Poverty, inequality and class structure

Edited by

DOROTHY WEDDERBURN

Reader in Industrial Sociology
Imperial College of Science and Technology

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1

Poverty as relative deprivation: resources and style of living

PETER TOWNSEND

Poverty can be defined objectively and applied consistently only in terms of the concept of relative deprivation. That is the theme of this chapter. The term is understood objectively rather than subjectively. Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diets, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities.

The consequences of adopting this definition will be illustrated to bring out its meaning. For example, research studies might find more poverty, according to this definition, in certain wealthy than in certain less wealthy societies, and although the poor in the former might be better off, according to some criteria, than the poor in the latter. Again, despite continued economic growth over a period of years, the proportion of the population of an advanced industrial society who are found to be in poverty might rise. Certainly some of the assumptions that are currently made in comparing and contrasting the more developed with the less developed societies and in judging progress in overcoming poverty in affluent societies would have to be revised. In the United States, for example, the assumption that the prevalence of poverty has been steadily reduced since 1959 may have to be abandoned, principally because the definition upon which prevalence is measured is rooted in the conceptions of a particular moment of history and not sufficiently related to the needs and demands of a changing society.[1]

The definition also has implications for policy, which should be recognised at the outset. Although all societies have ways of identifying and trying to deal with their problems, the social sciences are having an increasing influence upon decision-makers, both in providing information and implicitly or explicitly legitimating action. An important example in the history of the formulation of social policies to deal with poverty is the

definition of the subsistence standard in the Beveridge Report of 1942. Beveridge adapted the definition used in measuring poverty by Seebohm Rowntree, A. L. Bowley and others in their studies of different communities in Britain and he argued that this was the right basis for paying benefits in a social security scheme designed to abolish want.[2] For over 20 years the rationale for the level of benefits paid in the British schemes of national insurance and supplementary benefit (formerly National Assistance) has rested upon the arguments put forward in the early years of the 1939 war. No attempt has yet been made to present an alternative rationale, although benefits have been increased from time to time in response to rises in prices and wages. A clear definition allows the scale and degree as well as the nature of the problem of poverty to be identified and therefore points to the scale as well as the kind of remedial action that might be taken. Such action may involve not just the general level of benefits, for example, but revision of relativities between benefits received by different types of family.

Previous definitions of poverty

Any attempt to justify a new approach towards the definition and measurement of poverty so that its causes and means of alleviation may be identified must begin with previous definitions and evidence. The literature both about poverty and inequality are closely related and need to be considered in turn. Although poverty is more than inequality the poor undoubtedly receive an unequal share of resources and any explanation of this fact must be related to the larger explanation of social inequality in general.

Previous operational definitions of poverty have not been expressed in thoroughgoing relativist terms, nor founded comprehensively on the key concepts of resources and style of living. The concern has been with narrower concepts of income and the maintenance of physical efficiency. Among the early studies of poverty the work of Seebohm Rowntree is most important. In 1899 he collected detailed information about families in York. He defined families whose 'total earnings are insufficient to obtain the minimum necessaries for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency as being in primary poverty'.[4] Making shrewd use of the work of Atwater, a nutritionist who had experimented with the diets of prisoners to find how nutritional intakes were related to the maintenance of body weight, he estimated the average nutritional needs of adults and children, translated these needs into quantities of different foods and hence into the cash equivalent of these foods. To these costs for food he added minimum sums for clothing, fuel, and household sundries according to size of family. The

poverty line for a family of man and wife and three children was 17s 8d per week, made up of 12s 9d for food, 2s 3d for clothing, 1s 10d for fuel and 10d for household sundries. Rent was treated as an unavoidable addition to this sum, and was counted in full. A family was therefore regarded as being in poverty if its income minus rent fell short of the poverty line.

Nearly all subsequent studies were influenced deeply by this application of the concept of subsistence. With minor adaptations a stream of area surveys of poverty based on Rowntree's methods were carried out in Britain between the wars.[5] Rowntree himself carried out further studies in York in 1936 and 1950.[6]

But the standards which were adopted proved difficult to defend. Rowntree's estimates of the costs of necessities other than food were based either on his own and others' opinions or, as in the case of clothing, on the actual expenditure of those among a small selection of poor families who spent the least. Does the actual expenditure of the poorest families represent what they *need* to spend on certain items? Neither in his studies nor in similar studies were any criteria of need independent of personal judgement or of the minimum amounts actually spent on certain goods put forward.

In the case of food it seemed at first sight that independent criteria of need had been produced. But there were three major faults in procedure. Estimates of the nutrients required were very broad averages and were not varied by age, and family composition, still less by occupation and activity outside of work. The foods that were selected to meet these estimates were selected arbitrarily, with a view to securing minimally adequate nutrition at lowest cost, rather than in correspondence with diets that are conventional among the poorer working classes. And finally, the cost of food in the total cost of subsistence formed a much higher percentage than in ordinary experience. In relation to the budgets and customs of life of ordinary people the make-up of the subsistence budget was unbalanced. For example, when Lord Beveridge argued in the war for a subsistence standard similar to the poverty standards of Rowntree and others, he recommended an allowance of 53s 3d a week at 1938 prices for a man, wife and three small children, including 31s for food (58 per cent of the total). But in 1938 families of the same size with roughly the same total income were spending less than 22s on food (41 per cent of the total).[7]

An adaptation of the Rowntree method is in use by the United States Government. The Social Security Administration Poverty Index is based on estimates prepared by the Department of Agriculture of the costs of food needed by families of different composition. A basic standard of nutritional adequacy has been put forward by the National Research

Council and this standard has been translated into quantities of types of food 'compatible with the preference of United States families, as revealed in food consumption studies'.[8] This is then in turn translated into the minimum costs of purchases on the market. Finally, by reference to the average sums *per capita* on food as a proportion of all income (derived from consumer expenditure surveys) it is assumed that food costs represent 33 per cent of the total income needed by families of three or more persons and 27 per cent of the total income needed by households consisting of two persons.

A number of points in the argument can be examined critically. First, the index is not re-defined periodically to take account of changing customs and needs. In one of her influential articles Mollie Orshansky writes, as if it were a virtue, 'Except to allow for rising prices, the poverty index has not been adjusted since 1959'. Between 1959 and 1966 'the average income of 4-person families had increased by 37 per cent but the poverty line by only 9 per cent'.[9] Yet the same writer had pointed out earlier, that 'social conscience and custom dictate that there be not only sufficient quantity of food but sufficient variety to meet recommended nutritional goals and conform to customary eating patterns'.[10] In a rapidly developing society like the United States dietary customs and needs are liable to change equally rapidly and estimates of need must be reviewed frequently. Otherwise the risk is run of reading the needs of the present generation as if they were those of the past. Foods are processed differently, and presented from time to time in new forms, whether in recipe or packaging. Real prices may rise without any corresponding improvement in nutritional content. In the United States as well as Britain household expenditure on food has increased faster than prices in the last 10 or 20 years but regular studies of nutrition have shown little change in nutritional intakes. This evidence provides the minimum case for raising the poverty line between two points in time by more than the rise in prices.[11] No price index can cope properly with changes in ingredients, quality and availability of and 'need for' goods and services.[12] Strangely Miss Orshansky fails to grasp the fact that the standard that she helped to work out for 1959 could only be justified in the stream of American domestic history in terms far more dynamic than the grudging movements in the price index. That the United States definition is static and historically barren is revealed in her honest admission that one of the things the Social Security Administration did not know was 'how to adjust a poverty line to conform to changes in productivity'.[13] That is a fundamental and very damaging admission.[14]

Second, the use of a nutritional basis is questionable, and failure to

recognise this allows the full poverty standard to be fixed at a lower level than it otherwise would be fixed. Food costs were worked out which would obtain a minimally adequate diet, providing families restricted the kind and quality of their purchases and exercised skill in preparing as well as in buying food.[15] Nothing extra was allowed for eating meals out and the amounts were enough only for 'temporary or emergency use when funds are low'.[16] There are grounds for supposing that the standards pay insufficient heed to ordinary food customs and are inappropriate for more than a temporary period. The underlying definitions of dietary adequacy are insufficiently related to actual performance of occupational and social roles. Estimates of nutritional needs in fact include a larger element for activities which are socially and occupationally determined than for activities which are biologically and physically determined. Moreover, the former obviously vary widely among individuals and communities. While it may be very reasonable to average nutritional requirements, empirical studies of diets in relationship to incomes and activities have to be undertaken.

