a new tele, and I’m buying hers off her. I can’t get a baker to deliver round here’.

Sarah is thirty-three and Roy is thirty-four and they have seven children – three boys who are at boarding school during the term, and four girls who have to sleep in the same room as their parents. There’s an attic, but the children are frightened of it. The tiny kitchen is rotting.

‘That tap (in the sink) was out six months. We had to keep turning the pipe off. Then the pipe went. We’ve been waiting six months for the new sink. They knew the sink was gone when they fixed the tap’, said Sarah. ‘They say they’ll send someone to look. I’ve spent no end of money on phone calls. It’s bad enough for us, but it’s the babbies you’ve got to worry about. They suffer with bronchitis. One of them had a smack on the head with the plaster in the kitchen. The woodwork’s rotten and the gases blow out on you. I have to boil the water on the gas and take it in front of the fire. I wouldn’t put my kids in the sink. I went to the doctor with my nerves through it. I never had it before. Two years I’ve been like this, and they’ve had bad gastric. The drains are terrible and the smell. It’s £2.10 a fortnight. The plastering’s falling in in the front and the middle room’s damp. The pantry’s all coming apart. I have to keep the pram in it, as it’s too dangerous. I have to move in and out of each room to keep them off the damp. I can’t run fires in each room – it’s too expensive. I wouldn’t
ask any relations down. They’ve all got better houses, lovely houses. I don’t know why. You need a bathroom with children and it’s got to be outside Winson Green. My kids need more shoes. Ask the Children’s Officer and she just says you can if you have no father or he’s unemployed. I can’t give a party on their birthdays. Not that I deprive them of anything – do what I can for them’.  

The case study reveals important details about the lives of the woman and her children, and the problems they face due to poor housing.

Hedges’ photograph of two of the children was also used on the front cover of the report:

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829 Condemned, Shelter report, 1971, p. 78.
7.4 Interpreting a photograph

By displaying the photograph alongside related images and Shelter publications, it is possible to expand its narrative. A richer understanding of the final print is made possible. It is also interesting to see how the charity used Hedges’ photographs in their publications, and how they framed them with case studies which included interviews with subjects. A comparison between the contact print and the final print raises questions about the nature of photographic truth, and how the photographer’s intentions shaped his representation of the homeless.

The significance of the formal qualities of the final print as it appears in the Shelter report (it is much grainier than the contact print, and has a heightened contrast) is also relevant to a discussion of the photograph’s semiotic effect. By including excerpts from interviews in interpretation panels, details about subjects are made accessible, despite remaining anonymous (Shelter used pseudonyms in their campaigns). The biographical information about the subjects of the Shelter photographs, published in reports and displayed in exhibitions, is fundamental to the kinds of narrative generated by Hedges’ photographs.
Unlike Mark and Janine, I’ve not had an exhibition recently at The Photographers’ Gallery, in fact never, so the visual references I’m going to make will have to rely on the slides that I’m going to show. I’d like to start showing slides immediately. It would be appropriate to show slides of the exhibition that I made with Ed Barbara and Mike Goldwater from the Half Moon, because that presentation, and the book that we are working on has, I think, considerable bearing on the theme of the talks. The trouble with showing slides of panels is that they’ve got half a dozen photographs on them, and they are inevitably a compromise, so I apologise for that fact. So what I’ve done is in fact mix some straight black-and-white copies of original prints. The exhibition of course can still be hired from the Half Moon Photography Workshop.

It’s a consistent feature of modern industrial society that industry remains largely hidden. To experience it, you either work in it, or you rely upon mass media, or more specialist media, to represent it. The mass media, concerned as they principally are with news, tend to represent industry either as an arena of conflict, or through its business sections as usually public relations. Specialist media are often blocked in their attempts to represent industrial work – witness the recent attempt by the BBC to include contemporary footage from Pilkingtons in their series on the future of work. It was against this background of lack of knowledge that I started to try and find finance to undertake a documentary study back in 1974. Like Mark, I had initially no success with the Arts Council of Great Britain in Piccadilly. I also applied for Northern Gas Fellowships without any success, but finally I got a Regional Arts Association Award from West Midlands Arts in January of 1976, on the strength of the industry project, and I was able to work uninterrupted for a couple of years on it.
Before talking about the project in detail, I’d just like to say a little bit more about motivation. It’s always bewildered me that British photographers seem to be fatally attracted towards leisure and customs and rituals. There was a time in the early 1970s when it was de rigueur to include pigeon fanciers and fishermen and bowls players and Butlins and Blackpool in any photojournalist’s exhibition or portfolio. I think it’s sort of symptomatic of a curse that tends to afflict British photojournalism, or it has done for some years anyway, and that’s the generalist view. I’d like to talk about this, and discuss it with the audience afterwards. I’ve seen so many brilliant photographers dissipate their energies on all-encompassing themes which really disregard, I think, the limited and very specific role that documentary can play. So my motivation was to concentrate upon industrial work, because I felt it was both crucial to our society and neglected by it, and to try and spend as long as I felt necessary in a limited number of industrial locations. Last weekend, the Arts Council ran a series of advertisements for their annual report in the quality Sundays. You may have seen them. It was on the theme that they’re spending your money. You ought to read about how they’re doing it. They’re also spending workers’ money, and I don’t think it’s necessary for me to spell out the link between arts funding and workers, and how vital photography could be.

The locations I chose to photograph are only significant by default. They chose me. Seventy to eighty percent of the companies that I contacted turned me down flat. It might be interesting if you know which companies those were: Goodyear Tyres, Leucars Aerospace, Guess Key Nettlefolds, British Leyland, Metrocamel, West Midlands Gas, Qualcast, Mander Paints, British Industrial Plastics and, I’m afraid it’s rather a sad irony, that Janine’s partial sponsor ATV also turned me down flat. I very much wanted to do a media industry, but the media didn’t want me in. So I based my original selection on a balance of what I thought were the most important industries in the area that I was working in, industries which I hoped were going to represent traditional craft skills, mass production, white and blue collar work and high technology. As it turned out, my selection was very compromised by not being given permission. To facilitate access, I arranged personal accident insurance and public liability insurance which covered the firm for anything that might happen to me, or anything that I might do to the firm. I agreed to file a complete set of contacts with the companies concerned. But this didn’t seem to help very much. Their reasons were things like industrial espionage, terrorist activity (which was why ATV wouldn’t let me in), labour relations and personal safety. Mainly, I guess that they really couldn’t be bothered. The companies that did
allow me in were Norton Villiers (which just failed to make it to co-operative status before Ben got moved on from the Industry Department), British Steel Corporation, Unigate Dairies, Josiah Parks (who are part of Chubbs, who manufacture locks) and Birchley Rolling Mills. These companies were very open, very co-operative, I didn’t have any problem, as Janine’s said that she had with British Steel Corporation. I was able to go where I liked without a shadow. I think you had a terrible job if you had someone on your shoulder the whole time. At the end of each period of time with one company, I always put on an exhibition in the works canteen, and subsequently gave away the pictures to the people who were depicted in them.

I didn’t have a clear idea, when I began the project, what it was that I might discover. Technically, I knew that I wanted to supplement photographs with text, and I chose to use transcribed interviews for the reasons that Mark has indicated, I think. I think part of the problem of photographing in a factory is that of sheer scale. If you know the novel *Small Creeps Day* there’s a superb description of the strange territory that exists outside your immediate workplace. As in any institution, you inhabit a certain space or a zone and anything outside that is a foreign land. Practically, this meant that I had to spend a lot longer getting to know people, allowing them to know me, before my presence was accepted. There’s no real substitute for patience, your confidence and familiarity. Having confronted scale and personal relationships, you run up against the problem of what it is that you’re documenting. What is it that is significant? Is it how something is made? How someone makes it? Or how they feel about the work that they’re doing?

I think that it’s in this area that Walter Nurnberg misunderstood what a still photograph can do. And in misunderstanding he chose to load his pen with acid. Still photography never has been very good at handling process. It’s an old lesson that’s pointed out by Szarkowski in *The Photographer’s Eye* that a still picture has trouble with narrative. Conventionally, photographers get round the problem by staging an event so that it can be encompassed within a single frame. Clichés I mean. From the airport handshake for instance, to an attempt by Gjon Mili for *Time Life*, with his electronic flash technique, of trying to compress within one frame a whole process. I don’t think there’s any point in pursuing an impossible goal. I would prefer to let film and television handle process, and with still documentary photographs, which are, after all, just fragments of real time, you can record still life details. You can record details, or you can allow a single picture to act as a symbol for an emotional relationship that has been revealed to you. You can use the picture as part of a series which
have an additive effect. Not in the way that I think Janine was suggesting, where you have a series of photographs which explain a process happening. I can see the validity for doing it, but I don’t think it works. When I say an additive effect, I think that the pictures, although they’re unrelated and taken in different situations, because of the context that you place them in, add up to a visual statement about a value or a relationship. Or, you can edit the material with interview text to reinforce or contradict the photographic message. If you like, you can use the words to convey the narrative and the photographs have a different function.

I asked a rhetorical question a short while ago: What is it that you are documenting? It might be as well to attempt a partial answer, because it would be idle to assume that any documentary can be objective in the classic BBC sense. The exhibition that resulted from my own study has been criticised by both left and right wing. Right-wing critique has substantially been that I do British industry a disservice, and my answer to that is that it does itself a disservice, and will continue to do so, until it begins to implement some of the Bullock Working Party Proposal on industrial democracy; until it rediscover working patterns which bring genuine benefits to workers. I mean, Nurnberg’s reading for instance of this picture, is that that woman is not working. In fact that is exactly what she is doing. She is employed to sit and look at bottles. You see the problem. The left-wing critique is that some of the interview material is confused in its political analysis and is a shade conservative. And I think they’re right, it is. But it would be stupid to believe that the British working class is seen through Marxist analysis. It’s been suggested to me that I should edit some of the material out, because it contradicts earlier statements or photographs. And I think it would be wrong to do that, because if you can’t recognise the strength with which those contradictions are held, you will never be able to communicate with the working class that you espouse.

In closing, I would just like to point you towards an article by John Berger in *Camerawork 10* titled ‘Ways of Remembering’. In it, he begins to discuss what, I think, is the central problem for those involved in documentary. It’s got nothing to do with competence or style. I think this country has very, very many fine photojournalists. The problem really revolves around context and presentation. Berger discusses public use and private use of photography. He suggests that, for documentary photography to be effective, it has to rediscover the private value and context that personal images carry with them. I put this one up because I don’t have an illustration which is really suitable to take Berger’s point further. But, in this way, you have a factory bench in which a family snap is being used (the picture on the right), more family snaps and a picture postcard and then, if you like, a public image above where you
have a travel agency poster of a woman. These are ways in which a public and private use of photography can be found all around you. I think if we begin to present our material in the way he suggests, I’m convinced that documentary has a vital part to play. In saying this, I take for granted that the study will be shaped with political, as well as visual, intelligence and it will eschew generalism; that there is no substitute for time taken at the scene (I think the two previous speakers have both revealed that) and, with all that in your control, you should be able to resist the flight into fine art. Fine art and Minimalism. It always threatens to drive photography into a sort of sterile orbit which, if only people had read Tom Wolff’s book *The Painted Word*, they would see where it was going to end up. Anyway, that’s a private conversation I’ll have with Paul Hill at some other point. That’s really all I have to say. Thanks.
Appendix III: Alison Hall’s interviews with Nick Hedges

Interview i, 3 June 2010

Hall: Were you aware of what you wanted in the Shelter photographs?

Hedges: In terms of interviewing that particular family in that particular city that you were dealing with. Let’s say it was to do with education.

Hall: Like the report Back to school…from a holiday in the slums?!

Hedges: Let’s say it was that. What you would know is that the kind of photographs that you would need to take would have to support the text. You were listening to the journalist doing the interview at the same time, so basically you would be listening and thinking ‘What kind of photograph can best describe this situation?’

Hall: So you didn’t talk about it beforehand, the night before with the writer saying, ‘Look, I'm going to ask about where they do their homework’? You didn’t have that conversation before? It was more spontaneous, it was in the space?

Hedges: Intuitive.

Hall: So it wasn’t a rehearsed thing, it was on the spot. You were listening to what was being discussed.

Hedges: Yes. You would knock on the door and find a family where, oh my god, six kids sleep in this one bed, so you think to yourself fairly rapidly ‘Well I must find a way of photographing this’. So you maybe do the interview, take some photographs and realise there was no way at that time of night or day you could get this picture without it looking completely fraudulent. You couldn’t ask all the kids to get into their pyjamas and get into bed, so you would say, ‘Would it be ok if I came back later at nine o’clock?’ and to illustrate the points you’ve been making about overcrowding, ‘Can I photograph the kids at bedtime?’ Sometimes they would say, ‘Yes, that's fine, ok we’ll see you a bit later.’ And sometimes it didn’t work out. When I say it was intuitive you didn’t necessarily know what you were going to find and one of the complaints often made - and I've heard this made by journalists
who moved from working for the magazine *Picture Post* in the fifties to then go and work in television - was that because of the costs and difficulties of production in television, they had to know what they were going to find, rather than just discovering things. If you were a print journalist and photographer you could discover things. Television journalists, for a very good reason, often have to know what kind of questions they’re going to ask before they go and almost be able to anticipate that they’re going to see this when they go there, otherwise it’s an enormous waste of time and money, so it’s a different kind of process I feel.

**Hall:** Very different really.

**Hedges:** Very different, yes.

**Hall:** You said earlier you didn’t use flash?

**Hedges:** No, very quiet camera, no flash.

**Hall:** What camera was it?

**Hedges:** A Leica.

**Hall:** Was it problematic shooting film at night? Did you feel that you were limited?

**Hedges:** These days I just cannot believe how easy digital photography is. You can change the sensitivity of the digital camera so it’s working at a very high, what used to be called, a film speed, so it’s much more sensitive in poor light conditions. Us film photographers were struggling at having to push the limit of the film stock we were shooting on, but Leicas were good because you could use them at slow shutter speeds at a fifteenth or an eighth of a second and you could just about get away with a sharp photograph.

**Hall:** Did you ask the people to be still?

**Hedges:** No. Well, sometimes. But yes, you know, you find some are blurred, but that's ok. You don't just take one picture, you take more than that and the other great thing, lesson, I learnt for myself is, we were talking earlier about psychology, when you and I are talking and we’re sitting about...What? 4 feet apart? 5 feet apart?

**Hall:** Yes.

**Hedges:** This is an ideal distance in which to conduct an intimate conversation. We’re engaged with each other. If you move further away you distance yourself from the person, so
what I used to try and do when taking photographs was try to work within their comfortable body area and I often used a wide-angle lens, a 28mm lens, which from here would allow me to photograph from top to tail.

**Hall:** So if I took a photograph of you with that I could get, from here, everything in?

**Hedges:** Well, you might not get my toes in. If you turned the camera vertical you certainly would, yes. Working in that intimate distance from someone when you’re 4, 5 or 6 feet away from them is quite different to working 10 feet away, 3 metres away or 4 metres away, because you’re over the other side of the room, you’re further away. It’s not the same psychologically. By coming into this distance there’s a trust established. Obviously, if people feel uncomfortable you back away anyway, but you can gradually do this and know that it’s going to work.

**Hall:** So this is the optimum distance because any closer and you’re in someone’s personal space?

**Hedges:** Yes, I think about somewhere between just over a metre and 2 metres is right.

**Hall:** The camera is very obvious then. I see that, if I was further away and you were doing an interview and I wanted to photograph you, I would be less intrusive over there, I would be an observer. Here we’re more engaged and it’s more intimate but then if I get a camera out, it’s more in your face isn’t it?

**Hedges:** It depends on how confident you are in using the camera.

**Hall:** Because you can’t hide the camera.

**Hedges:** You can’t hide it, no.

**Hall:** And when you go like that, it’s an immediate barrier isn’t it?

**Hedges:** What I found was that I could do two things. Don’t forget, there’s a journalist working with me.

**Hall:** So they’d be sat there?

**Hedges:** We’d be next to each other.

**Hall:** Like a triangle?
Hedges: Yes, they might be there or something like that. So sometimes the person having the conversation with the journalist, they simply don't notice that I'm there. And the other thing is, you can actually hold conversations while you are taking photographs.

Hall: Is that possible?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: So I’d be talking like this and photographing?

Hedges: Oh yes, I could take pictures of you while I was still thinking about what we were talking about.

Hall: That seems to be a little unnatural though. Did people just get used to it?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: I suppose you get desensitised to the fact that someone’s got a camera because you’re talking to them. You’re thinking of something else and you just get used to the fact that they’ve got a camera.

Hedges: Personal psychology is very different for different people and what I would say is that you must have met people with whom you suddenly feel incredibly relaxed, you don't know why, but you can just get on and talk to them and there are other people who, for no apparent reason, you feel slightly...You're having to force...

Hall: Guarded?

Hedges: Yes and you’re having to force the pace a bit and whatever. You’ve got it or you haven’t got it and I'm speaking mystically now and that's probably not right, but I think that working with another person makes it a lot easier as well.

Hall: Yes, like a double act almost.

Hedges: And also the amount of time you spend with people. You can’t spend a short amount of time with people, you can’t say, ‘I’ve got to go and see so-and-so in five minutes so I’ve only got five minutes, can you talk to me?’ You have to spend as much time as you feel you need to.

Hall: You have to invest time in someone in order to get to the truth of something.
Hedges: Yes.

Hall: I see what you mean. So did you meet the same people over and over again when you photographed them?

Hedges: No. How do you mean?

Hall: Was it usual, in terms of time constraints and money and everything, to just meet a family for that hour, or those two hours, and get some images and you may not see them again? Or did you have the luxury of trying to get to know them?

Hedges: The way it worked was that we didn’t know if we wanted to use them until we’d finished taking the photographs. When we’d finished taking the photographs we’d know whether or not we wanted to use them in the reports. Once we did, the families would be, a) protected by knowing they were going to be referred to anonymously, their names would not be used.

Hall: Were the real names never used?

Hedges: Not the real names, no. And, b) that any contact with them, subsequent to the report, would only be through a Shelter case worker so that they would have confidence in knowing that no one would approach them from the Daily whatever or the television channel, unless it was through the case worker who worked for the housing association or sometimes the social services Any access to them would be done through that person. So, whilst I may not have made contact again with the family, Shelter would through the housing association or local authority. Do you see what I mean?

Hall: Only if they were going to be used in the report? Or did they follow up every single case?

Hedges: Oh no, they would have been followed up anyway. If they were not known to social services or to a housing association and they’d been encountered by one of us, we would ask them whether they would like to be referred to a housing association or to social services. One family I came across in the East End of London was called the Rumps: Peter, Leslie, Pauline and Michael.

Hall: You’ve got a good memory.
Hedges: I know. That's the other thing about photographs. The act of taking a photograph makes a mark in your head. I can remember almost every photograph I've taken.

Hall: You've taken a lot of photographs.

Hedges: I know, but I can, each time. It imprints something there. But anyway, I was saying about this family called the Rumps. They were a family that I'd come across in the East End of London and they weren't in contact with anyone at all and in the end we were able to get them rehoused to Peterborough, to a new town and into a new house. They were living in a basement flat in Soho. So contact was sometimes very close and sometimes, for me, it wasn't very close but it was always followed up.

Hall: In his article ‘Things As They Are’, Ainslie Ellis writes about an incident involving a photographer with a zoom lens that just opened his car door, took a photograph and then zoomed off somewhere else.

Hedges: That was a photographer who got very cross with me because I told the story. His name is Tony McGrath.

Hall: Was he a friend?

Hedges: No, he wasn't a friend of mine. He worked for *The Observer* in London. I was cross because *The Observer* chose to...I spent some time taking photographs in a street, but for some reason they didn't choose to use any of those pictures. They had to send their own photographer and he got a taxi from New Street station and he sat at the end of the street with a long lens and photographed the street and then he wound the taxi window up again and got on the train to London. I suppose he proved to me that's why I didn't want to be a photojournalist in a way, because that's not his fault, that what the life of a newspaper photographer often is. He probably had three or four other things to photograph that day as well.

Hall: When you went in some of the houses, you said earlier that you didn't know what you would see. Were you genuinely shocked? Did you think ‘I can’t believe people are living like this’?

Hedges: All the time.

Hall: Did you get emotional about it?
Hedges: No.

Hall: No? Looking at your photographs is quite an emotional experience.

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Not all of them of course, but on the whole they are. I think that's one of the key things about them. They evoke empathy and emotion.

Hedges: You couldn’t get emotionally entangled in that sense. I know that sounds like a very masculine thing to say.

Hall: Was that a learned thing, or was it that you knew that you were there to do a job in as empathetic a way as possible but that you couldn’t take photographs if you were emotionally distracted?

Hedges: No, you couldn’t do that, but also you knew that the most effective thing you could do was to take the best kind of photographs that you could and use them in the most effective way that you could. That's what you could do. You weren’t a social worker, you weren’t a counsellor. Basically, you had to know what your role was.

Hall: That's what Don McCullin talks about. I just went to see his war photographs at the Imperial War Museum in Salford and he said that he had to, not be distanced, but just think, ‘Well, this is what I can do.’ Like you were saying, you could do that in a very productive way.

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Was it rewarding to know that people like the Rump family got rehoused?

Hedges: Of course it was, yes. Generally, it was rewarding working for Shelter because you weren’t just a photographer. You got involved in policy discussions about what ought to be done in certain situations, to do with rent controls and things. It was a fairly democratic organisation. Not so democratic that everyone had a vote in every decision that was made, it wasn’t a cooperative in that sense, but it was very pleasing to see that national government started to take on board some of the ideas and reforms to housing that had first of all either been discussed by Shelter, or even tested out by them. The whole thing about refurbishment and renewal of poor communities, which Shelter pioneered in Liverpool, has been something that's been developed over the last twenty or thirty years in many different places.

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Hall: So they were groundbreaking?

Hedges: There were certainly groundbreaking, yes.

Hall: Because they got homelessness redefined didn’t they?

Hedges: Yes, they did.

Hall: That's pretty key, the idea that a slum wasn’t a home. Yet statistically people were housed, they had a home. You mentioned that you had some kind of input into other things, other aspects of the policy and ideas behind Shelter. Did you get any say in what happened to your photographs?

Hedges: This is where it gets difficult, because there are one or two episodes, of which you would probably be aware, where photographs get abused by the context in which they’re put and you as a photographer have no control over it.

Hall: And you didn’t know it was going to happen?

