

"SOCIAL WORKERS' ATTITUDES
TO POVERTY AND THE POOR"

by

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
October 1987

Acknowledgements

The ESRC made this study possible through a two year studentship competition award.

Bill Riddell, Stewart Berry and Roger Lightup were involved in the preliminary planning discussions in Nottinghamshire and Manchester and were responsible for the distribution of the questionnaires. My thanks to them for making this process both smooth and speedy.

I am grateful to Richard Berthoud, Isobel Freeman, Michael Hill, Keith Moore, Lindsey Rhodes, Malcolm Russell and Jane Streather for providing me with unpublished material. Susan Creighton, Yvonne Dhooge, Geoff Fimister, John French, Peter Golding, John Hannam, Bill Jordan, Bob Leaper, Jennie Popay, Heather Rainbow, Olive Stevenson and Richard Webber provided valuable information from their own studies and work.

I am grateful to all the social workers who took the trouble to complete and return their questionnaires and to the many who also participated in the interviews, despite considerable pressures on their time.

Professor Arthur Willcocks kindly made available a room and departmental facilities. Ken Levine and Jon Silvey gave me valuable advice in the use of SPSSx on the Nottingham University computer.

Chris Isaacs typed, with great skill, patience and care, draft after

draft onto the word processor. I cannot imagine where I would have been without her expertise and efficiency. Mark Svenson diligently helped with the proof reading. Mary Longley and Nora Riley helped with the time consuming task of coding the questionnaires and loading the data onto the computer.

Bill Silburn, as co-director of the Benefits Research Unit, generously made available many of the Unit's resources and facilities. Without these the study would have taken far longer to complete. His encouragement, support and sense of humour have always been a source of lively inspiration!

A special note of gratitude must go to my supervisor, Stewart MacPherson, who has given so generously of his time and effort, despite his own pressing work commitments. His constructive criticism and academic rigour have been so invaluable. His enthusiastic encouragement, support and understanding, through some very difficult times, have also been a constant source of strength.

To my wife, Fiona, and daughter, Jessica, I owe an apology as well as a debt. They have taken the strain of my pre-occupation and bad temper. Fiona has given me encouragement and practical help, despite being in some considerable pain over the last two years. I could not have completed this study without her understanding and support. I owe her, and Jessie, a great deal.

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Glossary

ACC	: Association of County Councils
ADSS	: Association of Directors of Social Services
AMA	: Association of Metropolitan Authorities
BAAF	: British Agency for Adoption and Fostering
BASW	: British Association of Social Workers
BBC	: British Broadcasting Corporation
BUPA	: British Union of Provident Associations
BUSWE	: British Union of Social Work Employees
CAB	: Citizens' Advice Bureau
CCETSW	: Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work
CND	: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CPAG	: Child Poverty Action Group
CQSW	: Certificate Qualification in Social Work
CSS	: Certificate in Social Service
DHSS	: Department of Health and Social Security
DSW	: Doctor of Social Work
EEC	: European Economic Community
EDT	: Emergency Duty Team
ESRC	: Economic and Social Research Council
FIS	: Family Income Supplement
FITEM	: Federation of Intermediate Treatment Groups in the East Midlands
FPSC	: Family Policy Studies Centre
FSU	: Family Service Units
GHS	: General Household Survey

HMSO	: Her Majesty's Stationery Office
IEA	: Institute of Economic Affairs
IT	: Intermediate Treatment
LAMSAC	: Local Authority Management Services and Computer Committee's Social Services Applications Group
LGTB	: Local Government Training Board
LPU	: Low Pay Unit
LSE	: London School of Economics and Political Science
MIND	: National Association for Mental Health
MORI	: Market and Opinion Research International Ltd.
MSW	: Master of Social Work
NAI	: Non Accidental Injury
NALGO	: National and Local Government Officers' Union
NCVO	: National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NISW	: National Institute of Social Work
NITFED	: National Intermediate Treatment Federation
NSPCC	: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NUPE	: National Union of Public Employees
OPCS	: Office of Population, Census and Surveys
ORC	: Opinion Research Centre
Ph.D.	: Doctor of Philosophy
PPP	: Private Patients Plan
PSI	: Policy Studies Institute
SB	: Supplementary Benefit
SCPS	: Society of Civil and Public Servants
SDP	: Social Democratic Party

SEG : Socio Economic Group
SFO : Social Fund Officer
SPSSX : Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SWA : Social Work Assistant
SWP : Socialist Workers Party
UK : United Kingdom
VSO : Voluntary Service Overseas
WRVS : Womens' Royal Volunteer Service
WRO : Welfare Rights Officer

Abstract

Field social workers are in daily working contact with the poor and deprived. In Britain as many as nine out of ten users of social work services are claimants of social security; over half are dependent on means tested social assistance. Most referrals to social workers are for benefit and housing problems.

Social work trainers, managers, and agencies expect social workers to have positive attitudes to clients. Professional training is increasingly confronting racist and sexist attitudes amongst student social workers; but very little is known about social workers' attitudes to poor people or how these attitudes affect the nature and delivery of social work services to claimants - the main user group of social services.

This study explores the attitudes to poverty of over 450 field social workers. As a group these social workers have relatively "positive" attitudes to the poor and feel very strongly - in a supportive direction - about a number of issues confronting social security claimants. Poverty itself is defined in relative terms, as a lack of opportunities for choice and participation in customs and practices accepted by the non poor population. The poor are viewed very much as victims of injustice and structural inequalities.

But most social workers employ individualising methods of work aimed at helping clients adapt to their financial status and circumstances. Less individually focused approaches are generally unpopular. Organisational structures, priorities, and dominant methods of working are powerful constraints on alternative approaches. Current methods reinforce definitions of acceptable practice.

The study raises important issues for the operation, practice, management and organisation of social work; in addition there are a number of implications for the research ^{of} attitudes to poverty. Social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor are characterised by contradiction and paradox, as is social work itself. The study of these attitudes requires a number of complementary research methodologies.

Introduction

This thesis examines social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor. Recent evidence suggests that as many as nine out of ten users of British social work services are claimants of social security and that over half are claimants of means tested social assistance. In the context of this incidence of financial poverty, among both short and long term clients, the study examines social workers' attitudes to the majority of those using social work services, social security claimants.

Traditionally, social work users are categorised and distinguished by client groups; issues of common significance are rarely recognised or acted upon. Consequently there is little systematic collection or interpretation of data on social work and poverty. One of the first priorities of this study was to bring together as much of the available data as possible. With the assistance of a number of local authorities, academics and researchers it was possible to create a picture of the impact that poverty has upon the operation and practice of social work. This data is reported in chapter five.

Despite the extent and nature of poverty amongst users there are very few studies which examine social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor. Fuller and Stevenson (1983) have argued that there is a

need for "substantial and detailed" studies of this kind. However, most of these studies come from the United States where social work roles can be, and often are, quite different to those in Britain. The findings of these past studies are reviewed: their implications for the practice of social work and for the theoretical and technical study of attitudes to poverty are examined.

Social workers' attitudes to poverty cannot, and should not, be divorced from the historical, social and cultural processes which generate and maintain hostile images of the poor. There is a powerful and persistent climate of contempt that judges and labels many of the poor as lazy, responsible for their poverty and even criminal. Social workers' perceptions of poor people, their views and opinions about poverty related issues, must be placed in the context of these processes and traditions. But so too must the perceptions of poor people themselves: evidence suggests that many of the poor blame themselves and each other for their poverty. As central agents in the provision and administration of social welfare, social workers can dilute or reinforce these self images and anti-welfare ideologies. Social work practice, however, is predominantly case orientated: poor clients are helped to adapt or cope with their personal and financial circumstances.

This study explores the attitudes to poverty of over 450 field social workers: first by use of a mailed questionnaire survey; second through individual and group discussions with more than 50 of this

number. The study is concerned to generate data on social workers' attitude positions and strength of feelings, to interpret and explain a number of associations with these attitudes, and to explore social workers' perceptions of appropriate social work roles with poor people. The issues have important implications for the operation, practice, management and organisation of social work, the selection and training of prospective social workers, and for further research of attitudes to poverty: the study of these attitudes requires a number of complementary research methodologies, rather than, as most previous studies have been guilty of, an exclusive reliance on the mailed questionnaire.

Organisation of the study

Chapter one reviews research findings on attitudes to poverty and the poor. It traces the developing sophistication in explanations for the variance in attitudes, from early interpretations based solely on demographic characteristics such as age or sex, through to analyses which interpret attitudes in the context of political ideologies and other value and belief systems. A number of persistent 'images' of the poor are discussed, as are distinctions based upon notions of 'deservingness' and 'non deservingness'. The role that public opinion has in informing or defining policies and programmes for the poor is also examined. It is suggested that attitudes to the poor are very often hostile, moralising and judgemental. These attitudes have persisted for centuries, across continents and have been reflected in much social security legislation and regulations, often

designed to regulate and police the poor and those dependent on welfare.

Studies of social workers' attitudes to poverty are reviewed in chapter two. Most of this literature comes from the United States. Social workers appear to have more 'positive' attitudes to the poor than the general public, but the findings on this are sometimes contradictory and far from conclusive. The influence that social work training and practice have on attitude formation and change is also examined. The need for research on social workers' attitudes to poverty is discussed, especially in the light of evidence that suggests that social workers' perceptions of their clients' problems may be class related, and the way social workers view clients will affect the way clients view themselves. This is important in the context of poor clients' experience of stigma. The chapter goes on to classify the range of factors that researchers have associated with social workers' 'positive' and 'negative' attitudes to poverty and the poor.

Attitudes are inferred from a matrix of beliefs, opinions and values, many of which are contradictory. The conceptual distinctions between the terms attitude, opinion, belief and values are examined in chapter three. Most often these terms are used synonymously in 'attitudes to poverty' research. But, it is argued, there are important differences which have implications for the way in which attitudes to poverty are investigated and interpreted. The value,

and limitations, of attitudes to poverty studies are assessed in chapter four. Some technical and conceptual difficulties of existing research are outlined: attitudes are far more complex, varied, subtle and contradictory than many studies have hitherto suggested. Attitudes to poverty studies are perhaps most revealing at the general level of indicators of broad "climates of opinion". These climates of opinion have political consequences: they may sustain or give credence to existing policies and programmes for the poor. Focus on climates of opinion, however, can disguise the great diversity, variety and depth of attitudes to poverty and the poor. There are a number of publics and a range of opinions: neat compartmentalisation of social workers attitudes disguises the inherent contradictions contained within individual social workers attitudes.

Many social work clients are poor. The extent and nature of financial poverty amongst users of social work services is examined in chapter five. This brings together published, unpublished and specially produced data on the client-claimant population: the extent to which clients are claimants and claimants are clients, the impact that poverty has upon referrals to social workers and the use that poor clients make of particular types of social work service.

Chapters six, seven and eight report the results of a questionnaire survey of 451 Manchester and Nottinghamshire social workers. The survey explores social workers' attitudes and strength of feelings

towards a number of related issues concerned with poverty and the poor, claimants, supplementary benefit, the place of financial help in social work, the social fund. The characteristics of the sample are examined in chapter six. This discusses social workers basic socio-demographic characteristics (age, sex, marital status, religious participation), political values and membership of groups, employment situation, qualifications, prior work and voluntary experiences, class and financial backgrounds, housing tenure and characteristics of their area of residence, experience of claiming benefit, what journals and newspapers they read.

Views and opinions about poverty and the poor are reported in chapter seven. This provides data on, and discusses, social workers general reading of poverty related literature, the qualities and characteristics they associate with rich and poor people, their beliefs about the poor in general, strength of feelings towards claimants of supplementary benefit, beliefs about the adequacy of the scale rates, perceptions of what items should be considered as necessities, perceptions of the extent of poverty amongst clients, beliefs about the differences between poor claimants and poor clients, and beliefs about 'cash' , 'care' and the social fund.

Chapter eight examines a range of possible influences on attitudes to poverty. It assesses whether past background, work situation, personal characteristics (such as age, sex, religious participation

etc), educational qualifications, professional training, experience of claiming benefit, housing (past and present), political values and group membership are associated with attitudes to poverty. The direction of association, 'positive' or 'negative', is also discussed.

The findings of interviews with over 50 social workers are reported in chapter nine. This uses social workers' own words to complement and develop the data presented in chapters six to eight. The interview data illustrate the complexity of attitudes towards a number of important poverty related issues. Definitions of poverty, perceptions of the adequacy and purpose of supplementary benefit, perceptions of poor clients and opinions about the role and purpose of social work practice with poor people are discussed. Complex, diverse, subtle and contradictory opinions and beliefs are illustrated.

Chapter ten contains the conclusions to the study. It identifies the factors which are associated with social workers' attitudes to poverty and contrasts the survey results with findings from previous studies. The implications for both social work and for the study of attitudes to poverty are discussed. Future areas of research are identified. It is suggested that social workers have a wide range of attitudes, opinions and beliefs, some of which are positive whilst others are negative to the poor. These contradictions are inherent in the operation and practice of social work.

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CHAPTER 1

ATTITUDES TO POVERTY AND THE POOR

Introduction

Chapter One examines a number of research surveys and findings on attitudes to poverty and the poor. The chapter is divided into a number of sections:

Section one presents American, Australian and Indian material on attitudes to the cause of poverty. A number of explanations for attitudes are discussed, as is the developing complexity of the analysis.

Section two examines British research findings on attitudes and discusses the similarities with findings from other countries.

Section three outlines the range of contradictory attitudes to the poor and distinctions based upon "deserving", "non deserving" and "scroungers".

Section four examines the influence that political ideology and other value systems have on attitudes to poverty and the poor.

Section five discusses the role that public opinion plays in informing or defining policies and programmes for the poor.

Before these issues are examined, however, it is first necessary to briefly comment on definitions of poverty.

A note on definitions of poverty

This study is about attitudes to poverty and the poor. It is not concerned to enter into the longstanding and continuing debate about the meaning of poverty or its measurement. This debate is at its most fervent amongst academics in the social administration community; the most recent ESRC social security workshop, in September 1986, focussed entirely on problems of definition and measurement, as did the most recent edition of the Journal of Social Policy (Bradshaw, 1986; Desai, 1986; Piachaud, 1986; Townsend, 1986; Veit-Wilson, 1986A; Journal of Social Policy, 1987).

There is no shortage, either, of recent publications that contain definitions or reviews of approaches to the measurement of poverty and deprivation (Holman, 1978; Townsend, 1979; Piachaud, 1980; Brown and Madge, 1982; Cooke and Baldwin, 1984; Mack and Lansley, 1985; Bradshaw and Morgan, 1987). Neither is there a shortage of studies mapping the extent and nature of poverty, or those identifying who the poor are at any one moment in time, or those describing the life styles and life chances of the poor and deprived (Burghes, 1980; Coffield et al, 1980; Piachaud, 1980; Berthoud and Brown, 1981; MacGregor, 1981; Brown and Madge, 1982; Fuller and Stevenson, 1983; Bradshaw and Morgan, 1987).

Attitude to poverty studies have rarely, if ever, laboured over definitions of poverty and issues of measurement. They are more concerned to discover what these attitudes are and interpret why they exist. Tightly prescribed areas of study or definitions of poverty can confine and manipulate a survey respondent's frame of reference; the danger is that what is researched is not in fact the subject's attitude to poverty, but rather their attitudes to the researcher's meanings and perceptions of poverty.

The approach that this study takes (and those reviewed in the rest of this chapter) is to allow respondents the opportunity to define poverty themselves, through their own meanings, experiences and prejudices. By asking a number of questions about a range of issues it is possible to interpret and give meaning to respondents' perceptions of poverty. Poverty is best defined by respondents through the course of the research, rather than at the outset by the researcher.

This approach to the study of attitudes to poverty has something in common with the social consensus approach to the measurement and definition of poverty (Mack and Lansley, 1985; Veit-Wilson, 1986A, 1986B, 1987). The social consensus approach constructs a "poverty line" from what the public believe should be provided at the minimum level, or is prepared to pay for in taxes as a minimum income (Piachaud, 1986, 1987). Similarly, the subjective meanings and

perceptions that respondents have of poverty and the poor can be inferred from the range of beliefs and opinions that they have on a number of related issues; the personal characteristics they associate with the poor (and rich); thoughts on the adequacy of supplementary benefits; attitudes toward redistribution; identification of items they consider necessary for everyone to be able to afford, and so on. These findings on attitudes to poverty, of course, have important implications for the debate concerning definitions and measurement of poverty.

The studies reviewed later (and the survey of social workers' attitudes to poverty discussed in chapters 6 to 8) do not pre-define "poverty" or "the poor". Of course, the questions asked do reflect the concerns of researchers and limit to some extent the range of attitude responses that can be observed. But this is inevitable in attitude measurement. The advantage of the approach lies in allowing social workers to define what they mean and understand by poverty rather than defining it for them.

SECTION ONE: THE CAUSES OF POVERTY - RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM ABROAD

Some early surveys and interpretations

Most attitude to poverty surveys (and in particular studies of social workers' attitudes to poverty) originate from the United States. It will be of value to consider some of these studies before going on to examine those undertaken in Britain. This is of especial importance if international similarities in attitudes towards the poor are to be discussed.

In the United States Lauer (1971) and Alston and Dean (1972) found that 43% and 34% of respondents thought that poverty was caused by "lack of motivation". The poor often share this belief. A 1969 American Gallup poll showed that up to 84% of poor people thought that their poverty was due to lack of effort, or a combination of lack of effort and unfortunate circumstances (see Wohlenberg, 1976; Tropman, 1977).

Feagin (1972A, 1972B) asked over a thousand Americans to rate three categories of explanations for poverty in order of importance: **individualistic** explanations placed responsibility for poverty on the behaviour of poor people; **structural** explanations placed responsibility on external societal and economic forces; **fatalistic** explanations placed most emphasis on the role of luck and fate.

Feagin found that American adults, from a wide range of racial, educational, income, religious and age groups explained poverty primarily in individualistic terms and emphasised the part that loose morals, lack of thrift, and bad financial management played in the causation of poverty. And the wealthier the respondent, Feagin found, the more likely that poverty would be explained in such terms. Poorer respondents, those of Black or Jewish origin, and younger respondents were the most likely to view the cause of poverty in structural terms. Feagin also found that, generally, there was widespread disapproval of social security payments ("welfare") and that a range of myths and misconceptions about poverty and social security existed. He argued that, in America especially, "we still believe that God helps those who help themselves". The poor, he concluded, were most often seen as "shiftless" and responsible for their own poverty (Feagin, 1972A and 1972B).

Lauer's survey of 1400 middle class Americans found that the poor were viewed as a culpable rather than a victimised group. The poor were perceived to lack motivation, to be lazy, have no ambition. Forty three per cent of Lauer's respondents answered in these terms (1971, 8). This disparagement of the poor, Lauer argued, is rooted in the belief that success is available to all those who are willing to achieve it by hard work.

The second most cited cause of poverty was lack of education; 35% of Lauer's respondents answered in this way. Lauer has suggested that

the attitudes of his middle class respondents towards the poor did not reflect the "reality of the poor", who were in fact strongly motivated towards work. He argued that the problem of poverty in America was not simply a problem of poor people, but a problem of the "total" society. In particular, it was a problem of "society's perception of its poverty-stricken people" (Lauer, 1971, 8). Herzog (1970) also argued that the "non poor" should be studied as rigorously as the poor; changes will be necessary in the attitudes of the "non poor" if the poor are to be helped.

Denigration of the poor is not a peculiarly American characteristic. In Australia, Feather (1974) replicated both Lauer and Feagin's work. Whilst the overall pattern of explanation for poverty was similar to that observed in America, Feather's respondents were somewhat less likely to explain poverty in individualistic terms. Younger respondents were the least likely to explain poverty in this way and also showed the least support for the protestant work ethic. But age alone is not a sufficient predictor of attitudes to poverty. Feather argued that other values and beliefs, not just socio-demographic factors, should be considered when attempting to interpret or predict explanations for poverty.

Alston and Dean (1972) attempted to explain attitudes to the causes of poverty in socio-demographic terms only. Their re-analysis of 1964 Gallup figures from a representative sample of white Americans simply concentrated on four social and occupational characteristics

of the sample - age, sex, occupation and education - to explain attitudes to poverty and towards support for welfare programmes. Their's was one of the first attitude to poverty surveys. They found:

(i) **Sex:** Males were slightly more likely to explain the cause of poverty in terms of 'lack of effort'.

(ii) **Age:** The young were the most unsympathetic towards the poor (compare with Feather who found the reverse). Those aged 50 or over tended to emphasise "structural" causes of poverty. Surprisingly though, it was the younger respondents who, when it came to attitudes to welfare programmes, were more likely to believe that not enough was being spent on welfare. Alston and Dean asked, "could it be that younger adults do not yet realise that costs of welfare form burdens on their own income?" (Alston and Dean, 1972, 18).

(iii) **Education:** Higher education was associated with greater intolerance toward the poor. Forty per cent of those who had finished high school or who went to college talked about the poor "lacking effort". Least educated respondents had the most sympathetic attitudes towards both the poor and welfare programmes.

(iv) **Age and education:** Older and less educated respondents tended to explain the cause of poverty as a result of circumstances rather than personality.

(v) **Occupation:** Lower status white collar workers and farmers had the most negative attitudes, whilst skilled workers had the most liberal attitudes towards both the causes of poverty and welfare spending. Professional workers were as opposed to welfare spending as lower white collar workers and farmers, even though they had the most liberal attitudes towards the causes of poverty. Alston and Dean concluded that those who explained poverty in individualistic terms, such as "lack of effort" also tended to feel that too much was being spent on welfare payments. In their opinion there was a clear and direct link between attitudes to the cause of poverty and attitudes to welfare programmes for the poor. Later research suggests that this analysis was far too simplistic.

Perceptions of the poor - criminal, lazy and responsible

Criminal

Many authors - from the early 1970s through to those writing today - have found the existence of widespread misconceptions about the poor. Alston and Dean's (1972) respondents often thought that welfare recipients were "dishonest". This belief was held by the majority, even those who explained the cause of poverty in "structural" terms.

The belief that welfare recipients were somehow involved in criminal (as distinct from morally) wrongful acts was examined in some detail by Goodwin. His survey (1972) of American middle class suburbanites found that many respondents believed welfare recipients also to be in receipt of income from "quasi illegal sources". This belief - which Goodwin argued was an 'inaccurate misperception' - enabled the middle class to distance themselves from lower class welfare recipients. Respondents perceived themselves as being fundamentally different from the poor, especially in terms of orientations towards work. Lauer (1971) found the existence of similar beliefs amongst his middle class sample. Respondents often thought that the poor lacked motivation to work, were lazy, indulged in sexual excess and misspent their money. The poor were seen as morally degenerate. The belief that they were also a criminal sub class was never far below the surface. Indeed very often this belief was expressed openly.

Lazy

Rytina, Form and Pease (1970) found a strong relationship between beliefs about the motivation of the poor and the income level of the respondent; those with high incomes were most likely to believe that the poor were lazy, did not care about getting ahead and did not work as hard as everyone else. Miller's (1978) analysis of the attitudes of 2,248 Americans found that between 1972 and 1976 the proportion of American's expressing negative attitudes to the poor and welfare programmes increased from 30% to 37%. As with Rytina et al, it was the most privileged members of society - white, upper income, college educated, with managerial jobs - who had the most unsympathetic attitudes toward the poor during this period. Over half (58%) believed that the poor lacked drive and ambition. Miller suggests that "those for whom welfare looms as a potential necessity clearly look more kindly on welfare recipients than do those who are very unlikely to need the benefits of social program(me)s" (1978, 51; see also Goodwin, 1972).

Responsible

In India, Sinha and colleagues (1980) surveyed the beliefs about the cause of poverty of 120 residents of a North Indian city. The authors categorised explanations under the headings of self, fate, government and economic dominance:

Self: The ability or personal dispositions of the poor are

believed to cause poverty.

Fate: Chance or the unfortunate luck of the poor are believed to cause poverty.

Government: Government organisation and policies are believed to cause poverty.

Economic dominance: The economic system and the exploitation by a few are believed to cause poverty.

Sinha et al use a categorisation very similar to that employed by Feagin (1972A, 1972B) nearly a decade earlier. The category of "self" corresponds to Feagin's 'individualistic' explanation. "Fate" corresponds exactly with Feagin's 'fatalistic' explanation. The categories "government" and "economic dominance" - correspond, in different degrees, with Feagin's 'structural' explanation.

Sinha et al found that the most wealthy respondents were also most likely to believe that the poor were responsible for their poverty - emphasising 'personal dispositions' and 'abilities'. Poorer respondents were most likely to blame the economic dominance of a few. Least causality was attributed to fate - by those on both high and low incomes - but low income respondents tended to stress this more than the wealthy.

Low income respondents - a group considered by the authors to be poor - often shared the belief that they were responsible for their own poverty. The poorest respondents were especially likely to blame themselves. Sinha and colleagues argued that "self blaming" and low self image is widespread amongst the poor. The authors concluded that respondents' class perspective affects their perceptions of the cause of poverty. Wealthy respondents defend themselves (presumably psychologically but also physically) by "blaming" the poor for their poverty. Poorer respondents generally blame the economic dominance of a few rich people, but with some notable and important exceptions.

Explaining attitudes to poverty and the poor - broadening the analysis

Multivariate analysis

As in Sinha's Indian survey, Flint's working class and poorer respondents from the 1972 American National Election Survey were less likely than the middle class to talk about poverty being caused by laziness. Working class respondents displayed a firm commitment to the work ethic whilst recognising the strong influence of inequality in the causation of poverty (Flint, 1981, 179). But Flint has criticised the single variate interpretation of influences on attitudes to poverty. He suggests that class alone is not a particularly helpful predictor of attitudes. Flint's multivariate approach to the explanation of attitudes focusses on the interaction of race, sex and class. When combined these variables may be more significant predictors than when taken separately. Considering the

influence of race, Flint found that black and white respondents had substantially different attitudes towards the poor. Seventy three percent of the white sample believed that people were poor in America "because they didn't work hard". In sharp contrast 72% of black respondents blamed the unequal structure of American society. But when he considered the influence of sex, Flint found no significant difference between men and women in their attitudes to the poor.

Multivariate analysis provides a picture of the interaction between the variables. Flint found that race was correlated much more significantly and consistently than class or sex with attitudes about inequality. Class was seen to be a significant variable with regard to certain attitudes in one population but not in another. Flint's exploratory study was very much concerned with inequalities in sex and race. The findings put some doubt on the usefulness of univariate interpretations of attitudes to poverty and the poor.

Community of residence

Some American authors have suggested that where people live - the community of residence - may affect attitudes to poverty. Some evidence exists to suggest that rural communities are less likely to support welfare programmes and are generally more hostile to the poor (Buttel and Flinn, 1976; Osgood, 1977). Sargent and colleagues found widespread antipathy in attitudes towards family services in a rural American state in their 1976 survey of 582 respondents. But they suggest that rural based respondents do not have significantly more

hostile views towards the poor than those living in urban surroundings. Political orientation was the major causal factor in nearly all the attitudes assessed (Sargent, McDermott and Carlson, 1982).

Bogart and Hutchison (1978) have suggested, however, that the community of residence is a crucial variable influencing opinions about the causes of poverty. They suggest that a respondent's social background (race, income, etc.) has quite different consequences for attitudes depending upon the nature of the community of residence. Their 1976 survey of 356 residents of Satellite City near Chicago looked at four communities: white segregated, transitional neighbourhood, area of rapid change, black neighbourhood.

They found that black respondents, blue collar and middle income respondents were more "structural" in their evaluation of the causes of poverty than white respondents and white collar workers. Political ideology exerted a strong influence on the attitudes of white respondents but less so for blacks. Highly educated black respondents generally responded in terms of the individual causation of poverty. The responses of high income blacks were more congruent with the responses of high income white members of the community than with the rest of the black community.

However, in general, structural explanations for poverty were more frequent in neighbourhoods with a larger proportion of black

residents. Bogart and Hutchison suggest that this was not a factor of race alone. Whites living close to black respondents also showed a stronger orientation towards structural explanations. Prolonged contact with minority groups in the community of residence may lead, the authors believed, to more liberal and structural attitudes toward the cause of poverty, a finding consistent with others (see Stetler, 1957; Stouffer, 1958).

Like Flint, Williamson's (1974A, 1974B) study of 300 white women in Boston found a consistent trend for respondents at the upper end of the income and class scales to perceive the poor to be lower in their motivation towards work than did respondents with lower socio-economic status. But Williamson has suggested that socio-economic status actually explains very little of the variation between these attitudes to the poor. Of far more significance, he believes, are the ideological values held by respondents. This analysis contrasts sharply with that of Alston and Dean and many others, whose explanation for the variations in attitudes to poverty centred around socio-economic variables such as age, education or income. Ideological explanations of attitudes to poverty have become more prominent as researchers have turned away from a simplistic and narrow focus on socio-economic variables and considered attitudes in the context of the wider significance of values, beliefs and power.

Summary

Early American, Australian and Indian attitudes to poverty studies

show the existence of a 'core' of hostile beliefs about the poor. The poor were very often seen to cause their own poverty through laziness, lack of effort, bad financial management or lack of education. Respondents in different countries emphasise different aspects, but generally within a framework of widespread moralising and hostility. The poor were also thought to be often involved in criminal acts. To some extent the poor themselves have accepted as true these beliefs. Many of the poor blame themselves and each other for their poverty.

Analysis by researchers has rested upon attempts to explain hostile attitudes by reference to a set of discrete socio-economic characteristics of survey respondents. Age, income, occupation, educational level and others have all been associated with a particular attitude position. However, later analysis has become more intricate, focusing on the interaction of a number of variables; for example race, class and community of residence. Something of a "breakthrough" occurred when researchers turned their attention away from the narrow focus on socio-economic variables and considered the influence that ideology and political values may have upon the formation and maintenance of attitudes to poverty.

SECTION TWO: BELIEFS ABOUT THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

- RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM BRITAIN

Some persistent themes

Research in Britain has uncovered the existence and persistence of similar attitudes towards poverty and the poor. A 1971 Gallup poll found that a third of all respondents thought poverty was due to lack of effort (Gallup, 1976, 1456). A 1976 survey on perceptions of poverty in Europe found that there was far greater hostility to the poor in the United Kingdom than in any of its European neighbours (EEC, 1977). One year later, however, Barbara Wootton summarised what she thought was the mood of the nation:

"Attitudes to poverty are changing. Years ago the well heeled middle classes tended to accept poverty as a normal social phenomenon to be lightly dismissed as largely the fault of the shiftlessness of the poor themselves. But now that social investigators have thrust the facts under our noses, we have become ashamed and guilt conscious ... critics of today are ... less disposed to blame the poor ... than to pretend no one is still poor" (Wootton, 1978, 554).