Finally, the question of finding criteria for needs other than food is dodged by estimating food costs and then taking these as a fixed percentage of the total budget stated to be necessary. The percentage varies for households of different size and is lower for farm families than for other families. How therefore, are the percentages chosen? Essentially they are a reflection of actual consumption, or more strictly, consumption in the mid-1950s.[17] But, again, although actual behaviour is more relevant than an arbitrarily defined category of 'poor' it cannot be regarded as a criterion of need. This remains the nagging problem about the entire procedure. All that can be conceded is that at least the United States method makes more allowance (although out of date) for conventional distribution of a poverty budget between food, fuel and clothing and other items, than the Rowntree method, which expected poor families to adopt a distributional pattern of spending quite unlike other families.

The circularity in the definition of poverty by the United States Social Security Administration is its weakest feature. In some respects budgetary practice is redefined as budgetary need. But arbitrary elements are also built into the definition from the start. Miss Orshansky is refreshingly candid about this. Beginning an expository article she writes: 'Poverty, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. Poverty is a value judgement; it is not something one can verify or demonstrate, except by inference and suggestion, even with a measure of error. To say who is poor is to use all sorts of value judgements. The concept has to be limited by the purpose

which is to be served by the definition . . . In the Social Security Administration, poverty was first defined in terms of the public or policy issue; to how many people, and to which ones, did we wish to direct policy concern.' Later she adds, 'A concept which can help influence public thinking must be socially and politically credible.'[18]

In these passages Miss Orshansky confuses different purposes. The point about a good definition is that it should be comprehensive, should depend as much as possible on independent or external criteria of evaluation, should involve the ordering of a mass of factual data in a rational, orderly and informative fashion, and should limit, though not conceal, the part played by the value judgements.

The limitations of the evidence of poverty

The evidence about poverty is voluminous but incomplete and inconsistent. Most of it is indirect, in the sense that particular aspects of poverty, such as bad housing, homelessness, overcrowding and malnourishment, the hardship of the unemployed, aged, sick and disabled and the severity of some working conditions rather than actual income in relation to community living standards have been described and discussed. One tradition is the polemical, comprehensive account of working and living conditions, as for example, in some of the writing of Engels, Masterman and Orwell.[19] Another is the painstaking official commission of enquiry, ranging, for example, from the 1844 report of the Commission of Enquiry into the State of Large Towns to the 1965 report of the Milner Holland Committee on Housing in Greater London. A third is the punctiliously specific research study.

For example, there have been studies of the relationship between prenatal nutritional deficiencies in mothers and organic and mental defects in their children,[20] more general studies of depression, apathy and lethargy resulting from inadequate diets and nutritional deficiency; books and papers containing evidence of the correlation between bad social conditions and restricted physical growth of children both in height and weight;[21] evidence too of the association between overcrowding and a number of different infectious diseases;[22] and evidence of the downward drift of income and occupational status in relation to schizophrenia.[23] This kind of evidence can certainly be used by the social scientist to build up a picture of the interrelationship of different problems and very rough estimates of the amount of, as well as the relative variations in, poverty. Different indicators can be used for this purpose, such as morbidity and mortality rates, percentage of households lacking certain amenities,

unemployment rates, measures of the average height and weight of school-children and the percentage of families obtaining means-tested welfare benefits.[24] Perhaps insufficient work has yet been done on the correlations between indicators like these and variables such as population structure, employment structure and rateable value. Certainly elaborate work of this kind would be required to buttress any development of more general theories of poverty.

But the underlying work of developing a comprehensive definition of poverty in operational terms which can be applied in different countries and regions and which can permit measurement of a kind sensitive enough to show the short-term effect on the numbers in poverty of, say, an increase in unemployment, an unusually large increase in prices, or the stepping-up in value of social security benefits, is still in a very early stage. This remains true despite a longish history of empirical work in some countries.[25]

It is interesting to compare some recent quantitative analyses of the extent of poverty. In 1966 the British Ministry of Social Security found that 160,000 families with two or more children, or 4.1 per cent of such families, were living on incomes lower than the prevailing basic rates of national assistance.[26] In the same year, the United States Social Security Administration, using a more generous definition of adequacy, found that 13.6 per cent of all households with children (15.6 per cent with two or more children) and 17.7 per cent of all households were poor.[27] In 1966 in Melbourne 4.8 per cent of families with children (6.1 per cent of families with two or more children) and just over 7 per cent of all households were found to be in poverty.[28] But although the last of these three 1966 surveys copied methods used in the United States to estimate what incomes for families of different size were equivalent they each adopted a national or conventional and not independent standard. In Britain, the Ministry of Social Security simply adopted the basic scale rates paid by the National Assistance Board, plus rent, as the poverty line, and sought to find how many families had an income of less than the levels implied by those rates.[29] In Australia, the legal minimum wage plus child endowment payments was treated as equivalent to the poverty line for a man and wife and two children, and adjustments were made for families of different size. In each case standards which had already proved to be politically acceptable rather than other standards were invoked. The United States method has been described above and, though it is more complicated in that it consists of certain attempts to develop detached criteria and build rational procedures, rough and arbitrary judgements are made at the really critical stages of fixing the level of the poverty line.

In calling attention to the fact that much of the evidence about poverty depends on measures which are built, in the final analysis, on conventional judgement or experience rather than on independent criteria such evidence must not be discounted. If there are national standards of need, expressed through public assistance scales, a minimum wage or child endowment, knowing the number of people having incomes of less than these standards represents valuable information. Such information can also be collected for different countries. The moral is, however, to endeavour to distinguish between definitions of poverty which are in practice made by a society and those which depend on detached or scientific criteria.