Hedges: And you didn’t know it was going to happen. The classic example of that was when I’d been photographing in Glasgow, in Mary Hill, in an area of tenement flats which was very poor and not derelict but extremely run down. It’s largely been redeveloped now, but we were photographing families living in them and I was also doing environmental photographs too, which meant that I would go off on my own and photograph the backs, the courtyards and the activity in them, kids playing, delivering newspapers. I took a series of photographs in one courtyard and one of them was of a little boy sitting with a bottle between his legs the wrong way up with his hand on it and he had rather a close-cropped crew cut and he looked a bit of a young thug, but he was only about nine or ten (Figs. 122 and 123). He was a hard kid, but that's all he was, there was no more to him than that. It was not an unrealistic portrait of what it is to grow up in a really poor, working-class area. Some of the games you play are tough. I didn’t think any more of it. I did sets of prints, some were used in the report that year, some were just put on file and I then went off and did other work. I was working in other parts of the country. I came back and found that the advertising agency had been into the offices and gone through the files, selected this photograph and published it, in a two week period this was, with a byline or a headline which was something like, ‘Would you want your child to grow up in a life of crime?’ And they published it in a magazine or a newspaper in Scotland, which is where the picture is taken, and the mother of the child saw it.
and she sued Shelter for misrepresentation. The picture was being used in a noxious way to suggest something about the child that was simply untrue and the photographer, me, had no...No one asked me, no one said, ‘Can you tell us a bit more about this picture?’ It was just picked up and used. I was furious.

**Hall:** Did you go and see them?

**Hedges:** Who? The family?

**Hall:** No, the advertising agency.

**Hedges:** Oh, the advertising agency. I wrote to them and I said, ‘Look this is ridiculous, you can’t do this kind of thing.’

**Hall:** What happened? Did they withdraw the advert? Did they apologise?

**Hedges:** Oh, it had run its course.

**Hall:** They’d used it anyway by then?

**Hedges:** They’d used it anyway by then, so that was that.

**Hall:** Did she successfully sue them?

**Hedges:** Oh yes.

**Hall:** Can you think of anything else like that, where they took images and decontextualized them? Did they say, ‘Look, we’re thinking of this headline’ or ‘We’re thinking of this representation’?

**Hedges:** Advertising agencies are employed to wring as much money out of people as possible, in terms of donations. The thing about the use of children in photographs is that they are innocent, so people can give money to representations of children because they are innocent. They don’t have anything attached to them which is in any degree to do with responsibility. They are not responsible for the situations that they find themselves in and therefore they are easy to use in terms of advertising. People can give in response to a photograph of a child whereas they might ask questions about that child’s father or mother.
Hall: I’m interested in the idea of the deserving and the undeserving poor. Did Shelter want a certain kind of image of the poor? For example, it wasn’t ideal to take photographs of working-class women smoking cigarettes.

Hedges: Yes. It was noticeable that any photographs which had women smoking in them were never used. I didn’t stop taking them. I took them but they just weren’t selected. If there were any photographs including material possessions which suggested luxury of any sort, that would be a television set by the way, they wouldn’t be selected. You tended not to have television sets in the photographs. I wasn’t consciously leaving them out, it’s just that Shelter chose photographs which didn’t have them in.

Hall: So that was a pattern that you identified later?

Hedges: Oh yes.

Hall: It wasn’t explicitly said to you?

Hedges: No, I was never told explicitly. I think it mainly applied to the advertising campaigns, as opposed to the reports.

Hall: Ok, so once you had your photographs in-house as part of the Shelter picture library, the charity was still employing an advertising agency who would come in and rake through your photographs and choose which ones to use in the posters and the Shelter packs?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: I didn’t know that, I thought that it was all done in-house.

Hedges: No, the advertising agencies weren’t in-house.

Hall: Did you feel possessive about your photographs?

Hedges: No. Well, I felt possessive in as much as I would get cross if they got misused.

Hall: Like the one with the boy.

Hedges: Like the one with the boy. David Mumford[830] (the man I first met when I was a student) and I used to have some philosophical discussions about it and he said, ‘Look Nick, the revolution is not going to happen tomorrow. If I have a homeless family come to my door

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[830] David Mumford was the Director of the Birmingham Copec Housing Trust.
at the housing association and they say, ‘We’ve got nowhere to live, would you be able to
find some accommodation for us?’ I don't turn to them and say, ‘No, you will have to come
back when we’ve had the revolution.’ I find them somewhere to live.’ There's a long
argument which is that charities actually postpone change, that they stop real change by
providing a bandage. It’s called band aid and it’s used for overseas charities.

Hall: Because it actually maintains the system.

Hedges: It maintains the status quo.

Hall: And it satisfies the middle class because they think they’re doing something.

Hedges: My point of view hasn’t altered much in this respect. I don't think the revolution will
happen tomorrow. I think if it was going to happen, it would have happened when the banks
crashed two years ago, but it didn’t. My point of view is that you have to do what is in your
power to change things and that may only be within the small circle of people that you know.
It’s how you behave to everyone else, how you relate to everyone else in your group, that is
the revolutionary activity, rather than trying to create a situation in which a revolution will
take place, which can only occur when people are so desperate that a great mass of them will
rise up and do something. So I sort of go along with the idea that the best charities perform a
very useful function. They make us sensitive and aware to the difficulties that exist in the
world for many, many, many millions of people and if they didn't exist we would be innocent
of that.

Hall: Do you think that Shelter made visible, maybe for the first time, the reality of
homelessness in Britain? Was it the first time it was really shown in an authentic way
through your photographs?

Hedges: No, I don't think so.

Hall: You think it had been done before?

Hedges: Yes, there had been magazines that had looked at that problem, like Picture Post.

Hall: Do you think it was authentic though? I think Shelter was saying, ‘We want change, we
don't just want to look at it and then turn over the page and read about something else’.

Hedges: I’d agree with you there. I think there was a growth of campaigns and organisations
and it’s no accident that it occurred between 1966 and 1968. During the student revolutionary
period in Paris in 1968, there was a huge movement of young people in terms of wanting change, of wanting to establish things which would alter the world to make it a better place. It coincided with the establishment of Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and other organisations. A friend of mine left Shelter to go and start work with Friends of the Earth in 1970 and a lot of these organisations grew up in that turmoil and tumult of the late sixties and early seventies and they’ve continued to do good work.

Hall: Do you think photography was central to the time?

Hedges: Yes, you didn’t feel alone, there were other people doing the same thing for other organisations. There were all kinds of organisations, like the community arts workshops.

Hall: Like the Half Moon Photography Workshop?

Hedges: Yes. In the 1960s or 1970s there was a little community arts organisation in West Bromwich called Jubilee Arts and they were the founders of what has now become a multi-million pound enterprise. There was a lot of that going on all over. There were revolutionary theatre groups. There were all kinds of things like that happening and photography was part of that scene.

Hall: It sounds exciting.

Hedges: It was.

Hall: Did you ever get involved in community photography?

Hedges: Yes. When I came back to the West Midlands I was on the committee panel for West Midlands Arts. We were involved in assessing and sponsoring organisations who wanted to set things up. When I was living in London I was involved in the Half Moon Photography Workshop and Camerawork. There were lots of young people who were feeling that way and also feeling that they weren’t alone in doing it, which was a good feeling to have. The problem with, if you like, left-leaning organisations and voluntary organisations and charities and whatever, is that it starts off as a general consensus, where everyone is sympathetic to what everyone else is doing and there is this feeling of revolution in the air, and it then gets narrowed down and it fragments. What you got instead were more isolated, more specialist feelings, like the feminists, black power and black rights. My own feeling was let’s not separate it into groups.
Hall: Shelter’s early campaigns are very aggressive.

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: They were very hard-hitting. They didn’t sentimentalise poverty. They used images in a visceral, powerful way.

Hedges: Oh yes.

Hall: Was that unique to Shelter?

Hedges: Yes, for a period of time. Advertising follows fashions as well and I suspect possibly that happened.

Hall: Were any of your photographs ever considered too much? Did Shelter ever say, ‘Nick this is too much, we can’t use this’?

Hedges: No. Self-censorship was more to do with more subtle issues like women smoking and no television sets in the photographs.

Hall: That's a filtered reality.

Hedges: It’s a filtered reality. A lot of the families that we interviewed and who appeared in case studies in reports would never appear in advertising campaigns. Specifically families from ethnic minorities.

Hall: What proportion would you say? Fifty percent?

Hedges: Mainly recent immigrants to the country. What is fascinating is the area of housing behind Whitechapel, where the Rump family lived in a basement flat in a tenement block that was put up in the 1890s, to rehouse Jewish families escaping from pogroms in Russia and Poland. Rothschild, the banker, built the flats to rehouse very poor Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe. By the time I did any work there, which was in the late sixties, early seventies, the Jewish families had moved on and been replaced by a mixture of Irish families, poor white families and the beginnings of the Bangladeshi population. Now if you go there, that's the area of East London which is almost wholly Bangladeshi. It’s a way in and through the UK. They’d move from Whitechapel to North London and a bit further out. Three or four generations later they’d be in Finchley.
Hall: Did you have certain ways of getting what you wanted, in terms of the emotional impact of a photograph?

Hedges: No, you just wait for it. It doesn’t happen sometimes, it does happen sometimes. You don't exercise control. It’s this thing of serendipity, accident. If you’re talking to someone about a situation in which they might feel trapped or depressed, it’s likely that their facial expression will echo that, isn’t it? They’re not going to sit there, looking cheerful. I'm being facetious now, but you know what I mean?

Hall: Yes.

Hedges: But on the other hand sometimes people are very stoical and they don't express emotion. But what you can’t do is to say, ‘Can you look a bit more miserable?’ If I ever heard myself saying that, I’d shoot myself.

Hall: Do you think some photographers do that?

Hedges: Oh, god yes. You can hear them: ‘Give us a wave love’. Press photographers are always doing it. They’re always telling people how to behave, ‘Give us a smile’.

Hall: I suppose if you had a model that you’re paying, you might say, ‘Ok, what we’re after today is doom and gloom, can we have a bit more?’

Hedges: You’re not working with actors, you’re working with real people and you just respect them. If it doesn’t work, it doesn’t work.

Hall: How many photographs could you take in, say, two hours?

Hedges: Couple of rolls of film, seventy?

Hall: Quite a lot.

Hedges: Possibly, it might just be thirty-six.

Hall: Did you ever look through the photographs and say, ‘Well, these are no good, they’re smiling’?

Hedges: It wouldn't be that they were smiling. It would be that I would say to Anna or Jeremy, ‘Look, I know that was a really good interview because I heard what they were
saying, but I’m really sorry, there were no pictures here at all.’ You’d just admit failure. Then sometimes, you’d get some very good pictures and there’d be no interview.

**Hall:** So you couldn’t mix and match the stories with a good picture?

**Hedges:** No, you couldn’t do that, but there are other ways of using them because not every photograph is attached to a case study, sometimes they’re free-ranging, used in introductions, or whatever.

**Hall:** I’m also interested in the extreme angles that you used in a lot of your photographs, for example the photograph where you’re looking down on a girl in a backyard (Fig. 54).

**Hedges:** When she's sweeping up? Mopping? Yes.

**Hall:** There's a repeated composition where the person is in the lower third of the image and you have a bare light bulb and peeling wallpaper. There is a repeated view, especially of children, from above with very strong eye contact. I see that a lot in the Shelter photographs and I think it’s very effective in terms of emotion. You must set that up in some way?

**Hedges:** Well, I can tell you how things like that happen sometimes. In the case of the first picture you mentioned about the young woman cleaning the yard, when you want to take a photograph that explores a particular activity (it could be cleaning a yard, doing something with a bowl or whatever it might be), if you photograph it from the same level, from ground level, you can’t see what they’re doing, because their body gets in the way. If you were to go and do some washing up in the sink, I would find it quite difficult to photograph what you were doing because I’d move to one side and see the sink probably. Behind you, I can’t see the sink at all. On the other side, there might be some washing up which has already been done, getting in the way. What you do as a photographer, quite often in situations where the ground level position isn’t sufficient, is you go above and you look down on things. If you look carefully though the archive, you’ll see there are a number of pictures where I moved from ground level up to either the first floor, or even higher sometimes, because it becomes more like a map then. You can actually see the patterns of things, they lay themselves out in front of you, so this change of angle of view is not a trick, but a way of enabling you to show things in a clearer way. You can sometimes do it from very low down, so you crouch down and look up at something, or you can go above and look down on something. When you’re photographing from eye level the view is more confused. It’s a device that photographers use
and it’s not uncommon. I don't think it’s anything special about my pictures and it’s a device photographers use quite often.

**Hall:** Were you stood on a chair? There are some photographs in a kitchen where you seem to be situated way up near the ceiling (Fig. 48). How did you make those photographs?

**Hedges:** I think the staircase went down into the kitchen and I was half way up the staircase. The thing about working in very restricted areas, like people’s kitchens and living rooms, is they’re usually tiny. You’re often looking for ways to create space, so you might shoot through a doorway because the doorway allows you to stand back a bit further, or you might climb up a staircase and shoot down into the kitchen.

**Hall:** Sometimes, the houses look quite spacious.

**Hedges:** It’s a distorted perspective. It’s wide-angle. A wide-angle lens artificially exaggerates the perspective. It makes things smaller the further away they are and the things which are nearer appear much bigger, so the perspective is exaggerated because the foreground looks bigger and the background looks smaller. With a standard lens, the thing is brought into a more usual perspective, so it doesn’t look strange.

**Hall:** Is that when you would get a curved horizon line?

**Hedges:** You get a curved horizon line when you use an extremely wide-angle lens, yes.

**Hall:** I’m interested in how you used mirrors in your photographs. In some of your photographs you see disembodied faces reflected in mirrors (Fig. 188). I'm also interested in how the child’s body seems fragmented in some of your photographs. Why did you do that?

**Hedges:** A mirror is a device that you use for various reasons. Firstly, it creates space. The mirror allows you to see more, because it’s a reflection, so it artificially increases the amount that you can see in the picture.

**Hall:** Yes and it can show you what's behind.

**Hedges:** And it can show you what's behind, yes. Secondly, it is significant in terms of the decor of the room. In some houses there are no mirrors. I've been in houses where there is not a single mirror.

**Hall:** That's quite unusual.
Hedges: It is quite unusual and it immediately makes you think that the person living in that house has no concern about their own appearance. More often, the mirror is something cheap and is just put up there. Sometimes, it’s very elaborate and decorated, so it tells you something of the cultural background of a particular family. Thirdly, the more I live as a photographer, the more I think that mirrors are fascinating because they start to offer a different time dimension, because a mirror is often used as a device to suggest the past or future as well as the present. I think that’s why photographers use them in their photographs, as a metaphor for another reality.

Hall: Are these thoughts retrospective? Did you think about these things when you were making the photographs as a twenty-four-year old?

Hedges: I never thought like that then. I think there are things that you do unconsciously and the more you do them, the more you ask questions about why you’re doing them and the more you start to consider that they may, or may not, be significant. I think, in this case, I certainly wouldn’t have been conscious of them as a twenty-four-year-old, but as a sixty-year-old, I certainly would. I would consider that the mirror became a statement which is also to do with self-examination. You are looking at yourself and you’re projecting forward and backwards whatever you see.

Hall: That's interesting.

Hedges: There’s a wonderful passage by Martin Amis where he says ‘I had to stop looking in the mirror, because whenever I look in the mirror I see my father.’ And that is a truth that all men and women will possibly recognise. One of my favourite photographs with mirrors is of a girl in Glasgow (Fig. 217). She’s putting on eye make-up by a window. I was very fond of that family. The dad spent most of the interview sitting in his chair with a little boy. There were two sisters. One had a tattoo that said ‘I love Jim’. The reason I'm very fond of it is because adolescent girls are extremely difficult to photograph. We’d been with the family quite a long time and they’d got used to us being there. Another of my favourite photographs is the one of the two girls sitting together in the chair (Fig. 29). The older sister was unemployed, the younger one was still at school, I think about fourteen, and you got this terrible sense that nothing was going to change and that they were trapped, the fourteen-year-old would become an unemployed sixteen-year-old two years later. And then she got up and did her make-up in the mirror and I thought, ‘There’s just a spark’. She just got up and did it
before going out and she allowed me to take pictures without a comment. I was very fond of that picture and it’s to do with care and pride in appearance. I was very touched by it all.

Hall: It’s a very intimate moment.

Hedges: Yes, it is. I think, in general, men were more threatened by photography than women.

Hall: That’s interesting.

Hedges: Because I think they felt more responsible. Don’t forget this is 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971 and they felt responsible, in terms of bringing an income in.

Hall: Being a provider?

Hedges: Being a provider, yes. I think it was just a matter of patience. I think it was more difficult to unwind any tension with men. They were more defensive of their situation. You had to be prepared to spend more time talking to them. They felt that you were being critical of them, or judgemental.

Hall: But, hopefully, the journalist’s questions would dispel some of those fears? It would become clear that the photographs were not about judgement?

Hedges: Yes, it helped.

Hall: Do you want to talk about any particular photographs?

Hedges: I remember taking the photograph of the young boy with the scar on his stomach (Fig. 172). I was in the West End of Newcastle and I was on my own, I wasn’t photographing with anyone else. I was doing environmental and street scene pictures. There was a row of houses which were occupied and opposite them, there was a row of empty houses and there were kids climbing up on the second or third floor. There were no windows in the houses. They were climbing out of the window frames, clinging onto the brickwork. I’d been there about twenty minutes, half an hour. I don’t know if it was the school holidays or not, but one or two mums appeared and they weren’t suspicious of what I was doing, we were just chatting about things. I was talking to one mum and she said, ‘We’ve been onto the council about boarding these places up. They’re terrible. You want to see what my lad did.’ And at that point, she grabbed her son’s shirt and jersey and pulled it up. I was kneeling on the ground, literally about two foot away from him or maybe a metre away, and I saw his scar
and I took a photograph straight away. Actually I took two photographs. I took one and realised it wasn’t in focus. She was saying what had happened to him and pulled his shirt down again. It happened so quickly. I said, ‘Hold on a moment, can you do that again?’ So she lifted his top again, while I got the focus right for the second photograph. It wasn’t set up; I simply asked her to repeat what she had done. There was no lighting.

**Hall:** I thought it was taken inside, because it looked dark.

**Hedges:** No, it was taken in the afternoon sunlight. It was probably early evening, about six or seven o’clock. What had happened was that he had been in one of the buildings over the road and he’d fallen onto a nail. The nail had gone through him and punctured his liver and he was rushed to hospital and saved. He was lucky. That's why she was concerned about the kids playing in the empty houses.

**Hall:** It’s such a powerful photograph. It’s published in the *Condemned* report.

**Hedges:** Yes.

**Hall:** There’s another photograph of children playing outside that you titled *The Intoxication of Play* (Fig. 218). It’s quite unusual, as most of the Shelter photographs are untitled or have more prosaic titles. It changed the way I understood the photograph. I think I would have looked at it in a different way if you had titled it *Boy Playing in Tenement Courtyard*.

**Hedges:** Well, that shows you the power of words, doesn’t it?

**Hall:** It sounds poetic, like the title of an art photograph.

**Hedges:** It’s a documentary photograph. If you write captions for photographs you get very fed up writing for the fiftieth time, *Children Playing in Tenement Courtyard*. You think, ‘Oh, fuck this.’ *The Intoxication of Play,* that's what it’s about. I think its impatience with the matter-of-factness of captions sometimes. All journalists and photographers will complain about some aspect of their work which is so routine that they feel they have to break out. The photograph was taken in Glasgow. I was off on my own photographing the tenement courtyards where children were playing. It was their natural habitat. They weren’t bothered at all; they were having a good time. I was parked up on the second floor of one of the tenement blocks, on the staircase. I was just sitting there, watching. I was probably having a fag looking out of the window, onto the courtyard. The tenement blocks were built when Glasgow was a very well-off city in the late nineteenth century. Glasgow was the big port for
Britain, big tobacco importers and whatever else, so they were well-built if you look at the fabric of the building. Wonderful, beautiful stone spiral staircases. The buildings themselves were actually well put together, but a hundred years on, or seventy years on they were derelict. Anyway, I was just sitting there and I was watching kids play and I thought ‘I’ve got an hour or two, I’ll just sit here and see what happens’ and this lad, I think he was carrying a flag or something, he was so into the game he was playing with his mates. I watched them play for a few minutes and that ecstatic gesture suddenly happened, so I took a picture. You just get yourself ready to respond in those situations.

Hall: You have to be fast.

Hedges: Certainly with interior pictures you can never anticipate what you’re going to find, but one of the things about street photography or when you’re outside doing pictures, is that you put yourself into a situation where you think, ‘Something’s going to happen’ and you wait. It’s a bit like being a fisherman. You just wait until something happens and sometimes it doesn’t happen, but you don't say, ‘Oh, I wasted an hour’. You just say, ‘Oh well, never mind.’

Hall: Do you have your camera ready?

Hedges: You just have it on your lap.

Hall: You have to be very fast?

Hedges: Yes. The camera’s sort of pre-focused. You don't have to mess around with setting the exposure or anything like that. It’s almost ready to go when you pick it up.

Hall: Do you remember taking this photograph? (Fig. 32)

Hedges: I had to take this picture in colour as well, so I had two cameras, one was colour and one black and white, and the colour pictures were shot on slide film and they were used when speakers were going out to give lectures.

Hall: So they wanted colour for that?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Why did they want colour for that?
**Hedges:** Coloured reproduction in advertising in magazines was prohibitively expensive so they would never use colour. It existed in the *Sunday Times Magazine*. Only Benson & Hedges and Jaguar cars would use colour in advertising, so for general purposes black and white was *de rigueur*. It was the only thing you used, but Shelter, when they went out and did slide talks, wanted colour. You probably remember people doing slide talks, as an art historian? They have a carousel of slides and they talk about the slides?

**Hall:** Yes.

**Hedges:** That's what they wanted, so we used to produce coloured slides. The graphic designers did graphic artwork for slides and I did colour slide photographs for them.

**Hall:** Illustrations of what they were saying?

**Hedges:** They’d be talking about a whole range of things in the talks. They’d be talking to Shelter groups and supporters, or they’d be talking to people they’d hope would be raising money for them.

**Hall:** This photograph is the archetypal ‘charity shot’ in the way the child is being used. I don't mean used in an insincere way.

**Hedges:** Yes, I agree.

**Hall:** It’s a representation of the child as an innocent witness to the environment that she has to live in. She’s powerless to control it.

**Hedges:** She’s powerless, yes.

**Hall:** An innocent victim of circumstances.

**Hedges:** The economic circumstances, yes.

**Hall:** A lot of your photographs feature children.

**Hedges:** Kids are about all the time, aren’t they? Kids of her age are at home, they’re not at school yet, she's probably about four. She might just have been at school. It wasn’t a conscious decision, but I certainly know from the selection of images that were used by the advertising agencies, that children would feature more than I was particularly happy with because they were, as we’ve discussed, innocent victims. I would rather have had a more
rounded version of the problem. The reports were often to do with families and not just exclusively about kids.

Hall: The photograph is so dark.