Certainly 49% of United Kingdom respondents in the European Communities survey of the perceptions of poverty believed poverty did not exist. But since Wootton made her comments the extent of poverty has increased significantly in the United Kingdom. The number of people dependent on supplementary benefit was 4.6 million in 1979. In 1983, the latest year for which figures are available, the figure stood at 7.1 million; an increase of more than 50 per cent. During that period the numbers living below supplementary benefit levels increased from 2.1 million to 3.3 million. Nearly 16

million people live on, below, or in the margins of poverty (Pond and Burghes, 1986; Becker and MacPherson, 1986; DHSS, 1986; Guardian, 1986; Field, 1986; CPAG/LPU 1986; Walker and Walker, 1987).

Researchers are again "thrusting the facts under our noses". Despite this, however, attitudes and beliefs about the causes of poverty follow recurring themes. The 1984 British Social Attitudes Survey found that, in that year, only 55% of the British public believed that there is such a thing as "real poverty in Britain today" (Jowell and Airey, 1984, 92-94). Respondents who were most likely to believe this were the unemployed, the young (under 35), those living in cities, those in households with children under 5, those with higher incomes, those currently in a Union and Labour party or Alliance identifiers (p.93). Despite the increase in reporting of issues concerned with social deprivation and poverty, many people still deny its existence. And where it is acknowledged that poverty does exist, the explanations for it are often moralistic or "hostile". The authors of the EEC survey report that:

"the striking thing about these results is not of course that some people rather than others tend to perceive poverty and attribute it to social causes ... properly speaking, the added value of these analyses is that they show the predominance of subjective factors over objective factors" (EEC, 1977, 19; my emphasis).

People tend to make judgements about the poor based upon beliefs and opinions rather than facts. In their survey of the influence of the media on perceptions of poverty Golding and Middleton (1982) found that the largest category of answers concerning the cause of

poverty made reference to the financial ineptitude of the poor. Poverty, the authors argued, was seen to result from the failure of the poor to control money going out of the home rather than from society's failure to get a decent income into it (p.195). Explanations stressing 'structural injustices' were only accepted by 26% of respondents. A significant proportion of respondents thought that the poor "have only themselves to blame so there's no reason why society should support them" (p.167), a finding wholly consistent with an earlier study by Peter Townsend. Townsend found widespread hostility towards the poor; poverty was very often seen in terms of individual failure. But Townsend also found, as have many other authors, that the poor often blamed themselves for their condition. One-third of those feeling poor all the time blamed their poverty on themselves. Townsend comments,

"Some of the poor have come to conclude that poverty does not exist. Many of those who recognise that it exists have come to conclude that it is individually caused, attributed to a mixture of ill-luck, indolence and mismanagement, and is not a collective condition determined principally by institutionalised forces, particular governments and industry" (Townsend, 1979, 429).

This is a recurring and persistent theme. The poor often share the perceptions of the better off, explaining poverty in terms of individual characteristics, personal failure or blameworthiness.

Perhaps surprisingly in view of these findings, Mack and Lansley (1985) have argued that there has been a remarkable shift in public opinion, towards greater sympathy for the poor. The authors believe that, by 1983, the public were more inclined to blame wider social

factors. For example, they cite the 1976 EEC survey finding that 43% of U.K. respondents blamed laziness and lack of willpower; by 1983 the corresponding proportion had nearly halved to 22%. Similarly, in 1976 only 16 percent of respondents cited "injustice" as the cause of poverty. By 1983 the proportion was 32 percent. By tracing the pattern of results from a number of surveys over the years, Mack and Lansley suggest that the strength of the "blaming the victim" thesis is weakening. Increases in actual unemployment and the widely perceived prospects of becoming unemployed through no fault of one's own have, they argue, contributed to this "softening" in attitudes (Mack and Lansley, 1985, Chapter 7).

But at the same time the authors found that 13% of poor respondents still attributed their own poverty to laziness, and 26% of respondents who thought they were never poor cited laziness as the cause of other people's poverty. Many poor people still explained poverty in terms of personal inadequacy. A recent survey conducted by Gallup for New Society made similar claims that a "wave of concern about poverty is sweeping through Britain ... most people believe that poverty results from misfortune, not indolence" (Lipsey, 1986, 18). Perhaps, but significant proportions of respondents, however, still explained poverty in terms of lack of effort.

The belief in the moral or physical failure of the poor is never far below the surface. Mack and Lansley conclude that "throughout the post-war period attitudes to the poor have tended to fluctuate

according to both the prevailing economic and social climate and the public's moral stance" (1985, 231). MacGregor, too, finds strength in this argument. She comments that "the contradictory treatment of people on low incomes from work and those on social security, who often live close together, encourages disfavoured attitudes towards the poor, who are seen as scroungers" (1981, 32).

Summary

British attitude to poverty studies have shown a similar pattern of hostility towards the poor, despite Wootton's optimism that attitudes are changing as a result of increased awareness of the extent and nature of poverty. Some other authors have also suggested that the British "public" is less hostile and judgemental towards the poor than they used to be, but the evidence for this is inconsistent. A substantial proportion still believe that the poor are responsible for their poverty.

SECTION THREE: CONTRADICTORY ATTITUDES TO THE POOR

- AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

On welfare spending

Tropman (1981) has argued that American society is essentially contradictory in its attitude towards those in need. "Blaming the victim" - explaining the causes of poverty by reference to the individual attributes of the poor themselves - coexists with the often generous giving to people in need. Schiltz too concluded that despite widespread hostility to the poor and welfare programmes amongst American citizens, they nonetheless had "persistently supported expenditure for public welfare programmes" (1970, 150).

Hendrickson and Axelson (1985) in their 1983 study of over 200 computer scientists, public defenders and social workers found the picture to be far from simple. Whilst their respondents endorsed the work ethic and individualistic explanations of the cause of poverty, they also agreed with structurally orientated welfare programmes to alleviate poverty. Seventy eight percent thought the poor should work for welfare payments; 75% thought the Federal Government was not helping the poor enough; 61% thought that the rich should pay higher taxes to support the poor; and 87% thought that day care should be provided to every mother on welfare who would like to work but who had a pre-school child at home. This high correlation between a commitment to the work ethic and structurally orientated welfare programmes was wholly unanticipated by the

authors. They explained the findings by reference to the large-scale increase in American unemployment which affected all social groups; a situation that many acknowledged had no relationship with personal blameworthiness. The prevalence of so many well educated respondents - trained to think critically about contemporary social problems - with access to and exposure from sophisticated news magazines and training courses also affected the findings. The authors discovered that respondents with the least knowledge, the most prejudice, or the lowest evaluation of the poor were also the strongest endorsers of the work ethic. In particular those who did not work with the poor had a stronger commitment to the work ethic than those who did. Accurate knowledge of the poor - perhaps through working contact - reduced hostility to them as a group and tended to be reflected in a weaker commitment to the work ethic.

In Britain, attitudes have also appeared to be inconsistent towards the need for and the role of welfare. The British Election Survey of 1974 found that 86.9% of respondents thought it very or fairly important to increase government spending in order to get rid of poverty. The figure for 1979 was 83.5% (see Mack and Lansley, 1985, Chapter 7). But the 1976 EEC survey of perceptions of poverty found that 29% of British respondents - compared to 7% of European - thought the authorities were doing too much for people in poverty; 35% of British respondents thought the level about right; 36% too little. In Europe well over 50% thought too little was being done (EEC, 1977; Mack and Lansley, 1985, 213-215). In 1983, when Mack

and Lansley conducted their survey, 57% thought the government was doing too little to help those lacking "necessities"; only 6% thought too much (1985, 213). The authors have suggested this showed a "softening" in public attitudes to the poor and welfare. But it was the rich who were least likely to support such redistribution through welfare. Working class households had a greater commitment to equality as did supporters of the Labour party or Alliance.

Eighty one percent of the 1986 British Social Attitudes survey respondents thought that it was the government's responsibility to provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed, and 77% thought the gap between high and low incomes was too large (Mann, 1986, 27-28). The New Society poll conducted by Gallup in 1986 found 86% of those questioned thought that the government should spend more money to get rid of poverty. When asked to decide about the appropriateness of cutting taxes or increasing benefits only 27% of the New Society respondents preferred to cut taxes: 61% thought that income tax reductions should have been spent on benefits. Even among Tory voters there is only a 48:42 majority in favour of tax cuts (Lipsey, 1986, 18-19). Table 1.1 shows the question used in the New Society poll, and the results.

Table 1.1: New Society Poll : Attitudes towards redistribution

Question : The budget decreased income tax by 1p in the pound. Some people say that income tax should not have been cut, and the money should have been used instead to increase benefits to the poor. How would you choose to use the money - to cut income tax or to increase benefits to the poor?

	Total	Cons	Lab	Alliance	18-34	35-44	45-64	65+	ABC1	C2	DE
Cut income tax	27	48	15	22	24	30	29	29	31	29	20
Increase benefits to the poor	61	42	74	67	61	66	62	55	59	59	66
Not stated/ don't know	12	11	12	12	15	5	9	17	10	13	13

Source: Lipsey, 1986, p.18.

Similarly, Golding and Middleton found the greatest antipathy to increased welfare spending amongst older respondents, those in the lowest occupational groups, and the least educated. It was these groups who felt they 'had more to lose as the payers than to gain as beneficiaries' (Golding and Middleton, 1982, 165). Such a view, that the welfare state redistributes according to need and consequently will help the poor most, is consistent with the analysis by O'Higgins (1984). But Le Grand (1982) has argued earlier that the reverse actually occurs. Redistribution has been perverse, benefitting middle class groups of suppliers and consumers far more than those in need (see also Field, 1981 on the "hidden" welfare states).

The data suggest that there is a confused commitment to welfare

spending. A 1983 BBC Election Survey found that 77% of the public were in favour of maintaining welfare services rather than cutting taxes (Taylor-Gooby, 1985B). But at the same time a MORI poll in October found that 34% favoured cuts in taxes even if it meant a cut in spending on public services (see for example Mack and Lansley, Chapter 9). In the MORI poll 58% approved of maintaining spending even if it required an increase in taxes. Taylor-Gooby (1985A and 1985B), reviewing a range of surveys, has suggested that there is a strong commitment for maintaining and increasing spending on welfare, even if taxes rise. But Mack and Lansley have shown that whilst this commitment may go as far as an agreement to pay 1 pence more in the pound on tax, the commitment drops if the tax rise would need to be increased to five pence per pound, or beyond. Lipsey (1979) has suggested that the public simultaneously want tax reductions but no cuts to services. Certainly this endorses Taylor-Gooby's comments that the wider social policy aims of redistribution over the family life cycle, or between "wallet and handbag", were not echoed in what men and women said (Taylor-Gooby, 1983, 51).

The deserving/non deserving distinction

The poor are not necessarily seen as a single group and attitudes to them are themselves not necessarily uniform. Respondents have been shown to make judgements and distinctions between different groups of poor people. Tropman's 1972 Kansas City survey found the persistence of negative attitudes to the poorest "lower class". Eighteen percent of his respondents thought that the lowest class "does not

try". Dependency on welfare benefits was explained in a number of ways: 44% of respondents thought that lack of education was the main cause of poverty and dependency on welfare benefits. Only 3% mentioned race, gender and ethnicity, and 2% mentioned age. In addition Tropman explored attitudes to the second lowest class - those not wholly dependent on welfare but nonetheless poor - the "working poor". Much greater support and sympathy was expressed for this group; two thirds of respondents believed that the poverty of this group was caused by low and inadequate pay as opposed to characteristics associated with their individual make-up. This distinction, between the worthy and unworthy poor, Tropman argued, was based upon the extent to which the poor were seen to be "copping out" or "chipping into society". Those who appeared to be trying were held in far greater esteem than those who failed to make a "contribution" (Tropman, 1977 and 1981).

The distinction between worthy and unworthy claimants, or deserving and non deserving, is a consistent and persistent theme. Redpath defines the deserving as "those who by virtue of helplessness, are exempted from the requirements of reciprocation inspired by the market ethic" (1979, 48). It is this need for reciprocity and exchange which is at the heart of the distinction. Only the "deserving poor" are exempted from the need to participate in this manner; the "undeserving" are somehow seen as not willing or wishing to reciprocate. Pinker has argued that the concept of reciprocity (and stigma) whilst central to the discussion of welfare is very much

under utilised in the analysis of welfare. The least stigmatising services are those which involve reciprocity, depth, distance and time. He argues that the propensity for reciprocity in the future is given more importance by the public when making judgements of deservingness. Past contribution is given less weight (Pinker, 1971, 170-2). In addition, the greater the distance between the providers and those in need, the less compassion there will be in the exchange. Time is also important. Those who have been dependent on welfare for a long time (and have adapted to the status it involves) are regarded with less sympathy than those who have only recently been made dependent on benefits, and are striving to break out of that dependency (Pinker, 1971, 174).

Tropman (1977) has shown how the principle of "chipping in" is so important. He has argued that the making of a contribution enhances both the individual and the collective elements within American society. Americans praise people who "make it" against all odds - who contribute despite overwhelming pressures. Tropman illustrates his conclusions by reference to the Nicholas plan during the depression, which gave food garbage from restaurants to the poor in return for chopped wood. This degree of "chipping in" was considered to make them worthy of support. In Britain, the principle of less eligibility originally implemented by means of the workhouse test ensured that the poor dependent on state help were never "better off" than the lowest paid worker - the "working poor". The working poor were seen as deserving, toiling to keep their independence.

Entwined with this developed the notion of the "cycle of deprivation"; that some of the poor had distinct family life styles and child rearing practices which distinguished them from the rest. Jordan (1973 and 1974) illustrates how these distinctions between the deserving and non deserving poor have historically been justified by "theories" aiming to explain the different treatment between poor groups, and the "punishment" of others. In the United Kingdom the cohabitation rule; 6 week rule; 40% rule; wage stop; board and lodging regulations and a host of other social security regulations, contemporary guidelines and controlling mechanisms have been aimed not at encouraging the deserving to apply for help, but at policing the undeserving or "scrounger" - ensuring that they should be kept out of the system as far as possible and that "life on the dole" should be far from comfortable.

These distinctions and the treatment of the poor arising from them are not new. Betten (1973) has traced their existence back to the 14th century and even earlier. American legislation, similar to that in Britain, punished the poor or unemployed - labelling them as "idle", "workshy", "pauper" or "feckless". Betten links the hardening of attitudes to the poor in the first instance with the Black Death in the mid 14th century; shortages in the able bodied workforce led to those unable to work being seen as anti-society; their ensuing poverty became a crime linked to vagrancy. Distinctions between these able bodied vagrants and the deserving poor - those poor through disability or illness - developed alongside

the mid 18th century religious revival. While attitudes remained generally hostile and moralising, a perspective emphasising structural explanations became more prominent, coinciding with a growing awareness, exploration and analysis of the extent and nature of poverty. But beliefs in the moral failure of the poor, that they were lazy, participated in sexual excess, misused their assistance or benefits, were involved in criminal acts have persisted throughout history and across continents (see Betten, 1973; Jordan, 1974; Heise, 1977; Golding and Middleton, 1982; Mack and Lansley, 1985). Golding and Middleton have suggested that this "recurrent refurbishing of a series of images of welfare" is modified by the media. "The notion of social security as a policing mechanism creates the complementary image of the claimant as criminal, to be policed, checked, investigated, suspected and controlled" (1982, 97; see also Dedinsky, 1977). More recently Golding has argued that the poor live "beyond the lens", and are excluded from participation in a number of fields (Golding, 1982, 1985, 1986A, 1986B). Poverty remains invisible, often hidden.

"On the one hand it is widely believed that little or no poverty persists, other than an unavoidable degree of hardship in old age. On the other hand, while poverty is recognised, it is explained in terms of the individual culpability of its victims." (Golding and Middleton, 1982, 199)

Undeserving scroungers

Redpath, and later Deakon have examined the historical similarities of attitudes to "scroungers", a shorthand term for claimants who it is inferred have a greedy ability to claim "everything going", or are

undeserving for other reasons. Scroungers, Deakon argued are defined a "moral panic", threatening societal values and interests, and presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media (Deakon, 1980; see also Handler and Hollingsworth, 1971; Hill, 1972B; Meacher, 1974; Popay, 1977; Deakon, 1977 and 1978; Field, 1979; Luckhaus, 1980).

Golding and Middleton's research, carried out in the late 1970s, suggests that many attitudes to claimants are based upon a "culture of contempt". The old and sick, however, were nominated as the group most deserving income maintenance support. Only 5.9% of respondents thought the unemployed were most deserving and three out of 10 respondents believed that more than a quarter of claimants were scroungers (Golding and Middleton, 1982, 172). This belief was common, as the Schlackman Organisation survey of attitudes towards supplementary benefit has reported:

"It was the almost universally declared belief of informants of all types that those who were in least need would be the most likely to claim and the most successful in obtaining supplementary benefit, while those who were in most need, and most deserved to receive help, would be the most reticent in claiming, and the least likely to receive help. This belief is the lynchpin of attitudes towards the supplementary benefit scheme" (Schlackman, 1978, 34).

But Norris, commenting on a postal survey carried out in South East England in 1972 and 1976, found an increase in negative attitudes towards most poor groups, including the elderly and handicapped. His random sample of 3,000 people on each occasion were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with helping particular groups, whether they

would be pleased or displeased if they became neighbours, and which needed help the most or least. Respondents who had working contact with the poor were more likely to be unsympathetic. Social contact with the poor increased respondents sympathy towards them. Over one quarter of the 1976 respondents thought that assistance should be based on the recipients needs, whether they were deserving or not. Thirty percent were prepared to give limited help only - based entirely on an estimation of the recipients worthiness, not on their relative need. Hostile and restrictive attitudes in 1976 made up 43% of all comments (Norris, 1978).

Conflicting attitudes to the poor abound in the distinctions between the deserving and non deserving; between support or otherwise for welfare programmes, social security benefits or redistribution through welfare. Beliefs about the cause of poverty affect perceptions of the whole need for human or welfare services; both income maintenance and personal social services. An ORC poll in 1968 found that 89% of respondents thought that too many people would not work because of the high level of benefits; 78% believed that we have so many social services that people work less hard than they used to (Klein, 1974, 412). Similarly Mack and Lansley found that 57% of their respondents agreed that "Britain's welfare system removes the incentive for people to help themselves" - only 35% disagreed (1985, 217). This fear of the "nanny state" has expressed itself in other ways. Sixty three percent of respondents in a survey for the 1985 Green Paper on the Reform of Social Security agreed or

strongly agreed that "young people should be expected to take up training and not receive benefits if they refused to do so" (DHSS, 1985). Indeed this proposal was part of the 1987 Conservative Election Manifesto and seems certain to become law following their electoral victory. But Berthoud and Brown (1981) commenting on evidence from a number of studies, suggest that only a small minority of the unemployed reject jobs which offered them less than being on benefits; the vast majority would prefer to be "working poor" rather than poor and wholly dependent on benefits (p.124 et seq). Mack and Lansley report how supplementary benefit claimants felt about claiming supplementary benefit; 85% saw it as a right that they were entitled to but 40% were embarrassed to claim it. Sixty two percent strongly agreed or tended to agree that "many people claiming dole are on the fiddle"; only 23% disagreed (Mack and Lansley, 1985, 217). The British Social Attitudes Series found that the majority of the public thought that claimants were "on the fiddle". In 1984 two thirds of the public agreed that "large numbers of people these days falsely claim benefits" (Bosanquet, 1986, 131). This view was strongest amongst respondents who identified with the Conservatives. Fifty percent of Conservative identifiers agreed strongly that large numbers of people falsely claimed benefits. Forty percent of Alliance and 39% of Labour identifiers thought this. This widespread belief in the criminality of benefit recipients may affect the willingness of some potential or actual claimants to "take-up" their legitimate entitlements.

Judgements about claimants and benefits

Not all groups of claimants or types of benefit are held in equal disdain. Retirement pensions and benefits for the disabled have received a fair degree of support. In the 1984 British Attitude Survey, 41% and 24% of respondents respectively supported these benefits (Jowell and Airey, 1984, 79). Similarly Cooke (1979) found strong support for disabled and elderly people in need in his Chicago study. Piachaud (1974) found considerable support for pensions. But Mack and Lansley suggest that there has been a softening in attitudes to other benefits too. In a 1976 Gallup poll 37% of respondents thought that unemployment benefit was too high; only 9% thought it too low. In 1983 only 9% of Mack and Lansley's respondents thought it too high; 40% thought it too low (Mack and Lansley, 1985, 215). In the 1986 New Society poll only 7% of the 889 respondents questioned thought that the "dole" was too high. Fifty seven percent thought it to be too low (Lipsey, 1986, 18-19).

Taylor-Gooby has suggested that there is a lower level of support for services and benefits which absorb less - not more - money; for example child benefit and benefits for single parents were supported by only 8% of the 1984 British Social Attitudes respondents (Jowell and Airey, 1984, 79). Taylor-Gooby shows, by comparing various surveys, that strong support exists for maintaining and increasing social spending. Education, the National Health Service and pensions have, he believes, strong support. But single parent benefits, council housing and unemployment benefit are relatively

unpopular (Taylor-Gooby, 1985A and 1985B). Data from the British Social Attitudes Series suggests that Labour party supporters are most likely to accord unemployment benefit as a higher priority. Certainly in the 1987 General Election Labour voters were more likely to consider welfare benefits and pensions amongst the most important 'issues'. But even so, the proportions were not large. Eighteen percent of Labour voters considered benefits to be among the two most important issues. Six percent of Conservatives thought this and 13 percent of Alliance voters (Kellner, 1987, 17). Generally benefits were not high in the list of issues considered by the electorate. But "interest groups" (or "self interest" as Taylor-Gooby is more likely to call it) also play a part in this process. Mothers are most likely to support child benefit, the old are most supportive of retirement pensions and the unemployed are most supportive of benefits for the unemployed. Additionally, in 1984 the unemployed were four times more likely than those in work to choose social security as first priority for increased public spending (Jowell and Airey, 1984, 78-80). There is some evidence to suggest, however, that attitudes to unemployment benefit may generally not be quite as harsh as they used to be. Forty percent of the 1986 British Social Attitudes Survey respondents thought that the government should provide more generous unemployment benefits; 38% thought the level was about right and 17% wanted them reduced (Mann, 1986, 27; see also Mack and Lansley, 1985, 215; Lipsey, 1986.)

Taylor-Gooby (1985A and 1985B) has argued that there is a low

enthusiasm for meeting minority needs; child benefit has little support because it is too indiscriminate or "universal". Mack and Lansley found a similar lukewarm reaction to child benefit (1985, 263). A more complex picture was provided by the 1985 Green Paper research for evidence on the Reform of Social Security. Again minority needs were unpopular. Sixty nine percent of respondents (compared to 13%) preferred a general scheme which made no provision for special or unique needs. Similarly while 80% of respondents were in favour of child benefit, when asked how important it was for the state to provide financial help to all families with children whatever their income level, then opinions varied widely. A majority (57%) thought it very or fairly important. Sixty nine percent of families with children supported this; 29% did not. Fifty two percent of retired respondents supported it; 39% did not (DHSS, 1985, 76). Support for the selective use of child and other benefits is strong. This is despite a recent CPAG survey showing that child benefit is a "mothers lifeline", often essential for adequate child care (Lister and Walsh, 1985).

There is widespread concern that benefits should not go to undeserving claimants. When asked to give the three worst and best things about the social security system, the Green Paper respondents were most concerned about help going to some people "who didn't need it" (27%). This compared with 21% who thought there was insufficient help for those who needed it most; 24% commenting on unhelpful staff, and nearly 1 in 10 who thought the system encouraged

scroungers (DHSS, 1985, 84).

Golding and Middleton have argued that people generally feel that benefits are too high and too easy to get. Nearly half of all their respondents thought too much was spent on welfare and social security; over twice the proportion of people who thought too little was being spent (1982, 164). But 6 out of 10 thought that benefits were also too generous, believing those who depended on social security could "manage quite well nowadays". This view was more common amongst non manual and elderly respondents.

Concerned to examine why hostile attitudes to some groups of claimants exist, Redpath has assessed the value of the various theories used to explain the dominance and persistence of "scroungerphobia". They are :

The tax resentment hypothesis: those who feel they pay more tax than their fair share will be more likely to feel antipathy towards those who benefit from the tax payments (Redpath, 1979, 114-121).

The better off hypothesis: those who gain little or nothing, or think they will do so, from working, will be most likely to be hostile to people on benefit. Resentment will be greatest amongst the lowest paid with large families (pp.121-126).

Relative deprivation hypothesis: those who in general view their

position in such a way as to feel a sense of relative deprivation are more likely to express hostility to out groups and specifically to immigrants (pp.126-127).

Economic stress hypothesis: those who feel financially hard pressed are more likely to be prejudiced against the unemployed and poor (pp.127-130).

Work ethic hypothesis: those who believe in the work ethic are more likely to believe that the unemployed and poor are scroungers (pp.139-132).

Experience of social security hypothesis: those who have themselves claimed benefits will be less likely to be hostile to the poor and unemployed than people who have never claimed (Redpath, 1979, 132-137).

Testing these hypotheses, Redpath discovered that the experience of claiming social security was the only factor which explained any of the variation in anti-welfare attitudes. Those with experience of claiming themselves are more likely to have a positive attitude to claimants (Redpath, 1979, 139). This is supported by other research. The Schlackman Research Organisation (1978) and Isobel Freeman (1984) both found that the experience of being unemployed and of claiming social security affected attitudes to poverty. Freeman, in her study of public attitudes to social security found that those

respondents who had themselves been unemployed were more likely to agree that all pensioners or all pensioners in need deserved assistance. Experience of unemployment also tended to make respondents less likely to emphasise individual causal factors of unemployment and more likely to suggest that state benefits should be higher (Freeman, 1984, 268). She concluded that experience of unemployment and poverty led to greater sympathy towards the unemployed. The study found a general acceptance of the role of the state in poor relief and that individualised explanations for poverty were less often referred to than societal factors. It was the 65+ age group who were most likely to see recipients of benefits as undeserving. Freeman's research suggests that, amongst her respondents, there was fairly widespread agreement that the social security system should be concerned with meeting needs, rather than requiring reciprocity and exchange. But respondents generally held more than one model of welfare; their attitudes therefore often appeared contradictory.

Dunleavy (1979A, 1979B, 1980) has discussed the experience of welfare in terms of the concept of "consumption sectors". Consumption sectors refer to the common use of a good such as social security or council housing - both public consumption sectors. Dunleavy argues that the experience of and beliefs about public consumption sectors interacts with occupational class to influence political affiliation. Consequently there is a strong association between home ownership and support for Conservative policies: home owners often believe they

pay subsidies to council tenants through tax. Council tenants on the other hand support Labour. This pattern cuts across traditional class alignments. This is certainly supported by figures on how the public voted at the 1987 General Election. Forty seven percent of home owners voted Conservative; 25 percent voted Labour and another 25 percent voted Alliance. Fifty eight percent of council tenants, on the other hand, voted Labour; only 22 percent voted Conservative and 14 percent Alliance (Kellner, 1987, 17). Recently the British Social Attitudes Series has confirmed that employees of the public sector (as distinct from "consumers") as a group preferred Labour to the Conservatives (Jowell and Witherspoon, 1985, 8).

Taylor-Gooby suggests that the idea of consumption sectors, whilst useful, is limited in its application to understanding attitudes across a wide range of welfare services. "Access to private provision is weighted to upper social groups, so that analysis by sector may add little to class analysis" (Taylor-Gooby, 1985C, 19). Nonetheless the experience of welfare, Taylor-Gooby suggests, is a basis for support of the welfare state.

But Golding and Middleton found the opposite; experience of claiming tended to reinforce respondents prejudices against the unemployed. Again, they found the poor often held the most negative attitudes to other poor claimants. This inconsistency between a number of surveys and Redpath's failure to link the other hypotheses with attitudes to poverty, despite an abundance of research suggesting

such an association, adds to the confusion over the relative strengths of these possible explanations. Golding and Middleton, for example, suggest that the reason why low paid and unskilled workers felt the greatest hostility towards claimants was because they may have felt no better off in work than on benefits (1982, 179-2). They also offer other explanations: the tax net dragging more low paid workers into the tax system; the drop in real income experienced by many low paid workers; and the visible and irreversible rise in the cost of welfare will, for many low paid workers, have given them a sense that they were paying more and getting less for themselves (1982, 231-3). But these generalisations conflict with the findings from Redpath's hypothesis testing. Mack and Lansley, who have conducted one of the most recent British surveys, also found hostility towards the poor by low paid workers. Whilst the poorest of their respondents were more likely to agree strongly that claimants were in real need, 17% with the lowest income still disagreed with this.

DHSS distinctions of deservingness

It is perhaps not surprising to find the existence of these distinctions between deserving and non deserving poor amongst DHSS officials responsible for administering income maintenance schemes. Yet given the arguments put earlier that employees of the public sector may be more inclined to support the Labour party, it might have been that DHSS administrators would have more positive attitudes towards the poor than the public generally. The available data does

not test this. What appears likely on the part of DHSS benefit administrators is that they have developed a role of controlling access to and consumption of public sector money. Also, in many cases, DHSS workers receive little more in wages than do claimants on benefit. These factors may lead to some DHSS workers expressing hostile or judgemental attitudes toward the claimants they deal with. Howe, in a survey of practice in an urban local social security office in Ireland found the distinction between deserving and non-deserving "alive and well". He comments: "evidence suggests that staff classify claimants according to the dispositions they adopt during interviews ... the 'ideal' claimant is someone who merely answers questions, produces all the required documents ..." (Howe, 1985, 61). In England too the distinction is strong. A Policy Studies Institute survey, commissioned by the DHSS and conducted by Richard Berthoud at the same time as Howe's study found similar results. A high degree of delegation of responsibility and decision making to officers at low levels was prominent. These same officers had the most hazy knowledge of the regulations and consequently applied them in an inconsistent manner. Members of ethnic minorities were often seen as the least deserving; attitudes to the poor became inextricably interwoven with racist beliefs (PSI, 1985). This was not an isolated finding. In America the literature on race and poverty is well developed. In Britain Golding and Middleton found that resentment of black or immigrants receiving benefits was seldom far beneath the surface (1982, 171).