Poverty and inequality

For various countries there is also a considerable amount of evidence about unequal distribution of incomes, and the proportion of aggregate incomes taken by the poorest 10 per cent or 20 per cent of income recipients. In one recent comprehensive review Harold Lydall found that the countries distributing employment income most equally were Czechoslovakia, Hungary, New Zealand and Australia. Those distributing them most unequally were Brazil, Chile, India, Ceylon and Mexico. Lydall attempted also to document trends in the distribution for different countries. He showed that in 10 of the 11 countries for which information was available inequality in the distribution of pre-tax incomes had not just remained stationary during the 1950s but had actually widened.[30] Most other attempts to compare distributions have been less carefully documented and have been reduced to rankings according to a single coefficient or the per cent of aggregate income taken by the upper 10 per cent of income units and by the lowest 50 per cent of income units.[31]

The methods that have been used to compare the distribution of income in different countries can be criticised on grounds that they are so crude as to be misleading. For example, the ranking of developed and developing countries according to a measure of inequality, such as the Gini coefficient, can change remarkably if alternative measures, such as the standard deviation of logarithms or coefficient of variation, are used.[32] The rankings are sufficiently diverse as to throw profound doubt on the accepted conclusion that inequality is greater in the developing countries. As Atkinson points out, nearly all the conventional measures are insensitive to whether or not inequality is more pronounced near the top rather than near the bottom of the distribution.[33] What is at stake is the concept of equality. An attempt is made in Figure 1.1 to bring out the ambiguities in present conceptions. In Country A the total range of the distribution of income is

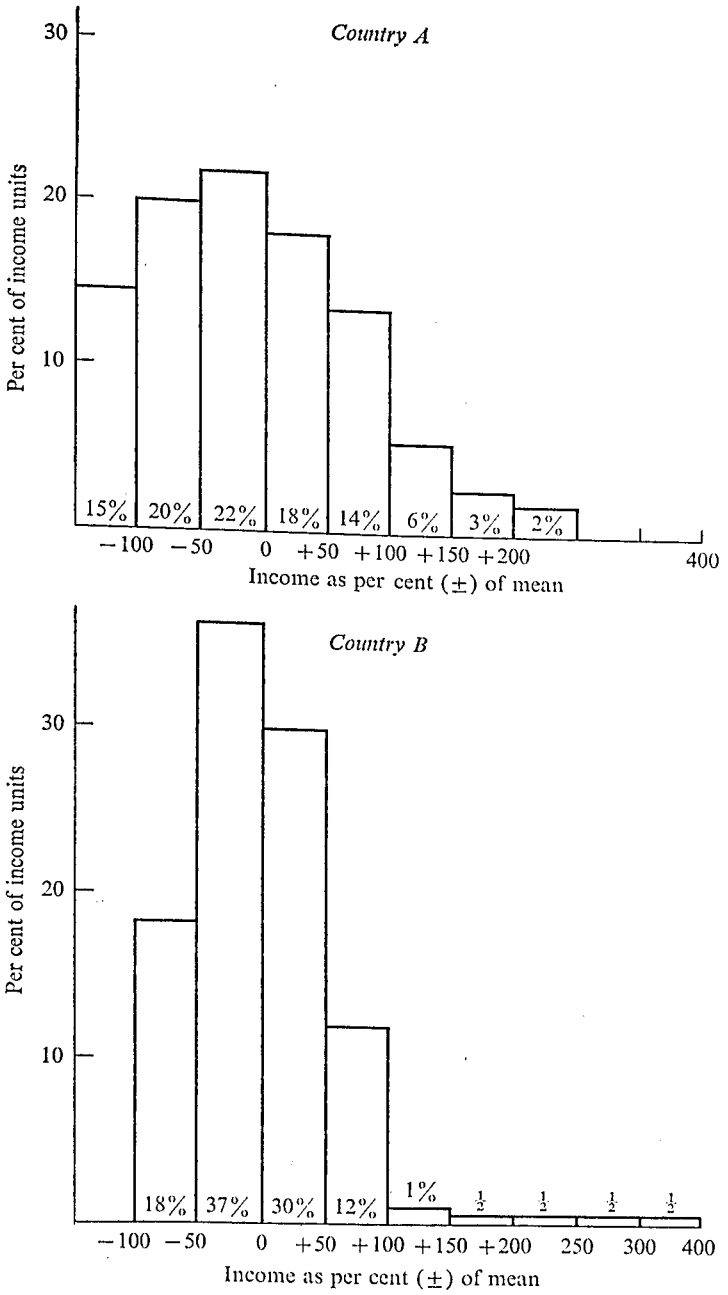

Figure 1.1 Illustration of the distribution of income in two countries

not as wide as in Country B, but 97 per cent of the population of the latter are concentrated over a narrower range of income. In which country is income distribution more unequal?

More fundamentally, the statistics themselves are suspect. For many countries the information for income units below taxable levels is either very sketchy or is ignored. While such factors may have small effects upon comparisons drawn between some developed countries they may be crucial for the developing countries. Moreover, income in kind is extremely important in those countries with large agricultural populations and yet the monetary equivalent is extremely difficult to estimate and take into account in the distribution of cash incomes. The problem is not much easier in the so-called developed countries, as is discussed in other chapters of this volume.[34] Inevitably we are driven to develop a more comprehensive definition of income and collect more comprehensive data on which to build theory. Better information about styles of living in different countries is also required. The same relative level of command over resources in each of two countries might permit minimal participation in such styles in one but not in the other.

Theories and data are, of course, interdependent. Bad theories may not just be the consequence of bad data, but also give rise to the collection of bad data, or at least the failure to collect good data. Economic theories of inequality tend to misrepresent the shape of the wood, and in endeavouring to account for it, fail to account for the trees. Sociological theories of inequality tend to avoid any specific examination of the correlation between economic resources and occupational status or styles of life and are as a consequence, unnecessarily diffuse.

Three forms of deprivation

A new approach to the definition and measurement of poverty, therefore, is needed. This depends on 'relative deprivation'. As already indicated a fundamental distinction is made between actual and perceived need, and therefore between actual and perceived poverty – or more strictly, between *objective* and *conventionally acknowledged* poverty. All too easily the social scientist can be the unwitting servant of contemporary social values and in the study of poverty this can have disastrous practical consequences. He may side with the dominant or majority view of the poor. If, by contrast, he feels obliged or is encouraged from the start to make a formal distinction between scientific and conventional perspectives he is more likely to enlarge knowledge by bringing to light information which has been neglected and create more elbow-room for alternative forms of action, even

if, in the end, some colouring of scientific procedure by social attitudes and opinion or individual valuation is inescapable.[35] At least he is struggling to free himself from control and manipulation by the values which prevail within the constrictions of his own small society. Without pretending that the approach offered in these pages, or any alternative approach, can escape the exercise of judgement at key stages, it may open the way to cross national usage and limit the element of arbitrariness.

On the one hand we have to examine the structure and stability of living standards, and on the other the sectional and collective interpretations of, or feelings about, such living standards. Throughout a given period of history there may be no change whatever in the actual inequalities of wealth and of income and yet social perceptions of those inequalities and of any change in them may become keener. Alternatively, substantial changes in the structure of incomes in society may occur without the corresponding perception that such changes are taking place.

Examples can be uncomfortable. After the Second World War, for example, there was for over a decade very little critical discussion of social policy either in Britain or the United States and few studies by social scientists of the problems of minorities. Until the mid-1950s in Britain and until the late 1950s in the United States even the term 'poverty' had not been disinterred for the purposes either of popular or scientific discussion of contemporary society. But now, in the early 1970s, there has been over a decade of continuous debate, study and even action taking heed of the problem. There are, of course, processes going on by which grim facts are being made more palatable and theories of causation made less disturbing to established views of social management. There are also placebos which are being made to look like radical reforms. But no one can suppose that there was virtually no problem in the United States and Britain between the mid-1940s and the mid-1950s. Indeed, if the conclusions of the research undertaken by the United States Social Security Administration are to be believed, that 20 per cent of the population of the United States were in poverty in 1962, 18 per cent in 1964, 15 per cent in 1966 and only 12.6 per cent in 1970, then the proportion must have been very substantially larger than 20 per cent around 1950. If this evidence makes any kind of sense, it only dramatises the distinction between actuality and perception.