Hedges: It was. It was very difficult to take photographs there.

Hall: Is this during the day?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: And the window’s here?

Hedges: The window’s above her head but there is no reflective light because the walls are dark material, the floor is dark.

Hall: Do you remember the room?

Hedges: I remember the smell. It was foul. This is their bathroom.

Hall: I can’t believe it.

Hedges: I know.

Hall: They had to have baths in here?

Hedges: No, they didn’t have baths, they just washed in a bowl but that was what was provided. It’s rented accommodation and it’s dire.

Hall: Did children notice the conditions, or was there the idea that they didn’t know any better?

Hedges: I don’t think so. You’ve only got to read any autobiographical stories from kids who have grown up in these circumstances to know that the place where you have a pee or wash figures very strongly and is, generally speaking, horrible.

Hall: She looks like she’s questioning the viewer.

Hedges: I think that's just lucky.

Hall: Were you talking to her at the time?

Hedges: Yes.
Hall: What did you talk about?

Hedges: With a four-year-old? I was probably saying, ‘Let’s get out of here’ or something. It was a very long time ago now. It was about forty years ago.

Hall: Do you remember taking this photograph? (Fig. 66)

Hedges: It’s Birmingham. Sparkbrook? It could be Balsall Heath. What I was struck by in that picture, and I have to say I was struck by it the moment I took it, was the cherubic infant Jesus pose of the baby. I mean, it is just unbelievable how much that child looks like a Renaissance painting, isn’t it?

Hall: Did you think that when you took it?

Hedges: Oh yes. I think it was taken for the Face the Facts report.

Hall: I’m interested in the way that the boy is in shadow.

Hedges: The fact he’s hidden? Pure accident. Basically he is standing in her shadow, his torso is hidden by her shadow and his bottom half is not and he looks fragmented, but it’s not a deliberate ploy. Basically that's just the way they stood. I expect the child by the doorway is thinking, ‘I'm getting out of the way of the camera’.

Hall: It reminds me of the famous Walker Evan’s photograph of the little boy in his pyjama top; the one of the sharecropper’s family in Alabama in 1935.

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Do you remember this photograph? (Fig. 219)

Hedges: Yes, that's the Rothschild dwellings, the ones in East London that I was telling you about. They were put up to house Jewish families escaping from Russia in the 1880s and 1890s.

Hall: What is the girl doing?

Hedges: She's got a doll and she's just sitting by herself on the staircase.

Hall: Were you surprised? Did you say, ‘What are you doing there?’

Hedges: No, I'm never surprised by what kids do.
**Hall:** She looks quite sad, sat there on her own.

**Hedges:** She’s sad, but on the other hand you don't know why she's sad. She may be sad because she's had an argument with her best friend, or maybe she's been told off or something, but there she was sitting on her own, fairly self-contained actually.

**Hall:** Minding her own business really.

**Hedges:** ‘Til that bloody photographer turns up, you see? Anyway, I didn’t hang about much there.

**Hall:** What about this photograph? (Fig. 220) The man looks serious, tough.

**Hedges:** No, he wasn’t. He was nice and that's his daughter Pauline.

**Hall:** Is this a basement?

**Hedges:** Yes, you can see the ground floor above.

**Hall:** Is that a pram?

**Hedges:** Probably, yes.

**Hall:** What about this photograph? (Fig. 221)

**Hedges:** That was for the Birmingham Housing Trust.

**Hall:** Is it?

**Hedges:** It was taken in 1967 or 1968 and she was a remarkable woman.

**Hall:** Was she?

**Hedges:** Absolutely. She made me feel so humble because, don’t forget, I was only twenty-one and Greta, that was her name, was living in an area of Birmingham, it wasn’t really Hockley, it was All Saints and it’s all been pulled down since. Greta lived there with her son and daughter, she’d got two children. She was younger than me, but she’d already got two children. She had more wisdom than I actually got by the time I was thirty, I suspect. She was such a wise woman for her age. She was probably about nineteen or twenty and she was using a mangle in the house.

**Hall:** Is that one of her children?
Hedges: Yes.

Hall: What about this photograph? (Fig. 222)

Hedges: That's Glasgow and that's children playing in a derelict tenement block. They’d got this pirate-type game.

Hall: Walking the plank?

Hedges: Walking the plank, yes. That was the way into the ship.

Hall: Is this photograph of the same place? (Fig. 223)

Hedges: That's the tenement courtyard, going down the staircase.

Hall: The child looks small.

Hedges: Yes, they are small anyway, so you are looking down on them.

Hall: Did you know his face would be obscured by the shadow like that?

Hedges: No.

Hall: Did you hope that his face would come out in that photograph?

Hedges: Sometimes photographers think, ‘I might just get away with this.’ And when they process the film, they realise that the shadow is so strong, there is just nothing there, so they won’t get away with it and it has to go to black.

Hall: I think it’s more interesting because it’s like that.

Hedges: It’s sort of more truthful. If you walk up and down staircases like that, you are exposed to real extremes of lighting and its very dark on those staircases, except for these patches of light where the windows break in.

Hall: What about this photograph? (Fig. 179)

Hedges: That’s the Rump family again. There was Pauline and Michael and there were two twins and I can’t remember the twins’ names but they didn’t have a bathroom, so the bath was a plastic bath which was next to the sink. I said it would be good to take pictures of bath time, if they didn’t mind, and they thought about it and they said, ‘Yeah, that's alright’, so I
came back one evening and did the photographs. That's Pauline Rump. No it’s not Pauline, that's her youngest sister, having a bath.

**Hall:** Now, a photographer couldn’t take this photograph. It just wouldn't happen now, would it?

**Hedges:** You couldn’t take it now. You’d be prosecuted for it.

**Hall:** Was the mum there somewhere?

**Hedges:** Yes.

**Hall:** And later you photographed them when they’d been rehoused?

**Hedges:** Yes, that's right. Yes, the mum would be there.

**Hall:** So did you say, ‘Ok mum, out of the shot’?

**Hedges:** No.

**Hall:** Because the image of the child on their own in that space is very powerful.

**Hedges:** I assume she might have just gone off to get a towel. I'm afraid I'm very undirectorial in photographs.

**Hall:** Really?

**Hedges:** I have a view of that, which is that actually it’s to do with the quality of my imagination. I don't think my imagination is anywhere near as rich as what actually happens in life. It’s not false modesty. I feel that real life is far more rich and diverse than my imagination could ever make it, therefore let’s just see what happens. Some photographers are completely different, because they have a much stronger sense of direction and stronger sense of...It might be narrative, or it might be to do with their imagination. They’ll construct things far more, but I don't do that and I'm not claiming either way is right, but I just know what's right for me.

**Hall:** Can you say anything about this photograph of a boy being dried by his mother at the sink? (Fig. 38) The motif of children in dark spaces crops up quite a lot in your Shelter photographs.
Hedges: Yes. That photograph was probably overprinted, inasmuch as I exaggerated the pool of light and darkness in that. There's probably a little bit more detail in the shadows.

Hall: Was that because you wanted more impact?

Hedges: Yes and I think probably because, I guess, down here and round here the room was untidy, so you don't want to show that.

Hall: Because that would distract you?

Hedges: It would.

Hall: What about this photograph? (Fig. 37) This is really interesting. There's someone behind there.

Hedges: Ah, this was done like this because it was for the report called *Happy Christmas!* It was taken in Birmingham and when it was selected to go in the report the graphic designer said, ‘I want to print the copy across the top’, so what happened was, we let the background go slightly darker up here. The girl’s grandmother is behind her, but she appears in the report anyway. This is a much more graphic image, but the background is manipulated so it is darker.

Hall: Because of the practicalities of needing space for the typography?

Hedges: It was to allow Ian to put the type across that top part without it being interfered with by any photographic detail.

Hall: What was his name?

Hedges: Ian Mattingly.

Hall: And this photograph? (Fig. 224)

Hedges: That's the staircase of the tenement block.

Hall: The perspective is great.

Hedges: I knew that it was going to turn out like that, because those tenement blocks and the staircases, as I said to you before, are so dark and you get these sudden patches of light.

Hall: Brilliant, blinding light.
**Hedges:** Absolutely, really blinding light, yes.

**Hall:** What about this photograph? (Fig. 225)

**Hedges:** That’s Liverpool 8 and I watched that baby for five or ten minutes. It had been propped up on the windowsill with a bottle and it was just watching the world go by. It was extraordinary.

**Hall:** This is the photograph I mentioned earlier, the one where I wondered where you were stood (Fig. 48).

**Hedges:** Yes, on the staircase.

**Hall:** Was it one of the worst kitchens you ever saw?

**Hedges:** It was actually. It was terrible.

**Hall:** Was it cold?

**Hedges:** Not too bad, but the irony about a lot of these slums in Birmingham was that they’re actually owned by Birmingham Council because they were compulsory purchases for slum clearance, but you don't get immediate slum clearance so people were condemned to live probably two or three more years in these conditions before they actually got rehoused.

**Hall:** And this photograph? (Fig. 195)

**Hedges:** That was the family from Manchester. The Pryde family.

**Hall:** It is pretty shocking.

**Hedges:** It was horrible.

**Hall:** Is this one of the most shocking things that you photographed?

**Hedges:** Yes it was, and that's all the kids.

**Hall:** Are they all brothers and sisters?

**Hedges:** Yes and you see the little baby? That baby died five weeks later.

**Hall:** Really?

**Hedges:** Hepatitis, so we said we wouldn't use the photograph.
Hall: Did they let you know that the baby had died?

Hedges: We found out through the housing association.

Hall: Is it difficult to look at these photographs?

Hedges: No, it just reminds me that I've not been shaken too far from what I thought then. Most people, when they get to my age, have turned into something else. If you’re not a socialist by the time you’re twenty, you have no soul and if you’re not a catalyst by the time you’re forty, you’ve got no brain, or something like that. It’s been something that's been quoted at me forever, all through my life.

Hall: So you feel that you’ve stayed true to your beliefs and political principles?

Hedges: I’ve been very lucky. I've found a way of getting to where I am without having to chase money or been forced into a situation where that's been a main concern. A lot of people don't have the freedom to do that, do they?

Hall: No.

Hedges: I didn’t opt out of the system. I had two daughters and I thought it was necessary to look after them and provide for them. I feel moved when I look at some of the photographs. You feel upset for the Pryde family, that they lost their baby. You feel upset for the fact that they had to live in absolutely dreadful housing conditions, where all the kids slept in one bedroom.

Hall: Did they sleep in this bed?

Hedges: No, it wasn’t that bed. It was thirty-nine years ago. It worries me if people are still being placed in a situation like this. I suspect that it’s not quite as bad as this now.

Hall: We hope so.

Hedges: We hope so, but I do know that there are children of refugees locked up in prisons still.

Hall: This photograph is taken from an interesting angle (Fig. 226).

Hedges: This is another Birmingham picture. You said you wanted to choose Birmingham pictures mainly didn’t you? Or was it by accident?
Hall: Well, actually I'm looking at all your pictures.

Hedges: Well, this is Birmingham again.

Hall: Is this a black baby?

Hedges: She was a black baby or mixed race, I think, yes. That was her cradle. That was where she was put to sleep. I was very touched by this.

Hall: She looks quite comfortable. She looks healthy.

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: What about this photograph? (Fig. 153)

Hedges: That's Michael Rump.

Hall: There's a television shown in the top right-hand corner of the photograph.

Hedges: Yes, they didn't manage to crop that one out. We got to know the Rump family quite well, partly because they lived in London, that's where I was based. We took Pauline and Michael to the famous free concert in Hyde Park with the Rolling Stones, when they let the butterflies go. Michael was on my shoulders when they let the butterflies go. That would have been the summer of 1969.

Hall: Were you quite close to them?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Do you ever wonder where they are now?

Hedges: I do. I've tried to find them on Google but I haven't been successful. We were able to sort out some housing for them. It was good.

Hall: What about this photograph? (Fig. 71)

Hedges: That was the Tandy family from Sheffield.

Hall: I think you wrote about them in your Charity Begins At Home article.

Hedges: I did.

Hall: You said that Shelter only used photographs of them looking miserable.
Hedges: Yes.

Hall: You implied that Shelter wasn’t authentic in the way that it presented the homeless.

Hedges: I think the problem is it was one-dimensional. Shelter’s main concern was to raise money to rehouse people who were living in bad housing and to educate and persuade politicians to perhaps change their minds about legislation to do with housing. If you show people who are smiling and having a good time, a) you may not give them any money and, b) you might not think the problem is as bad as it is. So you take the photographs. I had photographs of Mrs Tandy actually sharing a joke with people and the rest of the family, but I knew Shelter wasn’t going to use them. It’s an incomplete picture.

Hall: Than the one you saw?

Hedges: Than the one I saw, yes.

Hall: Do you think it was unavoidable?

Hedges: It’s not unavoidable for documentary photographers, but it’s unavoidable for a documentary photographer working for Shelter. Other photographers could show a complete picture.

Hall: You mean photographers that weren’t involved in raising money for charity?

Hedges: Exactly, yes. If they weren’t employed doing that. It’s part of the nature of the job and I don't blame the charity. I have to make the observation though that it’s not a complete picture.

Hall: Shelter must have known it wasn’t the complete picture.

Hedges: Oh yes.

Hall: What about this photograph? (Fig. 154)

Hedges: He had the same name as me, he was Nicholas.

Hall: Was that his sister? They look like each other.

Hedges: They were brother and sister. They were a lovely family and they lived in Bradford.

Hall: You use a lot of doorways in your photographs.
Hedges: That's an interesting observation. I don't know what to say to that. Maybe that's something we could take up next time round. I will think about that, yes.

Hall: What about this photograph? It’s almost all black (Fig. 157).

Hedges: Mr Owen. There's just no light in that room.

Hall: They didn’t have any windows?

Hedges: A skylight.

Hall: Was it a basement?

Hedges: It was a multi-occupied house and I suspect it was a room made out of a room. It wasn’t a proper room, no.

Hall: So they just had the one room and a shared bathroom or something?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Do you remember where it was?

Hedges: Yes, that's Liverpool 8 and it’s quite near...What's the name of the street? It’s not Parliament Street...It might be Hope Street but it runs towards the new Roman Catholic Cathedral.

Hall: I like it because it shows a man holding a child. Where was the mother?

Hedges: They were separated. He’s bringing those kids up.

Hall: He looks sad.

Hedges: He was. He was bearing up. He was alright, Mr Owen, he was ok.

Hall: And this photograph? (Fig. 140)

Hedges: Well, this was a very sad family. I felt really sorry for him because he worked for the council. Mr and Mrs Bell-Smith.

Hall: You’ve got a really good memory, remembering all this.
Hedges: Well, I told you about photographs, that they are imprinted. This was Liverpool 8 and he worked for the council. They had no running water and they had to cook on that little Belling oven.

Hall: What were the buckets for?

Hedges: For the water. They used to have to fill them up with water from over the road.

Hall: I thought they were for a leaking roof.

Hedges: No, they used to have to walk over the road to get water. It was terrible.

Hall: Did they just have this room or a whole house?

Hedges: They had this room and another room, a little tiny room, where the kids went to sleep, I think.

Hall: So the parent slept in this room?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Did this have a positive ending?

Hedges: I think so, because the housing trust was on their case, yes.

Hall: It looks quite clean though, no peeling wallpaper. What about this photograph? (Fig. 51)

Hedges: That was an Irish Catholic family living in Moss Side in Manchester.

Hall: It’s the same little girl that you photographed in the dirty bathroom.

Hedges: He’s quite smart, isn’t he?

Hall: Yes, he is.

Hedges: I don’t know...I wonder if he’s been to a funeral.

Hall: I thought he might have dressed up because you were there.

Hedges: No, he didn’t do that.

Hall: He’s wearing a jacket.
**Hedges:** They were quite shy. I think they’d only recently moved to the country. I think they’d only been over here about eight weeks and he’d come over for work.

**Hall:** Where was his wife?

**Hedges:** She was photographed. She should be in some of the pictures.
Hall: How did you get involved with Shelter in the first place?

Hedges: There were two principal reasons. During the summer holidays in my second year as a student, I’d come across a book in the local library. I lived in Bromsgrove and I was interested at that time in ideas about the world, cultural histories, politics, philosophy; those kinds of things. I came across a book which I’d never heard of, but it had got some photographs in, so that was a good thing. It was called *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and it was by James Agee and Walker Evans. It’s probably a book you know and I was absolutely knocked out by it and not only by the photographs, but by the arguments that James Agee puts in the beginning about the responsibilities that people have, as journalists and photographers, towards their subject matter. It seemed to me that he stated a particular kind of relationship, which is one which is uncommon in terms of the media. They don't tend to think of it like that, because they get so wound up with the pace and the demands of the media that they lose sight of the real reasons why they’re doing things. That's not a criticism, it was just inevitable, but what Agee and Evans did was to establish a way of working where they went and lived with three farmer families for three months. Agee developed a way of working in terms of his text where he said, ‘Nothing I observe is too small’. And at the end of the preface he said, ‘If I could do anything in this book, I would present you with lumps of earth, pieces of cloth’. Basically, he was saying that the essential element of documentary is the detailed observation of certain things. An undercurrent of that, of course, is that the journalist and the photographer recognise it as being significant, poetic, whatever you want to say. There has to be recognition, in terms of the observer. Take it to its extreme and you do what Andy Warhol did, which was to make a twenty-four-hour film of the Empire State Building and of course all skyscrapers move slightly, but they move so slowly that it’s imperceptible. So that book in the second year of my college education was very significant. When I got back to college, I discovered that they had a relationship with something called the Birmingham Housing Trust which had approached the college in previous years to provide them with photographs to publicise their work as a housing association which rehoused families living in poor housing. When it came round to my third year, the approach was still there and I said, ‘Oh, I’d love to do that. That fits in with what I want to do’. So, in actual fact, it was a prelude to me eventually going to work for Shelter. I worked for half of
my third year, when I wasn’t pissing about, doing this work and getting to know people in the way that Agee and Evans had suggested was the right way of doing things.

**Hall:** You mean getting to know the people you were photographing?

**Hedges:** Yes. I got to know the families. I can still remember the name of one woman, Greta who was, I think, a year or two years younger than me (Fig. 221). She'd already got two kids and she lived in this terrible slum property in Ladywood and I just thought what a wonderful woman she is, because she had enormous strength of character. She had a wonderful relationship with her kids and she was not browbeaten by the situation she was in.

**Hall:** Quite inspiring.

**Hedges:** She was an inspiring woman. I spent some time with Greta. That was in 1967 or 1968.

**Hall:** She made a big impression on you?

**Hedges:** And her son Steve, I can remember his name too and he was only two. During my final year at college I did this exhibition and by the time it came to the end of the college year, sometime in July, I was sitting in the offices of the Birmingham Housing Trust, sticking these giant prints onto flat boards. They were doing an external exhibition and the prints needed to be 6 feet by 4 feet, which is 2 metres by a metre and a bit, and I didn’t know how to stick them onto the board, so we used wallpaper paste. This is how it all begins, you see. I always laugh now when I think of the way in which photographers present their work in the Tate Modern and whatever, and they say, ‘This is a certain sort of print’ and it’s become so sophisticated, it’s unreal. Anyway, I was sitting in this empty office sticking these prints, literally, onto these flat boards with a wallpaper brush and a bloke put his head around the door and said, ‘Oh, nice photos’. And I didn’t know who he was and then he disappeared and that was the only conversation. About three weeks later, I had a phone call from London (by which time I was signing on) and it was the same man, Des Wilson, who was the Director of Shelter, and he offered me a job as a photographer. Absolute luck. If I hadn’t been sitting in that office with a wallpaper brush in my hand I’d have probably ended up as a wedding photographer. Who knows? I don't think I would have done that. You can see that good fortune and good luck play an enormous part in everyone’s life, especially for a photographer who doesn’t pose things and doesn’t set things up. Luck is a very important factor.
Hall: Maybe it was meant to be.

Hedges: Well, no I wouldn't have said it was meant to be. I put it down, much more, to simply luck. I don't believe in the hand of god. And I think that, when you’re taking photographs, good fortune is also significant. A very famous quote of Cartier-Bresson is that ‘Eighty or ninety percent of good photography is about luck’ and being able to exploit it and be ready for it, so when it happens you can react.

Hall: And being able to recognise it.

Hedges: And being able to recognise it, yes.

Hall: I'm interested in your working methods at Shelter. When you arrived what was the set up? How were you introduced to it? How did it change? Did you challenge things?

Hedges: Well, having offered me a job, I went down to London. I started in September or October of 1968 and we were really lucky, because Shelter was in some offices in The Strand which was very near Fleet Street (the centre, in those days, of the newspaper and magazine industries), so extremely good for PR. You were literally next to things and the offices were rented out to Shelter by Shell Mex, or Shell as it is now, the big petroleum company. Shelter had a peppercorn rent, which meant they paid very little for them. When I arrived, they appointed at the same time a journalist and a graphic designer, because they had begun to realise that being able to offer quality material to the media was a significant thing for a charity and being able to do it from in-house, rather than commissioning freelancers, was something they felt they could have more control over. So, back on the sixth and seventh floor of this Shell Mex house, we were wandering around thinking, ‘What do photographers need? A darkroom’. Oh Lord, these are offices and hadn’t really been explored that much. There was a sort of double or triple office, with a little annex to it and someone unlocked the door and, lo and behold, it was a darkroom. What we had stumbled on was the old studio of the Shell Mex film unit. Shell had been making high quality documentary films from the 1930s and of course they had all moved out of this building to a new headquarters across the river. So there we were, with a purpose-built darkroom and a room which was perfect for a graphic designer, a journalist and a photographer to work in (Fig. 227). Pure luck again. It was good fortune.

Hall: Do you remember the names of the graphic designer and the journalist?
**Hedges:** Ian Mattingly was the graphic designer; Jeremy Harrison and Anna Bowman were the two journalists. Jeremy to start with and then, I think he was joined by a second journalist, Anna Bowman. It wasn’t all perfect. To start with, there was no equipment, so I had to agree that I would supply all my own equipment so I supplied any larger camera apparatus, everything basically. Luckily, my granny had given me a hundred pounds for my twenty-first birthday and I bought an enlarger and, like most college students, you tend to do holiday jobs and I’d scrimped and saved and got a couple of cameras.

**Hall:** What kind of cameras did you have?

**Hedges:** I always used Leicas, which are rangefinder cameras and they’re very quiet and discreet and they’re extremely reliable as well. They have all sorts of advantages. You can focus them in very low light levels. In those days, you had to focus the camera, you had to focus the lens. This interview is taking place in 2010 so the thing I’ve noticed, I just smile about it now, because photography has become so much easier technically than when I started in the mid to late sixties. You were putting yourself up against technical problems all the time if you didn’t want to use flash, if you just wanted to use available light. You’re working in very low light level conditions and therefore you had to find enough sensitivity in the film or the way the film was processed to allow you to take photographs without using additional lighting. So you’re working at the edge, the margin all the time.