Beltram, from a background within the DHSS, found large divisions in DHSS officials' attitudes to all claimants, and in particular to those on supplementary benefit. Whilst he found that a large majority of DHSS officials thought the scale rates were too low, their attitudes were nonetheless tinged with prejudices when they were constantly confronted by a disproportionate number of "demanding" claimants (Beltram, 1984A and 1984B). Moore has linked the deteriorating relationship between many DHSS officials and claimants with the prevalence of beliefs in scroungerphobia (Moore, 1980 and 1981; also Stevenson, 1973, 125, 141-2). These beliefs certainly appear to have affected the service that some claimants receive at DHSS offices. Michael Hill has described the "psychological climate in which officials operate". He shows how dominant public attitudes, most often hostile to the poor, affect in particular the administration of discretionary power (Hill, 1972A). Since 1980 many of these discretionary powers have been replaced by detailed regulations conferring 'rights' to benefits. But there is still a distinct "tone" to much of the income maintenance service. Combined with the often dismal surroundings in DHSS offices, long queues and waiting times, low levels of benefits and cuts in staffing levels, some claimants perhaps not surprisingly respond with aggression. Other claimants find the whole experience stigmatising and degrading. Over one-quarter of the Breadline Britain respondents were dissatisfied with the service provided by the DHSS (Mack and Lansley, 1985, 211). More recently though the DHSS unions have acknowledged the poor quality of their own service as a result

of the burden placed upon a reducing number of officials by increasing numbers of claimants. The proposals for the social fund and the return of administrative discretion without recourse to appeal has also caused grave concern in DHSS circles. Many DHSS administrators are the first to concede that their service is in urgent need of improvement (SCPS, 1985).

Summary

Internationally, attitude to poverty research has uncovered a plethora of confused and contradictory beliefs about the poor, the role of welfare spending, social security benefits, redistribution. There is a simultaneous wish on the part of survey respondents to help those that are "deserving", but to restrict and control assistance to those who are not.

Distinctions based upon notions of deservingness and non deservingness can be traced back at least six centuries. Mechanisms to control and police the non deserving poor have been an essential, if not the essential characteristic of much British and American social policy and social security legislation. Beliefs about the differences between the non deserving and deserving abound amongst the public, DHSS administrators, policy makers and claimants themselves.

Some of the poor are exempted from the need to reciprocate or "chip in"; some claimant groups or benefits are generally more popular

amongst the wider public than others. But for the remainder failure to make some form of (worthy) contribution or effort towards self help fuels a climate of "scroungerphobia". There is little enthusiasm generally for benefits to meet minority needs or for benefits that are "universal" and too 'indiscriminate'. "Targetting" assistance to those most in need through the selective use of social security is an attractive objective for most people. But targetting in the absence of goodwill or adequate resources can become a euphemism for making further distinctions, both perceptually and in practice, between the deserving and non deserving poor.

There is some evidence to suggest that the experience of public consumption sectors, and social security in particular, may be associated in some circumstances with more positive attitudes towards poverty and the poor.

SECTION FOUR: ATTITUDES TO POVERTY: THE INFLUENCE OF IDEOLOGICAL AND BELIEF SYSTEMS

Expanding the analysis

Williamson (1974A) has suggested that beliefs about the cause of poverty or the motivation of the poor can be interpreted as specific aspects of a more general ideological orientation. The two strongest predictions of ideological orientation, he believed, were the endorsement of the work ethic and identification with liberal values. Those strongly committed to the work ethic tend to believe that the poor are low in their motivation towards work. Those with a high liberal identification tend to believe that the poor have a high motivation towards work. Williamson argued that these ideological orientations account for a large part of the variance in perceived levels of motivation among the poor.

Respondents who believe that the poor are highly motivated are more likely to support efforts to aid them. In sharp contrast to Miller and Rytina et al, Williamson suggests that those with the least income or education tend to believe welfare payments are at higher levels than wealthy respondents. Correspondingly, poorer respondents with the least education generally hold strongly anti-welfare beliefs. Wealthier respondents with the most education hold the most pro-welfare beliefs (Williamson, 1974B, 168-169).

Williamson suggests that economic self interest (as indicated by socio-economic status), income, education and occupation are all weak predictors of support for welfare payments. Ideological orientation is the most important explanation for attitudes to the poor or support for welfare payments. Williamson (1974A) suggests that poverty lobbyists must attempt to change the ideology which influences attitudes to poverty if they are to have an effect on welfare payments or levels of benefit. This requires efforts to correct the widespread misconceptions about the poor. Klein (1974) in contrast suggests that those concerned with influencing policy towards the poor should be elitist in their approach, and ignore public opinion, which is very often hostile.

Political ideology or partisanship

The authors of the 1985 British Social Attitudes Report argue that "partisanship" is a powerful discriminator of attitudes to major public issues (Jowell and Witherspoon, 1985, 30). Similarly Pandey et al have characterised ideology as "a manner of thinking, a system of values, assumptions and beliefs which affect the perception of social reality" (1982, 327). Their survey of 90 college students in India examined the effect of broad ideological beliefs on attitudes to the causes of poverty. They were concerned in particular with ideological orientation as expressed by political affiliation. Using one scale to indicate political preference ("New Left Scale") and a further questionnaire to explore perceptions of poverty ("Perceived Causes of Poverty Questionnaire") the authors

categorised causes under four headings: self; fate; government policies; economic dominance of a few in society (see section 1 in this chapter). They found:

(i) Those with neutral or right wing political views attributed significantly more to "self" - the habits and abilities of the poor - and to "fate", as the causes of poverty ("dispositional attributes").

(ii) Those who had left wing political views were more likely to explain poverty in terms of "government policies" and the "economic dominance of a few" ("situational attributes").

The authors found that politically neutral and right wing students did not differ significantly in their attribution processes with respect to any of the four causes. While political affiliation was an important predictor of attitudes, the authors found that all groups attributed more importance to system causes than personal ones. Left wing students though were significantly more likely to emphasise these situational or system causes. Lewis (1980), studying the attitudes to public expenditure of 200 people on the electoral register in Bath found that there was a remarkable reproduction of party policy in attitudes to public expenditure on welfare and other services. He argued that attitudes and preferences were dependent in part on political values. Conservatives had more congruent fiscal attitudes within the constraints of the system. Those who didn't regularly vote for one

political party were similar in attitudes to Labour party supporters. Similarly Edgell and Duke (1985) in their Greater Manchester study of attitudes towards reductions in public expenditure found a marked party political pattern of attitudes towards cuts, although all categories had moved towards greater disapproval.

Whiteley, in a number of articles, has stressed the importance of political affiliation - partisanship - on attitudes towards the poor or welfare spending. He has shown how attitudes are more structured, organised and consistent the greater the level of the respondent's political activity, a finding confirmed by others. Whiteley (1981B) for example found that Labour party activists were more "left wing" in their political attitudes than Labour voters generally. Activists were also more likely to be highly educated, middle class, articulate and principled. Similarly in another study Gordon and Whiteley (1977) found that the attitudes of Labour councillors were far more "structured" than Labour supporters. This, however, was not the conclusion of a later study by Welch and Studlar (1983). They have suggested that there is only a very small difference between the attitude orientations of activists and non activists. This finding though stands alone. Smith (1984) for example found that people who are politically aware tend to have lower levels of "non attitudes" and have more consistent attitudes and beliefs. Converse's (1964) study of attitudes to policy issues among American voters similarly found that the further away from elite sources of belief systems, the less one's attitudes were

organised. This accounted for the proliferation of "clusters of ideas", largely unrelated, amongst many respondents.

Furnham's review of the range of explanations for poverty in Britain showed how explanations for poverty are related in predictable ways to political voting patterns. Conservatives tended to explain poverty primarily in individualistic terms; Labour party supporters emphasised societal factors. But subjects tended to place different emphasis on particular explanations depending on the class and race of the target poor person, indicating different lay theories of the causes of poverty as they relate to different poor groups. A person's theory of poverty and wealth is, Furnham believes, a possible predictor of their voting pattern (Furnham, 1982A, 319). But this is somewhat circular: voting patterns also provide a predictor of attitudes.

Class, Furnham has argued, may be an important moderator variable and an important predictor of political attitudes in Britain.

"Conservatives, traditionally middle class and therefore relatively wealthy, explain middle class poverty ... in terms of situational characteristics, and working class poverty in terms of dispositional factors. While Labour voters, traditionally working class and therefore relatively poor, would do the opposite" (Furnham, 1982A, 320).

The majority of poor people are working class. Consequently Conservatives usually explain poverty in dispositional terms and Labour voters in situational terms. This is consistent with findings from the 1985 British Social Attitude Report (Jowell and Witherspoon, 1985). Wealthier respondents, those in social classes

I, II and III (non manual) were far more likely to support the Conservatives (1985, 7). This is again confirmed by data on how people voted at the 1987 General Election. Fifty four percent of social classes I and II and 47 percent of class III (non manual) voted Conservative. Only 13 percent of those from classes I and II and 24 percent from class III (non manual) voted Labour (Kellner, 1987, 17). More explanatory work has shown that working class respondents are often radical with respect to certain issues, including economic and social security matters, but are often conservative with regard to freedom of speech, tolerance, civil liberties, and ethnocentrism. Middle class respondents may often show the opposite pattern (Furnham, 1982A).

Furnham has suggested that "political parties tend to attract their supporters largely on the basis of economic self interest, and are opposed to them with respect to all other issues" (Furnham, 1982A, 320). This is similar to Eysenck's comments on the "paradox of socialism". Middle class respondents are often more radical and sensitive than the working class in respect of political and social attitudes. The working class are often conservative and tough minded, voting into office Members of Parliament who often hold contrary views (Eysenck, 1977). Certainly over 30 percent of social classes IV and V (semi/unskilled manual) voted Conservative at the 1987 General Election. Additionally one quarter of all unemployed workers voted Conservative; 52 percent voted Labour, 20 percent voted Alliance (Kellner, 1987, 17).

West has argued that political partisanship is only a partial explanation of attitudes. West emphasises that people's views are formed from a complex matrix of values, needs and interests. Partisanship, he suggests, is likely to be a significant variable when political rhetoric is pitched at its most general level. But on more concrete issues (for example community care) the influence of partisanship will be limited (West, 1984, 440, 442). Actual or potential self interest may often override broader ideological or political principles. At the general level though ideological influences may still be strong:

"People in general are more likely to echo the rhetoric of left or right over matters of broad principle than more concrete issues ... rooted in the everyday world of experience" (West, 1984, 422).

Taylor-Gooby, discussing a number of surveys, including his own, suggests that the influence of party allegiance on attitude to welfare generally is likely to decline as the public discriminate more about welfare choices. There is a surprising degree of overlap in attitudes between groups with different class, sex, income, age and family compositions to particular services and issues, even though marked differences still persist (1985C, 15). Political affiliation, on its own, is of limited value in explaining attitudes to poverty. Edgell and Duke's study of attitudes towards expenditure cuts found a distinct and consistent relationship between attitudes and class (both social and occupational). All class categories moved significantly in the direction of greater disapproval, with the exception of occupational grade A (most approving) and D (most

disapproving) (Edgell and Duke, 1985). However, Bosanquet has commented that, as far as attitudes to social policy and the welfare state are concerned, "differences by party identification are, on the whole, more important than differences by class" (Bosanquet, 1984, 76).

The work ethic

The importance of the work ethic as an influence on attitudes to poverty has been commented upon by many authors (Rytina, Form and Pease, 1970; Goodwin, 1972; Betten, 1973; Feather, 1974; Tropman, 1977). Max Weber proposed that there is a causal relationship between the work ethic and the development of capitalism in Western society. The work ethic provides a moral justification for the accumulation of wealth and inequality (Weber, 1958 and 1961). Mirels and Garrett have reviewed the literature on the work ethic and traced its importance as a personality variable and influence on attitudes or behaviour. They show how puritan theologians believed that "the honest acquisition of capital in a calling was a testament to man's glorification of God, and that economic success was a sign of election to a state of grace" (1971, 40). Others have shown how disciplined work was seen as the best way to prevent an "unclean life" marred by "sloth and sensuality which riches so often engenders" (Fullerton, 1959). Mirels and Garrett have developed a scale to measure commitment to the protestant work ethic which has often been used to test its association with attitudes to poverty.

MacDonald found that respondents who endorsed the work ethic tended to have negative attitudes to the poor (MacDonald, 1972; see also MacDonald, 1971A, 1971B). Furnham found that British respondents who had a strong commitment to the work ethic tended to have a negative attitude to the unemployed (Furnham, 1982A, 1982B, 1982C). Redpath has argued that discussions about the importance of the work ethic have their roots in an essentially American tradition of explanations for poverty. But such a discussion is complicated in Britain by the existence of an established welfare state (Redpath, 1979, 143). More recently Wagstaff (1983) has examined the attitudes to poverty amongst 75 males and 50 females in Liverpool and Glasgow. Using a scale to measure negative attitudes to the poor ("MacDonalds Poverty Scale") and a scale to measure commitment to the work ethic ("Protestant Ethic Scale") he found that supporters of the Labour party held relatively fewer negative attitudes to the poor, and believed less in the importance of the work ethic. People with right wing political views were more likely to blame the poor for their poverty. Wagstaff found that this correlation between political values and attitudes to poverty remained significant even when the combined effects of socioeconomic status and age were removed. Political orientation, he concluded, was an overriding influence on attitudes to the poor. But the correlation between these political values and support for the work ethic was problematic; it did not remain significant when the effects of age and socioeconomic status were removed. Wagstaff concluded that the relationship between political affiliation and commitment to the work ethic may be

strongly influenced, if not determined, by the variable of age. Age, rather than political affiliation, may determine attitudes to the work ethic, but party affiliation will be more significant when it comes to attitudes to poverty. However, Taylor-Gooby has urged caution when taking political affiliation or class membership as a predictor of attitudes to welfare. His Medway research illustrates the complexity of the relationship between different variables and the essential duality in popular opinion. There is support for services to provide for those in need but this coexists with the ideology of the marketplace. Labour supporters in particular have, he suggests, a contradictory consciousness. Many of their opinions appear to lack internal consistency (Taylor-Gooby, 1982, 345).

Political affiliation, work ethic, and a belief in a "just world"

Furnham and Gunter (1984) have provided a complex analysis of the interaction of certain ideological beliefs on attitudes towards poverty. Specifically, they have examined the links between a belief that the world is a "just place" and the work ethic. Lerner originally formulated the hypothesis of the "Just World Belief", and has described in detail the theoretical underpinning and implications of the hypothesis (Lerner, 1965 and 1970; Lerner and Miller, 1978). He has argued that people have a need to believe in a just world and that this affects their reactions to the innocent suffering of others - victims. Essentially a belief in a just world will tend to lead to respondents blaming victims for their fate. Reviewing earlier

work, Furnham and Gunter show how Goffman (1963) discovered that it was common for respondents to view other people's physical disabilities in terms of moral defect - just retribution for some wrongful act - and a justification for the way that disabled person was treated. Mydral (1944) and Ryan (1971) have recognised that we often justify the treatment of oppressed and disadvantaged groups by claiming they deserve their fate; the concept of "blaming the victim" - a constant theme in attitudes to the poor. Phares and Wilson (1972) have shown how, after a serious accident, responsibility is increasingly assigned to a potentially guilty person. Similarly Walster (1966) has called this a "defensive attribution". By blaming victims and believing that we are different to them, a respondent can be protected from a similar fate.

Fritz Heider has argued that the relationship between goodness and happiness, between wickedness and punishment is so strong, that given one of these conditions, the other is frequently assumed. "Misfortune, sickness, accident are often taken as signs of badness and guilt" (Heider, 1958, 235). Heider argues that there is a tendency for people to attribute a consistency between the virtues of an individual and their outcomes, or, as Lerner comments, "a world in which we get what we deserve and deserve what we get" (Lerner, 1971, 51).

Zuckerman has developed this further: " a world in which people get what they deserve is a world where "deserving" inputs are rewarded

and "undeserving" inputs are punished" (Zuckerman, 1975, 972). He has argued that beliefs in a just world serve as a guiding principle for attitudes and behaviour. Zuckerman tested his hypothesis using a 16 item "Just World Scale" developed by Rubin and Peplau on 31 female and 21 male introductory social psychology students. He found that in a time of need, those who believed in a just world behaved more "deservingly" and helped others, even though that behaviour did not lead in any obvious way to the satisfaction of the need. But people believing in a just world want to behave in a deserving manner; failure to do so would lead to their "just deserts". People generally get what they deserve (Rubin and Peplau, 1975; Zuckerman, 1975).

Furnham and Gunter (1984) tested the thesis by examining 133 male and 88 female academics' attitudes to poverty. They hypothesised that those with a strong just world belief would be more negative to the poor - would tend to blame the poor for their fate. Using a scale to measure these beliefs ("Belief in a Just World Scale") and one to measure attitudes to poverty ("MacDonald's Poverty Scale") they found that there were no significant differences between the respondents belief in a just world and their sex, age, education, income, whether they were retired or unemployed. There was, however, a significant difference between different voting intentions and religious or occupational groups. Conservative voters had the strongest just world beliefs, followed by Liberal/SDP voters, non voters, other party voters, and finally Labour voters. Church of England and

Jewish respondents had stronger just world beliefs than protestant or agnostic respondents. All believers (including agnostics) had significantly higher just world beliefs than atheists (see also Lerner and Simmons, 1966, for a discussion of religious links). Retired people, those with full time jobs, and students had significantly stronger beliefs in a just world than people who were in part-time employment or students who could not get jobs.

Analysing the relationship between just world beliefs and attitudes to poverty, Furnham and Gunter found that their hypothesis was supported. Conservative voters and religious respondents had stronger beliefs in a just world and these were associated with negative attitudes to the poor (Furnham and Gunter, 1984; see also Furnham and Bland, 1983). This finding is consistent with those of the European Value Systems Study Group (Harding et al, 1986). Its survey of values across 26 nations found that respondents who were religious, home owners, older, not actively involved with politics and very happy or satisfied with life were far more likely to be Conservative in their political values (pp.82-83).

"Those who believe in God, and those who attend church regularly, are more likely to select positions towards the right of the scale, whereas those without religious beliefs or practices lean more towards the left" (Harding, Phillips and Fogarty, 1986, 84).

Locus of control

Phares (1976) and others (Phares and Wilson, 1972) have shown how different beliefs about the consequences of behaviour affect perceptions and attitudes. The belief that we have no control over the outcome that follows behaviour ("external locus of control") or the conviction that outcome is directly related to one's own behaviour ("internal locus of control") may also affect a respondent's attitude to the cause of poverty. Furnham and Gunter (1984) have attempted to link explanations based upon locus of control with their findings on just world beliefs and the work ethic. They concluded that those who believe in the work ethic are more likely to have an internal locus of control and strong just world beliefs. They also tend to be more Conservative in their social, political and religious beliefs and economically more secure. These people tend to emphasise the dispositional attributes of the poor when explaining the causes of poverty.

Those with a low commitment to the work ethic are more likely to have an external locus of control and believe in an unjust world. These respondents are more likely to emphasise the situational causes of poverty.

Lauer commented many years ago that the disparagement of the poor is "rooted in the belief that success is available to all Americans who are willing to achieve it by the dint of hard work" (1971, 9). This explanation of American attitudes to the poor combines a number of

these factors; belief in a just world - "success is available to all Americans who are willing to achieve it"; the value of the work ethic - "by the dint of hard work"; and internal locus of control - rewards are related to behaviour. This combination, as Furnham and Gunter show some 14 years later, is also more likely to produce hostile attitudes towards the poor.

Post materialist values

Inglehart (1977 and 1981) has argued that during the last two decades or so the underlying value system of Western society has dramatically altered. This shift has been one from an emphasis on material and physical well being, towards more attention being paid to the quality of life, individual participation in politics, a "humane world", etc. This value system he classified as "post-materialist". Those preoccupied with material or economic security are described as "materialist". Inglehart argued that these values are learnt through adolescent experiences. Post materialist values are encouraged by experience of greater affluence and physical security; younger people and those with high economic status are more likely to have post materialist values than older people or those with low status. Additionally those with higher education are also more likely to hold post materialist values.

Post materialists, Inglehart has argued, are also more likely to be engaged in political activity and place more positive value on political participation generally. But their involvement, he argues,

is often one of challenging the status quo rather than upholding it.

In summary then, some of the main characteristics of the post materialists are their younger age, higher economic status, higher educational attainments and involvement in political activity.

The European Commission survey of attitudes to poverty found that perceptions of poverty correlated particularly highly with these post materialist values. Those with the most "positive" attitudes to the poor were also post materialists. Those with more "negative" attitudes were far more likely to be materialists (EEC, 1977, 92-103).

Post materialists are also more likely to state that they themselves see people living in situations of extreme poverty. The authors of the EEC survey argued that value systems are important filters of attitudes; national, cultural and individual value systems are perhaps more influential than the experience gained from contact with the poor (EEC, 1977; see also Meddin, 1975; Jowell and Witherspoon, 1985; Harding et al, 1986).

Additionally Inglehart (1984) has argued that post materialists are also less likely to attend church regularly and attribute less significance to God than those who hold materialist values. Following on from Furnham and Gunter, it may be, therefore, that post materialists are also more likely to have a weaker belief in the

value of the work ethic, an external locus of control and a weaker belief in a just world. As shown previously, such people are more likely to be Conservative in their political values and emphasise dispositional attributes of the poor when explaining the causes of poverty. Neither Inglehart, Furnham and Gunter or other authors discussed above have attempted to study the possible associations between post materialist values and these other belief systems. It is not an association that has been postulated before. Could social workers, as a group, embody many of the characteristics and attitudes of the post materialists ?

Summary

The associations between a number of ideological and belief systems and attitudes to poverty have been outlined. Negative associations have been found between these attitudes and a support for the Conservative party, a strong belief in the protestant work ethic, a strong belief that the world is a "just place", an internal locus of control and materialist values. A positive association has been found between attitudes and a support for the Labour party, a weak belief in the work ethic, a belief that the world is largely an "unjust place", an external locus of control and post materialist values. These belief systems are themselves linked. For example Conservative supporters are more likely to have a stronger belief in the work ethic and that the world is a just place, which are also associated with an internal locus of control and, generally, materialist values.

But these belief systems are also associated with socio-demographic variables. Those who believe in a just world are more likely to be religious. Those who believe in the value of the work ethic are more likely to be older. Those with less education and who are older are also more likely to have materialist values. Figure 1.2 summarises the main associations between these variables and attitudes to the poor.

Figure 1.2: Summary of factors associated with negative or positive attitude to poverty and the poor

	Dispositional explanations for poverty	Situational explanations for poverty	Author
Attitude Position	"Negative" attitude	"Positive" attitude"	
S O C I O - E C O N O M I C V A R I A B L E S			
Age	Young Old 65 plus	Old Young -	Alston and Dean 1972 {Feagin 1972A,1972B {Feather 1974 Freeman 1984
Sex	Male No differences	Female No differences	Alston and Dean 1972 Flint 1981
Ethnic origins	- White White Highly educated blacks	Black/Jewish - Black Black	Feagin 1972A, B Miller 1978 Flint 1981 Bogart and Hutchinson 1978
Occupation	Lower status occupations Managerial -	Skilled workers and professionals - Mid income/Blue collar	Alston and Dean 1972 Miller 1978 Bogart and Hutchinson 1978
Income and socio-economic status/class	Wealthy/high income Middle class High income/high class	Poorer/low income Low income Lower socio-economic status working class	Feagin, 1972A, 1972B Rytina et al 1970 Miller 1978 Sinha et al 1982 Flint 1981 Williamson 1974A, B Furnham 1982A, B, C Mack and Lansley 1985 Golding and Middleton 1982

Figure 1.2 continued (socio-economic variables).

Education	Highly educated	Lower education	Alston and Dean 1972 Miller 1978 Williamson 1974A, B
	Poor/least educated	Wealthy/highly educated	
Experience of claiming	Experience	-	Golding and Middleton 1982
	-	Experience	Redpath 1979 Freeman 1984 Schlackman 1978
	-	Experience of "consumption sector"	Dunleavy 1979A,B
Contact with poor	Working contact	Social contact	Norris 1978
Location of Residence	Rural	-	Osgood 1977 Buttel and Flinn 1976
	No differences	-	Sargent et al 1982

Figure 1.2 continued (ideological variables).

	Dispositional explanations for poverty	Situational explanations for poverty	Author
	"Negative" attitude	"Positive" attitude"	
I D E O L O G I C A L V A R I A B L E S			
Belief in Protestant Work Ethic	High (Conservative supporters) (Older)	Low (Labour supporters) (Younger)	Lauer 1971 Wagstaff 1983 MacDonald 1971 Furnham 1982A,B,C Feagin 1972A,B Hendrickson and Axelson 1983 Williamson 1974A,B Etc...
Belief in a Just World	High (Religious/retired employed/Jewish C. of E. Conservative)	Low (Atheists, unemployed, Labour supporters)	Lerner 1965, 1970 Furnham and Gunter 1984 Lerner and Miller 1978
Locus of control	Internal (Strong belief in work ethic, Conservative)	External (Weak belief in work ethic, Labour supporters)	Phares 1976 Phares and Wilson 1972
Political affiliation	Conservative (Religious, older not active politically, higher socio- economic class)	Labour (Lower socio- economic class)	Wagstaff 1983 Pandey et al 1982 Furnham 1982 Furnham and Gunter 1984
Post materialist values	Materialist values (Older, less educated, more religious, less active politically, lower socio- economic status)	Post materialist values (Highly educated, young, politically active, less religious, high socio-economic status)	Inglehart 1977, 1981, 1984 EEC 1977

SECTION FIVE: ATTITUDES INTO POLICY - THE ROLE OF PUBLIC OPINION

Are attitudes to poverty reflected in welfare programmes or benefit payments made to poor people? Goodwin (1972) found that whilst his middle class respondents were willing to donate money to "underprivileged" groups they also agreed with strong work requirements on American welfare programmes in order to 'teach' the poor the value of the work ethic. Goodwin showed how welfare programme administrators and political leaders translated these widely held beliefs into welfare programmes with strict work requirements. The solution to poverty became one of getting the poor into the proper frame of mind to willingly participate in menial jobs.

Wohlenberg (1976) discussed the role that public opinion plays in creating and perpetrating different American regional welfare programmes. He found that American states which were more politically Conservative often made it difficult for poor people to get onto welfare programmes, and paid them less than they would have received in other more liberal states. States distinguishing between the "deserving" and the "non deserving" poor had less effective and more punitively orientated welfare programmes than liberal states. Public opinion was seen as an important influence on the nature and extent of welfare programmes for the poor. It created the climate in which administrators defined the relevant

statutes and the type and tone of service that would be provided.

The influence that public opinion may have upon social policy is discussed by Miller (1978). His analysis of data from a national survey of 2,248 respondents found that opposition to welfare programmes and payments came predominantly from the most politically active subsection of the population with the strongest electoral strength; the most privileged members of society. Miller suggests that this opposition was a reflection of basic political and ideological values rather than any assessment of how effective the programmes were in meeting the needs of the poor. Opposition, when translated into policy, could well defeat welfare reforms. In Britain Deakon (1977, 1978, 1980) has outlined the effect that public hostility to "undeserving scroungers" can have on the administration of benefits in local offices, on national policy and on the unemployed and poor themselves. More recently there has been widely reported hostility to a peace convoy of hippies, who in June 1986 were claiming over £10,000 per week in benefits between them, and "giving nothing in return". This led to promises by Ministers that both criminal, civil and social security law would be altered to stop this happening again. At a similar time new national Board and Lodging Regulations were clearly intended to stop young people "enjoying" the experience of claiming whilst in seaside resorts. Similarly Marsden and Duff (1975) have shown how the high level of public distrust towards claimants has led to an emphasis by administrators on controlling and policing abuse and fraud amongst

the undeserving rather than encouraging claims. The effect of this is often to deter the "genuine" claimant from applying. Isobel Freeman's survey of attitudes to social security amongst Scottish residents found strong acceptance for the "relative" definition of poverty (1984, 323). In Britain the 1984 British Social Attitude Survey found that two thirds of the public ascribed to a relative (rather than "absolute") definition of poverty (Jowell and Airey, 1984, 94). Mack and Lansley (1985) found similar support for the relative concept of poverty amongst respondents who were asked to decide on which items were necessary to allow people to contribute and participate in society. But there is considerable evidence to suggest, however, that the current system of supplementary benefit (and the proposed replacement of Income Support) fails or will fail in many cases to even provide a subsistence standard of living (Piachaud, 1980; Berthoud, 1986; Bradshaw, 1986; Bradshaw and Morgan, 1987; Desai, 1986). The legislation and scale rates are a product of decades of incremental changes and confused and contradictory objectives. Williamson (1974A) and Freeman (1984) argue that the public must have access to a radical alternative ideology before anti-welfare attitudes can be rejected. For Labour party supporters in particular the existence of a dominant ideology of antipathy towards the poor confuses their perceptions. It leads, as Cheal has argued, to a "contradictory consciousness" (Cheal, 1979)

MacGregor has argued that a number of factors have worked against the elimination of poverty. In particular she cites the

powerlessness of the poor and the hostility and indifference expressed towards them by other members of society. She argues that "a sense of communal responsibility for children, the sick, the old and the unemployed will have to be promoted if public opinion is to change" (1981, 167). How public opinion is perceived by politicians may well be an obstacle to improving the situation of the poor and their position vis a vis the rest of society. Public and political attitudes are influential in that they determine the room for manoeuvre for any change or expansions in state welfare provision. But as many authors have observed, as the social security system has been adjusted partly to meet changing needs and partly to reflect changes in social attitudes, much of the differentiation between the deserving and non deserving poor has persisted (Fuller and Stevenson, 1983, 194; Berthoud and Brown, 1981, 143; Carter, Fifield and Shields, 1973, 25, 29).

Klein's (1974) review of the active relationship between policy and public opinion emphasised the moralistic nature of public attitudes:

"The 19th century distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor seems to be alive and kicking - despite the efforts of social reformers to abolish it over the past 70 years" (Klein, 1974, 411).

Klein suggests that if policy makers wish to change existing arrangements for income maintenance, then they should ignore public opinion - which is usually Conservative in its attitudes towards change. "It is precisely those who want the greatest social change who should be most elitist in their approach" (1974, 417).

Both Whiteley and Taylor-Gooby (but perhaps for different reasons) believe that the "general climate of public opinion in Britain will not accept a fundamental dismantling of the welfare state, as distinct from its erosion at the edges" (Whiteley, 1981A, 473). Taylor-Gooby supports this because of the duality in opinion; the simultaneous support for private control and collective responsibility, as opposed to a utopian belief in the value of the public domain.

"Changes may gain assent if new policies are presented in terms of their implication for some aspect of opinion but **not others**. In particular welfare cuts are more likely to gain support in the context of approval of a non-interventionist state than in the context of an attack on state provision. Cuts are also more likely to be accepted if attention is focussed on the damage to unfavoured groups ..." (Taylor-Gooby 1985c, 29).