The distinction may also encourage the sociologist to pay a little more attention to actuality than he has done hitherto. The term 'relative deprivation' was coined originally by Stouffer and his colleagues,[36] and then elaborated valuably first by Merton, and then by Runciman,[37] to denote *feelings* of deprivation relative to others and not *conditions* of deprivation

relative to others. Yet the latter would be a better usage. Little or no attempt has been made to specify and measure conditions of deprivation relative to others in recent work, perhaps because such conditions are recognised to be very complex phenomena requiring elaborate and patient fieldwork to precisely identify. The description and analysis of these conditions is important in many different ways. For example, skilled manual workers may feel deprived in relation to office staff, even though their take-home earnings may be as high, or higher, than the salaries of some of the office staff. However, they may have fewer resources of other kinds. We have to establish what are the inequalities in actual working conditions, security of employment, promotion prospects and fringe benefits and, in addition, the extent to which some workers may be excluded from sharing in the conditions available either to other groups of workers in the same industry, or workers comparable to themselves in other industries.[38] It is surely impossible to assess the importance of subjective deprivation as an explanatory variable independent of assessing actual deprivation.

A different example might be a group who are conscious of only small deprivation but who are, in fact, substantially deprived, by any objective criteria, such as some sections of the retired. By comparison with the earnings of older people who are still at work, or with the incomes of younger people without dependents, the incomes of retired persons in different countries are very low. The great majority have few assets.[39] Moreover, their deprivation is quite widely acknowledged by the rest of society (if not by Government) and public support is readily found for proposed increases in pensions. But although some pensioners' organisations campaign for large increases in pension rates most of the elderly themselves say they would be content with relatively small increases. Their expectations are modest.[40]

This example brings out very clearly how a distinction must be drawn not just between the actuality and perception of poverty but also between normative and subjective perceptions. So the social scientist has to collect evidence about (1) objective deprivation, (ii) conventionally acknowledged or normative deprivation, and (iii) subjective deprivation. The distinction between the second and third is in some ways a matter of degree. The former represents a dominant or majority valuation in society and the latter an individual valuation, but also a valuation of different kinds of minority group – or even a statistical representation of a large number of individual viewpoints. An individual may feel poor, especially by reference to past comfort, even when he is neither demonstrably poor nor acknowledged to be poor by society. Some retired persons, for example, have an

income which is more than adequate according to either objective or conventional standards but which is inadequate according to their own customary or expected standards. Groups too may feel poor. A group of manual or professional workers who have earnings considerably higher than the mean may feel poor by reference to other groups. There are alternative ways of defining and measuring conventionally acknowledged or normative deprivation. In the course of history societies develop rules about the award of welfare payments and services to poor families. These rules can be said to reflect the standard of poverty conventionally acknowledged by these societies. The rates of payment under public assistance laws, for example, represent a contemporary social standard. The extent to which people in different societies in fact fall below national standards can be investigated.[41] Similarly, societies use minimum housing standards, whether of overcrowding or amenities. These standards tend to be changed from time to time in response to political pressures. They represent conventional or elitist values rather than standards the non-fulfilment of which represents objective deprivation.[42]

Each of the three types of deprivation deserves thorough documentation and measurement, as a basis for explaining social conditions, attitudes and behaviour. But by trying to separate subjective and collective views about poverty from the actual conditions which constitute the problem we are led to define them and their relationships rather more carefully.

Conceptions of relativity

The idea of 'the relativity' of poverty requires some explanation. The frame of reference in adopting this approach can be regional, national or international, although until formal ties between nation states are stronger or global corporations even more strongly entrenched the international perspective is unlikely to be given enough emphasis. The question is how far peoples are bound by the same economic, trading, institutional and cultural systems, how far they have similar activities and customs and therefore have similar needs. Needs arise by virtue of the kind of society to which individuals belong. Society imposes expectations, through its occupational, educational, economic and other systems and it also creates wants, through its organisation and customs.

This is easy enough to demonstrate for certain commodities. Tea is nutritionally worthless but in some countries is generally accepted, even by economists, as a 'necessity of life'. For many people in these countries drinking tea has been a life-long custom and is psychologically essential. And the fact that friends and neighbours expect to be offered a cup of tea

(or the equivalent) when they visit helps to make it socially necessary as well: a small contribution is made towards maintaining the threads of social relationships. Other goods that are consumed are also psychologically and socially 'necessary' in the same sense, though to varying degrees. The degree of necessity is not uniform for all members of society, because certain goods and services are necessary for some communities or families and other goods and services for others. Repeated advertising and imitation by friends and neighbours can gradually establish a new product or a new version of an old product as essential in a community. Minority wants are converted into majority needs. People may buy first of all out of curiosity or a sense of display but later make purchases in a routine way. The customs which these purchases and their consumption develop become socially and psychologically ingrained.

Clothing is another good example. Climate may determine whether or not any soft forms of protection are placed over the body, and how thick they are, but social convention, itself partly dependent on resources available, determines the type and style. Who would dare to lay down a scale of necessities for the 1970s, for young women in Britain consisting of one pair of boots, two aprons, one second-hand dress, one skirt made from an old dress, a third of the cost of a new hat, a third of the cost of a shawl and a jacket, two pairs of stockings, a few unspecified underclothes, one pair of stays and one pair of old boots worn as slippers, as Rowntree did in 1899?[43]

But convention is much more than ephemeral fashion. It is a style of living also governed by industry and State laws and regulations. Industry conditions the population not only to want certain products and services but to put up with certain disservices. The Public Health and Housing Acts and regulations control sanitation, the structure, size and lay-out of housing, streets and shops. A population becomes conditioned to expect to live in certain broad types of homes, and to heat and furnish them accordingly. Their environment, and the expectations of society around them, create their needs in an objective as well as subjective sense. Similarly, society expects parents to provide certain things for their children, thereby creating needs. The goods and services provided for infants and at all stages of childhood are, through law, the school system, the mass media and so on, socially controlled. The needs which parents feel obliged to meet out of their incomes will depend, among other things, on formal rules about compulsory schooling, free schooling, free school meals and milk and free health services, as well as social norms about the wearing of shoes

and school uniforms. Laws and norms are in delicate interdependence with need.

If poverty is relative cross-nationally or cross-culturally then it is also relative historically. It is relative to time as well as place. Needs which are a product of laws and social norms must change as new legislation is passed, social organisations grow and coalesce, automation develops and expectations change. Within a generation the possession of a television set in Britain has changed from being a doubtful privilege of a tiny minority to being an expected right of 95 per cent of the population. But this is only one example. The school-leaving age is being raised, and this will add to the family's needs – to support each dependent child for one year longer. The Parker Morris standards for housing, like earlier housing standards, have been accepted by the Government; new homes built to these standards will add items that each family will be expected to afford. In the 1880s and 1890s one room was the most that many working-class families could afford – or expect. Today, a two- or three-bedroomed house exacts larger real financial obligations. The attenuation of public transport services is brought about in some areas by the development of private transport and, if private transport becomes the norm, that can only be at greater real cost per family. Two or three weeks summer holiday away from home is another social revolution of the mid-twentieth century which, now that it has become a majority convention, adds to the needs which the average family is expected to meet.