**Hall:** How did you do that?

**Hedges:** I had a friend at college and we were both interested in exploring that and we used to find ways of processing film which gave you marginal advantages. Using a Leica meant you could use a slow shutter speed, something like a fifteenth or an eighth of a second and, as long as the subject matter wasn’t doing a Boogie Woogie, you could get a reasonable shot. In actual fact, you got very sharp pictures, but you had to find a way of working around the technical limits. It’s so easy now, in comparison.

**Hall:** How would you technically capture more light from the film in the darkroom?

**Hedges:** Effectively, what you do to extend the sensitivity of the film is develop the film for slightly longer. There are difficulties associated with doing that. It’s a bit like baking. You sometimes get a very hard crust in baking if you cook something for too long, so with photography what you do is agitate the film slightly less. It means that the contrast doesn’t increase too much. You can do things in the darkroom which will help marginally.
**Hall:** Once you were working for Shelter, how much freedom did you have? Could you change things?

**Hedges:** I was horrified by one of the first things I found. I arrived there and after the settling in period and debriefings and whatever, I was asked to go to an advertising agency. They produced some coffee and I was asked to choose a boy from a model agency catalogue to pose in the studio as a homeless boy and I thought ‘I haven’t come here to do this, this is ridiculous’. Anyway, it was the first job I was asked to do and having done it (because it was a very tight deadline) I went to see the Director of Shelter and I said, ‘Look, we don't need to do this, this is fraudulent. Why do we need to pose something when out there, as you know Des and as I know, because I've done quite a lot of photography now, there are hundreds and thousands of children and families who are living in desperately bad housing conditions. Rather than inventing a truth about them, why don't we just simply allow them to speak?’ And so they agreed. It didn’t take much to win them over. If you notice in one of the earlier reports, which I think you’ve seen, it’s blatantly obvious that they’re posed photographs. There’s a rather elegant man and woman sitting on a doorstep, with a piece of brand new luggage, which has even got the shop label on it, and it’s blatantly obvious they’ve been chosen from an agency catalogue (Fig. 136). They’re sat on the doorstep to pose in an eviction photograph. It’s just ridiculous. Shelter had used models in advertising as well, but after that they chose not to pose photographs. Certainly while I was working there they didn’t do it.

**Hall:** Did you use models when you were working with Birmingham Housing Trust?

**Hedges:** No.

**Hall:** Did you photograph people in their houses?

**Hedges:** Yes. You’ve got to be patient, you’ve got to be lucky and you’ve got to develop a way of working with people so that they are sympathetic to what you’re doing. You can’t turn up in a Rolls Royce and get out and photograph. I know people who’ve done that. You can’t get out of a train at New Street, get a taxi and sit at the end of a street with a long lens and photograph and again I know people who’ve done that. You’ve got to develop a rapport and it takes time and it’s to do with attitude and also it’s to do with the organisation having the flexibility to allow you to do that.

**Hall:** How was your work for Shelter organised throughout the year? Did you work to a timetable?
Hedges: I was employed as a full-time photographer. I soon discovered that being a full-time photographer actually means you spend about seventy percent of your time in the office. No, you probably spend twenty percent of your time in the office, fifty percent of your time in the darkroom and fifteen percent having discussions and, if you’re lucky, about fifteen percent of your time actually shooting photographs. Anyway, I realised that Des was an extremely savvy newspaper and PR person. He understood the rhythms in which the media worked and I think, exploit is the wrong kind of word, but knowing them, he could then tie in everything that Shelter did. Don't forget a charity’s principal concern is raising money to rehouse people. The rehousing was done through the housing associations and their educational role is significant, but their main job is rehousing people. Des recognised that there were times of the year when publicity was an extremely good thing. Obviously Christmas, because it’s an absolute cliché but Christmas is a time for giving. People tend to think of other people and so gifts to charities always rise enormously around Christmas time. In terms of influence Des realised that the political Party season or the conference season, which is usually September, is also very significant, so what he decided to do was to publish Shelter’s main reports every year in September to coincide with party political conferences. So you would get the Conservative Conference, the Labour Conference, the Lib Dem Conference and Shelter would have a stand there, what these days you’d call a lobby group. Shelter would publish their reports to coincide with these Party conferences and sort of piggy back on the back of them, because certain political figures would be particularly interested in issues to do with housing and social deprivation and they would hone in on these things as evidence for whatever policy they might be interested in talking about.

Hall: So Shelter was using the politicians and they were using Shelter?

Hedges: Oh yes, it was mutual.

Hall: Was it all to do with PR?

Hedges: Well, it depends how cynical you are. The problem in 2010 is that many politicians are interested in the acquisition, and then the exploitation, of power. My belief is that all politicians have got to have that interest, but I also believe that people have convictions. I believe that Gordon Brown, for instance, has and had a certain attitude towards certain issues which were the outcome and fruit of a passionate belief in certain things. The same would be true of other politicians from different persuasions. Effectively, what Shelter had got was this pattern of intensive media activity around the time of the party political conference in
September and big fundraising things around Christmas. You would find that your working year was based around certain key points like that.

**Hall:** Were your photographs tied to the themes of the reports?

**Hedges:** Yes. Ian, the designer, was involved in the production of reports and newspapers, which were produced for Shelter supporters. There was strong support from local Shelter groups, which were voluntary groups dedicated to promoting Shelter and raising money of course. We also produced exhibition material, because Shelter made use of exhibition stands quite a lot. There was coherence between publications and images. There tended to be significant images, maybe the cover of the report, which was then used as part of an advertising campaign in the press and also used as a display poster as well, so there was the production of certain iconic images.

**Hall:** So that was a conscious strategy?

**Hedges:** Yes. The focus was on the report and the title of the report, *Condemned, Reprieve, Happy Christmas!* or whatever it might be. They would focus on certain images and often they were the cover. The photographs were an integral part of things.

**Hall:** So you might see photographs from within reports turned into posters and leaflets?

**Hedges:** Yes.

**Hall:** So that created a strong identity for that year and then the year after it would be a different focus?

**Hedges:** Yes. Des was also very clever in that he would choose, along with the management committee, different cities as the focus for the reports. Every year you would always have an area of London.

**Hall:** Always?

**Hedges:** Yes, because London is, I'm afraid, the capital city and it’s where most of the media is based. It might be Notting Hill, Battersea or North London. It could have been anywhere basically, but it was an area of London and then they would also choose cities in different parts of Britain: Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, Bristol. Then the following year it would be Edinburgh, Newcastle, Liverpool and so basically they would spread the press coverage out, because the regional press coverage was significant too,
because it became blatantly obvious that local authorities and local policy towards housing was different in different parts of the country. It was significant, in terms of Shelter’s campaign to identify these differences. For instance Salford, next door to Manchester, had got whole swathes of housing which had been condemned as slums in 1937 and this was now forty years later and people were still living in them, so that would be a problem for Salford, so you might focus on it in that way. In Liverpool, it was to do with multi-let housing and rented accommodation in large Victorian houses, as well as substandard terraced houses. Shelter also looked at themes related to bad housing. One year they might look at the relationship between bad housing and health, another year they might look at the relationship between bad housing and education. These were ways of making connections for people to see that adequate, good housing underpinned everything.

**Hall:** Was the work that you did with schools ongoing, or was it also structured around particular times of the year?

**Hedges:** It was more of an ongoing thing. Shelter recognised that education was a very significant part of their ability to tune in and make connections with people. They wanted to do two things: they wanted to tap into the idealism of young people and they wanted to provide educational material for secondary schools, which would enable young people to understand about problems connected to housing. Then, as now, there was an enormous housing shortage and young people, especially those who wanted to get married, had huge problems in terms of finding reasonable accommodation to live in, so education was a very significant part of what Shelter did.

**Hall:** Was that unusual for a charity?

**Hedges:** I think you’ll find that Oxfam do the same thing. One of the problems, in fact Third World charities have quite difficult problems to do with it, is that the charity commission has rules about what charities can and can’t do. Education is one of the difficult areas, because it’s all very well saying, ‘We want to raise money to provide a consistent water supply for a village in Africa’ but you have another problem if you say, ‘We want to raise money to persuade people that this government’s policy about Third World aid is inadequate’. Charities have to follow tight regulations about education. They can’t be seen to be overtly political. I think Shelter wasn’t the only charity doing this in 1968, but some of their initiatives were really very striking. There was one where they employed education officers. We had about three Education Officers. One was involved in getting young people to raise money, young
Shelter groups who were also involved in campaigning, which was significant and very important. The others provided educational material to secondary schools. We provided curriculum material and published material for fifteen, sixteen and seventeen-year-olds and published it in teachers’ packs, which could then be distributed. They were really good and they were enjoyable to work on because, as a photographer, they allowed you to produce a wider range of work.

Hall: Were you given guidelines for the teachers’ packs?

Hedges: Yes, you had specific guidelines. They looked at issues to do with bringing up children in overcrowded conditions, so you went and found some. Or they would look at different communities. For example how rural communities mature and develop compared to inner city communities, compared to suburban communities, compared to new towns. So I would spend time photographing in a new town, time photographing in a village in Worcestershire or time photographing in a mining village in South Wales. Basically, you would work around a general theme. It was more independent than working on the annual reports.

Hall: You’ve mentioned that often you would rephotograph homeless people at a later date, to see if their conditions had improved. How long did you wait before you photographed them again?

Hedges: Well, for instance with the Rump family from the East End of London, we got to know them over quite a long period of time in 1968 and eventually they were rehoused to a new town or Peterborough, which isn’t really a new town but it was being developed as a new opportunity for people moving out of cities. That probably took about a year, so I think maybe I photographed them in their new place in Peterborough in about 1969 (Fig. 181).

Hall: I don't think I've seen any photographs of them in their new house.

Hedges: Well, they were used. I don't know where they are.

Hall: So there was continuity with homeless families in some cases.

Hedges: Yes, a follow-up report.

Hall: You’ve described how you worked with a writer. Which came first, the photographs or the case studies?
**Hedges:** I worked with the journalist. We would establish a base in whatever city was featured in the report, say Liverpool. There were local people in Liverpool who worked with Shelter. There was a housing trust, a neighbourhood action project, which was funded by Shelter, and therefore there were people who we would contact. These days you would call them case workers or social workers and they could provide you with introductions to people who would be willing to work with you in preparation for a report. Sometimes, it was disastrous. I remember photographing in Salford for a week and getting absolutely nothing and the journalist got very good interviews and I got absolutely dreadful photographs.

**Hall:** Why?

**Hedges:** The situations just did not lend themselves to photographs. It could have been the physical nature of the building. It didn’t reveal itself easily to the camera.

**Hall:** You mean it was too dark?

**Hedges:** No, perhaps the building was the wrong shape. The interview may have been very harrowing but the photographs didn’t reflect this. Maybe they had a television and it was hard to photograph the space without including the television. Well televisions were a no-no as far as photographs were concerned, because they were considered a luxury, so you tried to take photographs without them. For whatever reason, you may get very good interviews and not very good photographs. In Newcastle, we got superb photographs which were very poignant and very telling, but the interviews were not necessarily as good, which is surprising because Geordies are very articulate, but it just wasn’t the right kind of material. You had to be flexible about that.

**Hall:** Why would a television detract from people telling you that their house is cold and damp?

**Hedges:** I’ll tell you why, because people are very judgemental. People thought if the homeless could afford to have a television, they could afford not to live in a place like that, that it was their own fault. What you had to try to do was not prejudice people’s points of view by including certain things. I might shift two paces to the right so I didn't get the television in. When you work for a charity there are certain rules and conditions. Basically, you work with real material, so you don't set up pictures, you don't pose them, you don't use kids from advertising agencies or model agencies, but what you would do is accept that the significance and the success of the charity depends on raising money to rehouse people.
Whilst you’re not telling an untruth, you’re only telling a partial truth. You can’t throw everything in and that’s because you’re dealing with an imperfect response, you’re dealing with judgemental people who are saying homeless people don’t deserve to have televisions. There’s a false logic in this, there’s a sense of saying, ‘Well, look, if they didn’t have a television they wouldn't be living in bad housing.’ As though ninety pence a week rent on a telly would get them out of bad housing.

Hall: It wouldn't make any difference.

Hedges: Of course it wouldn't, but I'm saying that's the kind of judgemental attitude you’re working with.

Hall: When you started, were you aware of that?

Hedges: No.

Hall: Was it just something you learned?

Hedges: Effectively, when you’re working as a photographer you shoot three or four rolls of film, which is the equivalent of around 150 photographs. You know that they will only be able to use two or three of those photographs.

Hall: Out of 150?

Hedges: Yes. They might use a few more as library pictures at some other point in time.

Hall: And the rest are destroyed?

Hedges: No, they’re not destroyed, just not used.

Hall: Do they stay in the archive?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Did you keep every single negative?

Hedges: Yes. Like the contact prints of Mrs Tandy in Sheffield (Fig. 88). There are a number of photographs of her which were never used because they showed her relaxing and showing affection to her kids, like any mother would. That's normal, but it didn’t convey the message that Shelter wanted. They wanted to say that Mrs Tandy was affected very, very badly by the insecurity of her housing. She had got no gas, no electricity (which she hadn’t), so the
photographs needed to reinforce that. What they can’t do is suggest that, on top of all that, she could actually contrive to be a good human being and love her children. I would say that the bigger truth is actually more significant, but the charity couldn’t take the risk of showing that.

**Hall:** The charity relies on a single photograph to sum up a whole life. It’s not a photo-story in *Picture Post* is it?

**Hedges:** You’ve got a limited amount, you’ve got one interview and possibly two photographs, and that's it. Going back to how I worked with the journalist. We were working in very tight, intimate spaces with people in situations where they might feel threatened or invaded. It’s a tricky and difficult thing for a photographer, and indeed a journalist, to do. One of the things I feel quite strongly about is the relationship that photographers develop with the subjects they’re photographing. It’s really significant and I think that it’s something that photographers don't talk about. Often they just take it for granted, or it’s not something they think about. If you can imagine you’re in a room which is probably 12 feet by 10 feet say, or 4 metres by 3 metres. You’re in a very intimate situation with someone and you need to allow them to be articulate and in charge of the situation themselves. You’ve invaded their inadequate house, inadequate room, so you’ve got to make yourself quite small, you’ve got to somehow reduce your presence. I did this to start with instinctively and I used to smile to myself when I found I was crouching again. You don't take up much space. You don't stand up. You get down and if you’re not sitting on the edge of a seat or a sofa, you’re crouching down on the floor. You’re low and you’re not imposing yourself on the situation and psychologically that is very significant. The other thing, which is a purely technical thing, is that when you’re working in those sorts of situations, you almost always use a wide-angle lens. It allows you to photograph from between a metre and 2 metres away from someone and actually show quite a large part of them and also the space around them. That is really important. Wide-angle lenses have more depth of field. Things appear sharper than if you’re using a standard or longer lens.

**Hall:** I remember you said that you tried to engage with the people you photographed; that you talked to them while you were photographing them.

**Hedges:** Yes. You develop a rhythm with the journalist and you know that if the journalist needs to take a break to think about something or write something down, rather than create an awkward silence, you just carry on talking and allow the journalist to catch up. Equally, the
journalist is sensitive to your needs too and they will shuffle around so that they don't get in your way. It is a double act, but not in the comedic sense of the word. It’s more two people working together. I wouldn't necessarily be working with a journalist. I’d be on my own sometimes, probably around thirty or forty percent of the time.

**Hall:** Did you prefer that?

**Hedges:** I didn’t mind. It was just different, being on your own. It gives you a lot of freedom. You’re not tied to other people’s need for a cup of tea, or whatever else. One of the things I found is that I’d actually talk when taking photographs. The thing about using a Leica is it’s such an old fashioned, small camera that it hardly makes a noise when it goes off. It’s like a whisper and you could actually hold conversations with people while you’re taking photographs of them. You need a little practice. You become so used to the technical side, that you don't even think about it. You’re not worried about what the camera’s set to. You’re not worried about all those kinds of things. It’s quite an easy thing to do.

**Hall:** And the people just got used to the camera?

**Hedges:** Yes.

**Hall:** Were your photographs informed by what you were talking about?

**Hedges:** Yes. You didn’t ask questions for effect, you asked questions because you wanted to find out certain things about their situation. For instance, if you were doing a thing about housing and education, then you would ask them about their kids. I remember a child, a young girl of around about thirteen or fourteen. She came in after school and we were talking about where she did her homework (there was nowhere for her to do her homework). She shared a bedroom with her two sisters and she did it sitting on the edge of her bed, no table or anything else. If you think about what it was like for you growing up, and certainly for my own daughters, it was a totally different experience (Fig. 228).

**Hall:** I know that photograph. When you were taking it did you say, ‘Ok, just pretend I'm not here’?

**Hedges:** You do things in two ways. I've always thought that recreating something is difficult, because then you’re asking someone to act something out. They don't necessarily feel that comfortable. Sometimes, if time was short, you’d have to do that, but quite often what you do is say, ‘Well, could I come back another time? Could I come back at bedtime or
when you’re going to give so-and-so a bath?’ So you’d go away and come back two or three hours later and you’d photograph it when it was actually happening, rather than setting it up to recreate a situation.

**Hall:** So the photograph of the girl doing her homework, how did you approach that?

**Hedges:** The girl said, ‘Oh, I’ve got something to do, I’ll go upstairs.’ So she went upstairs and started doing her homework. I took some photographs and said thanks and she carried on doing her homework. Reality is always more significant than any invention of the mind. I don’t allow my imagination to dominate the photographs in any way. I respect what I see in front of the camera, whether it’s an inanimate object or an animate object, so I wouldn’t suggest to someone that they look sad or look cheerful. It always appals me when photographers do that, where it’s a picture of a happy couple getting married and the photographer says, ‘Give us a smile.’ I don’t like to direct anything, I like to observe it. It is being a bit purist, but I go back to Cartier-Bresson. If it’s too dark you just put your camera away. These days it’s never too dark because you can take pictures in terribly difficult situations, whereas previously you couldn’t. What would happen is you’d be discussing the situation with a mother and father, or just a mother, and you’d be asking them about the housing conditions and say, ‘What are you most concerned about?’ And they might say, ‘One thing that really concerns me is the damp. It affects my children’s health’ and then they’d move an item of furniture and they’d say, ‘Look’ and they’d point to a damp patch. The photograph has to give an emotional weight. You have to express the person and the effect of that damp on them as individuals. In some photographs it all comes together. Like the photograph of the mother and child in Birmingham (Fig. 66). She’s standing underneath the collapsed ceiling but it’s not a contrived photograph. We were talking and walking round her house at the time and she just ended up standing there with her baby in her arms and above her was this hole. So you could do it, but it seems to me it’s too bloody obvious.

**Hall:** Too clichéd?

**Hedges:** Yes. Often people, when you’re talking to them, think that the physical manifestation of something is the most significant thing, but of course, you know it isn’t. It’s lying in bed and hearing the rats. It’s the mental manifestation. It’s something you gradually grow towards and you understand it by looking at images of other photographers that you admire. W. Eugene Smith is someone I used to feel very strongly about. And the FSA
photographers, people like Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans. Evans was a purist as well. He didn’t tend to put emotional content into his pictures.

**Hall:** He didn’t engage with the people that he photographed.

**Hedges:** No, because Agee did that. You grow suspicious of photographers who manipulate the facts. Bill Brandt for instance overstates the case, I think.

**Hall:** Were you inspired by the work of any of your contemporaries?

**Hedges:** I became convinced at college that I didn’t want to become a photojournalist for several reasons. Firstly, I wasn’t good enough to respond that quickly to those situations. Secondly, I probably wasn’t brave enough and thirdly, I felt fairly convinced that I wanted to work at a slower pace, to work with more in-depth knowledge about the situations I was photographing. Later on, I was able to do that even more when I did the factory photographs, which I spent two and a half years doing. I knew what I didn’t want to do. I certainly knew I didn’t want to do advertising photography. I was not interested in capitalism. I was a socialist with a small ‘s’. In the late sixties and early seventies, there were a number of photography initiatives which were very healthy, things like *Camerawork* magazine and the Half Moon Gallery. The Arts Council of Great Britain funded a number of different community arts organisations to try and develop arts in areas that were largely ignored by art practice, often in poorer inner city areas. There was an exploration through photography and video of a number of social issues which were absolutely vital at that time. They were to do with representations of housing and poverty. They were to do with representations of women and equality. Quite a large number of women photographers explored the representation of women through the medium. Racism was another area that photographers explored, very importantly and significantly.

**Hall:** Like Vanley Burke in Birmingham?

**Hedges:** Vanley was very interesting. I'm actually quite fond of Vanley. He started off as a technician working at the art school in Birmingham. To begin with, he wasn’t a very good photographer. I remember receiving portfolios of work from him for projects in Birmingham and they were really just not very good. But very quickly he became a very important photographer in Handsworth and his photography improved enormously in a short period of time. He wasn’t the only photographer who was important in Handsworth. There were others, like John Reardon and Derek Bishton.
Hall: What did you think of the Exit Photography Group?

Hedges: The Exit Group in London. Yes, they were important.

Hall: So you knew what you didn’t want to do.

Hedges: Yes. Fashion photography, advertising photography, publicity photography, what they now call social photography, which is weddings. Those areas of photographic practice are to do with contrived circumstances. There’s a tradition of documentary practice which runs counter to that, but it’s always been a small tradition compared to the rest of photography. Think of all the photography that’s used for x-rays, medical photography, crime photography, scientific photography, photographs of the other side of the moon. They are superb and significant images, but they are taken for other purposes. You used to find articles appearing in The Sunday Times, The Observer and other colour magazines, which included very good photographs. Don McCullin did a big piece about Bradford. Ian Berry was another good photographer. Philip Jones Griffiths was the absolute best of the photographers. His big thing was a photo-book on the Vietnam War called Vietnam Inc. They weren’t unusual subjects for photographers to work with, but they came at it with different approaches. Some people said that you shouldn’t take these pictures; you should give the cameras to the people themselves to take the pictures. As a photographer, I've been set up on a number of occasions by Marxist lecturers who wanted to demolish me and what I’d been doing, because they saw me as a parasite of the state. There's a very hardline left point of view which says that, as a white middle-class person, I shouldn’t be making photographs of factories or black communities, because I'm not from there, I'm not part of them. I don't understand it and I can’t be part of it because I didn’t grow up with it. I believe in a socialist agenda, which says that we are all equal and I am my brother’s keeper.

Hall: Were you ever accused of perpetuating a stereotype of the working class? Was your work for Shelter criticised?