Self interest, he argues, is the foundation on which people's attitudes to welfare are built. Factors associated with self interest - class position, age - are crucial variables in explaining attitudes to poverty and the poor. Consequently the links between class and attitudes to poverty uncovered by Golding and Middleton and others may be a closer indicator of self interest than anything else (Golding and Middleton, 1982, 167). Similarly the links between attitudes to poverty and age, partisanship, own living standards discovered by Mack and Lansley may also relate to the idea of self interest (Mack and Lansley, 1985, 205-209). Certainly Mack and Lansley suggest that their findings uphold the self interest thesis. But they suggest that there are notable exceptions of people going against their own immediate interests. Future perceived needs and

how distant time-wise these will be, may be an important influence on attitudes. But Mack and Lansley suggest that "altruism or at least a wider sense of social obligation does appear to play a role in the formulation of attitudes" (1985, 285; see also Titmuss, 1973).

There is a conceptual problem in the identification of "public opinion". In the classical view public opinion did not consist of an aggregate of individual opinions, nor was the fact that it had been adopted by a numerical majority identify it as public opinion.

"Ideas that have not been formed and tested through discourse and public debate, for example, would not be deemed worthy of being called public opinion. With the advent of the survey method, the classical view was often lost because survey researchers implicitly equated public opinion with whatever public opinion polls measured". (Turner and Martin, 1984, 237; see also Coughlin, 1980; Bulmer, 1986).

It is a matter of speculation whether or not the results from attitude to poverty surveys are representative of public opinion in its classical sense. There is considerable agreement, however, that they give a useful indication of general "climates of opinion". These have both an impact upon and are influenced by the nature of welfare provision for the poor and by a range of socio-economic and belief systems. At the same time, however, it will be important to remember that "climates of opinion" can hide the "diversity of subcultures - a variety of shades of opinion" that exist amongst the individuals whose attitudes are being measured. This is a country of "distinct publics and diverse opinions" (Young, 1985, 30-31).

Summary

Public opinion, as perceived by politicians and policy makers, may play a considerable role in determining the nature of programmes to help the poor. Additionally the "tone" of such services may be influenced by what is perceived to be the general "climate of opinion" towards the poor. But even where public opinion appears to be more supportive of the poor, policies and programmes retain essential distinctions between those who are deserving and those who are not.

Those concerned to improve the material circumstances or social position of the poor will need to either ignore public opinion and be elitist in their approach; use public opinion and advocate for "deserving" groups and against the "non deserving"; or attempt to influence the climate of opinion by introducing or pushing forward an attractive, alternative ideology based on rights of citizenship and the objective of social security for all.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined findings from a number of countries on attitudes to poverty and the poor; there are persistent historical and international trends in attitudes. Authors have generally categorised attitudes as "positive" or "negative" to the poor. Positive attitudes have been seen as those that stress the situational or structural causes of poverty - giving little scope for concepts such as choice or personal responsibility in the creation or

maintenance of poverty. Negative attitudes have been seen as those that stress the dispositional or individualistic causes of poverty - "blaming the victim" - and giving little scope in the creation or maintenance of poverty to factors external to the poor themselves. These distinctions rest upon distinct understandings of, and explanations for poverty and have implicit recipes for action. They also illustrate the frame of reference from which each author approaches the subject of attitudes to poverty; structural explanations have most often been considered as a "softening" of attitudes, something altogether "better" than blaming the poor for their poverty. But who is to decide when a person is a "victim" is of crucial importance. Are "positive" attitudes to the poor necessarily equated with those that explain poverty in situational or structural terms? Do "negative" attitudes necessarily require the use of individualistic or dispositional explanations for poverty?

Simple distinctions such as 'negative' or 'positive' create a number of conceptual difficulties for the analysis of attitudes to poverty.

First, it fails to adequately report, record, or explain the complex interaction of attitudes, opinions and beliefs and their influence on attitudes to poverty. This is examined in some detail in chapter three.

Second, it fails to take account of the potential for a duality, ambivalence or confusion in attitudes. People may in fact have a

range of attitudes, some of which are both negative and positive to the poor at the same time. It has already been shown that powerful distinctions exist between different groups of poor people; judgements based upon "deservingness" or "non deservingness" and "scroungerphobia" are especially persistent. Much of the research reported in this chapter fails to explore the interaction and overlap between these "positive" or "negative" positions. It also says nothing about the strength or intensity to which attitudes are held. This is examined in more detail in chapter four.

Third, the explanations for attitudes offered by researchers have focussed on the influence of discrete socio-economic or ideological/belief systems. Figure 1.2 summarised the variables reported in this chapter and their associations with particular attitudes to poverty and the poor. In the large majority of cases the analysis has failed to consider the impact that an interaction of these variables may have upon attitude formation and change. Generally, researchers have focussed their attention on the influence of socio-economic variables such as age, occupation, education or income; or on ideological or belief systems such as a belief in the protestant work ethic, just world beliefs, or political affiliation. Some important exceptions exist, but generally researchers have considered one or the other, rather than the potential influence that a range of interacting variables may have upon attitudes.

The next chapter examines specifically the literature from social

work. It reports on studies of social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor and outlines some of the influences on and explanations for these attitudes.

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CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL WORKERS' ATTITUDES TO POVERTY AND THE POOR

Introduction

This chapter examines the findings of a number of surveys of social workers' attitudes to poverty. It also outlines the influences that social work training and practice have on attitude formation and change.

Evidence is presented which suggests that the way social workers view clients will affect the way clients view themselves. This discussion is especially important in the context of poor clients' experience of stigma. When hostile attitudes towards poor clients are entwined with low self image and feelings of stigma, the potential for clients to 'break out' of a spiral of dependency is reduced. Social workers need to have an insight into their own attitudes towards poverty and towards their clients if they are not to actually reinforce the low self image and desperation of many poor people with whom they are in contact.

The importance of the subject:

Grimm and Orten have argued that "social workers' attitudes are a crucial factor in the way they will deliver services to the poor and how clients, in turn, will react to the services they receive" (Grimm and Orten, 1973, 94). Because many social work clients are poor and

because professionally social workers are expected to have a positive attitude towards them, it is important to study their attitudes to poverty and the poor (Orten, 1979, 3; Macarov, 1981, 150; Becker and MacPherson, 1986, 61). Macarov argued "dealing with the poor ... makes up a very large part of social work ... and it is an obvious responsibility of education for social work to either provide the facts, or to require that students acquire them" (1981, 158). Bernard (1967) has argued that social work education has a responsibility for helping students form a professional identity and for transmitting the values and attitudes consistent with that identity. But, as Macarov rightly argued 'although social work education often places great stress on attitude change among students ... little is known about which attitudes change, if any; to what extent; and for how long ... it might be wise to try to determine students' attitudes toward poverty at the beginning of their educational careers ... and consciously to seek to bring about change, where needed, during their educational period' (1981, 158).

Whilst it is of importance to understand the nature of student social workers' attitudes to poverty such studies must also include practicing social workers, who come into daily contact with the poor. Fuller and Stevenson have argued that there is a need for "substantial and detailed studies" to show how the wide range of factors influencing social workers and their practice with clients experiencing material deprivation operate and interact. They have stressed that information is needed to evaluate the extent to which

certain values inhibit or distort social work services and to understand the manner in which these values are reinforced or modified. These issues take on especial importance because of the increasing extent to which clients depend upon social workers for advocacy or for direct help in financial and material matters. For clients to be treated fairly, Fuller and Stevenson contend, social workers in training will need to examine this aspect of their role (which will require a degree of insight concerning their own attitudes) as well as creating the structures necessary for this work to develop (Fuller and Stevenson, 1983, 63).

Orten assumed that the influence "positive" attitudes have on social workers practice will be in the direction of positive behaviour. But Silberman's earlier study in fact found the opposite (Orten, 1979, 3/4; Silberman, 1977, 81). Silberman has asserted that social workers who are "hostile" to the poor are more likely to implement such sentiments in their actual practice. Those more "positive" to the poor may be prevented from transforming their attitudes into "positive" action because of institutional or other constraints (a finding consistent with those reported in chapter nine for British social workers). How negative attitudes are reflected in social work practice, and the barriers constraining a more positive approach are important to identify. Yet as Festinger (1964) observed, there is no "obvious" relationship between attitude change and behaviour change. Attitudes are only one determinant of behaviour; very often there is an inconsistency between the two. But Kreitler and

Kreitler (1972) have maintained that behaviours are indeed predictable from a range of beliefs; "general beliefs", "beliefs about one's self", "beliefs about norms" and "beliefs about goals". Lobel (1982) has shown though how these different types of belief actually predict different types of behaviour. Beliefs about "one's self" are the best single predictor of punctuality. "General beliefs" are the best single predictor of assertiveness, pain, tolerance and conformity; "norm beliefs" predict a respondent's degree of orderliness. Different beliefs may influence different aspects of a social workers practice. The identification of which beliefs influence particular behaviours is not the subject of this study. It will, however, require considerable research in a social work context.

Lack of knowledge

Little is known about what social workers actually do with poor clients or about their attitudes to poverty and the poor. Macarov (1982) and others (Fuller and Stevenson, 1983) have confirmed the lack of detailed studies of social workers' attitudes to poverty. British studies are noticeable by their absence. Little is known about what social workers think of clients, and there is even less known about what the public and clients think of social workers (Philpot, 1987). Poverty, despite being widespread amongst clients, has not been seen as a central concern of British social workers. Until recently there had been little knowledge of the extent and nature of poverty amongst British social work clients. The first

stage of this research aimed to fill that gap. The results are reported in Chapter 5.

Social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor

The few surveys of social workers attitudes to poverty and the poor are mostly from America, where social work roles are somewhat different from those in Britain. Bearing in mind important distinctions between "cash and care" services in both countries, some of the main findings are outlined below.

Hendrickson and Axelson (1985) found that, as with professionals from computing and law, social workers tended to emphasise individualised explanations for poverty, but these co-existed with a more structural orientation (within limits) to the solution of poverty. Macarov (1981) compared social work students' attitudes to poverty in America, Israel and Australia between 1976-1977. He used a five item self administered questionnaire but did not ask for demographic details. This makes cross correlations impossible. Macarov found that American students defined poverty more in terms of "lack of money" whilst Australian and Israeli students spoke in more general terms, emphasising "mental health" and other subjective factors. American and Australian students emphasised the role that socio-economic and political systems have in causing poverty, compared to Israelis who were more likely to blame the individual concerned, and who also placed more emphasis on the role of luck. To combat poverty half the Australian students called for changes in the

socio-economic/political system, but less than one quarter of American and Israeli's responded in this way. Australian students were far more likely to look to structural changes; Israelis emphasised the need for better education. Macarov found an incongruence between how social work students explained the cause of poverty, and how they would respond to combat it. In Israel, a welfare orientated state, there is the greatest emphasis on individualised explanations for poverty. Macarov suggested that "the more 'welfare' the state, the more deviant the poor" (1981, 156). Considine (1978) has confirmed that individualised explanations for poverty no longer command widespread support amongst Australian social workers. Eighty-seven percent of his sample of 70 social work practitioners thought that social workers had a prime responsibility to analyse the structural causes of client problems and to work toward structural reforms. But practice had not yet developed sufficiently and radically enough to achieve this.

Different countries have different official or unofficial poverty lines: some are based on calorific or nutritional values; some on subsistence defined in other terms; whilst some depend on a proportion of median incomes. In Britain there is considerable controversy over the definition and scales used to measure poverty (see for example the note on definitions of poverty in chapter one). Contrasting definitions reflect the differences in measurement, values and structures of each society; but they also highlight the existence of important cross-national differences in the study of

social workers' attitudes to poverty. More research is needed to determine whether there is an association between social workers' attitudes to poverty and the distinct definitions or measurement scales adopted in different countries.

An early American study by Grimm and Orten (1973) found that differences in social workers' attitudes to the poor were significantly correlated with their socio-demographic background and selected occupational and educational experiences prior to entering social work education. One hundred and seventeen first year full-time social work students were tested using "Peterson's Disguised Structured Instrument", which yields a quantifiable measure of the subject's attitude position and intensity. Grimm and Orten found:

Marriage and parenthood: As family responsibilities increased, students were more likely to have negative attitudes to the poor. Linked with this, elderly respondents tended to have more negative attitudes.

Background: The lower the socio-economic background of the worker, the less sympathetic were their attitudes towards the poor. Students whose fathers had been highly educated or were in high status occupations when the student was growing up, displayed a noticeably more positive attitude to the poor: "even moderate increments in educational achievements and occupational status among the students' families of origin were associated with more sympathetic

interpretations of poor peoples' problems" (Grimm and Orten, 1973, 97).

Education and experience: Pregraduate school experiences associated with more positive attitudes to the poor included an undergraduate degree in social work or sociology; an undergraduate degree from a public university or school not in the South (a region often thought to be consistently hostile and punitive towards the poor), little or no previous work experience in fields other than social work. Those who had experience in two or more non social work jobs had the most hostile attitudes to the poor. Those who had always worked in social work related jobs had the most positive attitudes towards the poor.

Grimm and Orten emphasised the association between social workers' backgrounds, undergraduate training, work experience, marital status and their attitudes to poverty. But they suggest that social work students are a preselected group, often with a positive attitude to the poor, and attracted to the social work profession (see also Heisler, 1970). Orten's (1981) follow up study on 55 of the 117 students, at the end of their second year of training, found that overall they became more positive in their attitudes to the poor, although 20% changed in a negative direction. This study again used the Peterson Disguised Instrument. Orten distinguished between attitude intensity and position. Attitude intensity is a function of the degree of emotional involvement that a respondent has for the

subject (the emotive component). Attitude position reflects the cognitive component - whether the respondent is hostile or positive to the poor. He found that attitude intensity and attitude position may be affected by different factors and in opposite directions; educational experiences designed to influence attitudes may in fact positively affect one dimension of attitudes whilst adversely influencing the other (Orten, 1979, 142/143).

There was no significant association between social, economic and demographic characteristics and attitude intensity or position. But Black respondents and those who decided to become social workers before finishing high school had the most intense attitudes toward the poor, although not significantly more positive or negative. Consequently Black respondents and those from families with low socio-economic status were significantly less likely to change their attitude positions because of the intensity to which they held their views. Orten suggests that social work attracts people with distinct and intense attitudes. High school students with intense attitudes toward the poor are drawn to social work. But he suggests that social work students who want to do "to" rather than "for" the poor may not change their attitudes significantly during their professional education. Comparing his findings with his earlier study he found almost identical attitude positions - showing a consistency in the overall favourable attitudes to the poor held by social workers. But the later group scored significantly lower on intensity of attitudes; they were not as emotionally involved in the

issue of poverty as their predecessors. Orten suggests that attitude intensity may be a more important factor than attitude position; theoretically it is the critical factor that moves a social worker to act. "Intensity is a factor that determines the influence of attitudes on the behaviours of those who hold them and the extent to which attitudes are susceptible to change" (Orten, 1981, 12). As Goodwin notes, "It is necessary to study the perceptions of those who would help the poor. Especially important is a study of how perceptions change" (Goodwin, 1973, 564).

What are the factors that inform or change social workers' attitudes, values and beliefs? Some researchers have highlighted the impact that training and practice have on the formation of attitudes. These are examined below.

The influence of social work education on attitudes and beliefs

Sharwell (1974) examined the impact that social work education had on student attitudes towards "public dependency". During a two year period he found that his 20 subjects at the University of Carolina School of Social Work changed significantly - in a positive direction - in their attitudes to the poor. Certainly the sample had more positive attitudes toward the poor than other undergraduate subject students. Sharwell has suggested that strong "positive" attitudes of staff were transmitted to students through the "confrontation of major issues" directly as part of the course.

Cryns (1977) found the opposite occurred in his comparison of the attitudes of 69 undergraduates and 67 graduate social work students. Graduates had more negative attitudes generally than undergraduates, and in particular graduate males were more negative towards the poor. Social work education appeared to lead to more hostility to the poor. But Varley (1963 and 1968) found that training made no significant difference to four central social work values. Young, female, upwardly mobile students with no previous social work experience were identified as those most likely to experience a positive change in values. Older students who had prior social work experience were likely to be unaffected, or, at worst experience a negative change in their values. Others (Hayes and Varley, 1965) have found that training had no significant impact on values. Heisler (1970) has suggested that social workers and sociologists are likely to be more liberal in their political views than persons from other professional or academic fields. Koeske and Crouse (1981) also found that their 263 social workers in 1975 and 150 social workers in 1979 had more liberal values than the American population generally and than those of equal age, income or education. However, they also found that while the later social workers still had more liberal values than the population as a whole, they had less liberal values than their social work predecessors. Social workers in 1979 were more likely than workers in 1975 to emphasise the work ethic, responsibility, control. The authors were concerned that liberal ideology may be eroding among newer social workers.

Hepworth and Shumway (1976) assessed the effects of social work education on the "open-mindedness" of social work students. Using "Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale" at the start and end of the first year and later at graduation, they found that open-mindedness was increased by training. However, at the end of the first year students were slightly less open-minded, but this changed significantly over the second year. Bernard (1967) also found that, as a group, students developed significantly more positive values the further they went through training.

Pratt (1970) studied over 550 social work and health care workers attitudes towards helping the poor with health problems. The results suggest that the level of pessimism about improvements in the health of poor clients was related to the amount of education the workers had, and to whether they had worked with clients directly. Those with the highest education and who had worked directly with clients were the most pessimistic about improvements. Moffic et al (1983) found that trainee social workers may develop attitudes which are particularly conducive to working therapeutically with poor clients. They had a strong preference for inter-disciplinary work and for the equal sharing of power and tasks between fellow professionals.

From social work training to practice: attitudes and values

Wasserman (1970) examined the transition and adjustment of 12 social work graduates from training to their first social work post. Subjects started in work with a positive attitude towards their

clients, but they increasingly became disillusioned and lethargic. Wasserman attributes this to the bureaucratic constraints imposed upon social workers. Blau's (1974) examination of the differences in practice between experienced and new social workers confirms this. New workers had more positive attitudes to clients than experienced workers. But in their daily practice, however, it was these new workers who generally confined their services to the minimum required. Blau concluded that whilst adaptation to bureaucratic requirements came at the expense of "feeling" for a client - what Orten describes as "attitude intensity" - clients still received the services they required, albeit on a minimal basis. Jacobs (1968) has suggested that large bureaucratic organisations generate a pseudo subculture of poverty which distinguishes and labels lower class recipients in negative terms. Orten (1979 and 1981) found that social workers in the late 1970s were less likely to have intense attitudes and feelings toward the poor than workers in the early 1970s (see also Koeske and Crouse, 1981).

Hefferman (1964) examined the types of social action that social work managers were willing to engage in on behalf of poor clients. Managers were not willing to endanger their professional prestige and preferred the role of consultant or expert. This is confirmed by various studies by Epstein. He found that the more committed social workers were to the ideology of professionalism, and the higher they were in the agency hierarchy, the less likely they were to identify with the poor and support radical social action

approaches (Epstein, 1968, 1970A, 1970B, 1981). In his earliest survey (1968) he found that social workers considered themselves most effective when assuming traditional professional roles. Social workers believed that middle class persons were most capable in "political roles", such as campaigning and public relations, whilst lower class persons were most capable in the use of "conflict strategies". But the greater the institutional involvement of social workers in a problem area, the more conservative they were in their perceptions of effective social action strategies, for both themselves and other politically active groups. They regarded conservative strategies - political roles rather than conflict - as most effective, particularly for low income groups, in areas where they the social workers were institutionally involved. This reduced the militancy of politically active low income groups, and, Epstein suggests, posed less threat to social workers themselves.

In his later study on social work advocacy Epstein (1981) showed how advocacy on behalf of clients can be analysed on a continuum from "case" to "class", an analysis similar to that used by David Bull (1982) in Britain. Case advocacy is individualised work for individuals or small groups. Class or cause advocacy is work on behalf of a group who share a similar status or set of problems. The latter is a far wider approach, broader both in its focus, analysis and practice. Epstein found that the majority of social workers - 58% - practiced both case and cause advocacy, but women were less likely to practice cause advocacy than men. However,

case advocacy was practiced most often on poor clients; cause advocacy was more likely to be practiced on behalf of children, youths and the physically handicapped.

Epstein concluded that social workers had little interest in social action aimed at wider social change and by a transfer of skills from advocate to client population. This was especially the case with poor clients. Arangio (1970) also found that the majority of social workers believed in changing the individual rather than society or its institutions.

Lightman's (1983) study of 121 social workers' attitudes to striking found that social workers placed less emphasis on their own priorities and seemed to give precedence to achieving the goals of their clients. Work load size and quality of services were more important causes of possible strike action than matters involving money. Lightman suggested that social workers put their clients before personal considerations.

The evidence generally suggests that there is an incongruence between attitudes to the poor and the approach adopted. This exists not just amongst social workers. Wyers' study of the attitudes of income maintenance personnel found some willingness to accept social structural causes but a reluctance to work toward structural solutions (Wyers, 1978, 159). Personnel who had received social work

training were more inclined to take a structural approach to their work.

The impact of attitudes on clients' self perceptions

Social workers' attitudes to their clients can confirm or alter a clients perception of themselves, their self image. This has been extensively demonstrated in the literature on social reaction theories or "labelling" (Rubington and Weinberg, 1968; Matza, 1969; Schur, 1971; Meade, 1974). A positive attitude to a client is likely to encourage a client to have a positive self image and influence their behaviour on their own behalf. The concept of "unconditional positive regard" is linked with this. Pinker (1971) has suggested that most applicants for social services remain "paupers" at heart. Such a self perception can be confirmed or denied by the way clients are treated by social workers. Certainly recent evidence suggests that most applicants for social services will in fact be poor, if not "paupers at heart" (Becker and MacPherson, 1986).

A number of authors review the literature on the influence of social workers' attitudes on clients' self perception (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968; Wills, 1978). Some findings are outlined below.

The importance of the client's social class

In America there has been a considerable amount of research outlining how the "therapist's" dislike of her client/patient affects her definition of aims and the nature of her practice. Similarly, a

client's social class may be an important influence on social workers' attitudes and practice. Chalfont and Kurtz (1972) found that socio-economic class affected social workers judgements of alcoholic clients. Friedman and Berg (1978) examined the effects of client social class on the problem definition and treatment plans of over 50 social work students. Identical case records were presented to social workers but statements indicating client class were varied. While no major differences existed in the extent to which social workers defined clients from different classes as pathological or receptive to treatment, workers from lower class origins were more likely to have favourable attitudes to lower class clients. These attitudes to clients derived from both the class of the client and the social class origins of social workers themselves. Briar's (1966) similar study of 130 first year social work students, however, found that student social workers thought more positively about middle class clients. Similarly, Vail (1970) found that social workers generally thought they would have more successful results with middle class clients. Social work students were more likely to use an insight orientated approach for middle class clients than lower class ones. This finding, similar to that of Mayer and Timms in Britain, has been the cause of what has been termed a "clash in perspective" between social workers and clients. The distinction between the social workers choice of method and the clients understanding of what 'she is about to receive' has been widely documented as a source of discontent or misunderstanding (Mayer and Timms, 1970; Lishman, 1978; Brewer and Lait, 1980). Developments in task centred work,

contracts, or systems approaches may reduce such misunderstanding and provide a more explicit agreement over roles and tasks to be performed by worker and client.

The importance of stigma and "double stigma"

There is considerable evidence to support the thesis that some claimants feel ashamed of receiving social security benefits (usually means tested) and that this transforms itself into a "spoiled identity" (Clinard, 1970; Kerbo, 1976; see also Spicker, 1984). Little is known though about how the "clash in perspective" between social workers and poor clients actually encourages this sense of stigma; data suggest that social workers' attitudes can affect clients' self perception, but nothing is known about how this interacts with a poor client's underlying sense of stigma that results from being a claimant. Kerbo has suggested that claimants are degraded and "stigmatised at the hands of the general society, politicians, and even social workers" (1976, 174). Stigma relates directly to being a "welfare dependent". Coser (1965) and Matza (1966) have both shown how apathy and dependency are part of the social role of the dependent poor. Garfinkel (1956) has shown how the poor are often subjected to "degradation ceremonies", so encouraging a negative self identity. Cloward and Piven (1979) studied the stigma of the working poor. Goffman (1963), Coser (1965), Hagstrom (1965), and Clinard (1970) have indicated how stigma encourages a degraded self image, a "spoiled identity" characterised by dependency, apathy, lack of effort and despair. It is the

price the poor pay for their deviancy (Clifford, 1975).

One of the most enduring attitudes to the poor is that of moralistic hostility. This is at the centre of the meaning of stigma for poor clients. Negative attitudes to the poor reflect and legitimise the treatment of and income maintenance arrangements for the poor. Stigma is a necessary part of this process and experience. Clifford (1975) has shown how the general public view claimant groups and welfare services as "low status" - suffering a loss of prestige by their mutual association (the idea of services for the poor being seen as "poor services"). The general public's underlying explanation for poverty was seen in terms of personal inadequacy or laziness:

"The unmistakeable feeling of the general public was that a number of people were on benefit as a way of life, and consistently refused to work in the many jobs which it was taken for granted were open to them" (Clifford, 1975, 52).

Many claimants also shared the attitudes and values of the general public, but were generally more tolerant of minority groups. The poor have hostile attitudes too; claimants often accept dispositional explanations for poverty (Clifford, 1975; see also Cole and Lejeune, 1972). Briar (1966) found that 90% of claimants had harsh views of other claimants. Kerbo et al (1974) showed that over one third of claimants believed people were poor because of individual inadequacies. Huber and Form (1973) suggest that these beliefs are weaker among the very poorest.

Kerbo (1976) found that those who adhere to dispositional explanations and blame the poor for poverty are also more likely to feel stigmatised when they themselves are poor and dependent on welfare. Those who feel the greatest stigma are also more inclined to conform with a 'role behaviour' consistent with a welfare dependant: that of passivity and apathy. Those feeling the least stigma are more likely to protest. Kerbo argued that age is a significant variable in explaining the variation in feelings of stigma. Ideological influences interact with age to heighten or reduce this experience. Horan and Austin (1974) have shown how education and time on welfare affect feelings of stigma: the more educated the claimant, or the longer on welfare, the more stigmatising is the experience. Age has a small direct effect on stigma. It exhibits a linear relationship with education and time on welfare.

Breakwell et al (1984) have shown how the unemployed believe (rightly) that others are hostile towards them. This sense of being castigated and rejected generates a discomfort which, when reinforced by other negative associations with unemployment, threatens the poors' "fabric of identity". This belief that others despise them may be linked causally to the anxiety and insecurity felt by the unemployed.

Being unemployed or poor is stigmatising in the first instance. But

knowing that others are hostile to you because of your dependency forces poor clients of social services to experience a "double stigma". First by virtue of being poor and dependent on social security benefits; second by virtue of being the client of a social work service. The effect that these stigmas have on clients' self image and on their explanations for their own and others poverty requires investigation. But so too does the impact that social workers' attitudes have on this experience of stigma. Mayer and Timms (1970) and others have shown how difficult it is for potential clients to approach social workers for help. Alan Gartner (1970) has suggested that professional attitudes stereotyping the poor are responsible for the under-utilisation of social services. But Glamspon and colleagues (1977) have shown that even users of social services are often confused over which service - voluntary, neighbourhood or statutory - is the most appropriate for their problem. The attitudes of social workers toward clients, or, more likely, users' perceptions of social workers' attitudes towards clients, may well affect demands for social work services. If social workers have not developed an adequate understanding of the significance and impact of stigma on poor clients, they are at risk of reinforcing some of these processes even further. As Coser suggests:

"... in the very process of being helped and assisted, the poor are assigned to a special career that impairs their previous identity and becomes a stigma which marks their intercourse with others. Social workers, welfare investigators, welfare administrators and local volunteer workers seek out the poor in order to help them, and yet,

paradoxically, they are the very agents of their degradation. Subjective intentions and institutional consequences diverge here. The help rendered may be given from the purest and most benevolent of motives, yet the very fact of being helped degrades." (Coser, 1965, 145)

It is a vicious spiral. Dependency may be amplified, intensifying the spoiled identity of the poor, impeding social functioning and coping mechanisms, creating further dependency, further stigma and despair.

Summary and conclusion

There is a paucity of studies of social workers' attitudes to poverty. What research that does exist is mostly from the United States. Very many social work clients are poor; if social workers are to provide a service that is based on professional and positive values towards clients then they must have a greater understanding of their own attitudes towards poverty, and how these attitudes may affect both poor clients and demands for social work services.

Increasingly, emphasis in social work training and practice is being placed on race and sex awareness; social workers are encouraged to have an insight into their attitudes to black and other ethnic or minority groups, to be aware of their own sexist assumptions and how these may affect their practice and service delivery. The same argument may be advanced for attitudes to poverty and the poor, especially in the light of new evidence that suggests that 90% of referrals to social work services are from claimants (see chapter five for a full discussion of this data).

Existing research on social workers' attitudes to poverty have mostly focussed on the association between attitudes and a number of social and demographic characteristics or occupational and educational experiences. The associations between these and attitudes are summarised in Figure 2.1. Data also suggest that social work training may have some influence on the formation of positive values generally, but the evidence is far from consistent on this. Once in the field, however, many social workers, despite having such "positive" values, appear to be constrained in their everyday practice by a number of bureaucratic and other barriers. These barriers appear to reduce the potential for "positive" attitudes being translated into behaviour or practice consistent with those attitudes. Negative attitudes on the other hand may more likely be reflected in practice because of the 'inbuilt' bias or tendency for organisations to work in the way they do.

Attitudes are important for other reasons too. Not only might they have some effect upon practice (but remembering the barriers mentioned above), they can also have a significant impact on a client's self image. The way social workers view clients will affect the way clients view themselves. The class position of both client and worker may play a part in this process; certainly it has been identified as a possible source of a "clash in perspective" and may also influence the direction of social workers' assessments of clients and their problems.

Social work clients most often experience a double stigma. Services that are "consumed" mostly by the poor are often seen as "poor services". Stigma is a powerful notion here; it very often increases further dependency, further stigma and the despair of the poor. Unless social workers are aware of how their attitudes towards poor clients may exacerbate this process, the potential for clients to break from this dependency is dramatically reduced.

Figure 2.1: Summary of factors associated with social workers' negative or positive attitude positions to poverty and the poor

Variable	Dispositional explanations (negative)	Situational explanations (positive)	Author
S o c i o - e c o n o m i c B a c k g r o u n d			
Class	-	Lower class origin of workers	Friedman and Berg, 1978
	Lower socio economic background of worker	Higher educated fathers or in high status occupations when social worker growing up	Grimm and Orten, 1973
Marital Status/ Family size	family responsibility	-	Grimm and Orten, 1973
Education	-	Undergraduate degree in social work/sociology. Degree from University not in south.	Grimm and Orten, 1973
	-		
Past experience	Two or more "non social work" jobs.	Little or no previous experience in fields other than social work. Always worked in social work related jobs.	Grimm and Orten, 1973

Figure 2.1 contd. (training and practice).