With economic growth, though not necessarily in direct proportion to such growth, the needs which a family is expected to meet also increase. Standards rise subtly, sometimes imperceptibly, as society adapts to greater prosperity and responds to the changes demanded by industry, consumers, educationists and the professions. Certainly no standard of sufficiency could be revised only to take account of changes in prices, for that would be to ignore changes in the goods and services consumed as well as new obligations and expectations placed on members of the community. Lacking an alternative criterion, our best assumption would be to relate sufficiency to the average rise in real incomes.

There is one further important elaboration. If needs are relative to society, then they are also relative to the set of social sub-systems to which the individual belongs. This seems to suggest that a different definition of poverty is required for every society, or indeed every relatively autonomous community. But this tends to ignore the marked inter-relationship of many communities within regional and national economic, political, communication, welfare and other systems. Members of ethnic minorities can often

be said to participate in commonly-shared rather than exclusive activities. They use the common system of transport, work in multi-racial occupations, go to multi-racial schools which broadly subscribe to national cultural values, and generally adapt in many ways to the conventions and styles of life of the national society. Many of their needs will therefore be the same as of persons who are not members of such minorities and the same as of persons who are members of other minorities. But to some extent their resources will be different and their activities and beliefs relatively autonomous. A national definition of need, and more particularly of poverty, will to that extent not apply to them. Little is yet known in any quantitative sense about the degrees of cultural self-containment of different ethnic minorities. Certainly in Britain it can be said that West Indian immigrant communities are far less self-contained than Pakistani communities. Again, while both Jews and Irish preserve a corporate identity and tend to play special, though different, functions in industrial cultural life it would be difficult to claim they live so differently and have needs which are so radically different from those of society at large that only an entirely different conception of poverty can meaningfully be applied to them. Still, in the absence of empirical evidence demonstrating degrees of integration of ethnic minorities in the wider society this difficulty about any 'relative' conception of poverty must remain.

It would be wrong, however, to call attention only to the possible divergence of racial or ethnic sub-systems from the social system as a whole. There are differences between rural and urban communities and even between different urban communities which would compel different overall definitions of their needs. The difficulty of allowing properly for the income in kind of the country-dweller (such as home-grown vegetables, free or cheap fuel, and tied accommodation) but also the lack of facilities available to the town or city dweller, especially if he is young (for example, entertainment, choice of shops and choice of indoor as compared with outdoor work) are reasonably well recognised. Inevitably both would have to be taken into account in any sophisticated investigation of poverty, not just in qualifying the results of any measure but also in applying that measure.

Style of living

A distinction must therefore be made between the resources which are made available by society to individuals and families and the style of life with which they are expected, or to which they feel prompted, to conform. This is the set of customs and activities which they are expected to share or

in which they are expected to join. However, conformity is not rigidly prescribed. People engage in the same kind of activities rather than the same specific activities, just as they select from a fairly limited and familiar range of foodstuffs or other commodities. Different but overlapping sets of activities are expected of people of different age and sex and family membership. Communities differ according to geographical situation, composition and the kind of resources that are readily available to them. The style of living of a society consists more of elements which are heterogeneous but ordered and interrelated than they are rigidly homogeneous. Any attempt to define this style and represent it in some form of operational index, so that the conformity of a population can be measured statistically, is bound to be rough and ready. One kind of analogy could be drawn with the Retail Price Index. The Price Index does not show how much the cost of living may have changed between two dates for any particular family or section of the population but only in broad terms for society as a whole. There are difficulties in applying it to retirement pensioners or to the poor generally and to different regions. Techniques have to be developed so that applications to certain groups can be qualified; or a modified index, such as the index for retirement pensioners, is developed. But none the less it represents a useful point of departure and a means of accumulating, and generalising, knowledge.

Stratification and resources

What principles must therefore govern the attempt to obtain better information? We are concerned to identify the conditions and numbers of the poor relative to others in society. The population must be ranked in strata according to a criterion of inequality. But the criterion of cash income is inadequate. There are groups in the population with considerable income in kind, such as farmers and small-holders. There are people with small cash incomes but considerable assets, which elevate their standards of living. There are people with identical wages or salaries who differ greatly in the extent to which fringe benefits from employers add substantially to their living standards. There are people with identical cash incomes who differ greatly in the support they may obtain from free public social services, because they live in different areas, for example.

Living standards depend on the total contribution of not one but several systems distributing resources to individuals, families, work-groups and communities. To concentrate on cash incomes is to ignore the subtle ways developed in both modern and traditional societies for conferring and redistributing benefits. Moreover, to concentrate on income as the sole

Figure 1.2 Type of resource

1. *Cash income*	(*a*) earned (*b*) unearned (*c*) social security
2. *Capital assets*	(*a*) house/flat occupied by family, and living facilities (*b*) assets (other than occupied house) and savings
3. *Value of employment benefits*	(*a*) employers fringe benefits: subsidies and value of occupational insurance (*b*) occupational facilities
4. *Value of public social services in kind*	including government subsidies and services, e.g. health, education and housing but excluding social security
5. *Private income in kind*	(*a*) home production (e.g. of small-holding or garden) (*b*) gifts (*c*) value of personal supporting services

criterion of poverty also implies that relatively simple adjustments, as might be made in a single scheme for negative income tax, will relieve it.

A plural approach is unavoidable. Thus, Figure 1.2 shows the types of resources arising from the principal systems of resource distribution. Even a fleeting reference to the different systems in society which distribute and redistribute resources, such as the wage-system, insurance and banking, social security and services like the National Health Service, may suggest that poverty is the creation of their complex interrelationship, or perhaps more fundamentally, of the values and norms upon which they rest or which they continuously reinforce. The practical implication is that the abolition of poverty may require comprehensive structural change in not one but several institutional systems. The problem is to establish the part that the different types of resource play in determining the overall standards of living of different strata in the population and, secondly, which of the systems underlying the distribution of that resource can be manipulated most efficiently to reduce poverty.

To obtain full information about all these types of resources for a representative cross-section of households is an ambitious but necessary task. Each of the types of resources can be defined in detail and converted (sometimes though with difficulty) into equivalent cash income values. The distribution of each in the population can be examined. Individual income units and households can be ranked according to each dimension and a measure of total rank achieved. The way can be opened for the measurement of the contribution made by different resource systems to both inequality and poverty. Following this approach we could also investigate the extent of rank agreement in society, that is, the extent to which the number of units which are ranked the same on all dimensions approaches the total number of units. The use in stratification theory by

Landecker, Lenski and Galtung and others of certain ideas about class and status crystallisation, rank disequilibrium, congruence and so on, can, of course, be adapted for poverty research. [44]

One of the purposes of combining the ranking of resources in different dimensions would be to allow us to distinguish between *total* and *partial* poverty. If resources are distributed by different institutional systems then it follows that although some people may lack a minimal share of any of these resources there will be others who lack a minimal share of one or two of these types of resources but have a substantial share of others. Thus in Britain there are, for example, fatherless families with identically low cash incomes but whose other resources differ sharply. There are those who live in the slum areas of cities in very bad, overcrowded housing, with schools and hospitals of poor quality near by. And there are those who live in new council housing estates on the fringe of cities or in new towns, in good housing with spacious, modern schools and hospitals near by with modern facilities and equipment. The standards of living of these two sets of families are not at all equivalent.[45] Whether instances such as these are common is unknown.