Hedges: The criticism of the Shelter work was that, basically, you were preserving the status quo because you’re making people feel bad about something, they give some money but nothing fundamentally changes. I view it differently. My view is not that nothing fundamentally changes. I think more and more people become sensitised to the need to behave in a different way. The photography will help raise money and will help rehouse some people. It can’t change the situation within the country, but what can change the situation are
policies and Shelter affected the way that housing policy was developed in the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s. It pioneered a number of projects which affected the way that people view the development of new housing and also older communities. They were no longer simply destroyed, but were refurbished. They were given another chance. People were asked to get involved in planning the new communities. There was a democracy about it which was quite different.

**Hall:** Was that something that Shelter pioneered?

**Hedges:** Yes.

**Hall:** And photography was central to that?

**Hedges:** It made things visible. Today, video news coverage is very good in terms of taking people into situations that they have never previously seen, even though they don't experience it themselves.

**Hall:** Did you question what you were doing as a photographer?

**Hedges:** Goodness yes, all the time. You always ask questions about what you’re doing. You have to. You can’t just rest on your laurels and be content with what you’re doing. One of the reasons I stopped working for Shelter in 1972 was because I felt that I was repeating myself. The situation was no longer allowing me to express myself. I was going through the motions. It was time to leave. I hadn’t got anything to go to. I went freelance and I scraped by for a year or two. I had a project which I wanted to do, which I eventually did in 1976, but it was not in relation to criticism by others. It was more in relation to my own questions about the value of what I was doing. The project was to do with people who worked in factories and I did it in a different way. I spent much more time with groups of people in factories. I could spend three or four weeks at a blast furnace, with a group of fifteen or maybe twenty people. I would tape interviews and transcribe them. It enabled a much more detailed observation and account of what was happening before the camera.

**Hall:** Did you feel more comfortable with that methodology?

**Hedges:** Yes, because it was my agenda. I wasn’t working for anyone other than myself, I was very fortunate. The Arts Council gave me a grant of £1,800 a year. In the end, I ended up on Family Income Supplement, but it was just enough to do what I wanted to do.
Hall: You mentioned that you invested more time with the people you photographed, that you knew them more.

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Was it more collaborative than the Shelter commission?

Hedges: Shelter was very responsible as an organisation. None of the people photographed were exposed to publicity unless they agreed that they didn’t mind being talked to by newspapers or television and those meetings were only ever organised with the consent of the individuals concerned. Also, Shelter would be present when that took place, so it was done under very careful conditions.

Hall: Did the people get paid to have their photographs taken?

Hedges: No.

Hall: Now they are. Today, Shelter classify people as models for the day, even though they are just ordinary people being photographed in their own homes, and they get paid for their time.

Hedges: Do they? I’ve never paid anyone to take a photograph of them. I have very mixed feelings about that.

Hall: Why?

Hedges: It changes the relationship between the photographer and the subject. With my factory photographs, I used to exhibit the photographs in the factory canteen. After I’d done the photographs, I’d go back and put them up and then I would give the pictures away. A number of organisations have done the same kind of thing. I don't charge large amounts of money for my photographs either. I had a very interesting e-mail a couple of months ago from someone who wanted one of my pictures. He’d seen a copy of it in The Guardian. I recognised his name, so I replied to him and said, ‘Yes, I can do you a copy of the photograph. I will do you an A3 perfect print for twenty pounds plus postage’, which I think is a reasonable charge.

Hall: Is that just the technical cost of producing the photograph?
**Hedges:** It's slightly more. It pays for my time to produce it as well. So I did that and he said, ‘Well, that's great’. And then I thought, ‘I will find out who he is’ and so I Googled his name and found out he was the lead singer of the group called *The Fine Young Cannibals*.

**Hall:** Roland Gift.

**Hedges:** When I told my daughter, she said, ‘Dad, you should have charged him a lot more’. Anyway, he was very pleased with the print.

**Hall:** What picture was it?

**Hedges:** It was a picture that *The Guardian* published of my favourite photograph. It was one taken in a pub in Handsworth of a group of jazz musicians (Fig. 229). I took it in 1966. Anyway, he was delighted with the photograph. It cost him about twenty-five pounds, including postage. Other people sell their photographs for hundreds of pounds. It’s ridiculous.

**Hall:** Why?

**Hedges:** Because you go in the darkroom, or in my case I go to the inkjet printer, and I can make a print and it might take me half an hour or an hour to get it right and I might have used one or two sheets of paper, or whatever else, but it’s never going to cost more than about fifteen or twenty pounds. I will charge for my time and infinite numbers of copies can be made.

**Hall:** So you don't see your photographs as works of art?

**Hedges:** No.

**Hall:** You don’t see yourself as an artist at all?

**Hedges:** No. That’s what James Agee says at the end of the preface to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. He writes ’For god’s sake, don't think of it as art.’

**Hall:** Yes, but we think of Walker Evans as an artist.

**Hedges:** I think of him as a documentary photographer. The reason I gave the Shelter archive to Peter James at Birmingham was that I felt it should remain in the public domain. I did it at that time because of my health. I just wanted to make sure it was done and sorted out before I had a major operation. I knew Pete from having worked with him and I respected his attitude towards photographs. It was not a matter of passing the archive onto the highest bidder, it was...
a matter of just simply saying, ‘Look, these people, the people I photographed, they own the photographs as well, they should be in the public domain, it’s their history’.

**Hall:** So you don't look at your photographs and think of them in artistic terms?

**Hedges:** I believe that photography is a different medium. I believe that you can take artistic photographs. I believe that photographers can be artists, but I chose not to be.

**Hall:** Do you not think that good photographs have to conform to some kind of aesthetic sensibility? They have to be balanced. You have to think about where the light’s going to come from and the focal point of the image and about how the viewpoint impacts on the image. That's a language of aesthetics, that's art.

**Hedges:** No, it’s not. It can be, but what you’re doing by saying its art is immediately subjugating the subject. You’re making the subject less important than they are. I think the idea of calling it art confuses the matter. Essentially, this is a photograph of so-and-so with so-and-so. For example, the photograph of the child playing in the courtyard which you said had an unusual title.

**Hall:** *The Intoxication of Play?* (Fig. 218)

**Hedges:** Yes. That is an eight or nine-year-old boy playing in the back tenement courtyards in either the Gorbals or Mary Hill, I can’t remember now. It’s a particular moment where he is completely wound up with the moment of play he’s involved with and he’s on his own. He’s in his own world. But that is not an artistic photograph. I think the problem that people have is that institutions tend to dominate the way images are received. As soon as you say ‘gallery’ it changes the nature of how people perceive the photograph. I'm suspicious of institutions.

**Hall:** Do you mean because it’s elitist?

**Hedges:** No, I think galleries have gone beyond that now. The policy of the last ten or fifteen years has been about free entry to many museums. That's not elitist. What I'm saying is that the nature of the presentation within a gallery context, on white walls in a frame, changes the photograph. It contains it and decontextualises it. It takes it out of the context of other images that you might want to show with it. I'm naturally suspicious of galleries. I think they have a contradictory role to play. They enable images to be seen, but the context in which they are seen leans towards art. It separates photographs from the real world.
Hall: Do you find it offensive to call your photographs art?

Hedges: I wouldn't call it offensive. I do think it’s confusing. Sometimes you talk to people and suddenly someone comes up with an expression and you think it’s a very beautiful way of putting something. I remember taking students on a field trip to South Wales. My job in those days was to basically know where we were going and to make sure it was a place where students could get half an hour to take photographs and also to drive the minibus. I was waiting at a pickup point with the minibus for the students to return after they’d done a three or four mile coastal footpath walk. I was standing in the car park, in a tiny little village down by the estuary near Milford Haven. I was talking to a group of women who were standing in the car park, waiting for a coach with their kids to return from school. We were talking about how Pembrokeshire had changed and what it was like with the oil refineries now and one of the women started talking about her family and how they had been involved in the local fishing industry. All of a sudden, she became so eloquent and said, ‘I used to go out with my husband sometimes, before the kids were born, on the boat at dusk and we would be fishing overnight. When you’re out on the boat you can hear the land talking to you.’ And I thought it was beautiful, that one sentence. She’s wasn’t a poet, it wasn’t art, but it was an observation from her heart about the atmosphere of that moment. I think the problem with art is that it throws a conceptual cloth over things so people look at it in a different way. I think we should be free of that. You know what it’s like when somebody says, ‘Let me show you my holiday photos’ and they always apologise and say, ‘I hope you’re not going to be bored’. I never worry about that, unless it’s certain people and I think, ‘Oh God, I'm going to be stuck here for three hours’. Generally speaking, you will find that there are certain photographs which are extraordinary.

Hall: Within the holiday photographs you mean?

Hedges: And they don't think of them as art, they just think of them as being good photographs. Why can’t we just call them photographs? Why do we have to call them art? It’s a great photograph, it’s a perceptive photograph, but it doesn’t have to be art.

Hall: But as a professional photographer you made judgements. Would you look and think, ‘That doesn’t work, it’s too dark and she’s stood in the wrong place’?

Hedges: The process is this. What you do is you get your three or four films, you make contact sheets and the contact sheets are the same size as the negatives but they’re positives,
you know? So you get the contact sheet and you look at it through a magnifying glass. And then I would make choices. I would mark the contact sheet using a coloured pen and indicate that these are the images that I think are the most successful from that particular film. There’s a very good graph that describes what happens when you take photographs. You get yourself into a situation and you start taking photographs and you continue taking pictures. It’s maybe of a group of people and they’re doing something together, or maybe it’s a mother and a child and you take four or five images. It’s not posed, it’s not set up, you don't know what's going to happen. You take one, you take two, you take three, and then you take four and you think, ‘That's the one’. And you take five and then you take six and it dies away. The key image is probably number four, it might be number two or it might be number six.

**Hall:** Is it ever number one?

**Hedges:** Very rarely. It can be sometimes, yes but you have to be very lucky for it to be number one. Generally speaking, it’s somewhere in the middle of a sequence. So you’ve already discarded five shots out of six and you’ve got the one image, so effectively you’ve made a selection. It’s not necessarily the decisive moment as Cartier-Bresson called it. Sometimes, it’s an indecisive moment because often the world is made up of indecisive moments, rather than decisive moments. That's something which we can dissect a bit later, but effectively you’re making a choice. You’ve discarded five photographs. You move on and look at the other images and maybe you’ve got a couple of shots of someone doing some cooking on a stove, or whatever, and you’ve shot one from one side and one from the other and maybe the woman’s face is hidden in shadow in the first picture and in the second picture she's lifted her head and slightly turned towards you. That's the one you go for, because you can see more of her face. It’s as simple as that. Effectively the choices you make, this discarding of thirty or thirty-six pictures and leaving just six, works out. You’ve got technical fade too, blurred photographs, because the shutter speed you’re using is quite slow anyway and they’ve moved too fast or you’ve not focused it accurately. Sometimes, you have to take insurance photographs. Sometimes, you find yourself in a situation where you desperately want this picture to work but the subject will not lift their head. You don't tell them what you want, but you just hope that they’re going to do it. You can imagine how the picture might be if only they would do something and they never do, so basically you’ve got five pictures which are ok, but not really great.
Hall: As we talked about earlier, several themes and motifs seem to characterise your photographs: mirrors, doorways and transitional spaces. Your photographs often show children in doorways. They’re not quite outside and not quite inside. They are framed by shadowy spaces.

Hedges: The lighting inside staircases and houses is actually quite tricky because there are pools of light and quite a lot of areas of shadow.

Hall: You never used artificial light?

Hedges: No. In one case, the lighting was so bad in the room that I changed the light bulb. I changed it from a 50 watt to a 100 watt.

Hall: Did you have the bulb with you?

Hedges: I had to go back the next day. It was the Milne family in Birmingham, which is the first set of pictures I took for Shelter (Figs. 83-87). There was snow on the ground outside. There was a young woman with blonde hair and two boys lying on the bed. I changed the light bulb for that. I had no idea that I would have to, so I had to go back. I had an exposure meter and I knew on the first visit that it was impossible to take pictures, so I went back the following day with the light bulb.

Hall: So you didn’t bother to take photographs on the first visit?

Hedges: No. Mrs Milne was introduced to us by Father Paul Burn, who worked for the Catholic Housing Aid Society in Balsall Heath.

Hall: Where was Mr Milne? He wasn’t in the photographs.

Hedges: I don't want to say where he was, sorry.

Hall: No problem.

Hedges: It’s just because we’re using the real names and it would be unfair to her. Paul Burn introduced us and I was on my own with him and I went to photograph the family and I had to say to Paul, ‘Look, I'm sorry, I'm going to have to come back because the light is so bad in here.’ And he was cool with that and he said, ‘I'm sure if we talk to Mrs Milne, she won’t mind.’ So I went the following day with a light bulb. So in that situation, I did use a stronger light bulb.
Hall: Ok.

Hedges: You asked me about how I photographed children in certain spaces. Mirrors tend to create space in a room because you’re looking one way and you’re seeing another way. They are also linked to time because they can be seen to project either forward or backward, they can be past or future. I’m speaking fancifully here. It’s not usually like me to do this. Mirrors can be symbolic. In other art forms as well as photography, like painting and film. The other thing about mirrors is that, in quite a lot of the houses that I photographed for Shelter, they were the only wall decoration, there was nothing else. There was a mirror and there might have been an old photograph put up with a bit of Sellotape.

Hall: Did you think about mirrors and their symbolism at the time you made the photographs, or was it something that you thought of later?

Hedges: I thought about it at the time. I'm fascinated by mirrors, I always have been. I'm always interested in the environment in which you find your subject matter. I have strong memories of one particular family. I went to Newcastle and I met Mrs Moran the following day and it was just luck you see (Fig. 211). I was working with a journalist and we were walking down this street in the West End of Newcastle and talking to people and we found ourselves at Mrs Moran’s. We didn’t work with a social worker there, we were just finding people ourselves and the houses were multi-let, quite large Edwardian houses, but they were in a pretty derelict state. It just so happened that the light in Mrs Moran’s room where we took the pictures was coming through a large window, from the South West I should think. It was probably mid-afternoon, possibly late afternoon, three or four o’clock I would guess. Her son was sitting by the window, smoking, and the light caught his cigarette smoke as it went up. Mrs Moran was standing by the fireplace and we were talking about the housing and how long they’d lived there and the problems they were having. Her son didn’t say a word. We were there for about an hour and he just sat there. He didn’t want to be involved at all. He was not obstructive, he was simply not being drawn into it at all and Mrs Moran was a mean one to talk and went on for quite a long time about things. I could tell they were a Catholic family because of the sort of iconography about. She had a very gaunt face and she was wearing a coat. Going back to mirrors, I think they have always been there. When I was photographing the factories I was really amused, because the guys who were in charge of running the steel rolling mills, they sat there with hand and feet controls. It was like a jet aircraft almost. Each of them had a little mirror so they could see what was going on behind
them, because they were facing in one direction. Someone had written in chalk on the side of a mirror, ‘Mirror.’ You know that famous Magritte painting _Ceci n’est pas une pipe_? They thought, ‘This is a mirror’, so they’d written on it and I thought it was so funny. As for doorways, when you’re photographing inside someone’s house, the doorway, whether it’s the front door or the doorway between one room and another, is like a frontier and what you’re often doing is encountering people for the first time or the last time at the frontier. Do you remember the photograph of the child looking through a pane of glass in a door in Liverpool? (Fig. 59) That was made on the frontier of the space. I took that when I was leaving. I was on my own and it was the last image I took before I walked out completely. This conversation we’ve been having is me deliberating about things some thirty years later. You’ve mentioned some significant themes in the photographs and I'm responding to that and saying that it’s probably right, but at the time I wasn’t conscious of it.

**Hall:** It wasn’t a conscious thing then?

**Hedges:** No. We’re sitting here and there are one, two, three doors within about three foot of you. Doorways in a small flat are important. They seem quite significant in terms of space. The thing with kids is that they will hang around doorways quite a lot. They're a sort of space in between aren’t they? Children think, ‘I don't want to come right into the room because then I’ll be involved as well, so I'll just hang around on the outside’.

**Hall:** We’ve not really talked about how children responded to you being in their houses. Were they shy? Were they excited? Did they talk to you a lot?

**Hedges:** If you’re outside, kids get very excited about you being there, because you’re different. I'm talking now about 1968 to 1972. I'm not talking about 2010. Now, they would probably consider you to be a paedophile. It’s totally different now for people taking pictures. Back then, outside, you were a novelty, you certainly weren’t a threat and you often had to be very patient to get all that sort of novelty aspect out of the way, because you get kids playing up to the camera a lot.

**Hall:** Was your camera very obvious?

**Hedges:** No, but it was obvious in as much as you wouldn’t see someone with a camera round their neck from one year to the next.

**Hall:** Did children ask you to take their photograph?
Hedges: Yes, they would say, ‘What are you doing here?’ They were curious. And you engaged them in conversation, but not too much because it’s stopping you taking pictures. So effectively, you measured your conversation with them. You thought, ‘I’ll have a short conversation, but I don't want it to go on too long’.

Hall: When you went in the houses and there were children there, what happened?

Hedges: Usually kids were much shyer in their own house. They were with their parents and it was their space. They weren’t in the public arena and they’d be much more overwhelmed by your presence, because meeting this strange wally with the beard in the street is one thing and meeting him talking to mum and dad in the living room is another. That is much more intimidating.

Hall: Were they shy?

Hedges: No, I wouldn't say shy, just sort of quiet. They knew their place. Effectively, this bloke was talking to mum and dad and they were the kids. Gradually, their confidence would build up, especially if you went back the following day to do more work. If you met a family on three or four occasions, the children become your best mates and they want to hold your hand, but to begin with they were fairly shy about it.

Hall: Did you ever talk specifically to the children about their point of view, or was it mainly with the adults?

Hedges: Probably not. We would generally be talking to the parents and about the children through the parents. The conversations with the kids would only start to develop if you’d met them on two or three occasions. It’s hard to work this one out. I don't think the kids were never part of the conversation apart from in terms of the deprivations that they were suffering, but the kids didn’t necessarily see the deprivations in the same way. The parents’ disappointments were different to the child’s own experience. The child might be more concerned with the World Cup. They didn’t express the same degree of hope and despair. A child has a different attitude towards poverty. As a photographer, you don't want to draw attention to deprivation with the child.

Hall: But I think your photographs are all about that.

Hedges: Yes, but that's how they are. You don't have to have a conversation about it.
Hall: Children are central to your images. In your images, poverty is looked at through the eyes of children. Shelter’s campaigns focused on the plight of the homeless child.

Hedges: Because they’re innocent victims. They are not responsible for their situation. They’re behaving quietly because it’s the first time that you’ve encountered them. The second or third time, they become much more boisterous. The clothes that they wear, the quietness of them in the pictures and the fact that you’re paying attention to them because the camera’s turned towards them, are all quite strange occurrences. You’re not asking them to do anything. It depends what age group you’re talking about as well. The photographs were often taken between eleven o’clock and four or five o’clock in the daytime. At that time mothers, toddlers and occasionally unemployed blokes would be at home. If you go back later in the afternoon you get school kids coming back from school, so it’s a peculiar range.

Hall: So you didn’t have any direct dialogue with children?

Hedges: No, not with toddlers. You’d talk to older children, occasionally.

Hall: What about?

Hedges: You’re not talking about poverty. It’s unfair. It’s not their problem. As I say, they’re innocent victims of it all. They happen to have been born into this situation. From the very beginning photographing for Shelter, I was always very concerned that children were exploited by all charities and by all advertising. I mean whether it’s advertising for consumer products on television or whatever it is, children are exploited. They’re used and I felt uneasy about this. I’m disappointed that you think that my boxes of photographs are largely of photographs of kids, because I don't think they are. I would think the kids feature in thirty or forty percent of them.

Hall: Maybe it’s because I'm focusing on them?

Hedges: I think it is. I'm worried about it. I was worried about that from the very beginning because the thing about using children as the signifier and the main message is it’s ultra-simplistic. It could pull at the heartstrings, but it doesn't deal with the issues, it doesn’t answer anything. The most difficult people to photograph were dads. Men were the most difficult to involve in interviews, or taking photographs, because they were the most ashamed of their situation because it reflected on them.
Hall: There’s no doubt that photographs of children dominated Shelter’s reports and advertising.

Hedges: That’s why I left. I just got fed up of it. That advertising campaign that you mentioned, Last year a rat ate Jimmy’s Christmas present, I actually hated it (Fig. 41).

Hall: I’m sure that it generated a big response.

Hedges: It appalled me. I thought it was grossly simplistic. I was employed by Shelter to take photographs for advertising campaigns, reports and educational material. I would say to them, ‘We’re not going to set anything up here’. I would push for certain images to be used and I’d sigh when they ignored what I had suggested and would choose to use a picture of a kid.

Hall: Did you take the photograph of the little boy crying for that advertising campaign?

Hedges: Yes, they’re all done in Birmingham. It was a very specific advertising campaign where, for the first time, well not for the first time but one of the few times, the advertising agency had visualised and drawn the artwork before any photography had taken place, so I was shooting for a layout. I knew that they wanted a child’s face with a large area of black around it. It was unusual that that happened. I think what had happened was that they’d gone through the picture library, not found photographs that they could use for their idea and therefore asked me to shoot particular ones. Generally speaking, that didn’t happen.

Hall: But you weren’t happy about that?

Hedges: Well, I did it.

Hall: Maybe you didn’t have much choice.

Hedges: When it came to printing up the photographs for the archive, I didn’t choose very many of those kinds of images.

Hall: I haven’t seen the photograph that was used in that campaign.

Hedges: Exactly. I didn’t print it out because I didn’t rate it. They’re all there.

Hall: So you’ve got them here in this house, but they’re not anywhere else?

Hedges: No, Pete’s got them. I haven’t got them. They’re on contact sheets or negatives.
Hall: So you didn’t turn them into final prints?

Hedges: The archive was not self-serving, but I chose to print the images that I thought were the most significant and important in terms of Shelter’s history and also the cultural history of Britain at that time and the photograph for Last year a rat ate Jimmy’s Christmas present wasn’t one of those I’m afraid.

Hall: Could you tell me about the Shelter calendar?

Hedges: It was a really nice thing to do. It enabled the designer and me to work on a set of images which had been shot for the education programme at Shelter. I told you earlier about the depiction of different communities in different parts of the country and obviously that included kids playing. So it was largely a series of photographs about kids playing in different circumstances, so there were pictures of kids in village schools and kids playing in playgrounds.

Hall: I remember a photograph of children playing Ring of Roses, was that one? (Fig. 230)

Hedges: Yes, that was taken in Wichenford in Worcestershire. And then there was a picture of a group of kids, two or three kids, jumping up and down very excitedly with a skipping rope. That was taken in Liverpool 8. I’ll try to find the calendar for you anyway.

Hall: That would be great, because there isn’t a calendar in the archive.