Variable	Dispositional explanations (negative)	Situational explanations (positive)	Author
T r a i n i n g a n d p r a c t i c e			
Social work education	-	Trained workers	Bernard, 1967; Sharwell, 1974
	Trained workers (especially males)	-	Cryns, 1977
	No effect	No effect	Hayes and Varley, 1965;
	Older, had previous social work experience	Younger, female, upwardly mobile, with no previous social work experience	Varley, 1963 and 1968
	-	"Openmindedness"	Hepworth and Shumay, 1976.
Practice	Social work practice	-	Wasserman, 1970; Blau, 1974
	"Barriers", (pseudo subculture of poverty)	-	Jacobs, 1968
Position in hierarchy	Highest	-	Hefferman, 1964; Epstein, 1968
Country of practice	Israelis'	Americans/ Australians	Macarov, 1981; Considine, 1978

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CHAPTER 3
ATTITUDES, OPINIONS AND BELIEFS

Introduction

Halloran (1967) has suggested, rightly, that there is considerable conceptual confusion between the terms attitude, opinion and belief:

"One could deal with this state of affairs either by treating all the concepts as synonymous or by attempting more refined distinctions and definitions" (Halloran, 1967, 16).

This section is concerned to outline some of the features distinguishing the terms. There are important conceptual differences which have implications for the technical study and interpretation of attitudes to poverty. However, most authors writing on attitudes to poverty take Halloran's first option and treat the terms as synonymous (for example, Freeman, 1984; Orten, 1981).

Berelson and Steiner (1964) have acknowledged that there are differences in meaning between the terms, but that no hard and fast boundaries can be drawn when discussing their definition (1964, 557). Orten, too, has claimed that there is no single definition of attitudes that all researchers would accept (Orten, 1981, 7). Meddin (1975) has commented "it seems that one scholar's definition of values could just as easily be a second's definition of attitudes and a third's definition of beliefs" (1975, 889).

Beliefs and values: some definitions

Belson (1985) has summarised some basic distinctions between the terms:

"BELIEFS. A belief is a relatively enduring organisation of what you perceive and what you think you know about some fairly specific aspect of your world. A BELIEF can take different forms ... knowledge, faith, opinion.

KNOWLEDGE. This is a form of belief that is verifiable and is thought to have been verified (but may nonetheless be mistaken). Examples are: an unsupported metal object will fall/the number of unemployed people in the UK at the end of 1982 was .../

A FAITH. This is the sort of belief that is intrinsically unverifiable but is accepted without doubt. Examples are: there is an omni-present and all-knowing God/there is no God/every state or event is the result of foregoing states or events/...

OPINION. This is the sort of belief that is neither a verified fact nor an unverifiable faith. An opinion may take the form of a judgement about the cause of this or that/a judgement about some future event/a belief about the nature of some thing or situation/an evaluation of something/... Examples are: X will win the next election/the management at Bloggs Ltd. has been directly responsible for the collapse of that firm/...

A VALUE. This is a broadly based view about how things ought to be. It is a dedication or an identification of the individual to such a state. Examples are: helpfulness, honesty, courage, patriotism, an exciting life, equality, self respect, self fulfilment, permissiveness, freedom ... Values are generally perceived as having a special relationship to certain attitudes or beliefs " (Belson, 1985) .

Attitudes: definitions

What of attitudes? Allport (1935) considered 16 definitions and characteristics of the term and proposed his own definition drawing on the salient features of the others:

"a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individuals response" (Allport, 1935, 810; see also

McGuire, 1969, 142-150 for a full discussion of this definition).

This feature of a "state of readiness" is emphasised by Belson (1985) making use of a definition by Krech and Crutchfield (1948, 152).

Belson's definition brings out a number of important features:

"An attitude is a fairly enduring organisation of one's motivational, emotional, perceiving and knowing processes in relation to some aspect of your world. It is usually a largish aspect, for example: the police/the work force/generic prescribing/West Indians/the Tories/Communists/women drivers/... It is said to be a state of readiness - a tendency - to act in a certain way when confronted with certain classes of stimuli" (Belson, 1985).

Attitudes have at least three distinct features. First, a state of readiness - a tendency to act or react in a certain way when confronted with certain stimuli. Second, an enduring organisation of motivational, emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes. Third, a direct link with some aspect of the individuals world - a specific thing or situation (e.g. poverty/the poor).

Contact with poverty or the poor (either directly or as an "issue") will arouse the motivational, emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes within each individual. The aroused attitude in turn will affect that individuals reaction to the aspect under consideration (see also Krech, Crutchfield and Ballachey, 1962, 180-272; McGuire, 1969, 151-152; Scott, 1969, 204-273).

The interaction of attitudes, opinions, beliefs and values

The conceptual distinctions between the terms are illustrated in Figure 3.1. This shows the "interaction" between the components,

using examples of different attitudes to the same issue of poverty.

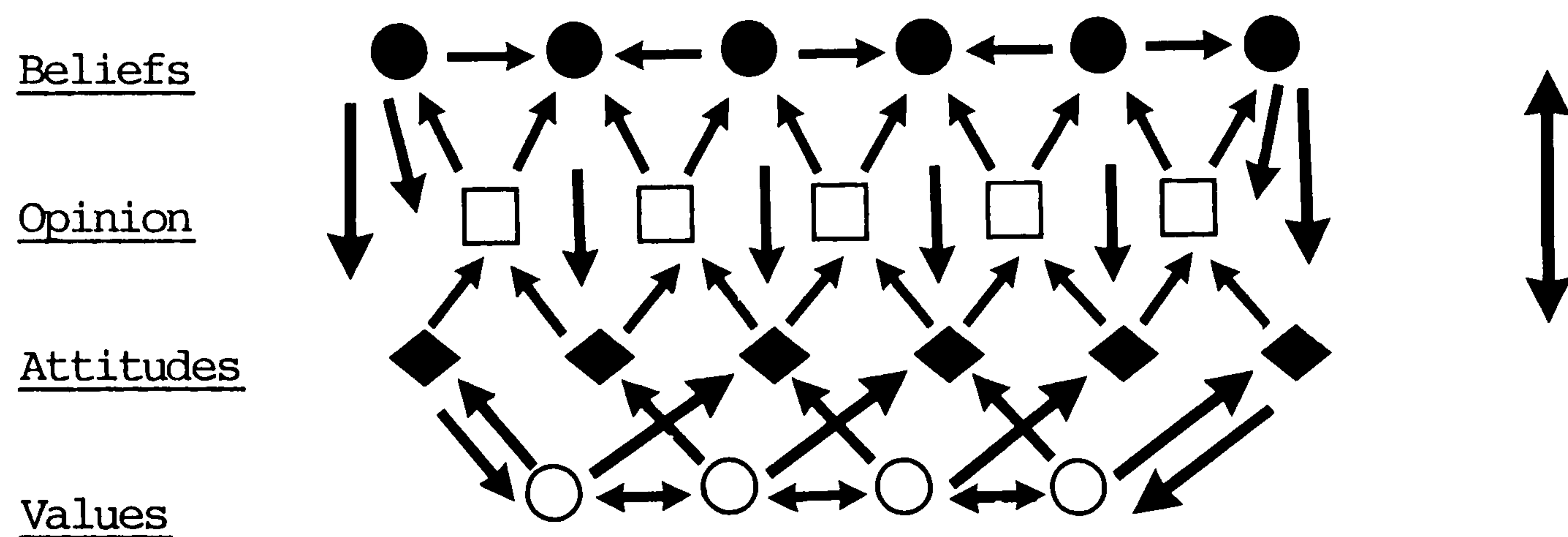
Figure 3.1: Conceptual distinctions between the terms

	Example 1	Example 2
<u>BELIEFS</u> ...	a single person on supplementary benefit receives £80 per week	a single person on supplementary benefit receives £25 per week
<u>OPINIONS</u> ...	Single people get too much benefit/ spend it unwisely	Single people get too little benefit
<u>ATTITUDES</u> ...	A generalised hostility to poor people	A generalised sympathy for the poor
<u>VALUES</u> ...	Work ethic/ individualism	Equality Self fulfilment and individual potential
	(Negative) freedom Materialist values	(Positive)freedom Post-materialist values

Values are mental constructs; they can only be inferred from what people say, do, or from their judgements or expressions of preference (Harding et al, 1986, 1-5). They are often thought to determine attitudes or beliefs; "one value can serve as an organising theme for a large number of attitudes" (Meddin, 1975, 889). But values are more global, abstract attributes than attitudes, which refer to some specific class of situation, object or person. "We can suppose a 'cluster' of attitudes related to some underlying value" (Harding et al, 1986, 4). The same authors suggest that values and attitudes are evaluative in nature, "they reflect how we feel". Conversely beliefs are cognitive, "they concern thoughts and ideas rather than

feelings and emotion" (1986, 5). Beliefs have a strong influence on opinion, attitudes and values. But the direction of influence is far from linear. In reality people have a whole number of beliefs, opinions and attitudes covering a diverse range of issues/subjects, and indeed hold diverse views even on specific issues or topics. The process is one of constant and diverse influence and interaction. An attitude is composed of many beliefs and opinions but it also exerts considerable influence on what we are prepared to accept as fact or fiction. Diagram 3.2 illustrates this process.

Diagram 3.2: The interation of beliefs, opinions, attitudes and values (Based upon Belson, 1985)



Some influences on attitude formation and change: experience and learning

McGuire (1969, 161-172) outlined a number of potential influences or determinants of attitudes. He included here genetic factors, maturation, illness, direct experience of the attitude object, experiences in "total institutions", verbal and non verbal communications. Each, potentially, could affect attitude formation in two ways: first, by contributing the attitude content of a person's belief system and second, by determining the "dynamic

characteristics" of that system, such as its openness to change (1969, 161).

A number of authors (McGuire, 1969, 142-150; Converse, 1984, 3-39) have shown how, over time, attitude research has focussed more and more on the "learned" nature of attitude formation. Certainly Allport's early definition of an attitude referred to a characteristic of being "organised through experience" (1935). He was referring here specifically to the learned nature of attitudes. This is now almost the sole explanation offered by social psychologists (see for example Osgood 1957; Fishbein, 1967) and social administrators. Townsend for example has commented:

"variation of individual perceptions, or alternatively different stock reactions on the part of individuals belonging to certain social groups or classes, can only be explained in relation to the development of social perceptions. The perceptions of individuals are filtered through the perceptions adopted by their families, work groups, neighbourhoods, schools and training courses ... There are of course perceptions of poverty which are rooted in culture and class. Social attitudes are passed on through generations, and then absorbed and reflected, in turn, by the youngest generation. The harsh attitudes reflected by some ruling groups ... can be traced through the 1834 Poor Law ... Because millions of working people depend upon these ruling groups for work and status the attitudes of the latter exert disproportionate influence and command disproportionate attention. It is not surprising that they are reflected in widely held public attitudes ... " (Townsend, 1983, 64/65).

Gross confirms this process:

"most researchers are in general agreement with Allport that attitudes are learned through experience and are socially determined. Essentially attitudes are learned behaviour, related to the cultural framework within which the individual developed. They are taught directly or indirectly through the various social systems within which the person interacts throughout his life experience. The

primary family and later the peer group are considered to be the most influential factors ..." (Gross, 1980, 3).

Sherif and Hovland (1953) have argued that attitudes form and change through experience and learned interaction with significant others (see also Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall, 1965, 5; Zigler and Child, 1969; McGuire, 1969, 265-272 for a discussion of various theories of attitude change). Freeman, too, has emphasised the learnt nature of attitude formation. She discusses the important early socialising influence of the family and cites evidence that children adopt partisan views before they have the knowledge to back them (Freeman, 1984, 38). As people move away from the family environment other systems such as educational or peer groups become increasingly important. These processes are also present in the creation of wider values (Harding et al, 1986, 221-222).

Different experiences and backgrounds have a different impact upon attitudes through this learning process. This has important implications for technical considerations in attitude research.

Again, Gross comments:

"It is appropriate, then to assume that the individual's demographic characteristics, reflective of his past and present life experiences, are related to the formation of attitudes." (Gross, 1980, 5)

If we accept the assumption that demographic characteristics do reflect life experiences and learning processes, exert an influence on attitudes and are influenced by them, then any attitude study should include significant reference to the background and experiences of respondents. The questionnaire used in the study of

social workers' attitudes to poverty (Chapters 6 to 8 and reproduced in appendix two) asked a considerable number of demographic and background related questions. This was necessary in order to isolate some of the more significant variables. However such an approach is not adopted by all social researchers. Macarov's (1981) study of social work students' attitudes to poverty in America, Israel and Australia did not ask for any demographic details whatsoever.

The construct of an "attitude to poverty": implications for research
Shaffer and colleagues (1982) have argued that an attitude to a social issue (such as poverty) is a compound stimulus that can be described in terms of three related constructs. Borrowing their terms and placing them in the context of social workers' attitudes to poverty, these constructs would be:

(i) the attitude content: referring to the social workers position on poverty, related to a set of alternative positions.

(ii) the attitude rating: referring to the emotive strength or intensity with which the social worker holds the position on poverty.

(iii) a perspective: referring to a range of alternative contents that a social worker considers when rating the content of her attitude to poverty.

The cognitive component of an attitude to poverty is reflected by the position. The emotive component is reflected in the degree of intensity by which the attitude is held (see also Sherif, Sherif and Nebergall, 1965). Intensity is the factor that determines the influence of attitudes on behaviour - the "ends" and "means" in social work - and the extent to which attitudes to poverty are susceptible to change through experience, social work education, or practice. Orten (1981) has argued that attitude intensity may be a more important factor for consideration among social workers than attitude position; theoretically at least it will be the intensity by which such attitudes are held that will move social workers to act. There are, of course, a whole range of factors that influence the extent and direction of any such action. Fishbein and colleagues and others have pointed out that whilst attitudes may be an important influence of behavioural intentions "further variables may intervene between intentions and overt behaviour" (Fishbein, Thomas and Jaccard, 1976, 8; Taylor-Gooby, 1985, 22. See also Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977 and 1980; Bordiga and Campbell, 1982). Silberman (1977) has asserted that social workers who are 'hostile' to the poor, explaining the cause or persistence of poverty in individualistic terms, are more likely to express such attitudes in their actual behaviour. Those more "positive" to the poor may be prevented from transferring their attitudes into actions because of institutional or other constraints. Personal preferences for various methods of work, interest in the 'subject', a sense of impotence about the possibilities of change, organisational

constraints have all been identified as influential in determining the output of practice with poor clients (Bull, 1982; Bamford, 1983; Sharron, 1983; Fuller and Stevenson, 1983).

The survey of social workers' attitudes to poverty reported in chapters 6 to 8 is the first attempt in Britain to generate social work data on both attitude content and intensity. But because an attitude is a hypothetical construct and cannot be measured directly, it must be inferred from various types of responses made by the social worker (Gross, 1980, 4; see also Turner and Martin, 1984, 8). Jowell (1986) has argued that a wide range of questions must be asked, many of which will be variations on the same theme, before an attitude picture can be constructed. This has important implications for the technical selection of questions and the construction of a questionnaire on attitudes to poverty. A large number of questions will be required to explore the range of opinions and beliefs that interact to inform, construct and sustain attitudes. Attitudes to poverty and the poor are entwined with other beliefs and values:

"without a wealth of consistent and associated beliefs and values, any attitude is likely (though not certain) to weaken" (Turner and Martin, 1984, 241).

Additionally Turner and Martin have also commented:

"The dynamic psychological processes involved are complex and difficult to generalise. A great mass of subtle information is needed for case by case analysis, information that is not easily unearthed by common survey practice ... an investigator would have to go to extraordinary lengths to find out about each respondents constellation of psychological forces" (Turner and Martin, 1984, 239)

A mailed questionnaire, no matter how detailed and sensitive it is to these experiences and forces, can never hope to amass sufficient information to provide a whole picture of the range of motivational, experiential, interpersonal, and cultural processes at work. The process of attitude formation is far too complex for this. Again this has important implications for research methodology. The limitations of the mailed questionnaire for attitude to poverty research directs our attention to complementary approaches. Researchers must:

"go beyond simply asking respondents their preference in a set of multi-choice questions and summing up the answers. To do nothing more is irresponsible. (They) ... must begin to examine the meaning context within which individual views are held. For some analyses this will require conducting much more intensive interviews (perhaps with small numbers or groups) in order to discover the deeper meanings not easily elicited by structured questionnaires" (Turner and Martin, 1984, 244-245).

The nature of attitudes and their interaction with values, beliefs and opinions have a number of important implications for attitudes to poverty research methodology. Almost by definition, when used alone, a mailed questionnaire is unable to generate sufficient data and information for an analysis of the forces and processes at work in attitude formation and change. When complemented by individual, group or panel interviews some of these deficiencies may be corrected (see for example Lievesley and Waterton, 1985). The survey of social workers' attitudes to poverty reported in chapters 6 to 8 was complemented by a detailed group and individual interview schedule (see chapter nine for the findings and appendix 3). Even so the processes are often so subtle and complex that generalisations may

be hazardous. Taylor-Gooby in a wealth of writings warns us of the danger of generalisation, and criticises the simplistic assertions of some authors (for example Harris and Sheldon, 1979) who assume that attitudes to the market and state are in a contradictory relation. The pattern of the data indicate that individuals and the public have complex attitudes to welfare and poverty. As the editors of the British Social Attitudes series suggest, "the idea that the public can usefully be classified into two categories - for and against - on most social issues is shown to be unhelpful" (Jowell and Airey, 1984, 8).

Summary

Most researchers investigating attitudes to poverty treat the terms attitude, opinion and belief synonymously. This confuses some of the important distinctions between the terms and disguises the nature of their interaction in attitude formation and change. For example certain values ("post-materialist") have been shown to be associated with 'positive' attitudes towards the poor (Inglehart, 1977 and 1981; EEC, 1977).

Accepting that there are distinctions between the terms implies a particular approach to the study of attitudes to poverty. First, given that attitudes are learned through multiple experiences, interaction and social contexts, then researchers must investigate a whole range of demographic and background experiences if they are to be able to inform and explain the influences on attitudes. Second,

given that attitudes are hypothetical constructs inferred from a number of responses, opinions and beliefs, then researchers must make use of a wide range of questions from the general to the specific, in order to investigate subjects such as 'poverty' or 'the poor'. The mailed questionnaire alone cannot sufficiently explore the forces and processes at work. Consequently the use of individual and group discussions, as a complementary research method is seen as important. The attitudes being inferred by these forms of analysis have a number of components, namely a 'content' (or position) and an 'intensity' (or strength of feeling). It is the intensity by which an attitude is held that may have the most important influence on behaviour, although there are of course a number of influential factors, both internal and external, that intervene between attitudes and actions.

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CHAPTER 4

THE VALUE OF ATTITUDE TO POVERTY SURVEYS

Introduction

How then should we treat the findings of attitude to poverty research? The evidence amassed by different researchers is often conflicting; both between studies and within studies. Given these inherent contradictions and ambiguities does attitude to poverty research tell us anything? Jowell and Airey have certainly argued that "scepticism is, we believe, the most appropriate point from which to view all survey data" (1984, 6). This section outlines the findings of a number of projects and discusses the problems with and the value of attitude to poverty research.

"Climates of opinion"

Taylor-Gooby in an extensive critique of survey data has confirmed the need for caution:

"Attitude data is propaganda biased, individualist, situational, volatile and no guide to behaviour. However simply taken as an indication of the state of play of opinion in the minds of the public, which may or may not be influenced by government itself, it may be useful."
(Taylor-Gooby, 1985A, 22).

Findings reflect the dominant "currents of ideas" available in society on particular themes. As such they offer a clue to the structure of ideology and "provide an account of the general structure of political ideas" (Taylor-Gooby, 1983A, 51; 1985A,

22/23). But:

"results should be treated as evidence of pattern, not structure. The elements are ordered and do have meaning. They are not necessarily interrelated in such a way that one rests on another" (Taylor-Gooby, 1985B, 76).

Peoples' attitudes are ambivalent, chaotic and ambiguous, not simply confused (Taylor-Gooby, 1982, 326). Golding and Middleton take a similar view. They argue that surveys provide no more than "an ill defined snapshot of peoples' attitudes and beliefs" (1982, 159).

Certainly care must be taken before basing any major policy decisions on attitude to poverty findings. And political parties should be wary of using findings to suggest widespread agreement for a particular party line. "Any Government should beware of boasting of the strength of its mandate" (Lipsey, 1979, 14). Taylor-Gooby adds "it is possible to conceive of different elements in the kaleidoscope of opinion being assembled to provide support for almost any political platform" (1985B, 76). Equally as problematic is the argument that attitude surveys or opinion polls actually "create" the public opinion that they are intended to measure. Marsh for example has argued that polls

"present topics as objects of current public concern, and suggest that the majority is debating a particular issue in a particular way. If the results ... are then treated as proof that public opinion exists, they could be an important part of the process of creating a climate of opinion" (Marsh, 1984, 588).

This is the type of argument that is levelled against opinion polls measuring political voting intentions before a General Election. Poll results showing a majority in favour of one particular party, or

increasingly important, a growing support for a particular party, may in fact encourage more voters to vote for that party (the "bandwagon effect"). Whiteley (1986) argues that at least 4.5 percent of British voters admit to being influenced by opinion polls in this way; that is a total of 1.8 million of the voting public. At a time when "tactical voting" is an increasingly important factor in British politics, the "messages" given out by attitude polls become even more significant. Some countries on the Continent either ban outright or operate voluntary restrictions on opinion polls close to a General Election. Certainly in the 1987 British General Election the Alliance complained that the opinion polls acted against them. Their low rating in most pre-election polls led to many potential voters believing the Alliance could not win. Consequently they voted for another party.

Some technical and conceptual difficulties of attitude to poverty research

The simplistic and general nature of the 1986 New Society study (Lipsey, 1986) may have excluded more than it informed. Peter Golding in the same issue of New Society has commented, "the more piercing the inquiry the more we touch the bedrock of prejudice, suspicion and doubt". Golding argued that attitudes to poverty remain selective and discriminatory, and "continue to feed off the deep rooted value placed on the principle of less eligibility and the undeserving poor" (1986, 16,17). The New Society poll was too shallow in its enquiry to bring out these themes and prejudices. But

a close reading of the data itself uncovers the persistence of common or persistent myths and moralistic judgements.

It is a truism that the questions asked in any research study determine the type of answer given. Catherine Marsh (1984) and others (Belson, 1985) have shown how small differences in wording can produce important differences in answers. Golding, commenting on the Breadline Britain questions relating to people's willingness to pay extra tax to help the poor, criticises that type of approach:

"Hypothetical questions are notoriously unreliable. People are willing to endorse all kinds of measures hypothetically which they might oppose if presented with a real choice."
(Golding, 1986, 16).

Both survey data and its interpretation must be treated with caution. The type of question, the extent to which the enquiry is superficial or piercing, affect the value and importance that can be placed upon the interpretation and discussion of attitude findings. In their earlier study of British Social Attitudes, Jowell and colleagues (1984) limited their enquiry of attitudes to poverty to only a few questions. If value is to be placed on their findings as an indicator of British social attitudes on this subject then the range of questions would need to be extended considerably in future volumes. Unfortunately, attitudes to poverty per se was not an area that the next two volumes of that series sought to explore in any depth.

Measuring attitudes: the use of scales and instruments

Many of the attitude to poverty studies reported in preceding chapters make use of specific instruments or scales to indicate attitude position and, occasionally, intensity. Scales are also used to indicate a respondents position in respect of certain values (for example the protestant work ethic, left/right orientation, dogmatism, just world beliefs). Attitudes to poverty can be cross tabulated with a position or score on these other scales; influences on attitudes are then discussed.

Chapter One illustrated the factors that have been associated with particular attitudes to poverty and the poor. For example a firm belief in the work ethic is generally associated with a 'negative' attitude towards the poor. But strong beliefs in the work ethic are also associated with a strong belief in a just world and a Conservative political orientation (Furnham and Bland, 1983; Wagstaff, 1983). There is an interaction between beliefs, values and opinions, and socio-economic factors such as age and income. The existence of a number of these factors/characteristics/beliefs are likely to indicate a particular attitude. For example, a person with a high just world belief, strong support for both the work ethic and the Conservative party, may be more likely to be hostile towards the poor than a respondent simply with a strong belief in a just world. Similarly people with "materialist" values are more hostile to the poor than those with "post materialist" values. It is the presence

of a combination or cluster of characteristics that is a more useful indicator of attitude position and intensity. The experience of past claiming has been highlighted as an important 'positive' influence on some attitudes to poverty. In combination with the existence of a number of other factors - such as a weak belief in the protestant work ethic, Labour party identification and low income - the likelihood of a 'positive' attitude to the poor may be increased even further. Past research has failed to explore this adequately. The process is made more complex by a number of technical and conceptual problems to do with the scales themselves.

In fact some of the scales may not reflect what they intend to measure. The validity of the "Peterson Disguised Structured Instrument" has recently been shown to be inconclusive by Carol Gross, despite its widespread use in attitudes to poverty research (Gross, 1980; Peterson, 1967; Grimm and Orten, 1973; Orten, 1979 and 1981; Silberman, 1977). Orten, who has produced some of the most distinguished studies of social workers' attitudes to the poor by using Peterson's Instrument has commented:

"No attempt has been made in this study to develop an instrument to measure attitudes towards the poor. A scale that utilizes projective methods, and that has been validated in previous studies was employed" (Orten, 1979, 22).

But it is now known that Orten is not justified in making that claim. Similarly a number of other scales are used to measure attitudes to poverty. "MacDonald's Poverty Scale" and a number of others assess attitude positions by analysing responses to a small

range of statements (MacDonald, 1971A, 1971B, 1972; Furnham and Gunter, 1984). Alston and Dean (1972) asked only four questions on the causes of poverty and then cross tabulated the scores by socio-economic variables such as age or income to explain attitudes. The "Protestant Work Ethic Scale" uses 6 items (Williamson, 1974). "Peterson's Disguised Structured Instrument" uses 40 statements, but these were generated in the late 1960s in America and are both dated and contextually inappropriate for use in Britain (Peterson, 1967). The "Just World Belief scale" uses upto 16 items (Lerner, 1965 and 1970; Zuckerman, 1975; Lerner and Miller, 1978).

There is nothing intrinsically wrong in using this type of structure to gauge attitudes to poverty. What is important though is to be careful of generalising too far from the findings. The technical problems of specificity/generality; the interaction of beliefs, values and attitudes; the duality and ambivalence of attitudes, require that results from surveys using such instruments are treated with caution. Because social researchers have also tended to focus upon the influence of discrete variables on attitudes to poverty (e.g. just world belief, political affiliation, age) they have most often ignored the possibility that these factors can combine and interact to produce distinct views. The likelihood of a particular attitude position may be made more probable by a cluster of characteristics, variables or beliefs.

Given these reservations, however, Taylor-Gooby has recently argued

that technical difficulties concerning survey method, question and questionnaire design and interpretation can in principle be handled, if not resolved, by the gradual progress in survey construction and validity testing. He claims "survey results are likely to approximate to reality, even if the perfect survey is never attained" (Taylor-Gooby, 1985B, 74-75).

The duality of attitudes: support for private and public welfare

Taylor-Gooby's Medway study has illustrated the existence of a high level of ambiguity and contradiction in attitudes to welfare and poverty; between the ideology of self interest and the awareness of the need for collective provision. In an extensive collection of articles on attitudes to welfare he shows that a duality of opinion exists. Support for both public and private welfare coexist and are tinged with a moralistic concern about keeping the "undeserving" at bay (Taylor-Gooby, 1982, 1983A, 1983B, 1983C, 1983D, 1985A, 1985B, 1986). His detailed and rigorous critique of the attitude to welfare research conducted by the "free market" orientated Institute of Economic Affairs, highlights the unwarranted and unsupported conclusions that are sometimes drawn from this type of study. The Institute of Economic Affairs had suggested that their results showed growing support for private welfare provision (Harris and Seldon, 1979). In fact, Taylor-Gooby has argued that the IEA data does not warrant those conclusions. His reanalysis of the figures show how state and private provision is not necessarily contradictory (Judge, Smith and Taylor-Gooby, 1983). "The State guarantees universal

services to meet common needs. The private sector allows for the possibility of flexibility and consumer control" (Taylor-Gooby, 1983A, 53; see also Taylor-Gooby, 1985C, on the generally perceived flexibility of private health care agencies such as BUPA or PPP). Whilst the sentiments that support private welfare are real, they coexist with countervailing sentiments of collectivism (1986, 244).

This support for the "mixed economy of welfare" is especially strong for high spending services for people with 'deserving needs'; widespread support exists for services for the elderly, sick and disabled, education and the National Health Services, but there is less sympathy to benefits for the unemployed, low paid, lone parent (1985A, 29). There is antipathy to welfare for needy minorities. Ninety percent of respondents thought the State should provide unemployment benefit, but 70% supported its restriction. Child benefit - a universal income maintenance payment - received little support because of its indiscriminatory nature (Taylor-Gooby, 1983A, 51).

"Dual" attitudes towards benefits and claimants are far from new, nor are they "representative" of all attitudes or opinions:

"The picture of mounting antagonism to welfare is only sustained if attention is concentrated on attitudes to particular unfavoured needs. These do not provide an adequate guide to opinions about the range of welfare services as a whole." (Taylor-Gooby, 1985A, 33).

Attitudes are relatively homogenous across the population and supportive of the welfare state as a whole. Services that comprise

the welfare state are generally valued as cost efficient and "good value" for money. Distinctions between which services are favoured, on the other hand, relate more to beliefs about "needs". Services that are perceived to provide for genuine/deserving needs are likely to be most popular.

West's study of attitudes to community care and the welfare state found strong support for deserving disabled people (West, 1984, 434). Generally the handicapped received much more sympathy and support than the unemployed (Norris, 1978). This is confirmed by the recent attitude to poverty study commissioned by New Society. The results show there is a growing belief that poverty is caused by factors beyond the control of individuals (Lipsey, 1986, 18-19). But perceptions about poverty and who the poor are remain influenced by persistent myths and prejudices. Lipsey reports that 7% of those questioned believed that there are "hardly any" poor people amongst the unemployed. This small but significant minority do not equate the experience of unemployment with poverty. Whilst New Society and others have used the survey to illustrate "a wave of concern" sweeping through Britain, such conclusions may not be wholly supported. What the surveys do show is the essential ambivalence of many attitudes to welfare and poverty. There is both support for public and private, meeting needs (but not necessarily minority ones) and the selective use of social security benefits. The structure of attitudes is far from simple or uniform. There are a number of publics and a number of opinions.