Another advantage is to trace more clearly the differences between *temporary* and *long-term* poverty. The distribution of resources changes over time. People are promoted within the wage-system; they change jobs, and become unemployed or sick; they obtain new dependants. It is impossible to conceive of social stratification as in fixed ranks, and clearly there may be major changes in the possession of resources both in the long-term, over the entire life-cycle, but also in the short-term, from month to month and even week to week. The life-cycle of poverty first described by Seebohm Rowntree requires contemporary documentation. A proportion of the population may always have been poor, but a much larger proportion have had occasional or periodic but not continuous experience of poverty. A large proportion still have lived or are living under the constant threat of poverty and regard some of the resources flowing to them, or available to them, as undependable. For the purposes of understanding the experience of poverty and the development of good policy it is most important to obtain the data to modify the over-confident division of the population into 'we the people' and 'they the poor'.

Inequality, however, is not poverty. Even if we succeed in identifying and measuring inequalities in the distribution of resources those in the lowest quintile or decile, say, are not necessarily poor. For example, the quintile with the lowest incomes in Sweden are not so badly placed as the corresponding quintile in the United States.[46]

Just as it is argued that a wider concept of 'resources' should replace 'income' in the study of inequality and poverty, so it is argued that 'style of living' should replace 'consumption' (or more narrowly still 'nutritional intakes') in determining what levels in the ranking of resources should be regarded as constituting deprivation. Some care is required in establishing the meaning of the concept, for it has been used in sociology in many different senses. For Weber, stratification by economic class and status could both be represented by style of living. 'Status honour is normally expressed by the fact that a special style of life can be expected from all who wish to belong to the circle.'[47] But Veblen and more recently sociologists such as Warner developed the concept into a system of what amounts to supercilious and derogatory distinctions in society. Everyone, or nearly everyone, was supposed to hold similar views about what was good and desirable. Modern studies have begun to break down this unrelieved picture of a uniformly acquisitive, materialistic, consumer society and a number of community studies in particular have shown that there are not just enclaves of traditional working-class culture but highly developed and pervasive styles of community living.[48] Tom Burns suggests that in contemporary urban society the principle of segregation is more and more strictly followed. In any large town or city there are social areas 'representing important expressive aspects not only of the income but of the occupations, social proclivities, educational background, and social pretensions of the people who live in them – or rather of the kind of people who are supposed to live in them'. In suburbs, neighbourhoods, and even blocks of flats there were, he continued, groupings of young married couples, middle-aged people, the retired or bachelor girls and men. Consumption was the expressive aspect of style of life and 'style of life has developed a much greater significance as a mode of organising individual behaviour and leisure, careers and, therefore, as a form of social structure . . . Individuals do organise their lives in terms of a preferred style of life which is expressed concretely in terms of a pattern of consumption ranging from houses, and other consumer durables, to clothing, holidays, entertainment, food and drink.'[49]

Style of life is made up of very widely and very restrictedly shared elements. This must always have been so for reasons of cultural self-confidence and social control as well as individual and local community self-respect. But the mix for any particular section or group in society may be different and may change over time. There are types of behaviour which are nationally sanctioned and even upheld in law affecting working hours and conditions, child care, marital relations, spending and so on. There are

public corporations and departments which endeavour to provide recognisably uniform services throughout the country. There are trade unions, which encourage their membership to adopt a nationally cohesive outlook and not diverse and perhaps contradictory branch opinions and activities. There are symbols of nationhood, like the Royal Family, the British policeman, a village green, a love of animals or of cricket, which are repeatedly invoked in family or local rituals. And through the mass communication industries – television, newspapers, popular magazines, the cinema and advertising – the cultural norms of society are both reflected and modified. The mass media help to standardise the kinds of leisure-time pursuits, child-rearing practices, manners and language which certain wide sections of the population will feel it is appropriate for them to adopt.

There are subtle gradations of styles of living ramifying through society as well as different mixes of national and local styles for different communities and ethnic groups. Different classes may engage in similar types of activity, such as going on a holiday or holding a birthday party for children, but do them differently. In developing an operational definition of style of living it is therefore necessary to distinguish (i) types of customs and social activities practised or approved by a majority of the national population; (ii) the types of customs and social activities practised or approved by a majority of people in a locality, community, class, racial group, religious sect or work group; and (iii) the specific content and manner of individual and group expression of both national and local customs or practices. It is hypothesised that with a diminishing level of resources people will engage less fully in the national 'style of living'. Below a certain level it is further hypothesised that participation will fall off more sharply. More exactly, as resources diminish at the lower levels of the distributional range participation will diminish disproportionately. In principle items for the index might be chosen at systematic intervals from an exhaustive list of customs practised by the majority or at least a substantial minority of a population, though obviously there would have to be controls for item 'inter-contamination', and the frequency and varying symbolic importance of the practice of different items. A summary list has to be the product of judgement and pilot experiment. The following index was developed for the purposes of analysing a national survey carried out in the United Kingdom in 1968–9.[50]

A deprivation index

	Per cent of sample population which:	
1.	Has not had a week's holiday away from home in last 12 months	53.6
2.	*Adults only.* Has not had a relative or friend to the home for a meal or snack in the last four weeks	33.4

3.	*Adults only.* Has not been out in the last four weeks to a relative or friend for a meal or snack	45.1
4.	*Children only* (under 15). Has not had a friend to play or to tea in last four weeks	36.3
5.	*Children only.* Did not have party on last birthday	56.6
6.	Has not had an afternoon or evening out for entertainment in the last two weeks	47.0
7.	Does not have fresh meat (including meals out) as many as four days a week	19.3
8.	Has gone through one or more days in the past fortnight without a cooked meal	7.0
9.	Has not had a cooked breakfast most days of the week	67.3
10.	Household does not have a refrigerator	45.1
11.	Household does not usually have a Sunday joint (3 in 4 times)	25.9
12.	Household does not have sole use of four amenities indoors (flush W.C.; sink or washbasin and cold-water tap; fixed bath or shower; and gas or electric cooker)	21.4

Such indices provide the means of exploring whether or not there is a threshold of resources below which deprivation becomes marked. In principle they extend the selective use of more traditional indices of morbidity, nutritional deficiency, poor housing and mortality.

Conclusion

The social scientist is very frequently the victim of normative values and his perceptions and measures tend to be permeated by them. But if he feels obliged to make a distinction, as I have suggested, between subjective, collective and objective assessments of need then first he becomes much more aware of the forces which are controlling his own perceptions and second he becomes that much more prepared to break with the conventions which restrict and trivialise his theoretical work. I have suggested two steps that he can take towards the objectification of the measurement of poverty. One is to endeavour to measure all types of resources, public and private, which are distributed unequally in society and which contribute towards actual standards of living. This will tend to uncover sources of inequality which tend to be prescribed from public and even academic discourse. It will also help him more readily to compare different types of poverty. The other is to endeavour to define the style of living which is generally shared or approved in each society and find whether there is, as I have hypothesised, a point in the scale of the distribution of resources below which families find it increasingly difficult (proportionate to the diminishing level of resources) to share in the customs, activities and diets comprising that style of living.

But this does not leave measurement value-free. In the last resort the decisions which are taken to define the exact boundaries of the concept of resources and weigh the value of different types of resources have to be

based on judgement, even if such judgement incorporates certain criteria of number and logical consistency. And decisions have to be taken about all the different ingredients of 'style of living', their relative importance and the extent to which they can be reliably represented by indicators used as criteria of deprivation by social scientists. Values will not have been eliminated from social research. But at least they will have been pushed one or two stages further back and an attempt made both to make measurement reproducible and more dependent on externally instead of subjectively assessed criteria.