Hedges: It was only one year we did it. It was a one-off.

Hall: The calendar photographs show very positive images of childhood, unlike most of the Shelter images.

Hedges: Kids having a good time?

Hall: Yes. There are other positive Shelter images. Like the photograph of the little boy reading his comic in the stairwell (Fig. 31). He’s got his own space and he’s happily occupied.

Hedges: Oh yes. He was outside the front of his house in one of those semi-basement spaces.

Hall: I also remember a photograph of a middle-class house, a nice house (Fig. 231). There's a little boy reading a book in the living room. Where was that photograph taken?
Hedges: East Kilbride. It was a new town. Those photographs were taken for the same education project. We photographed in a new town, a rural village and a coal mining village. It was a comparison of different ways of life.

Hall: And those photographs were used in teachers’ packs?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Can you tell me about the other photographers who worked for Shelter? Did they continue to employ an in-house photographer after you left in 1972?

Hedges: They did for about three or four years, I think. They first employed George Marshman and he worked there for about twelve months. He didn’t work there for very long. George decided he didn’t want to be a photographer anymore. He wanted to be a social worker, so he left and he still works in Tottenham and Haringay in North London. Then they employed another photographer called Stuart Macpherson under the new Director of Shelter, Geoff Martin. They had a lot of problems with Geoff Martin. It was a bad appointment apparently and he decided to close down all of the in-house photography and other stuff. I think it was a cost-cutting exercise basically. I suspect that Shelter, like a lot of other organisations, had to reconsider the amount of money it was spending on administration and running costs, compared to the amount of money it was raising in terms of its charitable donations.

Hall: But photographs were still important?

Hedges: They still published reports. Stuart was involved in several reports. I remember seeing them, they were good. I think he dealt with bed and breakfast accommodation and things like that.

Hall: There’s a letter that you wrote to the Shelter management in the archive at Old Street. You objected to them closing down the in-house photography facility. You explained how you’d built up relationships with people. It wasn’t just a case of getting images, it was more than that. You felt that employing freelance photographers, who didn’t have that same connection to the subject, was going to be a bad move for the charity.

Hedges: I felt quite strongly about it. I would still feel the same now, if I were involved. My attitude towards photography has not changed much from 1968 or 1969 to now. I think that it is important for archives to exist, that's why I think it’s very significant that Pete’s done what
he’s doing at Central Library in terms of preserving history. The key thing about photography is that it democratises history. Before it was invented the only images we have of anyone or anything are mediated by painting and, generally speaking, are to do with two things. They’re either to do with subject matter which has got a religious significance or subject matter which is related to success, in terms of material wealth or status. Military success pictures, I mean Nelson, Marlborough, whatever it might be. What photography has done and why it, newspapers, television and video are so significant, is that it made sure that history can never again just be the remit of famous people and famous events, because history is actually about us all, so that's why photography is so significant. I felt this very strongly when I was a student and I feel it still today. One of the reasons for the letter I wrote to Shelter would have been to do with the idea of not throwing away the opportunity to make significant histories. The pictures I took of factory workers in the 1970s and early eighties were done for the same reason. Those people built our country. It’s making the invisible visible. It’s giving proper attention to everyone and it’s why I despair so much about this cult of celebrity at the moment. It’s just unbelievable what's happened in the 1990s and the first part of this century isn’t it?

**Hall:** Do you think that Shelter thought about your photographs in that way?

**Hedges:** No, of course not. Like any business or concern or charity or voluntary organisation they were concerned with balancing their income, for the best possible reasons, with their expenditure on wages and running costs and expenses.

**Hall:** Did the situation influence your decision to leave?

**Hedges:** I wasn’t working there when that happened. I stopped working in 1972. That didn’t happen until 1975 or 1976. I’d already finished, I’d gone freelance. I didn’t do any work for Shelter because they’d employed someone else.

**Hall:** To what extent were you involved with the campaigns?

**Hedges:** I had nothing to do with the financial side of things. I knew the people that ran it, but I wasn’t interested in it. I was simply concerned with getting photographs. Whether they were successful or not was their area of concern and business and I think I was probably a bit of a snob. I didn’t want to bother with whether things were successful. I used to sigh deeply when I was asked to go and do things like photograph a celebrity ball at Madame Tussauds with all of these debs lying around.
Hall: Did you do that?

Hedges: Oh yes. Or photograph HMS Belfast, which was moored on the Thames Embankment where there was this big fundraising do for Shelter.

Hall: So as the in-house photographer you could be asked to photograph anything?

Hedges: Yes. One of the worst jobs I had to do was to sit in front of a television screen and photograph Des Wilson on a television programme, being interviewed by Joan Bakewell (Fig. 232). It was the first time Des had got onto this show. I think it was called Late Night Line Up or something and Des was really keen that this should be commemorated, so I had to sit in front of my bloody television set, photographing pictures of our dear Director.

Hall: They didn’t even invite you to the studio to do it?

Hedges: No. Don't forget, one doesn’t have much status as a photographer.

Hall: Really? I think much of Shelter’s success was based on the visual impact of the photographs.

Hedges: I probably disagree with you. I think it’s do with a combination of all sorts of things. It’s significant that there was a political current which responded to it at that time; that there was a concerned middle class that would donate money.

Hall: But the photographs were central to Shelter’s identity.

Hedges: I agree. I don't dispute that. But don't forget the other factor which came into it was that drama they showed on television.

Hall: Cathy Come Home?

Hedges: Yes, that was pretty significant.

Hall: That was coincidental wasn’t it?

Hedges: It was. It just happened.

Hall: They weren’t linked. Was it two weeks later that Shelter was launched?
Hedges: Sheer luck. I think the film came out round about the time I was doing stuff for the housing trust in Birmingham, or it might have been even earlier than that, I don't know, either 1966 or 1967.

Hall: So, at that stage, was Shelter using a photographer from an agency?

Hedges: They were probably used Penny Tweedie.

Hall: As a freelance photographer?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: Can you say anything about Shelter’s first advertisement *Home Sweet Hell* that was published in *The Times*? (Fig. 108)

Hedges: It was done in an advertising agency studio.

Hall: How do you know that?

Hedges: You can just tell by looking at it. When I started the picture library, when I first started working there, there were copies of it about. I could tell that it was too well-lit to be real. The corner of the studio, the wallpaper, was on a sheet of flat board. I think probably on the contact sheets I could see the edge of it. It was cropped in a bit and the milk bottle was placed quite carefully.

Hall: Like Bill Brandt’s photographs.

Hedges: Those things went on.

Hall: It’s good that you changed that. Once you got there it didn’t happen anymore.

Hedges: It did once. It was the first thing I was asked to do when I was there.

Hall: Can you remember the photograph?

Hedges: Yes. It’s of a little boy sitting on the edge of an iron bedstead and he’s got a hand on the end of the bedstead and he’s looking very unhappy because he’s living in an institution (Fig. 233).

Hall: But he’s not really? It was set up?

Hedges: Oh yes.
Hall: I would like to see that photograph. I've not seen it. It’s not in the archive.

Hedges: Well, maybe for a good reason.

Hall: Did you destroy it?

Hedges: I don't know. You would have to go through all of the negatives. They’re with Pete James at the Central Library.

Hall: Is there anything that you want to talk about regarding your time at Shelter?

Hedges: Partly your questions are to do with the negative aspects of working at Shelter. I think there are also some very positive ones, which are to do with working with a group of people, a designer and two or three journalists, who were, generally speaking, like-minded. There was a sense of working in a team, a cooperative thing, which was a very good environment to work in.

Hall: Did you enjoy it?

Hedges: Oh yes. The education department was very good as well. I enjoyed working with them. The thing about working in 1968, 1969 and 1970, 1971, working in a radical organisation concerned with important issues, was it was quite a privilege to do that. It’s easy for me and others to forget that. I wasn’t paid very much. It paid a living wage, £1,000 a year, £20 a week. I found an absolute slum to live in. The rent was about £6.50 a week which left me with what, 13 quid to live on? It wasn’t a lot of money to be honest but it was just enough to get by, but you were able to do work which coincided with your own political beliefs. Small ‘p’, always has been with me, just as well given where the Labour Party has gone. That was a privilege and also not being faced with the compromise of working for commercial and media organisations. I’ve got friends who’ve had to do that and it’s always a huge compromise about what they can do. There is, in any adult’s life, a pressure on you to conform to certain practices. Pete’s got that with bureaucracy and local government in Birmingham. You’ve got it with your own PhD work and we all have it and I feel it was great to be alive in 1968 and as an adult be able to work in that kind of area. Both my daughters, who are now thirty and thirty-two, wish that they’d grown up then because of the radical agendas which were alive and being discussed.

Hall: So it was very rewarding? You felt like you were making a difference?
Hedges: Yes, it was very rewarding and also you were not under pressure in the same way that people of my age then, as young as about twenty-three, twenty-four, are now. I was twenty-four when I started and twenty-eight, twenty-nine when I stopped doing that stuff at Shelter. That was a very fruitful period of time and you didn’t feel under pressure or an anxiety about work and about where you were going to earn a living. It was a freer time to be. This whole thing about the great weight that people of your age feel, I don't know how old you are, but in their twenties and early thirties. Survival in the creative industries is much more problematic now, much more difficult. It was a freer time then and not just a freer time in terms of political aspirations, but the pressure that bore down on people as well, so it was good.

Hall: It’s not so good now?

Hedges: No, I don't think it is actually. There are certain things which I think offer enormous opportunities for young people in the creative industries. That's partly involved with the continued democratisation of the media. You being able to use that tiny little tape recorder is just amazing. Digital tape recorders, digital cameras and digital photography make the use of the media so much easier and more reliable and so much more accessible. The stuff is so much cheaper to purchase. I had to save up for bloody years to buy a camera and it is not the case now, so I think there are certain things which are a great advantage. I think one of the great difficulties that people have got now is an uncertainty about an ideological approach. I don't think people know where they are. I felt with much more certainty about the truth of the socialist agenda back in the late sixties, early seventies. I was also a bit of an anarchist. Today you could feel quite strongly about a Green agenda, but you’d feel pretty powerless about it. I trace it all back to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism and the alternative ideologies. However misguided they were, they offered to the left the possibility and the discussion of fairly significant attitudes towards life and its agendas, which simply don't exist now because we’ve been completely overwhelmed by capitalism. It drives every agenda in the world, apart from Venezuela and Cuba, doesn’t it? China is an extraordinary country. It claims to be communist, but as it basically produces sixty percent of the material goods for capitalism, it’s just crazy. This has got nothing to do with the photography of children, but what I'm saying is it is very different now, I think, for young people to work. Then, it was much easier for photographers to do what they felt they needed to.
Hall: When you said earlier that you didn’t like talking to children directly, that interested me. Was that just because you didn’t want to upset them?

Hedges: It wasn’t that but just imagine the situation. You’re going to interview and talk to a mother and father about their housing conditions and you’ve made contact with them and you’ve arranged to go at around three o’clock in the afternoon, or whenever it is. So you do that and you talk about them, the kids are hanging about. They’re near the door, or whatever. You introduce yourself to them, ‘What's your name?’ You talk to them as any adult with a young child might. You try and make them relax and feel at ease with your presence there.

Hall: Did you feel comfortable with children?

Hedges: Oh, I have no problem with kids at all.

Hall: They get on well with you?

Hedges: Absolutely. You know that you’ve got to talk about certain things. You can talk to teenagers about things, as we mentioned the girl who showed me where she did her homework, but there's also the photograph of the girl putting on make-up by the window in Glasgow and I would talk a bit to them too. We talked to the sisters, one was unemployed and one was still at school. We talked about prospects. Teenagers are shy in a different kind of way. They don't want to draw attention to themselves. They’re worried about how they look in the photograph, ‘My nose is too big, I've got spots on my chin’. You don't push it.

Hall: So, you never had a conversation with children about housing conditions? Was it more like, ‘How is it going at school?’

Hedges: Or, ‘Shall we have a game of football?’

Hall: So you didn’t want to upset children with questions about their circumstances.

Hedges: I'm glad you’ve got round to seeing that. You don't impose yourself on them because you’re going away. You don't want to make them feel bad about their life, do you? That's why you don't talk to them about it. Children notice their environment. You’ve only got to read any autobiography by anyone who’s grown up in unfortunate circumstances to understand the significance of their childhood and its impact upon them. You realise that they feel these things as a young person. They used to dread doing such and such. You don't need to ask them when they’re kids, because you can’t do anything about it.
Hall: And they can’t do anything about it.

Hedges: They’re only kids, so it would upset them and you’d leave them in a worse situation than when you went there.

Hall: Did children seem withdrawn or sad or were they quite happy?

Hedges: It varied from family to family.

Hall: What about the children in the Pryde family? I remember the photograph of the children grouped together in the bedroom (Fig. 195).

Hedges: You’ve got a family of seven or eight swirling around you, its mayhem. If you’re the eldest, you’re lucky because you can boss all the others and you can also take charge. You can look after the others, so there’s a feeling of power there too, or empowerment. Their agenda is set for them by other people, its set by the school, its set by the friends they play with and the relationship they have with their parents.

Hall: Did you feel sorry for them?

Hedges: Of course. You know your own experiences of childhood, you know the things that have given you happiness and strength and you know that these things don’t exist for these kids necessarily. Don't forget, you’re working for an organisation which is trying to change things. You can ring someone up and say, ‘Look, do you know about this family living in so-and-so? Any chance you can send someone down to talk to them?’ In some cases it’s even better, you can actually get them rehoused. Because you’re not working for a newspaper or magazine, you simply report it and then leave it. You know that there are extra steps that can be taken. That's important.
Hall: Were you involved in the wider photographic scene during your time working for Shelter?

Hedges: It was an exciting time for photography. The photographic scene in England or Britain in the late sixties was absolutely negligible, there was hardly anything going on at all. For instance, the Tate gallery refused to show photographs. It was their policy. Photography wasn’t considered to be an art form and therefore it wasn’t to be seen in the galleries. The principal mover behind changing things was the Institute of Contemporary Art, the ICA, and one of their curators was a woman called Sue Davis, who started The Photographers’ Gallery. She put on a series of exhibitions, quite small-scale exhibitions in the late sixties, around about 1967, 1968 showing people like Don McCullin and others. I think she just recognised that there was a real interest in photography. Sue recognised that there was a groundswell of interest in photography, particularly from young photographers who were just graduating from college courses at places like Derby and Nottingham. There were photojournalists like Don McCullin and Philip Jones Griffiths. I think also it was partly looking across the Atlantic and seeing what was being done in America, which was huge in comparison, and so Sue started The Photographers’ Gallery in 1969 or 1970, I can’t remember exactly which. It was in a converted Lyons coffee house and I remember going and meeting her there because I was working at Shelter at the time and we explored the possibility of me having the opening exhibition there, but the conversion of the coffee house into a gallery would take some time and Des Wilson, who was the Director of Shelter, decided that he wanted the exhibition now and it had to be somewhere else, so I missed out on that opportunity. The opening exhibition was called A Concerned Photographer which was one that she brought over from America.

Hall: Did it feature the Magnum photographers?

Hedges: No, it was to do with photography which was similar. Two of the photographers were members of Magnum. It was a group of photographers, some alive, some dead, who used photojournalism and documentary in the most progressive way. That started in 1969, 1970 and I was tangentially interested, but couldn’t take part in it. Then lots of other initiatives took place. Camerawork started out in a converted Jewish synagogue. They had a theatre called the Half Moon Theatre and they used the foyer area as an exhibition space for
photography. Very gradually, there was a momentum. Photography projects started up in the East End of London in Blackfriars. There was a groundswell of photographers taking up radical positions outside the mainstream media who weren’t reliant on newspapers and magazines as sources of employment. They got involved in community arts projects and so on and the Arts Council, equally, recognised the significance of this and started to have a photography panel. The Arts Council man who ran it was someone called Barry Lane. He was an employee of the Arts Council but he co-opted volunteers or voluntary members as an advisory panel and they also put money into community arts projects through the Regional Arts Associations which the Arts Council funded. So you’ve got projects springing up in urban areas like Newcastle, the Amber Collective for instance, Manchester and Liverpool.

Hall: Was funding available for photography?

Hedges: Most photographers earned their living doing what they’ve always done, which is being self-employed or being employed by newspapers and magazines, depending on which area of photography you’re involved in. If you were involved in fashion, it was seen to be a very glamorous possibility. If you were involved in documentary or photojournalism, it was seen to be heroic, foolhardy, adventurous but very serious. Some superb work came out but it was by photographers who were employed by magazines and newspapers, rather than by anyone else or they might have been self-employed. Some photographers got into the position where they had the reputation for a certain kind of photography and they would be self-employed and be hired to do certain kinds of photography. Architecture is one that comes to mind. There’s a wonderful photographer called Edwin Smith who worked in the 1950s and he was principally responsible for that. There’s a connection to the theatre and cinema industries as well. You’ve got people like Cecil Beaton and others. Photography wasn’t funded from the public purse. That’s the thing that changed in the late sixties and seventies. Small amounts of money became available through the Arts Council of Great Britain. That allowed people to take a more radical stance on things. They weren’t beholden to the mainstream media for their income, so they could take a more radical position if they wished to.

Hall: So you couldn’t do the opening exhibition at The Photographers’ Gallery?

Hedges: No. Des Wilson, the Director of Shelter, was very keen to use photography, not only as part of the general media output of the charity, but also as a way of garnering publicity and fundraising opportunities. He came up with the idea of doing a photography exhibition, I
think, at Christmas in 1969, so it would run December 1969 until January 1970. The Photographers’ Gallery wasn’t going to open until March or April 1970. Des was determined that it should happen at Christmas time, which is always a very good time for raising money for charities. So in the end we put the Shelter exhibition on at the Royal Photographic Society instead.

**Hall:** Just your photographs?

**Hedges:** Yes. I saw what the space was and I made an exhibition. I printed the exhibition to work in the space that we had at the Royal Photographic Society. Fifteen prints of A3 size were exhibited. They were mounted on board and then mounted onto portable exhibition screens. They were all captioned as well.

**Hall:** Did you choose the photographs and the captions?

**Hedges:** Yes. I was completely in charge of putting it up.

**Hall:** Were the photographs juxtaposed with case studies or notes?

**Hedges:** No. It was seen as a photography exhibition and the Royal Photographic Society was an extremely traditional forum. We were surprised they said yes and they were surprised with what we gave them.

**Hall:** Did you charge an admission fee?

**Hedges:** No, it was free.

**Hall:** And that was in London?

**Hedges:** Yes. It was in Mayfair. The Royal Photographic Society had a chequered history. For a long time they were based in London. They were the premier organisation to do with photography in the country. They owned the property in Mayfair, which of course was worth a huge amount of money. They decided it couldn’t really be expanded, it was limited floor space. They had a very big collection of wonderful materials, the best collection of the history of photography in this country in terms of original material. They moved from there to Bath and for a long time they were in Bath.

**Hall:** Did the exhibition go on tour?

**Hedges:** No. I think it was on for about three weeks.
Hall: Was there any press coverage?

Hedges: Bits in the press, yes.

Hall: Was the response to the photographs good?

Hedges: Yes.

Hall: What kind of photographs did the Royal Photographic Society show?

Hedges: Science photography, Art photography. It was a Catholic organisation which represented all strands of photography. Least of all documentary, I have to say.

Hall: So it was quite unusual for them to exhibit the Shelter photographs?

Hedges: It was seen to be slightly off the wall for them to do it, yes.

Hall: How did you respond to the work of other photographers at that time?

Hedges: Some of it with great enthusiasm. There was some wonderful work being produced. Philip Jones Griffiths’ book on Vietnam, which came out in 1971, was the very best book about Vietnam that has ever been published and it was a model of responsible journalism. It was a wonderful book. There were other photographers that took initiatives in the community and documented local communities in the East End of London or the work that the Side Gallery was doing up in Newcastle. There was a feeling of solidarity about it. There was a feeling that there were individuals and groups doing good work.

Hall: Did you feel part of that scene?

Hedges: The problem, if you’re employed full-time as I was and I wasn’t freelancing, was I didn’t have that much spare time, so I was not immersed in it as much as some, but I was where I could be, I was involved a bit. I used to contribute articles to Camerawork and attend meetings and sometimes be on an advisory panel and things like that. I wasn’t a key, active member. I don’t think it was a radical underground in quite the way that historians might like to portray it. It was much more a loose assembly of people who had good and bad ideas. Like all left field organisations, there were quite a lot of factions and disputes and arguments and whatever but if you’re employed full-time you just get on with what you’ve got to do. I had a huge amount to do.

Hall: What did you think of the Exit Photography Group?
Hedges: The Exit Photography Group was great. They did some very good work.

Hall: They were making similar photographs to you.

Hedges: Yes, it was similar but it was unattached. It highlights one of the real problems for photography at the time. You wanted to make a comment about something, but what would happen with that comment? How would it be used? Could it actually have a practical outcome? Exit was doing some great work, which was uncompromised by organisations. They were doing it on their own, whereas I was doing some work which was compromised by working for Shelter. It was a compromise I was prepared to live with for three or four years because I knew that Shelter was an organisation which was actively involved in rehousing people, changing government policy and educating people. In a sense, I said, ‘Well, look, it’s making a difference, I know it’s making a difference’, even though what I was asked to do sometimes was dreadful. It was a worthy organisation to work with. On the other side, people who were not attached had a less compromised role, but at the same time they couldn’t know what the outcome of their work was going to be. It didn’t have an outcome which was guaranteed in the same way. It had an outcome which was that it informed people, it educated people, it possibly changed people’s attitudes towards things, all of which was great, but what else? It’s a classic ambivalence. It’s a quandary that people are faced with. I decided to stop working at Shelter because I felt that I was actually quite stale. I was very happy with the kinds of images I was taking, but they were becoming a bit repetitive and I thought I’d go freelance. By going freelance, I started to develop ideas for projects that I wanted to do. The first one took me two years, even longer, four years in the end, to actually get it off the ground. It was a thing about people who worked in factories. My aim was to become independent, to actually be able to do other things and to be less tied down to an organisation. I also did all the photography for Mencap, The National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children.

Hall: Was that after Shelter?

Hedges: Yes. Anne Poolford, the Public Relations officer at Shelter, left and went to work for Mencap. She’d worked with me as a photographer. For four or five years I did all their photography between 1972 and about 1977. It wasn’t full-time. I wasn’t on a retainer. I was just asked every month or two to spend a few days working for them. I used to do photography for their magazine, which was called Parent’s Voice I think, and also their leaflets, educational material and some advertising.
Hall: Regarding Shelter, what kind of photographs do you feel would have presented a more rounded, less stereotyped image of the homeless?