General or specific issues

Patrick West's findings on public attitudes to the family, welfare state and community care highlight the influence that specific or general questions can have on answers. West concluded that "people in general are more likely to echo the rhetoric of left or right over matters of broad principle than more concrete issues like care for dependent persons ..." (West, 1984, 422). Individuals did not structure their attitudes in accordance with overarching ideologies, neither were attitudes organised simply along partisan lines. This is not to say that political allegiances were not important. In fact there was evidence that partisanship did influence some general attitudes toward the family or welfare state; those with a pro-state view had lower social class, minimum statutory education, no religious membership and were especially Labour party supporters. But, and this is the important point, even these attitudes were found to be inconsistent and partisanship was not an important indicator of attitudes to more concrete issues, such as care of disabled relatives. West concludes:

"Attitudes are situated in the context of overlapping value systems, needs and interests such that by reference to the stance of the 'ideologue' they appear inconsistent or contradictory. The distinction suggests that partisanship among the public is most likely when political rhetoric is pitched at the most general level and least likely when constrained by experiential exigencies". (West, 1984, 442)

West's findings support the "calculus of self interest" thesis that actual or potential self interest may override broader ideological principles. But on another level the partisanship thesis is also

upheld, especially in relation to attitudes to general welfare issues. Taylor-Gooby has argued that "the perception of self interest in provision seems an important determinant of opinion although the pattern of attitudes is complex" (1985A, 53). Additionally "the further removed from everyday experiences issues are, the less it is reasonable to assume that ideas about them will be structured in any readily comprehensible way" (1985B, 74).

Over specific issues of poverty, especially where rooted in everyday experience, self interest, the assessment of "needs" or "deservingness" may be important influences on attitudes. But when confronted with more general issues concerning the welfare state or poverty and the poor, broader ideologies, beliefs or political orientation may play a more significant part. Taylor-Gooby (1985C) feels certain though that the importance of partisanship is on the wane. He has persistently found a surprising degree of overlap in attitudes between groups with different class, sex, income, age and family compositions. Political affiliation or self interest, he suggests, does not act as a particularly useful predictor of attitudes to unemployment benefit, privatisation or community care. To the academic observer or policy maker attitudes to poverty appear to be ambivalent and contradictory.

Judge and colleagues (1983) have argued that support for the mixed economy of welfare is not contradictory nor is it new. Despite an appearance of contradiction attitudes may have a logic of their own,

as a reflection of complex values, needs or interests which cannot be neatly categorised. Essentially they are as complex and varied as the individuals that respond to the questions. The questions themselves - the degree of searching and the specificity of the enquiry - are no less important in shaping the findings, and the degree of confidence that we can place upon the conclusions.

Summary and conclusion

What value should be placed upon attitude to poverty research? The evidence suggests that at the general level of indicators of broad opinion, political values or ideology, attitude research is most revealing. Findings indicate the existence of a complex matrix of values, beliefs and opinions that are better described as "pattern" rather than "structure".

Interpretations of "climates of opinion" have political consequences for individual citizens, politicians or policy makers. They may in fact sustain, give credence to, or be used to justify personal or wider social values, beliefs and welfare policies. Mack and Lansley have commented that attitudes to the poor fluctuate according to the prevailing economic and social climate and the public's moral stance (1985, 231).

It is a circular argument. "Climates of opinion" are a product of and influence on general attitudes, values and beliefs. It is an 'averaging concept' providing "more or less sophisticated

aggregations - cross-classification of those answers" (Taylor-Gooby, 1985B, 76; see also Bulmer, 1986, 105-125). These by their very nature cannot be sensitive to the diversity and complexity of attitude position, intensity, formation, maintenance and change. As authors have shown, respondents provide different answers to the same questions some time later (Kavanagh, 1983, 14). The editors of the British Social Attitudes series have commented:

"The term 'public opinion' is itself misleading. Our data demonstrates that on nearly all social issues there are actually several publics and many opinions. Differences within the population are sometimes small but there are always differences." (Jowell and Airey, 1984, 8)

This evokes consideration of the classic opinion poll dilemma. How far do poll results actually influence the opinions that they are intended to measure? How far does the harsh treatment of the poor reinforce wider social beliefs that the disadvantaged must consequently be undeserving - or they would have been treated better? More importantly perhaps, to what extent do the poor accept and mirror these beliefs, blaming their neighbours and themselves for their own poverty?

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CHAPTER 5

POOR CLIENTS: THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF FINANCIAL POVERTY

AMONGST USERS OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

Introduction

This chapter is in five sections:

Section one discusses and offers some explanations for the lack of comprehensive data on social work and poverty.

Section two uses data derived from Richard Berthoud's national survey of supplementary benefit claimants to assess the extent to which claimants are also clients of social services.

Section three brings together the available literature and provides an analysis of specially prepared data from Strathclyde Social Work Department, to highlight the extent to which clients are also claimants of social security.

Section four brings together the available literature and provides an analysis of specially prepared data from Strathclyde Social Work Department, to assess the impact of financial poverty on referrals to social workers.

Section five reviews the association between the use of direct financial payments, children in care, child abuse and financial poverty.

SECTION ONE: LACK OF COMPREHENSIVE DATA ON POVERTY AND SOCIAL WORK

Introduction

This chapter is concerned to address a number of straightforward questions. How many social work clients are in financial poverty? To what extent does poverty have an impact on demands for and the work of the personal social services? The links between poverty, social work and welfare rights have been extensively documented and reviewed (Becker, MacPherson and Silburn, 1983; Becker and MacPherson, 1985A, 1985B; Fimister, 1986, 1987; Stewart and Stewart, 1986; Hannam, 1987). But when it came to providing concrete data on the actual scale of poverty amongst clients, or the impact that poverty has upon demands for social work services, little comprehensive data was found to be available. At DHSS headquarters in London, neither the social security nor the personal social services statistics units have such knowledge or figures. Neither does the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS), the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), or research organisations concerned with social services matters generally (for example, the Social Services Research Officers Group). Despite the growing momentum within social service departments to computerise their case records and information systems, very few are able to make any assessment of the extent of poverty among clients or its impact upon services. Data on "claimant status" is rarely seen as a variable worth recording. Some departments do, however, have figures

on whether a client is working or not ("employment status") but for those who are "not", data is rarely kept on whether the client is a claimant of benefit - and, if so, what that benefit is. Popay and Dhooge (1985) complain that in most instances even the recording of employment status in social work records is negligible.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) recently conducted a survey of the impact of unemployment on demands for personal social services (AMA, 1985). It comments that "many instances were found in which data on unemployment was not kept because presumably, its importance was not appreciated" (1985, 99). And the AMA researchers could provide no data, for re-analysis, on the "claimant status" of clients making use of the services studied in that research itself. Michael Hill similarly suggests that "social service departments do not collect very much referral data, and what they do acquire is not very informative" (Hill, 1985, 6).

This lack of comprehensive data has been a cause of concern to researchers and others for some time. Nineteen years ago Seeborn observed that the personal social services were large scale experiments in ways of helping people in need. He suggested that it would be a "careless attitude to human welfare", wasteful and irresponsible, to set such experiments in motion but then fail to record and analyse what happened (HMSO, 1968, para 456). But even in 1977 the DHSS Social Work Services Development Group still found that it was difficult for many directors of social services to state how

many people in a year had asked their department for help, who referred them, why they came, and whether they were known to other agencies. The DHSS report commented that information "is not generally assembled in comparable form either between local authorities or even sometimes within parts of the same local authority" (DHSS, 1977, para 31, p.11). The situation does not appear to have changed much since then. A survey reported by Glastonbury (1985), conducted by LAMSAC in 1982 found that of all local authorities responding to a questionnaire, 96 out of 125 had central computing facilities, 74 out of 96 had specific applications for social service departments, but only 5 had developed applications for anything other than word processing within social services (Glastonbury, 1985, 25).

Reasons for lack of data

There are a number of reasons for this lack of comprehensive data or analysis on social work and poverty.


First, demands on personal social services are traditionally subsumed under generalised "client" group categories (elderly, physically handicapped, etc.). Despite the fact that many clients may be claimants and that a common theme behind their contact with social services may be material hardship, this becomes blurred or rarely recognised. Browne has observed that within social service departments priorities are broken down by "case" type rather than being "issue" based. Social workers generally classify their work

"first on the basis of focus and duration of intervention (individual, family, group or community, long term or short term involvement) and secondly, the approaches used. This way of classifying their work did not always lead to a comprehensive analysis of separate issues" (Browne, 1978, 98; see also Dhooge and Popay, 1988). Increasingly specialisation by social workers to cover discrete client groups may make "issue" comparisons more difficult or unlikely. Welfare rights officers in social services are one of the few "issue" specialists who transcend the boundaries of individual client groups. }

Second, there is a powerful resistance amongst many social workers, and ambivalence among others, towards the whole area of social work and money. This ambivalence extends to welfare rights advice and advocacy, provision of direct financial help (section one; section twelve), dealing with benefit problems, the DHSS and other agencies concerned with income maintenance. Surveys show that dealing with financial matters was the task social work students least wanted to undertake although most expected to perform (HMSO, 1978, 354). Given current "high priority" demands for services (especially child abuse work) the place of welfare rights in social work is afforded little priority (Fimister, 1986; Stewart and Stewart, 1986; Hannam, 1987).

Third, research findings suggest that professional and in-service training in welfare rights and on poverty is very often inadequate. Professional training courses in particular give little priority to

welfare rights issues, on the basis that the legislation changes so quickly or is so complicated that social workers cannot be expected to grasp it. Many social workers are ill prepared and ill equipped to deal with welfare rights problems (CPAG, 1982; Becker, MacPherson and Silburn, 1983; McGrail, 1983; Silburn, MacPherson and Becker, 1984; Becker and MacPherson, 1985A, 1985B; Finister, 1984, 1986, 1987).

 As far as training on "poverty" is concerned (and included in this would be an examination of the significance of poverty on clients' lives, life styles and life chances; the "precipitating" effect it may have on some referrals to social services) there is perhaps even more cause for concern; poverty is rarely studied as a subject (or issue) in its own right. It is most often "assumed" or "consumed" within the general orbit of welfare rights education, which is itself most often inadequate.

Many studies and much research outline the extent and manner by which poverty impacts on particular groups. But there is some evidence to suggest (Carew, 1979; Fuller and Stevenson, 1983; Hardiker, 1984; Loewenberg, 1984; Raynor, 1984) that social workers as a group make little use of the results of evaluative research; rarely do they refer to it or use it to inform their decisions in any consistent way. There is also a general reluctance, especially in training, to examine in detail the more personal or familial processes at work in generating or maintaining poverty and inequality. When social workers once in the field observe such

factors, they are ill equipped to place their observations in the context of a coherent body of knowledge on which to inform their practice.

Fourth, the equating of "casework" with "individual work" has led to an over-emphasis or reliance on individualised social work methods at the expense of "wider" approaches. Traditionally the central concern of social workers has been for the individual or family group:

"Social work stands or falls by its ability to identify and respond to the meaning of experiences to persons, whatever these experiences may have been" (Butrym, 1976, 131; see also Perlman, 1970, 217).

Undoubtedly the need to be able to provide a personalised response would also exist in a more compassionate or equitable society where "such phenomena as severe mental and physical handicap, difficulties in interpersonal relations, frailty in old age, and so on, are likely to persist" (Goldberg and Warburton, 1979, 4). But it is also very often the case that "individual problems" are often inseparable from the social contexts in which people live and interact with others.

David Webb has argued that traditional social work, contrary to the popular view, is not irrevocably intra-psychic. He suggests "it is marked by a consistent history of referring to factors external to the individual" (1981, 143-4). It is the vagueness with which environmental factors are regarded that has led to the inherent inadequacy of traditional theorising. Perlman has also acknowledged

that "the casework method is for helping individual people who are the victims (and sometimes the perpetrators) of social or psychological problems. But when the problems beset large sectors of the population, they must be identified, studied and resolved or mitigated by other methods of social work and other relevant professionals and groups" (Perlman, 1970, 218; see also Bull, 1982, on "case" and "cause" advocacy). Yet this rarely happens. The most common social work response to "poverty" (which is a collective experience for many clients) is to work with "poor clients" as individuals. Pinker (1982) has acknowledged that the cause of much suffering is external to the client but insists that social work activities must be both modest and personalised in their objectives and approaches. Some years earlier Cohen (1975) had argued for a somewhat more radical path. He encouraged social workers to "refuse the ideology of casework" but nonetheless to think of "cases". He asserts that in practice and in theory social workers should stay "unfinished", not being ashamed of working for short term humanitarian goals, but keeping in mind longer term political prospects. "Don't sell out your clients' interests for the sake of ideological purity or theoretical neatness" he warns.

The "casework" method should not simply be equated with "blaming the victim". Many clients will want, require or value such an approach. And Bailey and Brake (1975) have argued that within the privacy of the casework interview or relationship, there is considerable room for manoeuvre and "consciousness raising". But where social workers,

for whatever reasons, fail to keep in mind the "longer term political prospects" or fail to locate their clients' experience of poverty in the wider social context, the end result of the casework focus may appear, as far as clients are concerned, to blame the victim rather than the perpetrator. Perhaps this dependence on the casework approach should not be too surprising, however. In many instances the "perpetrators" of poverty are powerful groups or interests without a "human face" or identity. Social workers have little influence against such institutions or forces. For many poor clients, however, the focus on "them" as individuals may confirm them in a role which they do not want, add to their bitterness and hostility and maintain them in a depriving situation (see for example Holman, 1973, 441; Jordan, 1974, 27).

Fifth, this sense of impotence about the possibilities for social change (and the associated lack of knowledge on how to go about achieving it) is exacerbated by organisational constraints and barriers. Social workers very often feel that what they can do in practice is determined by priorities established further up the hierarchy (committees, managers), and by what is currently the state of practice. As casework is the dominant approach - both ideologically and practically - many social workers do not feel encouraged or skilled to apply new methods to their work with poor clients. Again the focus that is encouraged by managers is on "cases" not "issues". If issues are not recognised or action on issues is not encouraged, then systematic information on issues as

they affect cases is not considered a priority. Even in the high priority area of child abuse, the focus is generally on individuals and families, or where deaths tragically occur, on ways in which improvements in inter agency co-operation can be achieved. Rarely, if ever, are wider issues such as state child care provision, the adequacy of benefits, considered or associated with "cases".

Summary

Social work and social workers are at the forefront of work with poverty through their daily contact with poor clients. However, despite an abundance of literature and research on some of these issues, social workers have generally failed to contribute to this field of knowledge despite being eminently well placed to do so. Many social workers, and their professional and in-service training courses seem to remain ambivalent to the roles of "cash and care" or financial work within social work. Social service departments, both locally and nationally, have failed to recognise the importance of recording figures on the extent of poverty amongst clients, or to examine the implications for services of the widespread claimant status of clients. A number of other explanations for this dearth of information have been suggested, including the focus in social work, ideologically and in practice, on "client groups" and "cases", as distinct from "issues" of common significance. The dominance of the casework method, the sense of impotence about how to achieve social change have also led to an undervaluing in social work practice and research of the importance of social contexts and systems on clients' lives.

SECTION TWO: THE CLAIMANT-CLIENT POPULATION

Introduction

There is a widespread assumption and acceptance among field social workers that the majority of people using the personal social services (referrals and clients) are financially poor. Most are claimants of social security. The "exception to the rule" is the client whose income is from a source other than the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS). Increasingly too, it is reported by social workers that financial problems are bringing people into contact with social service departments. The implication is simple but stark: claimants are poor before they become clients, but more and more are becoming clients because they are poor.

This section is concerned to outline the extent to which claimants are also in contact with social services. As with other sections presented in this chapter, most information is concerned with benefits, and supplementary benefit in particular. The crudeness of these as measures of poverty is well documented. But given the nature of the available information - which is itself very limited - this is perhaps the best indication of the extent and nature of poverty amongst clients.

Claimants as clients

The vast majority of claimants are not social work clients, even

though the large majority of clients are assumed to be claimants. A New Society/National Institute for Social Work poll in 1981 found that nearly one sixth of their sample had been clients of social workers: "...poor workers and people on state benefits were more likely to be clients" (Weir, 1981, 216).

A Newcastle Survey in 1982 revealed that 20% of short term and 29% of long term unemployed households had contact with social workers, compared with only 4% of employed households (Newcastle, 1982). Goldberg and Warburton's (1979) surveys in Southampton found that social workers were in contact with between 3% and 5% of the population, or between 9% to 15% of households. This figure varied considerably between different "groups": one in two of the severely handicapped over 75; one in four of the elderly living alone; 1 in 5 of the population over 75 and 1 in 14 of families with children. Contact with social workers was found to be highest (up to three quarters above the average) in the most socially disadvantaged pre-war estates; "in general, the public sector housing areas ... containing the largest concentrations of semi and unskilled occupations have above average contact rates both as regards referrals and ongoing cases ... high use of social work services is still very much associated with low socio-economic status, above average unemployment, large families and poor housing conditions" (Goldberg and Warburton, 1979, 48-57).

Goldberg and Warburton's studies were conducted over ten years ago.

More recently Richard Berthoud of the Policy Studies Institute was able to provide some data from his national sample of supplementary benefit claimants (1984) which throws more light on the claimant/client dimension. Re-analysis of his data suggests that, in 1982, 843,000 (20%) of all supplementary benefit claimants were in contact with a social worker. Of these, 30% had contacted the social worker "for benefit advice only"; 51% were in "occasional" and 19% in "regular" contact about something other than benefits (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: The PSI survey - SB claimants in contact with social worker: household type, by type of contact

	Regular %	Occasional %	'Benefit Only' %	Total %
Pensioner	19	43	38	100(437)
Lone parent	24	67	9	100(128)
Other with child	22	60	18	100(90)
Other household	19	53	28	100(88)
Non householder	13	58	29	100(100)
	19(166)	51(427)	30(250)	(843)

Source : derived from data supplied by Richard Berthoud, 1986.
Note: Table in thousands.

Table 5.2 provides details of the number of 'special expenses' of the 20% of supplementary benefit claimants who are also social work clients, and compares them with all other claimants. 'Special expense' is defined by reference to receipt of DHSS lump sum grants ("single payments"), together with extra expenses paid for, given, or badly needed (Berthoud, 1984; A.42). Proportionately more social work clients have 'six or more special expenses'. It is this group

who, above all others, have 'high needs'. "They were very much more common among people whose 'money problems' included current debts, than among the others. They were also very much more common among families with children, and especially couples with children, than among claimants without children" (1984; A.43).

Table 5.2: The PSI survey - "special expenses"

	Client/Claimants %	All other claimants %
None	17	22
1 - 2	40	40
3 - 5	25	26
6+	18	12
	100	100

Source: derived from data supplied by Richard Berthoud, 1986.

Data on money "problems" suggest that more clients on benefit were 'currently behind'. But it is important to note that fewer had 'had problems' and a larger proportion did not report money problems at all (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: The PSI survey - 'money problems'

	Client/Claimants %	All other claimants %
'Currently behind'	26	22
'Has had problems'	38	48
'No problems reported'	36	30
	100	100

Source: derived from data supplied by Richard Berthoud, 1986.

Other data on the degree of reported hardship suggests that social work clients are no more likely to be in severe poverty than are the rest of the population dependent on supplementary benefits (table 5.4).

Table 5.4: The PSI survey - "hardship"

	Client/Claimants %	All other claimants %
High	29	26
Medium high	20	20
Medium low	21	27
Low	30	27
	100	100

Source: derived from data supplied by Richard Berthoud, 1986.

This finding should not be too surprising. Personal social services provide assistance to a large number of different client groups in need. Generally, however, these services are not as a direct response to financial need, but are rather more concerned to meet other needs or legislative requirements.

Summary

§
Limited and past research suggests that deprived groups and claimants are far more likely to make high use of social work services.

Re-analysis of data provided by Richard Berthoud suggests that up to 20% of supplementary benefit claimants were in contact with social workers in 1982; one third for benefit advice only. In addition, though, there are many more who are living in these households dependent on supplementary benefit. On these estimates, currently there are at least two million people in households who are both in contact with social workers and in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Claimant/clients are in no more serious financial hardship or poverty than other claimants of supplementary benefit. But poor clients are more likely to have additional and complex needs which would entitle them to "additional requirements" or "single payments".

SECTION THREE: THE EXTENT OF CLAIMANT STATUS AMONGST SOCIAL WORK CLIENTS

Introduction

This section discusses a number of studies which provide quantitative data on the extent of poverty amongst clients. The studies are generally not concerned with this issue specifically. Findings on poverty are inferred from data on other subjects. For example, referral data or "impact of unemployment" studies (such as that commissioned by the AMA, 1985) provide some limited knowledge on the extent of poverty amongst clients. The AMA study focussed its attention on unemployment - not poverty - and so excluded from the analysis groups who were "outside" the potential labour market. Referral data on the other hand includes client groups which are not 'economically active', such as the elderly or mentally handicapped, disabled or under 5s.

Some findings

In Scotland, the Renfrew division of Strathclyde social work department conducted a computer exercise in 1982 amongst its social work offices. The findings reveal that 60-90% of all referrals were from people on social security benefits. Only 1 in 10 was from a person in employment (Murray, 1983).

Senior social worker Andrew Nash initiated and monitored a two month

study of referrals to an intake team in Peterborough. His findings, reported in 1983, showed that of 344 referrals, involving 849 people, 66% of referrals involved an unemployed person - when there was an unemployment level locally of 12.6% (Nash, 1983). The Renfrew survey also revealed that in one office 46% of callers to the social services had been continually unemployed for two or more years and 24% for more than five years (Murray, 1983).

The latest report by the AMA is based on a month long "snapshot" of referrals undertaken in September 1984 in six social service departments; information on 796 referrals was collected. The AMA found that:

- (i) 76.9% of referred persons aged under 65 had no waged adult in the household (this includes the population of chronically sick, housewives, those in full time education and those not available for work) but removes the "economically inactive" population of old age pensioners (AMA, 1985, 85).
- (ii) From the 796 referrals only 61 (7.7%) were in paid employment (AMA, 1985, 86/9). Of all referrals 92.3% were from the "economically inactive" or the unemployed.
- (iii) The proportion of all referred persons of working

age who were unemployed is 33% (AMA, 1985, 88).

Similarly Strathclyde's analysis of 72,000 referrals between 1982 and 1983 shows that:

- (i) 88% of all referrals have a welfare benefit as the main source of income.
- (ii) 46% of adults are in receipt of supplementary benefit (compared with 15% in the Region as a whole) (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1985, 21).

Data from these studies suggest that the large majority of users of social work services are claimants of social security, and that almost half (on 1982 figures) are claimants of supplementary benefit in particular.

Analysis of recent Strathclyde and other referral data

Concerned to substantiate and examine these issues in considerably more detail, a number of social work departments were approached to see whether more up to date referral data was available. Various local authorities (e.g. Coventry, Leeds) were able to provide some original referral data which indicated the extent to which certain client groups made demands for and on social services, but only Strathclyde social work department kept systematic referral data which also included data on claimant status and benefits received.

Analysis of specifically prepared data on 73,000 referrals to that department between 1984-1985 has provided an important source of information on the extent of claimant status among clients and the association between financial poverty (as indicated by claimant status) and referrals to social workers.

Table 5.5 shows the referral population broken down by the "living group" and Table 5.6 the proportion that these groups constitute of all referrals. For example 10% of all referrals are from families with no children (Table 5.6). Of this group 44% were in receipt of supplementary benefit (Table 5.5). This group as a whole made up 8% of all client referrals from people who were on supplementary benefit (Table 5.6).

Table 5.5: Strathclyde referrals by living group/household type, by benefit status, 1984-1985

	No benefit	Supplementary benefit	Other benefit	Totals
Not known	95 10%	535 57%	303 33%	933 100%
Family group with child(ren) including 1 or more under 5	2020 17%	8138 70%	1549 13%	11707 100%
Family group with child(ren) under 17 but none under 5	2409 22%	6132 55%	2595 23%	11136 100%
Single parent household with child(ren) including 1 or more under 5	290 6%	4448 88%	291 6%	5029 100%
Single parent household with child(ren) under 17 but none under 5	486 13%	2725 71%	619 16%	3830 100%
Family with no children	1143 16%	3189 44%	2949 41%	7281 101%
1 person household - not pensioner	608 8%	4179 56%	2654 36%	7441 100%
1 person pensioner	38 0%	2497 24%	7954 76%	10489 100%
2 person pensioner	46 1%	776 16%	3612 82%	4434 99%
Other private households	744 13%	2695 48%	2137 38%	5576 99%
Residential and others	772 11%	3207 54%	1851 35%	4164 100%
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

contd ...

Source : Strathclyde Social Services Regional Statistics. Creation date 25th February 1986.

Notes : Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are based on a re-analysis of data following the removal of the "not applicable" category. In approximately 22% of referrals benefit details were not recorded. There are 3 main reasons for this: (i) the worker did not want to ask the client her claimant status; (ii) the perceived problem, the worker believed, had nothing to do with money; (iii) referrals came from a third party and this information was not provided. There is no evidence to suggest that this "unrecorded" group is any different in terms of claimant status to the 80% for which such data is available. Consequently all tables relating to Strathclyde referrals have been calculated on this basis.

Table 5.6: Strathclyde referrals by living group, as a proportion of all referrals, by benefit status, 1984-1985

	% of all referrals	% of all referrals not on benefit	% of all referrals on S.B.	% of all referrals on other benefits
Not known	1%	1%	1%	1%
Family group with child(ren) including one or more under 5s	16%	23%	21%	6%
Family group with child(ren) under 17 but none under 5	15%	28%	16%	10%
Single parent household with child(ren) including one or more under 5	7%	3%	12%	1%
Single parent with child(ren) under 17 but none under 5	5%	6%	7%	2%
Family with no children	10%	13%	8%	11%
One person household not pensioner	10%	7%	11%	10%
One person pensioner	14%	0%	7%	30%
Two person pensioner	6%	1%	2%	14%
Other private household	8%	9%	7%	8%
Residential and others	8%	9%	8%	7%
All referrals	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source : Strathclyde Social Services Regional Statistics. Creation date 25th January 1986. Notes : see Table 5.5 for full details.

From the tables it can be seen that while single parents are a relatively small proportion of all referrals, they are the group most dependent on supplementary benefit and account for nearly one-fifth of all clients on supplementary benefit. On average, 52% of referrals were dependent on supplementary benefit, although such a figure hides the wide variation from this mean amongst different client groups. Nearly one quarter of households who had an income from a source other than the DHSS were families who had child(ren) under 17 but none under 5. Overall, over half of this 'living group' were dependent on supplementary benefit. The tables thus provide an outline picture of the client composition of referrals and their dependency either on supplementary benefit, other benefits, or income from a source other than the DHSS. The data is able to yield a similar breakdown by other benefits.

Over half (52%) of referrals to Strathclyde were dependent on supplementary benefit during the period 1984-85; 5% were dependent on unemployment benefit; 11% sickness/invalidity benefit; 17% retirement pension; 3% widow's pension, with minute proportions dependent on non - contributory disability benefits or industrial injuries benefits. Overall therefore, 88% of referrals were dependent on social security benefits for their income. 12% of referrals had incomes from a source other than the DHSS, most usually from work.

For the twelve percent of clients in employment, no figures are

available on the level of income from work. Some of this group are likely to be on low incomes - the working poor - claiming or entitled to claim family income supplement. This is supported by data presented later (table 5.11) which suggest that many of those in employment also have financial problems which bring them to social services.

Some limitations of the data

The Strathclyde data (and any data that relies on receipt of benefits) underestimate the proportions of client/claimants in poverty for a number of reasons.

First, failure to register as unemployed, especially amongst women, leads to an omission from the figures of a substantial group. In 1980 43% of female and 11% of male unemployed people failed to register as unemployed (GHS, 1980, table 5.E, 91).

Second, non take-up of benefits exacerbates poverty amongst all claimant/client groups and causes a serious underestimation of the numbers entitled to benefits. For example, only about 50% of those entitled to FIS claimed it during 1982. This would suggest that among the social work clients who are in employment, only half of those who are on low incomes and entitled to it will actually claim FIS. The take-up rate for supplementary benefit was estimated at 71% in 1981; the proportion was 67% amongst pensioners and 75% for non-pensioners (DHSS, 1984, 267). By 1983 the overall take up rate

had increased by a mere 1%. For pensioners the figure remained the same, whilst figures for the sick and disabled were estimated at 67%, the unemployed 75%, and one parent families 80% (Leeds City Council, 1985, Section 5, para. 4.1; DHSS written reply to CPAG). Many elderly client referrals (the great majority of whom will be living on state pensions) will also be entitled to supplementary pension. Figures from Strathclyde suggest that an average of 20% of pensioner referrals are from people receiving supplementary pension. The large majority of the elderly do not receive supplementary benefit but are still likely to have state benefits which for many fail to provide an adequate income. Between 1/4 and 1/3 of pensioner clients may be failing to claim extra supplementary benefit. By definition they are living below the poverty line.

It is clear that many poor clients fail, despite being in contact with a social worker, to secure maximum entitlement to benefit (Smith, 1982; Corden, 1983; Hirst, 1983; Blunn and Small, 1984; Fimister, 1984; Becker and MacPherson, 1985A, 1985B). A number of authors have recently outlined ways in which social workers can improve the take-up of benefits amongst their clients (Falkingham, 1985; Falkingham and MacPherson, 1986; Fimister, 1986, 1987; Becker, MacPherson and Falkingham, 1987).

However, even with maximum "take-up" state benefits most often do not allow a generous or even comfortable standard of living. The lives of the poor demonstrate that levels of benefit are inadequate to

cover the cost of bringing up children; do not allow participation in ordinary life; lead to feelings of shame, humiliation and embarrassment; are a common denominator in further deprivation such as in health, housing, education (Piachaud, 1980; Burghes, 1980; Coffield et al, 1980; Blaxter, 1981; Brown and Madge, 1982; Golding and Middleton, 1982; Mortimore and Blackstone, 1982; Murie, 1983; Beltram, 1984; Howe, 1985; Mack and Lansley, 1985; PSI, 1985; Bradshaw and Morgan, 1987; Whitehead, 1987).