It will be some time before theory and methodology can be put on to an agreed scientific footing. The problem of poverty had attracted a lot of concern and also justifiable anger. Many of the attempts to document and explain it have been grounded in limited national and even parochial, not to say individualistic, conceptions, which this paper has sought to demonstrate. Until social scientists can provide the rigorous conception within which the poverty of industrial societies and the third world can both be examined, and the relationship between inequality and poverty perceived, the accumulation of data and the debates about the scale and causal antecedents of the problem will in large measure be fruitless.

NOTES

[1] *The 1970 Manpower Report of the President*, by the US Department of Labor solemnly traces, like many other reports emanating from the US Government and also papers and books by social scientists, the fall in poverty between 1959 and 1968. But since a fixed and not an up-dated poverty line has been applied at regular intervals, this fall is scarcely surprising. The same trend could have been demonstrated for every industrial society in the years since the war, and indeed for nearly all periods of history since the Industrial Revolution.

[2] *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (The Beveridge Report) Cmd. 6404 (London, 1942).

[3] It is new only in the sense that the implications and applications do not appear to have been spelled out systematically and in detail. The line of thought has been put forward by many social scientists in the past. For example, Adam Smith wrote, 'By necessaries I understand, not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without,' *The Wealth of Nations*, Book 5, Chapter 2, Part I, 1776.

[4] B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London, 1901).

Charles Booth's major work in London in the late 1880s was on a larger scale but employed a cruder measure of poverty. See his *Life and Labour of the People in London.*

[5] See for example, A. L. Bowley and A. R. Burnett-Hurst, *Livelihood and Poverty, A Study in the Economic and Social Conditions of Working Class Households in Northampton, Warrington Stanley, and Reading [and Bolton]* (London, 1915), A. L. Bowley and M. H. Hogg. *Has Poverty Diminished?* (London, 1925). *New Survey of London Life and Labour* (London, 1930–35), M. S. Soutar, E. H. Wilkins and P. S. Florence. *Nutrition and Size of Family* (London, 1942).

[6] *Poverty and Progress* (London, 1941) and, with G. R. Lavers, *Poverty and the Welfare State* (London, 1951).

[7] Based on data in A. M. Henderson, 'The Cost of a Family', *The Review of Economic Studies*, Vol. XVII (2) (1949–50).

[8] M. Orshansky, 'Counting the Poor: Another Look at the Poverty Profile', *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 28 (January, 1965), p. 5.

[9] M. Orshansky, 'Who Was Poor in 1966?' *Research and Statistics Note*, US Dept. of Health and Education and Welfare, 6 December, 1967, p. 3. The *1970 Manpower Report of the President* puts the same point in a rather different way. 'Whereas in 1959 the poverty threshold represented about 48 per cent of the average income of all four-person families, in 1968 it represented only 36 per cent.'

[10] Orshansky, 'Counting the Poor', p. 5.

[11] Between 1960 and 1968 average expenditure per head in Britain on food increased by about 6 per cent more than prices but the energy value of nutritional intakes by only about 1 per cent and calcium by less than 3 per cent. However, there is no satisfactory comprehensive index for nutritional intakes. Ministry of Agriculture, *Household Food Consumption and Expenditure: 1968* (London, 1970), pp. 8, 57 and 64; *Household Food Consumption and Expenditure: 1966* (London, 1968), pp. 9 and 84.

[12] This applies to most goods and services and not just foodstuffs. One instance might be given from recent US experience. Between 1958 and 1964 the price of refrigerators jumped from $217 to $261. But at the same time they became self-defrosting and incorporated more frozen food storage space. During the same period, 1958–64, the Consumer Price Index showed a decline of 11 per cent. Nevertheless a person with $217 could buy (a refrigerator) in 1958 but not in 1964'. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, *Social Policy and the Distribution of Income in the Nation* (New York, 1969), p. 53.

[13] M. Orshansky, 'How Poverty is Measured', *Monthly Labour Review*, February 1969, p. 41.

[14] There are few references to this conceptual problem in the American literature. Ornati does call attention to the problem but does not suggest how a fresh 'contemporary' standard for each period of time, which he recommends, can be worked out consistently. See O. Ornati, *Poverty Amid Affluence* (New York, 1966), pp. 28–31.

[15] 'All the plans, if strictly followed, can provide an acceptable and adequate diet but – generally speaking – the lower the level of cost, the more restricted the kinds and qualities of food must be and the more the skill in marketing and food preparation that is required.' M. Orshansky, 'Counting the Poor: Another Look at the Poverty Profile', *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 28 (January, 1965), p. 5.

[16] This is a phrase used by the US Department of Agriculture in describing an 'economy food plan', costing only 75–80 per cent as much as the basic low-cost plan, quoted in M. Orshansky, *ibid.* p. 6. Later Miss Orshansky made the remarkable admission that 'The Agriculture Department estimates that only about 10 per cent of persons spending (up to the level in

the economy food plan) were able to get a nutritionally adequate diet.' 'How Poverty is Measured', *Monthly Labour Review* (February 1968), p. 38.

[17] Orshansky herself quotes a Bureau of Labour Statistics Survey for 1960–1, showing that food represented only 22 per cent of the expenditure of a household of three people, for example, compared with 31 per cent in the 1955 survey. Acknowledging that the percentage had decreased she stated that this 'undoubtedly reflect(ed) in part the general improvement in real income achieved by the Nation as a whole in the 6 years elapsed between the two studies'. Had the later percentages been adopted the poverty line would have been 14–1500 dollars higher for a family of three persons for example, and the total number of families in poverty would have been at least half as many again. Orshansky, *ibid.* p. 9. The percentage chosen is a further instance of the rigidity of the poverty line. In the last hundred years the proportion of the family budget spent on food has fallen steadily in the United States, Britain, Japan and other rich countries, and tends to be higher in countries which have a lower income *per capita* than the US. See, for example, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Social Policy and the Distribution of Income* (New York, 1969), pp. 53–6.

[18] M. Orshansky, 'How Poverty is Measured'.

[19] Compare, for example, F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London, 1969) (first published in 1845); C. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (London, 1960) (first published in 1909) and G. Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London, 1936).

[20] B. Pasamanick, A. Lilienfeld, and M. E. Rogers, *Prenatal and Paranatal Factors in the Development of Childhood Behaviour Disorders* (Baltimore, 1957).

[21] See, for example, B. Benjamin, 'Tuberculosis and Social Conditions in the Metropolitan Boroughs of London', *British Journal of Tuberculosis*, 47 (1953); F. J. W. Miller *et al.*, *Growing up in Newcastle upon Tyne* (London, 1960).

[22] For example, L. Stein, 'Tuberculosis and the "social complex" in Glasgow', *British Journal of Social Medicine* (January, 1952); J. A. Scott, 'Gastro-enteritism in Infancy', *British Journal of Preventive and Social Medicine* (October, 1953).

[23] G. W. Brown *et al.*, *Schizophrenia and Social Care* (London, 1966), E. M. Goldberg and S. L. Morrison, 'Schizophrenia and Social Class', *British Journal of Psychiatry* (1963).