Hedges: I'm not sure that the charity could have done it any differently but what I did know was that it was a very limited portrayal of people’s lives in bad housing. It didn’t show lots of things. It found it difficult to show tenderness, care, love, happiness, all of those things which exist in families who are living in bad housing, just like they exist in any family. It becomes one-dimensional because the charity is concerned with trying to show that homelessness and living in bad housing is a bad thing. You have to show it as a bad thing. You can’t show it as a complete thing. It’s not that I felt the charity could do it any other way. It was just that it was an incomplete way and I was probably getting frustrated about the fact that that was all I’d ever be able to do.

Hall: You mentioned that sometimes your photographs show the indecisive moment. Can you say something about that?

Hedges: In the introduction to one of his books in the 1930s, Cartier-Bresson talked about the decisive moment. He talked about it in both intellectual but also in graphic terms. The decisive moment is when you take a photograph which is the most representative image of a particular scene. It’s the crucial moment when something happens but it is also graphically the most crucial moment, so it’s expressed in a geometrical sense as well. It’s when a figure moves across the frame in a certain kind of way and it bounces out other elements within the frame. It’s resolved graphically at the same time as it’s resolved emotionally and intellectually. When it comes off, it looks amazing, it looks perfect, it looks like all the very best Cartier-Bresson photographs look. The problem I, and a number of photographers, had is that actual life is not made up of decisive moments. It’s often made up of indecisive moments. Rather than looking for things which are resolved, you tend to recognise unresolved moments where someone’s face is hidden by something, rather than fully in sight, where a shadow falls uncomfortably across a picture, rather than perfectly across a picture, so there is a graphic part to it. If you look at, say, Robert Franks’ or Lee Friedlander’s photographs, you’ll find there is a jarring discontinuity to them compared to the harmony that exists in a Cartier-Bresson photograph. I’m using musical terms, it’s a dissonance as opposed to a chord, it’s uncomfortable as opposed to comfortable. It’s a hard thing to describe without actually showing you a photograph which is an indecisive moment and a photograph which is
a decisive moment. I could do it easily with pictures, but to talk about it simply in words is quite hard.

**Hall:** Which approach were you most interested in?

**Hedges:** I went for the easy option. In some ways it’s easier to go for the harmonious, decisive moment than for the indecisive moment because we tend to respond to a resolved image because it is complete in itself. I think probably, although I hate to think of it like this but I have to admit to being guilty, there are more harmonious, decisive moments than there are indecisive moments. The other thing about indecisive moments is that they ask questions. A decisive moment tends to be self-referential. It finishes itself off. It provides you with the problem, but also with the answer. The indecisive moment leaves it open-ended. It allows more space for the audience to take part in it and I think that that's something that I'm not particularly good at doing.

**Hall:** Maybe your indecisive images would have been edited out? Maybe Shelter wouldn’t have wanted those kinds of questions being asked.

**Hedges:** That would be true of Shelter. But I'm also thinking about everything else I've done. The factory photographs and the different religions I’ve documented and the Mencap project and the work for *Problem in the City*. They all tend to be more resolved than they ought to be. I think it’s good to be ambiguous sometimes. I remember one photograph which is taken in the lifts at a shopping centre in Northfield in Birmingham (Fig. 234). There is a figure, a shadow on the left-hand side of the photograph, and it’s just a shadow of a man and then there are two girls in the lift having a joke. It doesn’t explain itself at all and yet for me it’s one of my best photographs. It’s to do with the fact that it’s that image you see when the lift doors close and you see something and the shutter goes and then it disappears forever. That's an indecisive moment. It was for *Problem in the City*.

**Hall:** What do you think about the work of Tony Ray-Jones?

**Hedges:** Tony Ray-Jones is decisive moment. They’re all resolved images.

**Hall:** What do you think about the work of Martin Parr?

**Hedges:** I don’t like it. I don’t think it would be a good idea to go into Martin Parr at the moment. I’m afraid I have large problems with him.
Hall: What about Robert Frank’s work?

Hedges: His main work was *The Americans* in 1957.

Hall: His work sometimes seems surreal with the extreme angles, cropping and chiaroscuro. What do you think of it?

Hedges: I think the cropped elements in particular. One of the things that photographers always have a problem with is that they are faced with the dictatorship of the frame. The frame is the rectangle or the square that you look through when you take the photograph and you can approach that in two ways. You can either say, ‘Well, I want everything within the frame to be complete.’ Or, like William Klein, you can decide to break out of the dictatorship of the frame and allow half an arm to disappear out of the frame. There was an absolute discord in that the frame didn’t capture everything. It only captured part of it, so the life went on outside the frame and you couldn’t see it, but you knew it was there.

Hall: Those kinds of images are more filmic. They’re more to do with temporality and cinematography. They’re more like part of a moving image than a single, composed, fully-resolved moment.

Hedges: I think you’re absolutely right. If you think that photography is a fraction of a second, a thirtieth, a sixtieth, a one hundred and twenty fifth, sometimes a two fiftieth, if you’re doing sports photography, a five hundredth of a second, what happens in the other four hundred and ninety ninth of a second? There’s a strong connection to the filmic. Time is fluid. It exists before and after the picture’s taken.

Hall: Robert Frank’s work is like that. It’s about time and narrative.

Hedges: It’s interesting that a number of the pictures that he took are on the move. They’re either literally on the move, so he’s on a train or in a car, or they’re shot without looking through the viewfinder, so they’re shot from hip level and the horizon is not level at all, it’s all bent, it slopes from left to right. That is all to do with being on the move. If you wanted to break away from decisive and indecisive moments, it’s about a regulated and unregulated world. That's another way of looking at it. They’re all useful ways of trying to understand photography.

Hall: Do you think that you could have made those kinds of photographs for Shelter?
Hedges: It would have been inappropriate to take Robert Frank type photographs for Shelter. I was paid £1,000 a year, £20 a week, when I worked at Shelter, which was less than a lot of jobs, it was minimum wage basically. That money, my salary was paid for by people donating money to Shelter to rehouse the homeless. The same applied to everyone else who worked for the charity. Our overheads weren’t high, they were quite low actually, but we had to be responsible. Our job was to rehouse people and change government policy. Bugger whether they were decisive or indecisive moments. That wasn’t part of our job. It’s part of the discontinuity of modern art. Who looks at modern art? Who takes images? What is the great problem for modern art in terms of painting and sculpture and printmaking? It’s the disconnection from the audience. One of the great tragedies of art practice has been this disconnection from an audience. It’s all very well for us to be smart and sophisticated and suggest that it might have been better for Shelter to do what you said, but in actual fact it wouldn’t necessarily have helped anything.

Hall: If children had been given their own cameras, like in some of the community photography initiatives, the photographs would have been more indecisive.

Hedges: That’s a spontaneous reaction to the subject matter and the subject matter is something which the kids are familiar with. They like or dislike or are excited about or have an emotional response to the thing in front of the camera and they take a picture of it. They couldn’t give a bugger whether it’s framed correctly or not, which is fine. One of the great delights of photography is that you can do that.

Hall: Did you ever set up any of your photographs?

Hedges: Photographers get very, very sensitive to accusations of manipulation. It’s to do with the fact that we get accused of lying so often by people who don’t want to accept the evidence we’re presenting them with. When Rothstein moved that skull he was stupid. He shouldn’t have done it. He should have let that skull just sit there. Photographers often get forced into situations where they over dramatize and over sensationalise things which don’t need to be. That's one of the pressures that comes from working for a charity. You get those issues. You talked about darkening down the cover of a photo that was used on the cover of a Shelter report (Fig. 37). That was done for purely graphic effect. The woman had gone into the shadows in that photograph because I knew the graphic designer wanted to insert Happy Christmas! The text wouldn’t have read properly without it being darkened down. I accept that, it’s a graphic ploy. I know what the photograph really looks like. The woman is in deep
shadow, but she is there. But there is a difficulty that photographers face. It’s something that's been current over the last thirty years. Art historians and media commentators have chosen to pick on certain aspects of certain photographer’s work to suggest that they have manipulated things and changed things. It implies that they are no different to painters, printmakers and illustrators. My view is that photography is actually very different. It relies on what actually happens in front of the camera and that is something which is crucial. There’s a battle going on and it’s made me very weary and suspicious of cultural studies and whatever else because there’s an attempt to say that reality doesn’t exist. It’s a postmodernist view of life and I’ve got really quite tired of it because I know you’re sitting over there and you exist. It’s not a figment of my imagination.

**Hall:** Of course. People can’t have said to you, ‘Nick, those photographs you’ve taken don’t exist.’

**Hedges:** No, but they will say that they are as controlled and manipulated as any painting.

**Hall:** Can you think of specific photographs that they’ve said that about?

**Hedges:** All the Shelter ones. I've been set up several times to speak to media studies students and cultural studies students and photography students and I recognise within five minutes that the reason I've been invited is to be shot down. I don’t mind being shot down, I’ll be shot down. There was a theory which was abundant in the late seventies and eighties which was postmodernism. That is a leftist point of view. It turns people away from documentary photography. You get people doing other things like conceptual photography or photographing models

**Hall:** Like Jeff Wall? What do you think about his work?

**Hedges:** Well, he can do that if he wants to, but it doesn’t interest me at all.

**Hall:** What do you think about John Berger’s theory of radial interpretation?

**Hedges:** Berger is an example of someone who’s one of the good and the great. What he’s suggesting is that you can invest a documentary photograph, one which is used in a public way, with the same kind of power as that found in a family photograph. He’s suggesting that it can be done through context. I feel, and I've always felt, that it’s very important to include people’s names and words in photographs. Why not have interviews to go with the photographs? We did this with Shelter and I did this in the factory photographs so that you
actually create a wider context so the picture becomes more intimate. It’s not just about a Smith who happens to be a welder: it’s about Tony Smith, aged forty-seven, who speaks these words about what it’s like to be at work and you have a photograph, or a series of photographs, about him and his job and you maybe include a picture which is of his private life. The back of his locker which has got pictures of his kids stuck on it. It becomes a more total picture and it’s this idea of trying to invest a public image with the power and the intimacy of a family photograph. When you look at a family album you don’t just remember the person in the photograph. You remember what they said to you last Christmas and that granny so-and-so smelled of lavender. You invest a whole lot more in the photograph. Berger’s essay is one of the best on photographic realism and how you invest meaning in photographs.

**Hall:** So, to a certain extent, Shelter allowed you to create a context for your photographs?

**Hedges:** In a limited way. You had the voices of the families. The interviews were anonymous because we couldn’t give access to those families who were very vulnerable. There was a stab at it, yes. It was incomplete because you didn’t tell the whole story, but to do that would require a novel or a book of eighty or ninety pages. All you had was one side of A5 and a photograph. One photograph can tell a story, but it can’t tell the whole story.

**Hall:** Did you deliberately omit any of the images from the archive at the Library of Birmingham and if so, why?

**Hedges:** Of all the Shelter photographs, I think the only ones that weren’t included in the archive were the posed photographs that I was asked to take very early on, or any publicity or conference photographs, which to my way of thinking are just boring. There would be a group conference in Sheffield. You’d have speakers and you’d be asked to photograph them. It’s just tedious. They’re part of the history of the organisation, but they’re not part of what I considered to be the principal reason for the archive. Generally speaking, the only photographs I would leave out of an archive would be for private and personal reasons to do with the family or the persons concerned. There’s a particular photograph of a woman in a factory and I later discovered that she’d committed suicide within about two or three weeks of me taking the photograph. That had got nothing to do with me taking the photograph and she didn’t even know I’d taken one, but I thought it was probably a good idea, out of respect for her, not to include it. There was a family in Manchester that we were photographing for a Shelter report. We discovered that one of the babies in the photograph had actually died two
or three weeks later from some stomach illness, so we didn’t include that in the report. That would have been left out.

Hall: So it wasn’t published in the report but it was included in the archive?

Hedges: Yes. For goodness sake, its forty years ago and the baby is not identified in the caption in the photograph and therefore it seems to be ok. There’s no reference to the death of the baby so it seems to be protected. The pictures that weren’t included were those where there had been a tragedy in the family, for personal reasons. They wouldn’t be used at the time. Other photographs that weren’t included were just shots to do with publicity, committee meetings and conferences, which are just plain boring and they weren’t anything to do with what the archive was about.

Hall: Were there any photographs that you didn’t include because you weren’t happy with them?

Hedges: Oh hundreds, thousands. The thing about taking photographs is that it’s a bit like going fishing. Basically you cast your line in the water and six times you cast the line in and six times you don’t catch anything. On the seventh occasion you do, if you’re lucky. A roll of film used to be thirty-six exposures long and I used to reckon you’d be lucky to get five or six photographs of any significance in a role, so the shooting ratio would be about one in six, one in seven. The archive probably represents one in fifteen or one in twenty of the actual photographs taken, so there’s a huge edit done. The actual act of taking photographs can be imagined like a graph. When Cartier-Bresson advised young photographers about their work, he would always look at their contact sheets, never their finished prints and he would say that you can always see a graph where the photograph, the potential for the photograph, starts. You see frame one and frame two and frame three and each time it’s getting slightly more resolved and slightly better. By frame four or five, the photographer’s usually got a photograph that is potentially the best of that sequence but they continue taking photographs, so it becomes frame six, frame seven, frame eight and the only one they will ever use is frame four or five, the one at the top of the graph. The ones beforehand are a preparation. You don’t stop taking pictures; you can’t know when the best picture is going to be. It’s always a continuous process. I thought that was a very good observation to bear in mind when you’re looking at anyone’s archive. There's an ongoing sequence like waves, they rise and fall and there's a point at which you’re at the crest of a wave and that's the picture you want and then the rest are just washed up on the beach.
Hall: Why do you think that you remember some people that you photographed more than others?

Hedges: That kind of response to an individual is a measure of the degree of knowledge, friendship and intimacy that you might have shared with them. When I was taking pictures for the Birmingham Housing Trust in 1967, I met Greta (Fig. 221). She was hanging her washing out, I think, and I explained what I was doing and we chatted a bit and we talked about her baby boy and I said, ‘Would it be ok if I come and take some more pictures?’ So I got to know her over a few days and we got on really well and we had a laugh so she became, for a moment in time, a really good friend who collaborated with me while we were making that series of pictures. The same would be true of the people I met when I was at Shelter doing pictures in various places, so I got to know them really well. The actual act of taking a photograph sort of freezes them in your memory. I can go back to a photograph and remember the moment I took that picture. I can remember the kind of ground I was standing on. I can’t remember what I was dressed in, but I can remember the weather and whether I was feeling hot and sweaty or cold. The act of the photograph is like a little stamp in your brain, it puts it there. I think I might be quite unusual in that because I haven’t met many people who can say the same, or it could be that I’ve led a very limited life, ‘Poor sod, that's all he can remember.’ It’s true of the pictures I took for Shelter, the pictures I took later on, the factory photographs (fig. 235) and the fishing industry pictures that were exhibited at the Side Gallery. The ones on the trawler and on the fishing boats I remember very strongly (Fig. 236). The ones in the wholesale market, where it’s a general crowd scene, I don’t remember quite so much. It’s when you’re with someone on a familiar basis, a group of three or four people.

Hall: So you had more of a relationship with some people than with others?

Hedges: Some people, more than you might imagine, created more of an impression.

Hall: You may not have had a conversation with all the people you photographed.

Hedges: When you’re photographing indoors you’re involved in conversation. You’re in their space, aren’t you? It wasn’t necessary in the case of outside or crowd scenes.

Hall: Did working for Shelter give you the freedom to spend as much time as you wanted with the people that you photographed?
Hedges: There were definite limitations, but Shelter allowed me much more time than had I been working for a conventional media organisation, where I would have been rushed onto something else. That remark was originally made by a journalist who worked for Picture Post who then went on to work in television for Twenty-Four Hours or Nationwide. He said that working for the magazine meant he could go out and find out about a story and discover it and explore it. When he went to work for television, because it was so much more expensive to produce and involved so many more people (it wasn’t just him and a photographer, it was him, a crew, a producer and a sound person), they had to go out knowing what the story was going to be. The story was discovered before they ever went there and the approach to the story was never open-ended, it was closed. That’s still true about most documentaries on television now. My daughter works in radio and she says you have to pitch the idea. How can you pitch an idea if you don’t know what it is you’re going to find? When you’re working on your own, as a photographer or a journalist, it’s much easier to follow leads that don’t appear when you first start the story. To an extent, I could do that at Shelter. There would be a discussion about which cities we would look at this year for the report and then I’d go off and explore them with a journalist. We’d do the same when we were doing the education programme.

Hall: How did your photographic practice and philosophy change or develop over your four years with Shelter?

Hedges: Isn’t that for you to say?

Hall: Were you conscious of any specific changes?

Hedges: You’re right to ask the question. In any professional situation as you work through something, as you work in a particular job, you satisfy the demands that the job is placing upon you and you begin to explore possibilities that the job doesn’t suggest to you. You start to ask questions about why you’re doing it. It’s this questioning and being self-critical that changes. Sometimes, the change takes place after you’ve left the organisation. You begin to realise that this isn’t quite what I wanted to do; this isn’t quite what I wanted to be. And then after another year you think, ‘Maybe I’ll leave.’ I’m not saying this happened with Shelter, but this is what happens to people. Quite often, the organisation you work for doesn’t have the room to allow you to make the change while you’re in it. You have to make the change when you get out of it, that’s what all people do. One of the great changes is that you start to become aware of how precious time is. You understand how much time you need to spend
with someone, or in a situation, to really understand it. You know that the more time you can
invest, the more likely it is that you’re going to get what you want. With Shelter you might
say, ‘I wish I could have spent another few days with that group of people in Salford’ but you
knew you couldn’t because you had to be in Newcastle. When I was doing the factory
photographs, the steelworks, I could say, ‘Oh, I’ll just spend another week here, I’ll just
spend another month here.’ No one’s telling you to move on, so time was the big thing I
think. On the technical side, I think I became much more assured about working at very low
light levels. I was explaining to you how much more difficult it was to take pictures on film
in those days than it is today with digital cameras. People simply do not understand that we
really were working at the margins. If you decided you weren’t going to use flash and you
didn’t want to set any pictures up, you were working right on the limits of what the
technology would allow. The more you did it the better you became. By the time I’d got to
the end of three or four years at Shelter I became very good at working at very low light
levels. But I’m a great believer, which you may not have come across in any of the other
interviews, in the importance of craft and the importance of being a master of your craft. By
that, I mean all of the technical disciplines that you use and bring to bear on what you’re
doing and your way of working. If you’re a photographer, you become particularly good at
working in very low light conditions with particular kinds of camera. You become good at
processing film in a certain way. They’re all small things, but they contribute to the finish of
something and it would be equally true of someone who is a writer or a dancer or a
filmmaker. The craft side of things is a marriage of craft, intellect and emotion.

Hall: Did you change in any other ways?

Hedges: The thing that changed me more, not just as a photographer necessarily, but as a
human being, happened about eighteen months after I’d left Shelter. I was asked by Neil
Taylor, a good friend of mine who I’d met when he used pictures from the Shelter library, to
go to Tanzania to photograph the country and make a tape, an audio visual. I was the
photographer and Neil was the producer-come-director. That experience of working in
Tanzania for six weeks changed the way I thought about inequality and poverty in this
country forever. Anybody who’s worked in the Third World would probably say the same.
You can’t get as worked up about things in this country after you’ve experienced what it’s
like living and working and being with people who live at the very margins. I couldn’t get as
radically involved with issues to do with society, poverty and bad housing in the UK. Once
I’d returned from Africa, it didn’t seem relevant in the same way.
Hall: Who organised that project?

Hedges: It was USPG in London. They were the Main Church of England charity that worked in Africa.

Hall: I haven’t seen those photographs.

Hedges: They weren’t printed. They were all taken on slide and they’re with the organisation that I took them for, in London. They were used as a tape and slide presentation, an AV presentation. The important thing was the experience, not so much the photographs. The lesson I drew from Shelter was the importance of time and creating a more complete documentary study of things. That's why I wanted to spend longer on my next project, which happened to be the factory photographs, and also to include interview material and the fabric of other people's lives as well, signs and postcards and personal effects that surround where people work.

Hall: Could you tell me a bit more about the time when a politician held up one of your Shelter photographs during a television interview?

Hedges: That was when I realised how clever Des Wilson was in the way he organised the press and publicity surrounding Shelter reports. He always made sure that reports came out at the time of the party political conferences and I remember sitting down one evening and all of a sudden there was a report from this particular Party Conference, I can’t remember if it was Liberal or Labour, and this bloke on the platform got up and he opened the Shelter report and said, ‘This is a scandal.’ And it was one of my photographs and I thought, ‘That's brilliant’. I realised Des had got things right because he’d got maximum publicity for nothing and then the bloke obviously quoted what the scandal was from the report.

Hall: Do you remember which report and which photograph it was?

Hedges: I think it was the Condemned report which came out in 1971. It was a double-page spread photograph (Fig. 195).

Hall: I think it was the photograph featuring the baby that died afterwards.

Hedges: Is it really?

Hall: I think it is, because I've seen that as a centrefold.
Hedges: Right, oh that sounds right, yes.

Hall: Did you feel proud?

Hedges: No, not really. You don’t feel proud when someone does that. Basically, you feel pleased that the message has got through.

Hall: Were you surprised when that happened?

Hedges: Oh, gosh, yes.

Hall: Could you talk about your time as a teacher of photography? Did your experience at Shelter and with your other projects impact on that?

Hedges: I started full-time lecturing in 1980. I worked at the West Midlands College of Higher Education which offered a new degree course in visual communications. It was in Walsall and I worked there for six years on that. Then Margaret Thatcher closed the course down. The people that I worked with at Walsall were great. There were graphic designers, two video tutors and an extremely good writer on popular cultural theory called Dick Hebdige. He’s a good man, he lives in California now, I think. That's when the magazine *Ten.8* got started. We worked on it as a collective, me and one or two of the students. Other people from the West Midlands also started working on the magazine. Then, I was made redundant.

Hall: Were you the only photography teacher?