Third, the numbers in poverty depend to a large extent on how poverty is defined and on the level of the scale rates at any particular time. Some authors suggest, for instance, that poverty can and should be measured by scales other than the "inadequate" scale rates of supplementary benefit. The "margins of poverty" thesis, or Townsend's relative deprivation index suggest that people are poor (in terms of their ability to participate in accepted practices and conventions) up to an income of around 140% of supplementary benefit rates. Below that level people's ability to participate in such conventions markedly deteriorates, a finding initially proposed by Townsend, and confirmed by others, including Mack and Lansley's study of "Breadline Britain" (Townsend, 1979; Mack and Lansley, 1985; see also Desai, 1986). If this convention is accepted, by 'raising' the "poverty line" the extent of poverty amongst clients will be even higher. Those on other benefits, or in employment, may have incomes that while above basic supplementary benefit levels, are low enough to impose serious poverty.

Summary

Ninety per cent of referrals to social services come from claimants of social security. This group will be receiving a number of different social security benefits, either contributory or non-contributory. Over 50% of referrals are from those receiving supplementary benefit. There is a wide variation between different client groups in the proportions dependent on supplementary benefit. No figures are available on the number of clients in receipt of family income supplement.

Non take-up of benefit amongst social work clients exacerbates their poverty, as does the level of social security benefit generally. Whilst over 50% of clients may be receiving supplementary benefit more may be entitled to it if they claimed it.

No data are available to make possible a calculation whether the level of take-up amongst social work clients is higher or lower than amongst the general population of "non clients".

The inadequacy of research on and recording of 'claimant status' for existing or new client referrals makes these findings patchy, tentative and exploratory. Much more research is needed on claimant-clients to establish in detail what proportion and type of claimants are clients of social workers.

There is evidence to suggest that about a fifth of all supplementary benefit claimants are also in contact with a social worker. Over 800,000 supplementary benefit claimants were in contact with a social worker in 1982. With dependent partners and children, there are likely to be over 2 million people currently dependent on supplementary benefit who are also in contact with a social worker. Using the figures presented in this section it would be possible for individual local authorities to estimate the extent and nature of poverty amongst social work clients in their particular area.

SECTION FOUR: THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON REFERRALS TO SOCIAL WORKERS

Introduction

This section examines the nature of referrals to social services, and in particular those which are financially based or welfare rights related. Goldberg and Warburton's definition of referral is used: "any incoming case requiring some social work input which is neither currently on an allocated nor on the agency review case load" (1979, 59). Rowlings (1978) also discusses in some detail the definition and meaning of a referral and how some are recorded whilst others are not. She describes how work is allocated and the distinction between a "referral" and a "case". Certainly, focusing on referrals underestimates the extent of deprivation that such financial problems cause: figures based on referrals rarely take into account the number of dependents also affected by financial poverty. Similarly, by focusing on the main or first presenting problem they also underestimate the extent to which financial poverty may influence clients' lifestyles when poverty is not defined (by the client or social worker) as the main problem. Whilst long term cases (where that distinction is made) may have welfare rights or financial problems, reference to them will only be made where it illuminates the discussion further. This focus is on financial problems and the various related social work responses such as financial advice, assistance or welfare rights help.

Hill (1985) rightly asserts that the extent to which social services are bombarded for help with material problems depends upon public perceptions of them as being concerned with such issues. Evidence from detailed interviews with 50 social workers in Nottingham supports this (Becker, MacPherson and Silburn, 1983). Some local offices were less likely to be approached for financial or welfare rights help than others. Clients' perceptions as to the degree of competence and interest of local social workers affected the type of demands that would be brought forward. Most recently, Tester (1985) has examined the relations between a range of organisations that impact on a client's life. Certainly the availability of alternative advice agencies and the networks of liaison between social workers and other bodies will affect the type of referral and particularly its outcome. Hill's most recent research shows that work on financial problems is growing in some places which are not dramatically deprived and despite the fact that there is not much evidence of a commitment by social workers to this type of work (Hill, 1985, 2, 8).

Some findings

Seeborn estimated that 60% of referrals to the new social service departments would be requests for advice on income maintenance or housing (Sinfield, 1969, 34). As far back as 1973, Sharkey reported on a welfare rights experiment by East Sussex social workers where, over a 20 day period, 1200 enquiries were received at a social service caravan. Half of all enquiries were supplementary benefit

related (Sharkey, 1973).

Goldberg and Warburton's 1975 Southampton study analysed 2500 referrals and 2000 cases brought or known to social workers. Their findings suggested that financial and material problems made up 17% of first presenting problems - twice as many as in 1973; 14% of referrals were child behaviour/family relations whilst 11% were housing/accommodation based. This study also revealed that more clients who were elderly and living alone experienced financial problems (26%) compared with those living with a family (10%). Those who experienced financial and material problems came largely on their own initiative (1979, 64/65).

Some years later French and Attewell in a small survey of "presenting problems" amongst three area teams in Lewisham found that on average 45.9% of new referrals were requests for direct advice on income maintenance and housing. Whilst no detailed calculations were provided they suggested and have recently repeated that the figure would be much closer to Seeborn's estimation if requests for advice or practical assistance with aids and adaptations, work under the 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, and other practical help were to be included (French and Attewell, 1982 and 1985).

More detailed large scale studies have been conducted by a few departments. Sheffield City Council examined changes in six social work referral categories during the period July 1976 to June 1981.

Table 5.7 compacts three tables from that survey and illustrates the changes in referrals for requests for help/advice - financial or material, welfare rights and benefit enquiries and personal/family counselling.

Table 5.7: Referrals to social workers, Sheffield: average number per month, by type, 1976-81

	Financial/ material	Welfare Rights/ Benefits	Counselling
1976 (July-December)	185	25	118
1977	230	18	151
1978 (January-October)	212	10	179
1979 (March-December)	202	18	199
1980	247	27	195
1981 (January-June)	269	25	207

Source: Sheffield City Council, 1981, Tables 1, 2, 3; page 3.

Note: The other three referral categories were Non Accidental Injury, Admissions To Care and Mental Illness.)

At a time when the rate of unemployment rose from 8.6% of the population in December 1980 to 11.6% in August 1982, the Sheffield study also revealed a significant increase in the monthly referral rate of direct requests for help/advice of a financial or material nature with a steady number of welfare rights referrals over that period (Sheffield City Council, 1981). The demand for personal and family counselling has also increased, but the figures do not tell us whether the unemployed make as many demands for counselling services as they do for those of a financial nature.

A survey by Strathclyde Regional Social Work Department throws more light on this last question. That survey, conducted in the same

period, found that there was an increase in the more traditional use of casework corresponding with an increase in unemployment. Casework with families rose by 21% at a time when unemployment rose by 27% in one year as a result of the Singer factory closure and created an unemployment figure of 13.9% (Strathclyde Regional Social Work Department 1981, 7). Coventry Social Services also report that between 1980/81 and 1983/84 when unemployment rose from 8% to 15% referrals recorded as "relationship problems" increased by 22%, but even this was not as dramatic as the 55% increase in welfare rights referrals (Coventry Social Services, 1984, SW2).

Nash's survey in Peterborough discovered that 66% of social service department clients who could work were unemployed compared to 12% of Peterborough's economically active population (Nash, 1982). The most outstanding problems in 80% of cases involving the unemployed concerned financial or housing matters. This group were seeking help with practical issues relating to their income and accommodation (Nash, 1983). Consequently welfare rights advice as well as liaison with DHSS offices and fuel boards was a significant part of the social workers' task.

The Strathclyde survey reported a similar change in the caseload of social workers during the early 1980s. Financial difficulties arising from unemployment in the period 1980-81 led to increases in social work caseloads of 21% in the number of clients in rent arrears, 23% in claims for education clothing grants and 38% in

reports for children's hearings (Strathclyde Regional Social Work Council, 1981, 7).

In Newcastle, in April 1982, 17.5% of the economically active population were unemployed. A major survey of unemployed people in the East Side of the city found a sharp rise in the number of referrals to social work teams coded as "financial or DHSS problems". This mainly reflected the sharp increase in fuel debts which at the end of 1981 were twice the 1979 levels and accounted for about 10% of all referrals. A welfare rights officer in Walker was having to occasionally close the office to restrict demand, but even so she counted 50 financial problem referrals per week (Newcastle City Council, 1982, 63).

This significant increase in fuel problems work was also reported in a further Strathclyde survey (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1983, 16). Murray, too, reports that in the Renfrew Division of Strathclyde in one social work office there was a 123% increase in fuel debt related referrals in the period 1980-82 (Murray, 1983). In England and Wales there are at least 600 gas and electricity disconnections every day. Of these, two thirds of disconnected households are poor, two fifths have a young child and two fifths are unemployed. Under the fuel boards code of practice, where children are involved, social workers must be informed prior to disconnection, although evidence suggests that this does not happen (Berthoud, 1981). The code of practice alone provides social service departments

with a considerable amount of extra work, estimated by the Association of Directors of Social Services to have cost £13 million in 1980 (Community Care, 23rd July, 1980).

This trend of increases in financial based problems is reported by a number of other authorities. Greenwich Council records that during the quarter ending June 1984 there were 2,453 referrals to the department. In the quarter ending March 1985 there were 2,700 cases referred. Within this 10% overall increase, there was a 14% rise in referrals of financial problems and a 22% rise in those relating to children and families (Greenwich, 1985).

Between 1982/3 to 1984/5 the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham reported a 37% increase in referrals "of a social security nature"; 16% in health; 79% in housing; 13% family or personal; 29% in employment (Barking and Dagenham, 1986).

Financial/material referrals have also increased significantly outside London. Durham County Council reports that for 1983/4 the Sedgefield district social service department had 3,300 referrals; 670 (20%) of which were for financial or material aid. In 1984/5 there were 5,100 referrals; 1,800 (35%) of which were financial/material based. In 1985/6 out of 5,150 referrals, 1750 (34%) were related to financial or material needs (Durham County Council, 1986).

The trend is echoed in South and West Yorkshire. In Barnsley, for example, it is reported that there has been a 100% increase in referrals over the last two years to welfare rights officers in social service departments - a trend repeated in the voluntary sector as well (Sheffield City Council, 1986).

One of the most detailed and recent indications of the nature and extent of financial based referrals is provided by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities research conducted in 1984. Table 5.8 gives figures reported by the AMA of the increase in the number of new financial referrals and welfare rights referrals to social service departments during the periods 1979/1980 and 1982/1983. Some Authorities (such as Coventry) record referrals separately under financial or welfare rights headings whilst others collapse the headings together. This obviously creates difficulties in using the tables to reveal actual increases, although even with these limitations the figures are useful in providing an indication of trends. The figures in this table were specially provided by local authorities to the AMA and were not part of the AMA's one month survey of referrals.

Table 5.8: The AMA survey - financial and welfare rights referrals to various social service departments, 1978-83

AUTHORITY	1978/79		1979/80		1980/81		1981/82		1982/83		% CHANGE	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
											1979 -83	1978 -83
Sunder- land	NF	NF	250	NF	292	NF	362	NF	502	NF	+101%	NF
Tower Hamlets	NF	NF	469	NF	587	NF	578	NF	709	NF	+51%	NF
Harrow	NF	6369	333	7214	436	7849	479	8002	446	8501	+34%	+31%
Coventry	NF	1857	4527	1969	3899	1745	4937	2221	5319	2712	+17.5%	+46%

A : Financial based referrals B : Welfare rights referrals

Source: AMA, 1985; Table 3 p.61 and Table 4, p.64. (NF denotes no figures provided).

In addition to the figures in Table 5.8, Manchester social service department estimated an increase of 2500 welfare rights referrals per year. The table illustrates the generally reported trend of increases in both financial and welfare rights related referrals (recorded separately or combined). The figures for financial based referrals show increases of between 17.5% to 101% during the periods recorded. Welfare rights referrals to departments increased significantly over this period - a trend echoed in the voluntary sector as well. A small survey quoted by the AMA conducted in Coventry in 1979 reports that 50% of all referrals to social work teams then had a welfare rights or debt related component and one sixth were solely of that type (AMA, 1985, 67). The Manchester

figure of 2500 new welfare rights referrals is significant; two thirds of such referrals are from the unemployed (AMA, 1985, 68). The AMA, summarising the information it had been given, concluded that financial referrals (categorised as welfare rights, debts, inability to meet outgoing expenses and requests for financial help) had significantly increased over the periods recorded.

The AMA's conclusions are reinforced by more recent and systematic figures produced by Coventry social services from its computerised referral system. These suggest that in 1983/84 welfare rights referrals were at a level of 18.9% of all new cases. Between 1980/81 and 1983/84 welfare rights referrals had increased by 55% from 1745 to 2709 (Coventry Social Services, 1984, SW3).

To complement information provided by local authorities, in September 1984 the AMA conducted a one month "snapshot" survey in six departments to ascertain the nature of presenting problems referred to social workers. Table 5.9 illustrates these findings broken down by the nature of the first presenting problem and by the employment status of the referred person over 18.

Table 5.9: The AMA survey - employment status of referred persons over 18 by first presenting problem, six social service departments

First problem	Employed	Unemployed	Retired	Education	Not seek- ing work	No reply	Total	%
Financial/ Material	36	95	89	4	113	2	339	46%
Handicaps	6	19	175	1	56	14	271	36%
Child Related	8	15	1	5	19	1	49	7%
Family environment	5	4	9	-	13	2	33	4%
Psychological	3	6	12	-	10	1	32	4%
Employment	-	9	-	-	2	-	11	2%
No reply	1	3	2	-	-	-	6	1%
	59 (8%)	151 (20%)	288 (39%)	10 (1%)	213 (29%)	20 (3%)	741 (100%)	(100%)

Source: AMA, 1985; Tables 9 and 10, pp 91/2 (amended).

Notes: Figures refer to September 1984.

Focusing on financial/material needs, the AMA includes under this heading: financial problems, fuel debts, material needs, accommodation, homelessness. These problems may have occurred within other referral categories but at the time of referral, represented 46% of first presenting problems recorded. These problems are especially prominent for those not seeking work and the unemployed, but the elderly too have significant demands on social workers in this context. Again, by focusing on first presenting problem, the figures under-estimate the actual frequency of such

problems (for example amongst long term clients) and the demands thus exerted upon social workers.

Of the 95 unemployed people in Table 5.9 with financial and material difficulties, 10 had been unemployed for between 6 months and 1 year, 21 for 1 to 2 years, and 36 for over 2 years. The AMA concluded that poverty increases with the duration of unemployment and suggested that "social work referrals are highly likely to be persons either retired, not seeking work or unemployed; and in any event primarily unwaged" (AMA, 1985, 92, 93). In 1986 the AMA started consultations for a study of the impact of poverty on local authority services. The AMA Poverty Steering Group (of which the author is a member) is advising the researchers on the scope and direction of the project, which will commence in mid 1987 and report in 1988.

Analysis of original Strathclyde data

Analysis of data on 73,000 referrals to Strathclyde social services department during 1984-1985 provides valuable information on the type of problems that clients receiving particular benefits bring to social workers (Tables 5.10 - 5.21). Table 5.10 shows all referrals by problem type. 48% of first presenting problems are financial, whilst a further 16% are for housing. With other "practical" based referrals (report assessments) the proportion of financial or practical referrals to social workers was over 70% of all referrals. Tables 5.11 - 5.21 break down each referral category into discrete sub-sections allowing more detailed analysis of first

presenting problems to be made.

The tables provide a wealth of detail on the types of first presenting problems that clients on different benefits bring to social workers. Only a few points are discussed here. Table 5.11 shows that 58% of clients with financial problems, and 70% of those with DHSS problems, were on supplementary benefit. Over one quarter of all clients on supplementary benefit had financial problems which led them to refer to social services. A further one fifth of clients on supplementary benefit had DHSS problems which also led to a referral being made. Interestingly those not on state benefits also had financial or DHSS problems but not to the extent of those on benefits, and in particular supplementary benefit.

Table 5.10: Strathclyde referrals, 1984-85, all referrals, as first presenting problem

	Number of Referrals	% of all referrals
Financial/material problems	35,435	48%
Housing	11,674	16%
Alcohol/drug abuse	1,308	2%
Offence related problems	1,639	2%
Requests for report/assessment	5,911	8%
Child related	2,359	3%
Family social relationship	1,958	3%
Problem relating to mental handicap	528	1%
Problem relating to mental health	545	1%
Problem relating to physical handicap	3,815	5%
Problem relating to the elderly	8,340	11%
Undefined	174	0%
All referrals	73,686	100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Service Regional Statistics. Creation date 25.2.86.

Note: percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.11: Strathclyde referral 1984-85, financial/material problems, by income

	Referrals not on state benefit	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Not known	32 8%	182 43%	171 44%	385 100%
Financial/material	1970 11%	10810 58%	6016 32%	18796 101%
D.H.S.S. problem	590 6%	7202 70%	2572 25%	10364 101%
Rent problems	229 18%	583 46%	449 36%	1261 100%
School uniform	20 15%	60 46%	52 39%	132 100%
Gas problems	308 15%	1009 49%	737 36%	2054 100%
Electricity problems	278 12%	1303 57%	724 31%	2305 100%
Others	7 7%	96 62%	35 31%	138 100%
All financial/ material problems	3434 (10%)	21245 (60%)	10756 (30%)	35435 100%
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Service Regional Statistics. Creation date 25.2.86.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.12: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, housing problems by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Housing	533 11%	2955 60%	1446 29%	4934 100%
Homelessness (single)	303 15%	1288 65%	393 20%	1984 100%
Homelessness (family)	132 10%	1121 83%	101 8%	1354 100%
Anti-social behaviour	29 13%	134 60%	59 27%	222 100%
Re-housing	150 9%	897 54%	602 37%	1649 100%
Dampness	14 11%	77 61%	35 28%	126 100%
Repairs	35 5%	346 51%	298 44%	679 100%
Furniture	67 12%	321 56%	190 33%	578 101%
Removal	7 5%	66 46%	70 49%	143 100%
Other	1 20%	2 40%	2 40%	5 100%
All housing referrals	1271 11%	7207 62%	3196 27%	11674 100%
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Service Regional Statistics. Creation date 25.2.86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.13: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, alcohol/drug abuse by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Alcohol/drug abuse	178 23%	278 36%	310 41%	766 100%
Alcohol related problem	83 21%	182 45%	139 34%	404 100%
Solvent abuse	10 37%	11 41%	6 22%	27 100%
Drug abuse	16 25%	34 54%	13 21%	63 100%
Others	22 35%	8 28%	18 37%	48 100%
All alcohol/drug abuse referrals	309 24%	513 39%	486 37%	1308 100%
All referrals	8651	38521	26514	73686

Source: Strathclyde Social Service Regional Statistics. Creation date 25.2.86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.14: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, offence related problems by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Offence related	160 21%	461 59%	156 20%	777 100%
Parole	54 62%	29 33%	4 5%	87 100%
Aftercare	19 21%	59 64%	14 15%	92 100%
Police warning	0 0%	3 60%	2 40%	5 100%
FSO	49 10%	374 78%	59 12%	482 100%
Probation	16 9%	123 70%	37 21%	176 100%
CSO	0 0%	16 89%	2 11%	18 100%
Others	0 0%	2 100%	0 0%	2 100%
All offence related referrals	298 18%	1067 65%	274 18%	1639 101%
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Service Regional Statistics. Creation date 25.2.86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.15: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, requests for report/assessment by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Report/assessment	538 30%	916 51%	354 20%	1808 101%
Panel	188 42%	207 46%	56 12%	451 100%
Court	488 19%	1704 65%	440 17%	2632 101%
Means enquiry report	55 11%	338 69%	96 20%	489 100%
Matrimonial proceedings	16 36%	27 60%	2 4%	45 100%
Child minding	120 80%	20 13%	11 7%	151 100%
Adoption	128 90%	9 6%	5 4%	142 100%
Fostering	115 64%	44 24%	22 12%	181 100%
Others	3 25%	6 50%	3 25%	12 100%
<hr/>				
All requests for report/assessments	1651 28%	3271 55%	989 17%	5911 100%
<hr/>				
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Service Regional Statistics.
Creation date 25/2/86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.16: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, child related by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Child related	404 28%	900 63%	129 9%	1433 100%
Child abuse	18 16%	87 76%	10 9%	115 101%
Child neglect	28 15%	147 77%	16 8%	191 100%
Child offence	25 34%	39 53%	9 12%	73 99%
Child/parent relationship	127 30%	255 60%	43 10%	425 100%
Truancy	35 30%	74 63%	8 7%	117 100%
Child handicap	2 100%	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%
Other	0 0%	2 75%	1 25%	3 100%
<hr/>				
All child related referrals	639 27%	1504 64%	216 9%	2359 100%
<hr/>				
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Services Regional Statistics. Creation date 25/2/86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.17: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, family social relationship problems by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Family-social relationship	234 27%	461 54%	162 19%	857 100%
Marital breakdown	254 32%	418 53%	122 15%	794 100%
Spouse assault	22 19%	76 65%	19 16%	117 100%
Unstable relationship	44 24%	102 56%	36 20%	182 100%
Others	1 17%	7 83%	0 0%	8 100%
<hr/>				
All family/social relationship referral	555 28%	1064 54%	339 17%	1958 99%
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All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Services Regional Statistics. Creation date 25/2/86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.18: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, problems relating to mental handicap, by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefit	Total
Problems relating to mental handicap	32 11%	133 47%	118 42%	283 100%
Social isolation	2 11%	9 47%	8 42%	19 100%
Mobility	1 3%	9 29%	21 68%	31 200%
Personal care/domestic	13 12%	45 42%	50 46%	108 100%
Holiday assistance	3 3%	34 39%	50 58%	87 100%
<hr/>				
All problems relating to mental handicap	51 10%	230 44%	247 47%	528 100%
<hr/>				
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Services Regional Statistics. Creation date 25/2/86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.19: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, problems relating to mental health by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Problems relating to mental health	30 12%	123 47%	108 41%	261 100%
Psychosis (i.e. schizophrenia)	1 2%	18 42%	24 56%	42 100%
Neurosis (i.e. depression)	26 19%	75 54%	37 27%	138 100%
Other mental illness (not defined)	21 21%	43 41%	39 38%	103 100%
All problems relating to mental health	78 14%	259 48%	208 38%	545 100%
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Services Regional Statistics. Creation date 25/2/86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.20: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, problems relating to physical handicap by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Problems relating to physical handicap	131 7%	384 20%	1381 73%	1896 100%
Social isolation	5 5%	22 21%	79 75%	106 101%
Mobility	93 9%	131 12%	868 80%	1092 101%
Personal care/ domestic problems	43 6%	129 19%	512 75%	684 100%
Others	4 20%	5 20%	28 60%	37 100%
All problems relating to physical handicap	276 7%	671 18%	2868 75%	3815 100%
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Service Regional Statistics. Creation date 25/2/86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

Table 5.21: Strathclyde referrals 1984-85, problems relating to the elderly by income

	Referrals not on state benefits	Referrals on supplementary benefit	Referrals on other benefits	Total
Problems relating to the elderly	38 1%	724 19%	2984 80%	3746 100%
Social isolation	1 0%	69 19%	302 81%	372 100%
Mobility	3 0%	56 8%	634 92%	693 100%
Personal care/ domestic problems	24 1%	222 13%	1440 85%	1686 99%
Senile dementia	2 2%	19 17%	90 81%	111 100%
Part III assessment	1 0%	63 12%	446 88%	510 100%
General assessment	1 0%	52 15%	287 84%	340 99%
Holiday	2 0%	179 21%	680 79%	861 100%
Other	2 10%	3 14%	16 77%	21 101%
All problems relating to the elderly	74 10%	1387 17%	6879 82%	8340 100%
All referrals	8651 12%	38521 52%	26514 36%	73686 100%

Source: Strathclyde Social Services Regional Statistics. Creation date 25/2/86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. These figures are calculated on the same basis as described in the Note to Table 5.5.

A greater proportion of people not on state benefits inflict self harm through alcohol or drug abuse than do clients on supplementary benefit (Table 5.13). In relation to offending (Table 5.14), it is interesting to note the high concentration of people not on state benefits who are on parole. One may speculate about the likelihood of improved chances for parole if the offender has an income awaiting him/her from a source other than the DHSS.

Over 60% of truancy referrals were from people on supplementary benefit (compared to 30% for those not on state benefits of any kind) (Table 5.16). The figures reveal an important point; although a large number of truants come from families on supplementary benefit, proportionately truancy is the primary reason for referral in twice as many cases among non claimant families.

Nearly 76% of child abuse referrals, and 77% of child neglect referrals are from supplementary benefit claimants (Table 5.16). This compares on average with about 15% of such referrals from non claimants. Given the much greater proportion of supplementary benefit claimants amongst the client group population it can be said that a characteristic of those who are referred for child abuse is that they will be poor. However it cannot be said that the poor are more likely to abuse their children than any other group; the proportions who abuse or neglect their children from these different income groups are similar. In contrast, family problems are for example disproportionately referred by non claimants, especially

marital breakdown (Table 5.17; see also Irvine, Becker and MacPherson, 1987).

Over 90% of referrals for adoption reports and 65% for fostering reports are from non claimants compared to a much smaller proportion of supplementary benefit recipients (Table 5.15). Indeed nearly 1.5% of all non claimant/clients refer to social workers for adoption services in contrast to almost no clients who are in receipt of supplementary benefit. Some social work services, such as adoption and fostering assessments are clearly "consumed" to a much greater degree by clients who are not in financial poverty.

Social work responses

Surveys by Hill (1985) and Popay and Dhooge (1985) provide useful information on the extent and nature of financial based referrals to social workers and the responses provided. Hill's study found that financial issues' referrals as a percentage of total referrals was 31.9% (average of three borough teams) and 16.1% (average of two county teams) (Hill, 1985, Table 3, 17).

Popay and Dhooge similarly found a general increase in financial difficulties amongst clients being reported by 5 out of 7 full time intake workers and 14 out of 16 rota based intake workers. These authors report that 43% of all social workers in their sample (24 out of 56) reported that they were doing more work on financial issues with clients. This was particularly so for intake teams where 71%

of social workers (5 out of 7) reported an increase in this work, compared to 29% of long term generic workers and 56% of workers involved in both long term and intake work (Popay and Dhooge, 1985, Table 4.5B, p.75).

Financial based problems (including welfare rights) are more likely to be the cause of new referrals for social work help, although even on existing cases it is still an important area of work. The AMA suggested too that much of this type of work consequently will be of short time duration, a finding echoed by Becker et al (1983) in their survey of social workers and welfare rights, and earlier by Goldberg et al (1979) in Southampton. Fifty one percent of financial/material referrals to Southampton were dealt with by one day and 70% by one week. Goldberg and Warburton emphasise the essentially short term nature of the work, pointing out that the main forms of help were assistance with applications for supplementary benefit and special grants (43%). Information and advice was recorded in 75% of referrals, advocacy in one quarter. Interestingly they comment that child care, physical health and emotional psychiatric problems were also not uncommon in this client group - implying that financial problems are a part of a matrix of problems that affect an individual or family lifestyle or ability to cope (Goldberg and Warburton, 1979, 71/78).

The Strathclyde referrals provide further and new information on this. Table 5.22 shows that 55% of all referrals are dealt with by

information and advice followed by no further action; 62% of all clients on supplementary benefit are dealt with in this manner.

Table 5.22: Strathclyde referrals 1984/85, help received, by type of income

	% of clients not on state benefits dealt with in this way %	% of clients on s.b. dealt with in this way %	% of clients on other benefits dealt with in this way %	% of all referrals dealt with in this way %
Not known	1	1	1	1
No action	8	9	7	8
Information/ advice no action	50	62	47	55
Financial/ material help. No action	7	6	4	5
Refer to home help	0	1	3	1
Refer to occupational therapist	2	1	10	4
Allocate as short term case	21	14	18	16
Allocate as long term case	6	3	2	3
Allocate to senior social worker	2	2	2	2
Admission to care	0	0	0	0
Other	4	4	5	5
% of all referrals	12%	52%	36%	100%
Total	101%	103%	99%	100%

Source: Strathclyde Regional Statistics 25/2/86. Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Table 5.23: Strathclyde referrals 1984/85, help received by type of referral

	% of all referrals	No action		Informative advice only		Financial/ material No further action		Allocate ST		Allocate LT		Others
Financial/ material	48	10%	(60%)	70%	(61%)	8%	(75%)	7%	(21%)	1%	(8%)	4%
Housing	16	9%	(17%)	74%	(21%)	2%	(16%)	8%	(8%)	1%	(5%)	6%
Alcohol/ drug abuse	2	4%	(1%)	23%	(1%)	1%	(0%)	14%	(1%)	30%	(17%)	28%
Offence related	2	6%	(2%)	30%	(1%)	0%	(0%)	25%	(3%)	24%	(18%)	15%
Report assessment	8	3%	(3%)	14%	(2%)	0%	(0%)	58%	(29%)	10%	(27%)	15%
Child related	3	8%	(3%)	42%	(2%)	2%	(1%)	29%	(6%)	8%	(9%)	11%
Family/ social relationship	3	7%	(3%)	66%	(3%)	3%	(1%)	16%	(3%)	3%	(2%)	5%
Mental handicap/ health	2	6%	(1%)	38%	(1%)	2%	(1%)	32%	(3%)	8%	(4%)	14%
Physical handicap	5	3%	(2%)	21%	(2%)	7%	(7%)	14%	(5%)	1%	(2%)	54
Elderly	11	5%	(7%)	21%	(4%)	4%	(8%)	28%	(20%)	1%	(4%)	41%
% of all referrals	100	8%	(99%)	55%	(98%)	5%	(99%)	16%	(99%)	3%	(96%)	13%

Source: Strathclyde Regional Statistics, 25/2/86. Notes: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding and the omission of a "not known" group. Figures in brackets relate to the percentage of each referral category as a proportion of the "help" received. Thus, columns: for each type of response, the percentage of different kinds of referral, rows: for each kind of referral, the proportion of each type of response.

Looking in more detail at specific referral categories Table 5.23 shows that 70% of all referrals for financial/material help were dealt with by information and advice only. The figure was 74% for housing problems. Financial and housing problems require, in almost three quarters of all referrals, a very short term response; generally in terms of information and advice, or financial/material assistance. These types of referral, in sharp contrast for example to alcohol/drug abuse or offence related problems, rarely are allocated as long term cases.

Over 80% of all information and advice was given for financial and housing problems. Similarly over 80% of all financial and material help was for these two types of presenting problems. Over one quarter of all long term cases were for report assessments; one third of all long term cases were for alcohol or drug abuse or offence related cases. This compares with only 8% of long term cases being for financial/material problems, and 5% for housing problems.

Michael Hill's recent work provides information on the nature of financial issues brought to social workers. He discovered that there was a large range of financial problems brought to social workers and that these covered the whole range of social security benefits, arrears and debts. Referrals of this nature predominantly came from single persons (around 40% of referrals) or single parents (Hill, 1985, 18-22).

Significantly, 56% of households making a financial referral to borough teams, and 54% to county teams were on supplementary benefit (Hill, 1985, 22). These figures were 65% and 51% respectively in Hill's "carried cases study" noted in the same report (Hill, 1985, 23).