[24] Methods of relating different indicators are discussed in C. A. Moser, and W. Scott, *British Towns: A Statistical Study of their Social and Economic Differences* (London, 1961). See also, B. Davies, *Social Needs and Resources in Local Services* (London, 1968); and for an illustration of the political uses of indicators of area deprivation, the Labour Party, *Labour's Social Strategy* (London, 1969).

[25] American work of a systematic kind could be said to date from W. E. B. Dubois, *The Philadelphia Negro,* first published in 1899 (New York, 1967). The early work in England of Booth and Rowntree in the 1880s and 1890s prompted a succession of studies in towns and cities. See, for example, Bowley, and Burnett-Hurst, *A Survey of Five Towns*; D. Caradog Jones *Social Survey of Merseyside* (Liverpool, 1934); H. Tout, *The Standard of Living in Bristol* (Bristol, 1938), as well as Rowntree's own subsequent work.

For a review of English studies see, Political and Economic Planning, *Poverty: Ten Years after Beveridge*, Planning, No. 344 (1952). For a general review of surveys using the subsistence standard of measurement see A. Pagani, *La Linea Della Poverta,* Collana di Scienze Sociali (Milano, 1960).

[26] Ministry of Social Security, *Circumstances of Families* (London, 1967), p. 8.

[27] M. Orshansky, 'Who Was Poor in 1966', *Research and Statistics Note*, US

Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 6 December, 1967, Table 4. In Canada a similar kind of approach to that used in the United States produced an official estimate of 3.85 million people in poverty in 1967, or about a quarter of the population. The proportion was highest in the Atlantic Provinces. See a brief prepared by the Department of National Health and Welfare for presentation to the Special Committee of the Senate on Poverty, The Senate of Canada, *Proceedings of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty*, 24 and 26 February, 1970), pp. 18–19 and 62.

[28] Estimated from Table 7.5 in R. F. Henderson, A. Harcourt and R. J. A. Harper, *People in Poverty: A Melbourne Survey* (Melbourne, 1970), p. 117.

[29] See also the discussion in Chapter 2.

[30] H. Lydall, *The Structure of Earnings* (London, 1968), pp. 152–62, and 249–51. See the discussion for Britain in Chapter 2.

[31] See K. R. Ranadive, 'The Equality of Incomes in India', *Bulletin of the Oxford Institute of Statistics* (May 1965), in his critical review of data used by S. Kuznets, 'Quantitative Aspects of Economic Growth of Nations: VIII, Distribution of Income by Size', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 11 (January 1963).

[32] For example, see B. M. Russett *et al.*, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (New Haven and London, 1964), and Kuznets, 'Quantitative Aspects of Economic Growth of Nations'.

[33] A. B. Atkinson, 'On the Measurement of Inequality', *Journal of Economic Theory* (September 1970), pp. 258–62.

[34] 'We have, at present, no means of estimating the effects of private fringe benefits on the degree of inequality of effective employment income . . . Private fringe benefits may offset a large part of the equalising effects of progressive income taxes.' Lydall, *The Structure of Earnings*, pp. 157–8.

[35] Gunnar Myrdal is well aware of this problem and describes it in broad terms. 'The scientists in any particular institutional and political setting move as a flock, reserving their controversies and particular originalities for matters that do not call into question the fundamental system of biases they share , . . The common need for rationalisation will tend . . . to influence the concepts, models and theories applied; hence it will also affect the selection of relevant data, the recording of observations, the theoretical and practical inferences drawn explicitly or implicitly, and the manner of presentation of the results of research.' He argues that, 'objectivity' can be understood only in the sense that however elaborately a framework of fact is developed the underlying set of value premises must also be made explicit. 'This represents an advance towards the goals of honesty, clarity and effectiveness in research . . . It should overcome the inhibitions against drawing practical and political conclusions openly, systematically and logically. This method would consequently render social research a much more powerful instrument for guiding rational policy information.' G. Myrdal, *Objectivity in Social Research* (London, 1970), pp. 53 and 72.

[36] S. A. Stouffer *et al.*, *The American Soldier* (Princeton, 1949).

[37] R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, revised edition (Illinois, 1957); W. G. Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice* (London, 1966). Runciman's work is particularly valuable, not just because he expounds the practical relevance of the concept to contemporary problems, such as wage bargaining, but because he shows its relevance to the analysis of political behaviour generally.

[38] See Chapter 7.

[39] D. Wedderburn, 'The Financial Resources of Older People: A General Review', and 'The Characteristics of Low Income Receivers and the Role of Government' in E. Shanas *et al.*, *Old People in Three Industrial Societies* (New York and London, 1968).

[40] See, for example, D. Wedderburn, 'A Cross-National Study of Standards

of Living of the Aged in Three Countries', in P. Townsend (ed.), *The Concept of Poverty* (London, 1970), p. 204.

[41] In a secondary analysis of income and expenditure data the social or normative standard of poverty was discussed and applied and the number and characteristics of people living below that standard identified. The authors did not, of course, claim that this was an objective or an ideal definition of poverty – though their work was sometimes subsequently misinterpreted as such. B. Abel-Smith and P. Townsend, *The Poor and the Poorest* (London, 1965). For a similar approach see Ministry of Social Security, *Circumstances of Families* (London, 1967).

[42] The present definition of overcrowding adopted by the Registrar General is one and a half persons per room. A 'bedroom standard' of overcrowding has been devised, which makes greater provision for family norms about the age and sex of children who share rooms. A 'minimum fitness' standard for housing has also been worked out recently by the Denington Committee. Ministry of Housing, Central Housing Advisory Committee, *Our Older Homes: A Call for Action* (London, 1966).

[43] Rowntree, *Poverty, a Study of Town Life*, pp. 108–9 and 382–84.

[44] The possibilities are discussed in Townsend, *The Concept of Poverty*. There are two special difficulties in deriving total rank in stratification theory from individual rank dimensions. Total rank is very difficult to express if the form of distribution varies in each individual dimension. It is also difficult to express if there is no criterion according to which the different dimensions can be weighted. The conversion of values in the different dimensions into equivalent cash incomes offers a means of overcoming the second problem. However, such a conversion may overlook subtleties in the different meanings placed on the value of assets, goods and services in everyday social life.

[45] The tendency for families of widows and children to have higher living standards than other fatherless families is traced in D. Marsden, *Mothers Alone* (London, 1969). There appear to be inequalities in the ownership of assets, particularly housing and household durables, as well as in treatment under social security.

[46] They have about 6 per cent of pre-tax income, compared with about 4 per cent in the United States. The top quintile have about 43 per cent compared with 46 per cent. H. Lydall, and J. B. Lansing 'A Comparison of the Distribution of Personal Income and Wealth in the United States and Great Britain', *American Economic Review* (March 1959); United Nations, *Economic Survey of Europe in 1956* (Geneva, 1957). Chapter IX, p. 6.

[47] H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London, 1946), p. 187.

[48] See, for example, P. Willmott and M. Young, *Family and Class in a London Suburb* (London, 1960); M. Stacey, *Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury* (London, 1960).

[49] T. Burns, 'The Study of Consumer Behaviour: A Sociological View', *Archives of European Sociology*, VII (1966), pp. 321–2.

[50] An elaborate survey of household resources and standards of living was carried out in that year by Professor Brian Abel-Smith and the author, with a research team working at the University of Essex and the London School of Economics and Political Science. The report is in preparation. Pilot work was completed during 1964–8. See, for example Marsden, *Mothers Alone*; Land, *Large Families in London* (London, 1969); Townsend, (ed.) *The Concept of Poverty*.