Hedges: No, there was another guy called David Bryson. David was a great bloke but he was really a painter-turned-photographer. We were all made redundant in 1986. I had six months to find a job, no it was three months’ notice, and I couldn’t find anywhere to work in the West Midlands at all. By that time I was married and I’d got kids and we were fairly happy living there, so I eventually found a job at Norwich School of Art in East Anglia. I commuted every week to Norfolk from Shrewsbury, which was a trial and I didn’t get on too well there. It was fine, I was relatively happy. I was a peripheral part of the course and then a job came up at Wolverhampton which I applied for and got, so I started teaching there in 1987 or 1988. You asked me about whether my experience as a photographer influenced the course at all or how I taught. Two things influenced my teaching. One was how bad my own my experience as a student had been. I was taught appallingly and I was absolutely convinced that no student was as badly taught as I was, in terms of acquisition of skills and attitude towards the
medium. I was very determined to have the right kind of balance on the course, which was empowerment for students in their first year, in terms of technical skill, so they should all feel confident about the way they worked with apparatus and in those days it was film not digital. Art institutions are funny things. Technical teaching is considered to be unimportant because it’s slightly beneath them. Aesthetics and ideas are more important. In photography, technical things are more significant. If you can give someone confidence in terms of working with apparatus, then you free their creativity so they can do what they want. I was determined the students shouldn’t be badly taught on the technical side and, equally, I was determined that they should experience the widest approaches to photography. I thought it was wrong to confine their experience of photography to just a fine art or documentary or commercial approach. We designed the course to have a balanced approach to the possibilities within photography in the first and second years and then in the third year the student would specialise in either documentary or fine art practice or commercial and advertising. That balance was one I was very proud of maintaining, rather than solely pushing documentary, which you might think I should, but I'm realistic enough to know that part of a job as a tutor was to, a) give students confidence and, b) allow them to have the opportunity to earn a living once they left. I think that that back in 1987 that wasn’t always considered to be important. You go to art school to piss about, don’t you? I get tremendous pleasure out of photography and it’s been good to me, in as much as I've been able to learn my living doing it. There have been struggles. You can help through teaching. You can help students be better equipped to deal with things.

Hall: How did you approach teaching documentary photography?

Hedges: We had modules. At Wolverhampton, it was a modular degree. You had to take four modules in each semester, so you took eight modules in a year. In the second year, you had a module which dealt with image and text. That dealt with work using photographs with text to produce photo-essays, book jackets and record sleeves. You had a module which dealt with photography as fine art practice. That explored ideas to do with all sorts of fine art possibilities which existed within photography. You had a module which dealt with advertising photography and you had a module which dealt with documentary photography called Realism and Representation. That dealt with the theory, history and practice of documentary and students had a major and a minor project.
Hall: It sounds like a comprehensive course. Did your own experiences as a photographer influence the way you taught the documentary module?

Hedges: Yes, of course.

Hall: Did you show your students your photographs?

Hedges: I did two or three formal lectures at the start of the module which looked at the history of documentary. I had my own particular version of the history of documentary, which is entirely my own. I divided up documentary photography over the last 160 years into areas of practice and suggested that certain types of documentary photography existed from the very beginning, and some new ideas about documentary practice came in at certain points in time. I tried to relate how those practices might be considered at this very moment in 1980, whatever. We looked at things to do with documentary as fine art practice, documentary as a weapon of change, documentary as propaganda and documentary as mixed media. I tried to bring in some of John Berger’s ideas about mixing photography with other media like poetry and statistics.

Hall: Like montage?

Hedges: No. Montage was dealt with in the fine art course. I mean more like in the book *A Seventh Man*. It had photographs, statistics, poetry and stories. It’s got a huge range of material in it, all of which is brought together for documentary effect and I think it’s a very good result. Another example would be Julian Germain’s book called *Steelworks*, which is superb. That was produced in the 1990s I think, about County Durham. Obviously, I would touch on my experiences at Shelter and doing the factory photographs.

Hall: Where did that fit in?

Hedges: It might be used to illustrate photography and social affairs. It might be used to introduce photography and propaganda. It would be relevant to several aspects. The great problem in teaching is not to make too much of yourself. There are so many examples of tutors who establish schools of their own type of photography. Like Thomas Joshua Cooper in Scotland. I'm afraid there is a tradition of it and it’s a tradition in the fine arts as well. The school of so-and-so. People would respond to certain enthusiasms. You might respond enthusiastically to an idea for a project and it might be to do with people at work. I can remember individual students coming up to me with superb ideas. Other times, I thought,
‘Why don’t you try so-and-so instead?’ As a tutor you don’t want to crush their ambition, but at the same time you also recognise when someone comes forward with an idea that is totally impractical.

Hall: Can you think of an example?

Hedges: Yes. How do you do a project on refugees and illegal immigration as a student in Wolverhampton when you’ve only got three or four weeks to do the project? a) You’re looking at an area which is illegal b) How are you going to get access to people to talk to? c) You’ve got other classes to attend at the same time. There’s all sorts of reasons why it’s not a project you could successfully complete. You admire the ambition, but you say to them, ‘Look, I just think this is too ambitious, given the time you’ve got.’ You’d need a year and luck. But there are other things which are on your doorstep which you can do. You listen to the person’s idea and you say, ‘Have you looked at such-and-such a person’s work? Do you know about this?’ You try and find a way of guiding them. You don’t want to suggest something that’s been done before because it makes them feel as though, ‘Oh, it’s not my thing.’ You suggest an approach that they might want to take. You have to deal with twenty or thirty different kinds of ambitions in a class. You’ve got people who are pretty wised-up and you can say, ‘Oh, they’re alright, they’ll get this sorted, they’ll know what to do’. You’ve just got to nudge them and they’ll be ok. Other people are really struggling for all sorts of reasons. It may be to do with their personality. It may be that they’re terribly inhibited about certain things. There are a hell of a lot of people who have a great deal of difficulty in dealing with other people. When you’re young, say between nineteen and twenty five, you’re not that confident about yourself. You’re dealing with sensitive souls. You’ve got to find a way of allowing them to grow and expand and test themselves out in situations which they’re not going to get crushed by and they’re not going to get defeated by. I’m a great believer in enthusing and empowering people and not the school of hard knocks basically.

Hall: Can you say something about your student Roshini Kempadoo?

Hedges: Roshini was one of our very first students at the West Midlands College of Higher Education. She came from British Guyana. She was very gifted and she was interested in two or three particular issues when she was at college. She was interested in feminism, obviously as a young black woman. She was also interested in issues to do with race. She was one of those students that tutors often have a slight battle over, in as much as you think, ‘I’d like her
to be a photographer’. Or someone else would say, ‘She’s really a good video person as well’. She found her own way. She did photography and AV, she already did visual presentations as well, so she worked with moving images in one sense and she went on to be very successful. She went to work in Scotland. She was one of those students who was an absolute gift. She was very able, extremely bright. She was one of those students that you just nudge and off they go. She was fairly innocent in terms of technical approach so one had to introduce her to the demands of the medium to begin with, but she was very aware of cultural issues. She was switched on. Lots of students aren’t switched on at all. Some students are more interested in getting home to watch Neighbours on telly than they are in your class. At four thirty there’s this sort of rustling and looking at watches. You know the telly is about to start at home in the student flat. Roshini never went off to watch Neighbours.

Hall: Could you explain about Gjon Mili and his electronic flash technique? You mentioned it in the lecture that is in the sound archive at the British Library and I just wondered what it was?

Hedges: It’s very high speed flash photography. If you take a photograph against a dark background and you make sure the light only falls on your subject matter, you have a strobe effect. Someone swings a golf club and you take twenty or twenty-five shots of the golf club in the course of its swing and they’re all sharp. Like the images of Harold Eugene Edgerton. It’s a kind of rapid strobe.

Hall: Like Muybridge?

Hedges: Yes, but even more sophisticated than Muybridge. That's what Gjon Mili did. He perfected that technique. He used it in his work for Time Life magazine.

Hall: What are your ideas about the ownership of images in terms of photographer and subject?

Hedges: That’s an interesting question and one which I've struggled with. One theory is that the subject ought to be in charge of the photograph. Taken to its extreme, it would mean that if I, as a white male, wanted to take a picture of a situation in which an Asian man was the main subject matter, I shouldn’t because I wouldn’t understand what it was like to be an Asian man. It’s to do with personal understanding. I, as a middle-class person, shouldn’t photograph a working-class situation because I don’t really understand it. It’s a class thing and also a race thing. I’ve been ambivalent about it because, being middle-class, most of the
things I've photographed have not necessarily been part of my class at all. They’ve been part
of the working-class experience, part of a religious experience (I'm not religious) or about a
woman’s experience (I'm not a woman). That was the stream of thought at one time.
Basically, it meant that none of my pictures were worth anything. My view is that we’re all
human beings. One of the great gifts of being a photographer is it can make you classless.
You can feel comfortable and be part of things which you aren’t naturally born into. My own
way of approaching people and subject matter is that everyone is of equal value and worth.
I'm no better or no worse than anyone else. We are all human beings. It’s especially true of
photojournalists working overseas. They’re visitors, they’re not part of the culture. It’s
problematic and there isn’t a particularly easy answer. The only answer I've come up with is
imperfect. It says, ‘I listen to you, I hear your message, I hear what you’re saying, I believe I
can understand the situation that you find yourself in, I hope you will trust and allow me to
make a photograph of you which will represent it. You can have a look at the photograph and
say whether or not it’s true or not.’ That was part of the factory project. I exhibited the
photographs in the factories so people could see how they were being depicted.

Hall: And they could keep them?

Hedges: Yes, they kept them. It was a way of saying thank you, but it was also a way of
saying, ‘This is your image.’

Hall: Is that something you wish you could have done at Shelter?

Hedges: It would have been very nice to pass the pictures back. Where I got to know the
family over a very long period of time, like the Rump family (the one that got rehoused), they
did have copies of photographs, we did let them have pictures. Obviously, we just did prints
for them but it’s an ideal way of working that is not always possible. The most radical way of
doing this would be to say, ‘There won’t be any professional photographers. We will give
everyone a camera’. That's great and it works but it can’t work everywhere. You have to have
people who are trusted representatives who can do things for you. That's my inadequate
response to it. It is an issue about which there is some controversy and debate. Especially
when you look back through history and say, ‘These pictures are taken by the very privileged
of the very unprivileged, we should know that when we’re assessing them and looking at
them’. It’s all to do with a democratisation of a message.

Hall: When you were at Shelter did you ever let children use your camera?
**Hedges:** Oh yes, all the time. I’ve got a lot of self-portraits, well, photographs taken by kids, of me with them. They are in the archive in Birmingham as negatives and contact sheets. You’ll see a very shaggy-bearded and bespectacled man standing in a dark corner of the room with a group of kids (Fig. 82). I appear in a number of photographs which they took. Kids asked, ‘Can I have a go?’ I used to put the camera round their neck on a strap so it didn’t drop. Those photographs are very different. They weren’t made into final prints. It was a way of making yourself the same, at the same level. You’re taking part in it, you see? And it’s also a way of saying there isn’t really anything magic about photography, it’s pretty straightforward. That happened with the Pryde family in Manchester, the family that featured in that double-page spread with the baby who later died. There's a picture of me in the corner of that room with about eight kids.

**Hall:** Thank you.
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The Shelter photographs are listed according to their box and reference number at BAHP. Hedges detailed the technical components of the photographs as follows:

‘The photographer used 35mm Leica and Nikon cameras with Kodak Tri-X film. The prints were made on Kodak White Smooth Glossy double-weight bromide paper (dried unglazed). Paper size is 10 inches by 8 inches, print size approximately 9 inches by 6 inches. Kodak Ltd donated the paper materials’.

Fig. 1  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Liverpool, 1971, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 361/13

Fig. 2  Condemned, Shelter report, September 1971, p. 25, Shelter archive

Fig. 3  Homelessness is on your doorstep, Shelter poster, 1973, scanned digital image, Shelter archive

Fig. 4  Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 5  Shelter News, Autumn 1971, p. 2, scanned digital image, Shelter archive

Fig. 6  Shelter archive, 88 Old Street, London, author’s private photograph

Fig. 7  The verso of one of Hedges’ Shelter photographs, Shelter archive

Fig. 8  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Birmingham, 1971, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 357/0

Fig. 9  Jo Spence, ‘The Politics of Photography’, Camerawork no.1, 1976, p. 1

Fig. 10  Jo Spence, ‘The Politics of Photography’, British Journal of Photography, 26 March 1976, p. 254-55

Fig. 11  Condemned, Shelter advertisement (reproduced in The Times, 17 September, 1971, p. 5)

Fig. 12  Policy for the Homeless, Shelter publication, 1971, front cover, Shelter archive

831 Nick Hedges statement, August 2001, Hedges Collection, d/file, MS 2399, BAHP.
Fig. 13  
*Shelter – The people*, Shelter poster, undated, scanned digital image, Shelter archive

Fig. 14  
*Children Photographed*, exhibition poster, 1976 (reproduced in Bezencenent and Corrigan (eds.), *Photographic Practices*, p.16)

Fig. 15  
Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 16  
Thomas Flynn, *Kids on Hornby Road, Bootle*, 1980, photograph (reproduced in Braden, *Committing Photography*, p. 70)

Fig. 17  
Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Salford, 1971, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 5, 344/28a (reproduced in Braden, *Committing Photography*, p. 73)

Fig. 18  
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Fig. 19  
Augustus Edwin Mulready, *Uncared for*, 1871, oil on canvas, 101 x 76cm (39.8 x 29.9”), private collection

Fig. 20  
Thomas Kennington, *Homeless*, 1890, oil on canvas, 166.6 x 151.7cm, Bendigo Art Gallery Collection, Victoria, Australia

Fig. 21  
Thomas Annan, *Close No. 101 High Street, Glasgow*, 1868-1871, albumen print from wet collodion negative, 28.4 x 22.5cm, National Galleries Scotland

Fig. 22  
James Burgoyne, *12-13 Upper Priory Court*, Birmingham, 1875, photograph, Birmingham Improvement Scheme 115a (110/2384), BAHP

Fig. 23  

Fig. 24  
‘What it Means to Live in a Good House’, *Picture Post*, 1 January 1944, p. 22

Fig. 25  
Anonymous, photograph, 1939 (reproduced in ‘Enough of All This!’ *Picture Post*, 1 April 1939, p. 54)

Fig. 26  
Anonymous, photograph, 1939 (reproduced in ‘Enough of All This!’ *Picture Post*, 1 April 1939, p. 54)
Fig. 27  Bert Hardy, photograph, 1948 (reproduced in ‘The Forgotten Gorbals’, *Picture Post*, 31 January 1948, p. 13)

Fig. 28  Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother*, 1936, gelatin silver print, 11 1/8 x 8 9/16”, MoMA, New York

Fig. 29  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Glasgow, 1970, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 5, 288/15a

Fig. 30  Bert Hardy, photograph, 1948 (reproduced in ‘The Forgotten Gorbals’, *Picture Post*, 31 January 1948, p. 15)

Fig. 31  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Liverpool, 1971, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 365/6

Fig. 32  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Manchester, 1969, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 71/18a

Fig. 33  Shirley Baker, *Hulme, Manchester*, 1965, C-type print, 27.3 x 18.6cm, Mary Evans Picture Library

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Fig. 36  Anonymous, photograph, *Yard, East of Bridge Street from Photographs of Properties of Petitioners in the Quarry Hill Unhealthy Area*, 1901, University of Leeds, Brotherton Library (reproduced in Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* p. 138)

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Fig. 41 Last year a rat ate Jimmy’s Christmas present, Shelter advertisement (reproduced in The Times, 13 March 1970, p. 2)

Fig. 42 Their place in the sun, Shelter advertisement (reproduced in The Times, 27 May 1970, p. 1)

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Fig. 47 Gustave Doré, Bluegate Fields, engraving, 1872, Museum of London

Fig. 48 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Birmingham, 1969, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 96/24

Fig. 49 This is what it’s all about, Shelter poster, undated (reproduced in Hedges and Lewis, From the Centre, Living through Change in an Industrial Society 1965-1990, p. 28)

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Fig. 61  You can help save Bo Suk for $15 a month, Save the Children advertisement, The New Yorker, 25 November 1972 (reproduced in Stott, Documentary Expression and Thirties America, p. 143)

Fig. 62  Dorothea Lange, Damaged Child, 1936, gelatin silver print, 10 ¼ x 9 7/16", MoMA, New York

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Fig. 79  Nick Hedges, negative, BAHP

Fig. 80  Edith Tudor-Hart, *Family Group, Stepney, London*, c. 1932, gelatin silver print, National Galleries Scotland

Fig. 81  Nick Hedges, negative, BAHP
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Fig. 84 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Birmingham, 1969, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 1, 6/9

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Fig. 97  Ken Loach, *Cathy Come Home*, film still, 1966, 
http://www.theguardian.com/culture/tvandradioblog/2006/nov/28/evicted 
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Fig. 105  *They ask for so little but need so much*, Dr Barnardo’s Homes advertisement 
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Fig. 106  *Call this home!*, Homeless in Britain Fund advertisement (reproduced in *New Society*, 19 November 1964)

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Fig. 120  Anonymous, pen and ink drawing (reproduced in Leslie Smith, ‘Juvenile courts: A conflict of interests’, *New Society*, 11 October 1962, pp. 20-22)

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Fig. 129  Sally Mann, *Fallen Child*, 1989, photograph, gelatin silver print, 18.75 x 23”, private collection

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Fig. 131  Anonymous, pen and ink drawing (reproduced in ‘Class differences in baby care’, *New Society*, 4 July 1963, p. 9)

Fig. 132  Anonymous, photograph (reproduced in ‘The Plight of the Large Family’, *New Society*, 7 April 1966, front cover and p. 184)

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Fig. 152 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Liverpool, 1971, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 363/4

Fig. 153 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, London, 1969, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 40/17

Fig. 154 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Bradford, 1969, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 1, 27/17

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Fig. 160 *The Shelter Story*, front cover, Shelter archive

Fig. 161 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 162 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 163 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 164 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP
Fig. 165 John Singer Sargent, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, 1882, oil on canvas, 87 3/8 x 87 5/8”, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Fig. 166 *Happy Christmas!* Shelter report, December 1970, front cover, Shelter archive

Fig. 167 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Birmingham, 1970, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 5, 274/29a

Fig. 168 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 169 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 170 *Happy Christmas!* Shelter report, December 1970, back cover, Shelter archive

Fig. 171 *This kid can’t wait to get to school*, Shelter poster, 1971, scanned digital image, Shelter archive

Fig. 172 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Newcastle, 1971, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 353/34

Fig. 173 Paul Shillabeer, *Joanna Shillabeer* (reproduced in ‘National Baby Week Exhibition 1936’ review, *Record, Institute of British Photographers*, Vol. XXX, Number 4, April 1951, p. 44)

Fig. 174 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 175 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 176 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 177 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 178 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 179 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, London, 1969, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 43/37

Fig. 180 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, London, 1969, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 43/29

Fig. 181 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP
Fig. 182 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 183 Lewis Hine, *Doffer family, Tifton, Georgia, January, 1909*, gelatin silver print, 1909, 11.8 x 17cm, George Eastman House, New York

Fig. 184 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 185 *Give Shelter*, Shelter advertisement (reproduced in *The Times*, 21 September, 1974, p. 5)

Fig. 186 *Who needs Shelter?*, Shelter poster, 1976, scanned digital image, Shelter archive

Fig. 187 Birmingham Archives, Heritage and Photography (BAHP), Floor 4, Library of Birmingham, author’s private photograph

Fig. 188 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, London, 1969, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 41/7

Fig. 189 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, London, 1971, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 5, 311/31

Fig. 190 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, London, 1971, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 392/29a

Fig. 191 Emma Barton, *Untitled*, uncatalogued photograph, c. 1900, BAHP

Fig. 192 Lisel Haas, *Untitled*, uncatalogued photograph, c. 1940s, BAHP

Fig. 193 The Wolfson Centre, BAHP, Library of Birmingham, author’s private photograph

Fig. 194 The Wolfson Centre, BAHP, Library of Birmingham, author’s private photograph

Fig. 195 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Manchester, 1969, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 73/25

Fig. 196 J. Cruys Richards, *Poor Children in Sutton Park*, Birmingham, 1898, bromide print, MS 2724/2/B/2363, BAHP
Fig. 197 Carol M. Highsmith, *Wall of Remembrance at the U.S. National Holocaust Museum, Washington D.C.*, photograph, undated, Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress

Fig. 198 Anonymous, *Hungarian woman and children on the way to the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau*, 1944, Yad Vashem, Israel

Fig. 199 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Manchester, 1969, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 73/11

Fig. 200 Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 201 *The Shelter Story*, page one, Shelter archive

Fig. 202 *Make Life Worth Living* exhibition, Science Museum, London, author’s private photograph


Fig. 204 *Make Life Worth Living* exhibition, Science Museum, London, author’s private photograph

Fig. 205 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, East Kilbride, 1970, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 5, 261/14

Fig. 206 Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Burnley, 1970, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 3, 177/15

Fig. 207 *Make Life Worth Living* exhibition posters, London underground, author’s private photograph

Fig. 208 *Make Life Worth Living* exhibition, Science Museum, London, author’s private photograph

Fig. 209 Library of Birmingham, author’s private photograph

Fig. 210 The Discovery Gallery, Floor 3, Library of Birmingham, author’s private photograph
Fig. 211  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Newcastle, 1971, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 353/36

Fig. 212  Daniel Meadows, *Residents of June Street*, Salford 1973

Fig. 213  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Salford, 1970, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 3, 181/31a

Fig. 214  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Liverpool, 1969, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 90/10

Fig. 215  Installation view of the exhibition *Daniel Meadows, Early Photographic Works*, The Gallery, Library of Birmingham, author’s private photograph

Fig. 216  *Daniel Meadows, Early Photographic Works* exhibition, The Gallery, Library of Birmingham, author’s private photograph

Fig. 217  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Glasgow, 1970, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8”, Box 5, 287/9a

Fig. 218  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Glasgow, 1971, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 375/7a

Fig. 219  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, London, 1969, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 41/13

Fig. 220  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, London, 1969, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 41/4

Fig. 221  Nick Hedges, Birmingham Housing Trust photograph, Birmingham 1967, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, photographer’s private collection

Fig. 222  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Glasgow, 1971, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 383/28a

Fig. 223  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Glasgow, 1971, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 6, 374/14

Fig. 224  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Glasgow, 1970, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 5, 240/28a
Fig. 225  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Liverpool, 1969, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 98/33a

Fig. 226  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Birmingham, 1969, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 2, 61/22

Fig. 227  Photograph of the Shelter offices showing (from left to right) Jeremy Harrison, Anna Bowman, Nick Hedges and Ian Mattingly), contact print, BAHP

Fig. 228  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Salford, 1971, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 5, 343/18

Fig. 229  Nick Hedges, Handsworth pub, 1966, photographer’s private collection

Fig. 230  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Wichenford, Worcester, 1970, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 4, 211/37

Fig. 231  Nick Hedges, Shelter photograph, Bromley, Kent, 1970, silver gelatin print, 10 x 8”, Box 5, 267/28

Fig. 232  Nick Hedges, contact print, BAHP

Fig. 233  Nick Hedges, negative, BAHP

Fig. 234  Nick Hedges, Girls in lift, Northfield shopping centre, Birmingham, Problem in the City, 1975, photographer’s private collection

Fig. 235  Nick Hedges, Blitz and the furnaces, Bilston Steelworks, Born to Work, 1977, photographer’s private collection

Fig. 236  Nick Hedges, Sorting out the catch on deck, Fishing Industry, 1980, photographer’s private collection
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