Even though a considerable proportion of financial issues were raised by people on supplementary benefit and involved supplementary benefit questions themselves, few cases, Hill discovered, were complex issues. They were much more frequently concerned with the delivery of basic benefits - for example missing giro's. Despite financial problems being brought regularly to social workers, the response of professionals in this context was generally at a simplistic level, rarely challenging the administration of the benefits themselves. Hill concluded that the increase in referrals of this nature to social workers is not a product of the 1980 reform of supplementary benefit, with its shift from discretion to legalism, but rather is linked to problems associated with unemployment and the strains on the benefit system (Hill, 1985).

Hill's findings echo those of the Nottingham study three years earlier, which found that ignorance of the legislation and rules of entitlements often led to social workers not recognising the inadequacy of their service. That survey of 170 social workers also throws more light on the nature of supplementary benefit problems most frequently brought to social workers. Delays in

payment were the most frequently cited problems, followed by difficulties in living on the amount of benefit provided. Of the 170 social workers, 86% personally encountered cases involving supplementary benefit problems. Of these workers, over one quarter were encountering them at the rate of at least one case per week, one third more than once per week, and a smaller but significant group of 5% at more than one per day (Becker, MacPherson and Silburn, 1983, 24/25). Intake workers in particular were most likely to be involved in such work, although financial or welfare rights work was a recurring theme in long term cases as well (Becker, MacPherson and Silburn, 1983; Becker and MacPherson, 1985A, 1985B).

Heather Rainbow's (1985) study of work carried out jointly between Finsbury Citizens Advice Bureau and the local social services team similarly chronicled the inadequacy of supplementary benefit administrators to provide entitlements accurately or on time. Social services were constantly making direct payments under section one budgets to claimants who should have been receiving their money from the DHSS. Recently, Susan Tester (1985) has explored the relations between supplementary benefit and other agencies and discusses ways of improving liaison in order to reduce the type and number of problems mentioned by Rainbow and other authors.

Summary

There has been and continues to be a significant increase in financially based and welfare rights oriented referrals to social

workers; for a large proportion of referrals these are the prime presenting problems. For both longer term and short term cases, there may be a multiplicity of problems of which financial or welfare rights work is a recurring issue.

The extent of such financial or welfare rights based problems may exceed Seeborn's estimation of 60% of all referrals. Certainly increases in referrals of this nature go hand in hand with increases in unemployment. Claimants identified as those most likely to be in poverty (single parents, couples with children, the disabled, the elderly) are also those clients that present social workers with the most demands for financial/material help.

The range of financial problems is extremely large; but the single most significant group of problems are those concerned with supplementary benefit. More than half of households making a financial based referral are on supplementary benefit, even if their problem is not directly related to that benefit. Delays in giro's or inadequacy in the administration of supplementary benefit are frequently cited problems and involve social workers in a considerable amount of work and sometimes direct financial assistance through section one budgets; which would not be necessary if their clients were receiving their full entitlements as claimants.

Social workers themselves are identified by referral and other surveys to be ambivalent towards this work; advice is kept at a

simplistic level and advocacy challenging the administration of benefits is rare.

SECTION FIVE: USE OF PARTICULAR SOCIAL SERVICES BY POOR CLIENTS

Introduction

This section examines the extent to which poor clients use particular services. First, the use of direct financial payments is examined. Second, information on children in care and those on abuse registers is provided. These are chosen because there is some information available on the extent to which clients are claimants. The exercise would be as valid if other services were to be chosen, for example under 5 nursery provision, meals on wheels, adult training centres, intermediate treatment facilities, remands to care, fostering and adoption services, children on statutory care orders or in care for a number of reasons. For all of these, data on the claimant status of those affected would suggest much about the demands poor clients make on social services; the likelihood that poor claimants have of becoming social work clients; the likelihood of them using or being the subject of a particular social work service or action (for example being placed on the NAI register).

Direct financial payments

Section 1 of the 1963 Children and Young Persons Act (now Section 1 of the 1980 Child Care Act) empowers local authority social workers to provide financial and material help in order to promote the welfare of children by diminishing the need to receive them into care. Similar powers exist in Scotland (Section 12 of the Social

Work Scotland Act, 1968) and in Northern Ireland (Section 164 of the 1968 Children and Young Persons Act). The 1985 Association of Directors of Social Services Report indicates that between 1981/2 and 1982/3 there was a 16.9% increase in the use of section one money while between 1982/3 and 1983/4 there was a 22.7% increase. The actual cash payments for all social service departments was £997,764 for the year ending March 1982; £1,166,836 for the year ending March 1983; and £1,432,076 for the year ending March 1984 (ADSS, 1985, Table 54, 78). This trend, the ADSS believes, is increasing.

Heywood and Allen (1971) and Hill and Laing (1978, 1979) reported that the use social workers made of this provision varied widely between areas and between forms of assistance. The trend between 1964 to 1969 and in the late 1970s was for social workers to be involved in a crisis response of grant giving in order to keep families in their home and/or to provide food in emergencies. Similarly Valencia and Jackson's (1979) later study in Scotland found that social workers most frequently used section one payments to assist with problems arising from a lack of money to meet immediate needs for food and other household necessities. Payments were also made to assist with debts to fuel boards where disconnection was threatened, to help with other debts or to prevent homelessness. These studies suggest that section one payments are usually a crisis response to fundamental needs. Certainly Fuller and Stevenson have argued that such payments represent a specifically preventive intervention, in that if the needs are not met, depriving

consequences will follow (Fuller and Stevenson, 1983, 490). Children in care are more at risk of growing up deprived, especially those in residential care.

Lister and Emmett (1976) throw more light on the interface with supplementary benefits; they found that half of all section one payments go to families on supplementary benefit, for needs which the supplementary benefit scheme is designed to cover. In only 45% of potential section one cases did social workers approach the DHSS to see if they would pay. Rainbow's (1985) analysis of section one payments made in February 1983 and February 1985 by Finsbury social workers reveal that a large proportion of payments are made as a result of DHSS administrative failures. She calculates that only 25-35% of payments are legitimate use of section one monetary powers (Rainbow, 1985). Hill, too, has recently concluded that "it was still the case that very many of the emergency payments for food and similar necessities were being made to persons who might have obtained the money from DHSS" (1985, 12). Hill suggests that about 80%-85% of clients being given a section one payment are on supplementary benefit, although local authorities did not keep this information themselves. Food was the largest item for which a payment was made (Hill, 1985, 29-30). Similarly, the ADSS 1985 survey reported that payments are largely to alleviate hardship caused by the increasing financial pressures that families are being subjected to. Payments are primarily being made to cover reconnection of electricity supplies, some clothing needs which

supplementary benefit is failing to meet and rent where housing authorities view tenants as being intentionally homeless. The report expresses concern for the way that social workers are increasingly being drawn into the field of income maintenance (ADSS, 1985, 23). Unfortunately the ADSS is not able to provide, for re-analysis purposes, any data on the claimant status of recipients of section one money or other services mentioned in its reports.

The AMA (1985) chose not to focus in any detail on the use of section one payments, arguing that its use reflected policies and practice more than need (AMA, 1985, 64). They were unable to provide detailed figures for re-analysis on the actual use and extent of section one payments, or the "claimant status" of those receiving them. This reflected the inadequacy of participating local authority statistics on these payments.

Some authorities have, however, systematically recorded the use to which section one payments are made. The London Borough of Southwark (1985) reports that in 1983/4 the department issued section one payments to 479 families; 225 families were helped with food bills/vouchers; 68 families with fares; 54 families with clothing payments; 26 families with furniture. The London Borough of Camden (1985) reports that for the year 1984/5 the biggest single increase in payments was for food and subsistence in an emergency. The average payment rose from £12 in 1983/4 to £17 in 1984/5. Leaper (1986) reports that the largest items paid for by Devon social

services are grants for fares and cash advances; followed by money for household necessities. The pressure on such budgets has led to the London Borough of Islington recently issuing detailed policy guidelines on the use of section one payments. The guidelines stress the "exceptional" nature of such payments and the alternatives that must be explored before they are made. It also outlines some "creative" uses of payments, although payments are "not to be used as an alternative to the income maintenance system" (Islington Social Services, 1986).

Strathclyde Regional Council's examination of the use made of Section 12 discovered wide variations in the use of such payments by different offices and workers. There was overwhelming hostility to taking on wider responsibilities for income maintenance. Attitudes of local management, individual social workers and the varying relationships between the local social work office and other agencies were identified as the most important variables that would determine the use of Section 12 (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1982A).

Children in care and child abuse

Holman's (1980) study of inequalities in child care illustrates how the children of the poor are more likely to enter care than other sections of the population. He argued that it was not the aim of his paper to suggest that environmental factors were the only cause of an inability to cope or neglect one's children. His argument was that for some families, however, socially depriving conditions create

a lifestyle of poverty that is more likely to necessitate intervention by social workers. For others, their powers to cope are uninfluenced by material deprivation. He focussed on the processes by which poverty and deprivation affect certain families' ability to achieve accepted child care objectives. Holman argues that social provision and social work practice has failed many of these families. Summarising a range of studies, he discusses the five features of lone parenthood, large families, unskilled manual workers, low incomes and inadequate housing which are largely associated with social deprivation, and identifies those most likely to be received into care (1980, 15).

Holman encourages the preventive development of social work practice coupled with an expansion of day care facilities and other resources to reduce inequalities in child care. He does not underestimate either the importance of casework and counselling skills alongside developments in community work or advocacy and negotiation methods.

Holman highlights how poverty may lead to some people, rather than others, becoming clients - perhaps against their will. More recently the Select Committee on Social Services report on children in care expressed concern at the high proportion of children in care coming from families on supplementary benefit (in Meacher, 1986, 3). Strathclyde social work department has reported that 70% of all children received into its care are from families whose head of household is unemployed (Strathclyde, 1981, 6).

Rhodes and Veit - Wilson (1978) in their analysis of children coming into care in Newcastle between 1971-1977 provide data on the extent to which financial poverty is a dominant factor in such admissions. By combining figures on admissions and financial records of contributions they were able over that six year period to analyse each reception into care. Some children were received into care on numerous occasions. During the six year period a total of 2,338 children were received into care; 626 children were received into care twice in that period, 202 children were received three times, 90 four times, 33 five times and 9 on six occasions. They found:

(i) 80% of children's families were living at or below supplementary benefit levels on the first reception into care.

(ii) This figure increased the more times a child was received into care. Consequently the figure of those parents living at or below supplementary benefit levels was 83.7% for children received into care on a second occasion, 91.3% of parents whose child was received into care on a third occasion, 94.2% on the fourth occasion, 96.9% on the fifth occasion and 100% by the sixth reception into care.

(iii) 91% of the children coming from one parent families on the first reception were living at or below supplementary benefit levels. Children who repeatedly came into care were more likely to come from

a one parent family (Rhodes and Veit-Wilson, 1978).

Packman's (1984) recent research on decision making in admissions to care reports similar findings. She considered 361 children from 275 families in two middle sized English cities all of whom were seriously considered for admission to care in 1980-1982.

- (i) of those with a father or stepfather, 31% were unemployed.
- (ii) only 1 in 5 mothers worked (over half of them part time).
- (iii) 44% of children came from families in which there was no waged member.
- (iv) social workers considered that 53% of families had "financial difficulties", while 25% were described as "bad managers".

Inequalities in child care appear to be as prominent today as when Holman wrote his paper some years ago. More research is needed on the process by which the children of the poor are more likely to be received into care. But also, more needs to be known about practices aimed at ameliorating the depriving consequences of residential care, which mean that children are fostered or adopted by adults who are much less likely to be poor than the natural parents (See Table 5.15). Foster parents receive an allowance for caring for children placed with them. Had such an allowance been paid as a

preventive measure to the natural parents, or had their state benefit provided a more generous level of income sufficient to achieve the child care objectives Holman described, then many of these children may never have been received into care. Leaper (1986) has called for a study of cash grants for "preventive family care".

One of the main causes for admission to care is neglect or abuse. The NSPCC have some figures on the employment and claimant status of parents of abused children, collected from 10% of all local authorities. The figures in table 5.24 relate to characteristics of parents who were first put on the abuse register held by the NSPCC in the relevant years. For the 90% of abuse registers held by local authorities, claimant status is unlikely to be recorded and is certainly not collated nationally by the ADSS or DHSS. Indeed the DHSS circular to local authorities on registering child abuse cases makes no recommendations about the collection of claimant status (DHSS, 1980).

Table 5.24: NSPCC - parents of abused children, employment and benefit status, 1977-1982

Year	Mothers		Fathers		Supplementary Benefit Recipients
	Employed*	Unemployed	Employed*	Unemployed	
1977	123 (17.6)	494 (70.7)	331 (53.4)	217 (35.0)	337 (46.6)
1978	111 (15.0)	592 (80.2)	350 (56.4)	219 (35.3)	301 (40.2)
1979	104 (15.5)	555 (82.7)	330 (57.2)	230 (39.9)	303 (42.6)
1980	122 (15.6)	601 (76.7)	313 (47.1)	257 (38.7)	367 (45.0)
1981	109 (12.6)	704 (81.2)	277 (38.7)	371 (51.8)	514 (57.2)
1982	98 (12.9)	622 (81.8)	226 (36.0)	365 (58.2)	483 (61.7)

*Percentages relate to the different numbers of mothers and fathers in the sample when parental situation is adjusted for.

Source: Creighton, 1984, Table 13, p.12.

Table 5.24 shows that the percentage of mothers in paid employment in any one year is very small - only 12.6% were employed in 1981 compared with a national figure of 51% for married women and 48% for lone mothers with dependent children (General Household Survey, 1981, quoted in Creighton, 1984). More strikingly is the percentage of employed fathers which was only 36% in 1982 and the percentage of abused children's families receiving supplementary benefit which by 1982 was almost two thirds of the total (Creighton, 1984).

Strathclyde social work department's analysis of 719 child abuse cases on the register in June 1980 provides an indication of the extent to which deprivation and non accidental injury may be linked. District rates of abuse were compared with various "poverty

indicators" calculated for each District (e.g. the percentage receiving free school meals, rate of infant still-births). The multiple correlation coefficient between the non accidental injury rate and the five poverty indicators chosen was 9.8 - representing a strong positive association between abuse and deprivation (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1982B). However, as the analysis of the Strathclyde referral figures for 1984-85 show clients who receive supplementary benefit are 52% of the total; of those clients referred for child abuse, however, proportionately equal amounts come from those on supplementary benefit and those not on any social security benefits at all. There is not a simple correlation between abuse and financial poverty. Financial poverty is only one aspect of deprivation. Consideration would have to be given to the wider dimensions of deprivation before a clearer picture could be put together of the processes at work here. Abuse referrals, whilst a small part of overall referrals to social workers, show signs of increasing in the light of recent child deaths (Community Care, 20th February 1986, 2).

The AMA's survey confirmed an upward trend in new abuse registrations but urged detailed research to be conducted to establish the association with unemployment (AMA, 1985, 131). Certainly Sheffield City Council's analysis of children registered as being at risk showed a significant correlation with unemployment and caused the Council to assert that the adverse financial effects of unemployment may lead to an increase in the incidence of non accidental injuries

to children (Sheffield City Council, 1981, 6). Irvine, Becker and MacPherson's (1987) review of the American and British literature on poverty and child abuse leads them to conclude that a causal association between poverty and child abuse is never likely to be proved due to a number of sources of bias, although significant circumstantial evidence exists to suggest that for many poor people it is an important factor, perhaps in some cases precipitating a form of abuse. They argue that physical abuse and cruelty is more prominent in poorer households; emotional neglect is slightly more prominent in affluent households, but sexual abuse cuts across all income and class backgrounds. These findings, they suggest, should not be surprising:

"Poor parents on supplementary benefit require very great ability to bring up their children to middle class standards on £1.44 a day. Many simply cannot do it. Conversely there are many in more affluent households who run little or no risk of neglecting their children through financial poverty. Parents living in these more affluent environments have available to them a number of choices which are unavailable to the poor. Some are able to spend part of their income on other methods of child care such as babysitters, nannies, au-pairs, so reducing the stresses associated with bringing up children. But even so evidence is growing which suggests that this group, while more hidden from the gaze of social workers, nonetheless abuse their children". (Irvine, Becker and MacPherson, 1987, 22)

Much more research is needed to examine the "visibility" of poor claimants, their parenting skills and other practices which are more likely to bring them to the attention of social workers and other professionals. Movements towards patch based or community social work for example may make the poor even more visible to social workers. Given the panic of recent abuse cases, these workers may

find themselves being forced to adopt a closer policing role rather than the intended one of community support and development. But, as Irvine and colleagues suggest, research into the origins of child abuse is, like the phenomenon itself, a political issue. The State, as a major provider of research funds, has a strategic role to play in encouraging or supressing the debate about the etiology of child abuse. Irvine et al are pessimistic:

"At a time when the numbers - and particularly the number of children - living in poverty or on its margins are increasing dramatically, one can only speculate whether such research, despite being central to the debate, will be commissioned or encouraged." (Irvine, Becker and MacPherson, 1987, 22)

Summary

The poor are more likely than other sections of the population to become clients of social workers. For some this may be as a result of the abuse, or neglect of their children; for others it may be a product of the process by which their children are received into care. Not surprisingly, poor clients dominate in the use of section one payments - the closest point a social worker gets to direct income maintenance. Many payments are to cover needs that for a majority of recipients are allowed for in the supplementary benefit regulations. However only in a minority of cases did social workers attempt to secure such payments from the DHSS rather than their own area budgets. This use of section one payments highlights the extent to which some poor clients look to social workers for direct financial assistance. Such responses accentuate the need for social workers to have a good knowledge of social security legislation and the methods by which to secure clients' entitlements

to benefits.

Research is urgently needed into the use which poor clients make of other social work services. Nursery provision will be high on such a list, but so too might statutory care orders (for whatever reason), meals on wheels services and so on. An analysis by Strathclyde social services of those attending day nurseries in 1982 revealed that of all those attending, 66% were from families on or below family income supplement levels with a further 11% on incomes less than £10 above FIS levels. Those from single parent families were most likely to be on low incomes. Similarly nearly 9 out of 10 home help clients in that year received a free home help service because their incomes were too low to require a contribution (Freeman, 1986). Detailed information on these and other questions would provide greater understanding of the associations between poverty and the use of social services. It is essential for the development of a preventive strategy within the personal social services. Without such research, the evaluation of social work effectiveness in ameliorating some of the harsher consequences of poverty is made impossible.

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CHAPTER 6

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY RESULTS : CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Introduction

This chapter is divided into a number of sections:

- Section one: basic socio-demographic characteristics
- Section two: political affiliation and group membership
- Section three: employment characteristics
- Section four: qualifications
- Section five: work and voluntary experiences prior to field
social work
- Section six: social class and financial background
- Section seven: standard of living, housing tenure and
area of residence
- Section eight: experience of claiming
- Section nine: what social workers read

SECTION ONE: BASIC SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

This section includes data on sex, age, marital status and the religious beliefs of social workers as a group. It compares this data, where possible, with figures for the population as a whole.

Four hundred and fifty one questionnaires were analysed using SPSSx on the 2900 computer at Nottingham University. Two hundred and ninety one questionnaires (65% of the total) are from Nottinghamshire social workers, 160 (35%) are from City of Manchester social workers. The relative response rate is 60% and 49% respectively (this and the methodology is discussed in more detail in Appendix two). One hundred and ninety one questionnaires (42%) are from male respondents, 260 (58%) are female. The same proportion of respondents are male and female in both authorities.

Sex and age

The age and sex distribution is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Age and sex distribution of the sample

Age	M	F	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
No answer	1	3	4	1	1
Under 25	5	15	20	4	5
25 - 30	39	59	98	22	27
31 - 35	61	56	117	26	53
36 - 40	42	52	94	21	74
41 - 45	17	27	44	10	84
46 - 50	10	23	33	7	91
51 - 55	6	14	20	4	95
Over 55	10	11	21	5	100
Total	191	260	451	100	100

Over half are under 35; nearly three quarters are under 40. Women outnumber men in every age band except that of 31 - 35.

Marital status

Two hundred and sixty four (59%) social workers are currently married. Three (1%) are widowed, 58 (13%) separated or divorced and 124 (28%) single. Table 6.2 shows the marital status of the sample by sex and compares this with the latest figures available for the population as a whole.

When these social workers are contrasted to the general population aged 20 to 60 it can be seen that, as a group, the Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers are slightly less likely than the general population to be married. This is particularly so for women social

Table 6.2: Social workers' marital status by sex, compared with
general population aged 20-60

	Nottingham and Manchester Social Workers			England and Wales 1985 Population aged 20 - 60 only		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
Married	118 (63)	146 (57)	264 (58)	8656 (66)	9275 (72)	17931 (69)
Widowed	2 (1)	1 (0)	3 (1)	89 (1)	349 (3)	438 (2)
Separated/ Divorced	27 (14)	29 (11)	56 (13)	734 (6)	906 (7)	1640 (6)
Single	42 (22)	82 (32)	124 (28)	3593 (27)	2424 (18)	6017 (23)
Total	189 (42)	258 (58)	447 (100)	13072 (50)	12954 (50)	26026 (100)

Source: England and Wales figures derived from OPCS, 1985, Table 1.1 and 1.1a, pp.22-23. note: Figures in thousands.

workers. Social workers are also more likely to be separated or divorced; male social workers are more than twice as likely to be separated or divorced than males in the general population.

Seventy percent of social workers under 25 are single. One quarter of 46 - 50 year olds are separated; one fifth of 31-35 year olds are separated. The highest separation rate is amongst area directors and seniors; one in 4 of these are separated compared with 1 in 10 social workers and social work assistants.

Religious beliefs

One hundred and seventy seven social workers (40%) record that they have no religion. One hundred and sixty seven (37%) have a religion, but are "non practising" (i.e. do not attend church, synagogue, mosque, or follow the necessary conventions or practices). Only about 1 in 5 male and female social workers (n = 101) actually practise a religion. Two out of 3 of this group report that their religious beliefs consciously influence the way in which they approach their work. Of the 268 social workers who have a religion (practising and non practising), 144 belong to the Church of England, 53 are Roman Catholics, 45 Non Conformists, 7 are Jewish, 25 have "other" religious denominations, which include Sikhs, Quakers, Salvation Army, Buddhists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Greek Orthodox and Methodists.

The under 25s and over 45s are the most religious age groups; over

one third of these practise a religion, compared with 27% of the 41 - 45s, 20% of the 36 - 40s, and 15% of the 25 - 35s. National data on religious participation shows that, in 1985 (the latest available figures) about 6,925,000 (15.2%) of the adult population of the United Kingdom practised a christian religion (this includes Anglican churches, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic and other Trinitarian churches). Another 1,813,000 practised other religions (Jewish, Muslims, Sikhs, etc.) or attended other churches (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) (HMSO, 1987, Table 11.6, p.176). The 1986 British Social Attitude Survey found that, in Britain, about 12% of the public attended church regularly each week. In America the figure was 36% (Jowell, Witherspoon and Brook, 1986, 90).

A survey by Gallup in 1985-1986 found that 20% of the British public said that they attended religious services at least monthly. Only 34% never attended a religious service. Gallup also found that 8% of the general public thought of themselves as "very religious", 56% "somewhat religious" and 34% "not religious at all" (Heald and Wybrow, 1986, 226-227). The data suggest that Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers approximate fairly closely with the general population in terms of religious practice. About one in five social workers practise a religion; about one in five of the public attend religious services at least monthly.

Social workers who will vote for the Conservative or Alliance parties are far more likely to practise a religion. Table 6.3 shows who

practises a religion by political party support.

Table 6.3: Religion by political party support

	Conservative	Labour	Alliance	Total
No religion	7 (33)	152 (49)	13 (16)	172 (41)
Practising	8 (38)	54 (17)	32 (39)	94 (23)
Non practising	6 (29)	10 (34)	38 (46)	151 (36)
Total	21 (5)	313 (75)	83 (20)	417 (100)

Notes: Percentages and figures are calculated on the basis of exclusion of those from other political parties (missing observations = 34). $P < 0.001$, $\chi^2 = 50.50142$.

Nearly forty percent of Alliance and Conservative supporters and only 17% of Labour party supporters practise a religion.

Social workers who are members of the British Association of Social Work (BASW) are by far the most likely to practise a religion; nearly half of BASW members practise and say that it consciously influences the way they approach their work. Those from social class I backgrounds are more likely to practise a religion than those from social class V (28% compared with 17% respectively). Widowed and married social workers are also more likely to practise a religion; 33% of widowed, 27% married, 20% single and only 9% separated/divorced social workers practise a religion.

SECTION TWO: POLITICAL VALUES AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

This section includes data on social workers' political values (who they would support in the event of a General Election) and their membership of political parties, pressure groups, BASW and CPAG.

Support for political parties

When asked who would they support if there was a General Election tomorrow, 21 social workers (5%) answered the Conservative party, 83 (18%) will support the Liberal/SDP Alliance, 319 (71%) will support the Labour party. Fifteen social workers (3%) will support other parties, such as the Communists, Greens, any "female candidate except Conservative", or another "minority party". Thirteen (3%) will not support any party or are undecided. Gallup, who asked the public the identical question, found that in November 1985 31% would support the Conservatives, 36% would support Labour, 31% would support the Alliance and 2% were undecided (Heald and Wybrow, 1986, 12; see also Jowell and Airey, 1984, 13). Whilst political support can vary considerably depending on when a poll is taken (especially before a General Election), it is clear that these social workers are significantly more likely to support Labour than the general public.

Five percent of all males and females support the Conservative party, 78% of males and 68% of females support Labour. Eleven percent of males and 24% of female social workers support the Alliance. In fact

three quarters of all Alliance supporters are female.

Labour supporters are more likely to be younger. Four out of 5 Labour supporters are under 40 years of age. One third of Conservative and 60% of Alliance supporters are under 40. Two out of 3 Conservative supporters are over 45 years of age; and half of these are over 55.

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welfare rights officers are the most likely to support Labour; 90% will support Labour if there is an Election tomorrow. Three out of 4 area directors, seniors and social workers are Labour supporters. Social work assistants are least likely to support the Labour party; only half support Labour, another third support the Alliance.

Social workers who support the Conservatives are also more likely to first be married and second have had work experience outside social services before becoming field social workers. Nearly nine out of 10 Conservative supporters, 7 out of 10 Alliance supporters and 5 out of 10 Labour supporters are married. Fifteen percent of Labour supporters are separated and 30% are single. Only 5% of Conservatives are separated and 10% single.

Nine out of 10 Conservative supporters spent well over 1 year in non social work employment before becoming field social workers. Seven out of 10 Alliance supporters and only 5 out of 10 Labour supporters spent more than 1 year in non social work jobs.

Membership of groups

Political party

One hundred and sixteen (26%) are actually members of a political party - one third of all male and 20% of all female social workers. Three are members of the Communist party, 2 are members of the SDP, 1 is a Green party member, 1 a member of the SWP and 1 is a member of the Conservative party. The remaining 108 (24% of the total) are all members of the Labour party. Three out of four members of a political party are under 40.

Trade union and British Association of Social Workers (BASW)

Four fifths of all social workers are in a union; three are in the British Union of Social Work Employees (BUSWE), 19 are members of NUPE, the remaining 330 are members of NALGO, the Local Government Officers' Union.

Sixty six social workers (15%) are BASW members. The first ever National Readership Survey of Social Workers (Taylor Nelson, 1987) conducted for the journal Community Care estimates that nationally about 13% of social workers are BASW members. The Nottinghamshire and Manchester social work sample equates closely with this national picture.

Half the Nottingham and Manchester BASW members are over 40 years of age; only 1 in 10 is under 30. One quarter of BASW members are also

in a political party or a pressure group.

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and other pressure groups

Thirty five social workers (8%) are members of CPAG, a pressure group for the poor. Seven out of 10 CPAG members are under 40. Nine out of 10 CPAG members are Labour supporters. Half of all social workers in CPAG are also members of the Labour party and another pressure group.

One hundred and one social workers (23%) are members of other "pressure groups". This is shown in figure 6.4. Eight out of 10 social workers in these pressure groups are under 40 and half are members of a political party.

Figure 6.4: Membership of pressure groups

Group	Frequency
CND	54
CPAG	35
Shelter/CHAR	8
Greenpeace	6
Women's Aid	5
Amnesty International	4
Mental Handicap Campaign	4
Social Security Groups (e.g.Action for Benefits)	4
War on Want or Oxfam	4
Ethnic minority action groups	4
MIND	3
Anti-apartheid	2
Association for Juvenile Justice	2
National Abortion Campaign	1
Militant	1
CAMRA	1
Gay Rights	1
Anti-vivisection	1
Family Rights Group	1
Vegetarian Society	1

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) is the most popular pressure group amongst social workers, although CPAG was not too far behind. The majority of the main or best known pressure groups are represented, although for some, membership is perhaps surprisingly low given the type of work that social workers are involved in. For example 35 social workers formally specialise in Intermediate Treatment with young offenders (Table 6.7). But only 2 are members of the Association for Juvenile Justice, a pressure group established in 1983/84 to promote credible alternatives to incarceration for juvenile offenders. No social workers are members of the other main I.T. related groups, namely the National Intermediate Treatment Federation (NITFED), the Federation of Intermediate Treatment Groups in the East Midlands (FITEM) or its Manchester equivalent. Similarly

68 social workers formally specialise in mental handicap work (Table 6.7) but only 4 are members of a group concerned with mental handicap issues. Seventy two social workers formally specialise in psychiatric social work but only 3 are members of MIND, a group concerned with mental health issues.

Group, membership, political support and job

Table 6.5 shows the proportion of social workers in each group by their political preference and job title.

One third of all Labour supporters are also members of the Labour party, 9 out of 10 are union members and 1 in 10 is a member of CPAG. Under half of Conservative supporters are union members, none are CPAG members.

Additionally WROs are most likely to be politically active (3 out of 4 are members of a political party - in every case the Labour party), every one is a trade unionist, three quarters are members of CPAG and 64% are members of other pressure groups.

Summary

As a group most social workers are "left wing" in their political values; 7 out of 10 support the Labour party and nearly one quarter of all social workers are Labour party members. Membership of pressure groups, however, is not as widespread as might have been expected given social workers' daily contact with vulnerable groups.

Table 6.5: Membership of groups by political support and job title

Group	POLITICAL SUPPORT						JOB TITLE				
	Conservative	Labour	Alliance	Other	Area Director	Senior	Social Worker	Specialist	SWA	WRO	Other
Political Party	5%	35%	2%	13%	44%	31%	23%	32%	8%	73%	14%
Trade Union	43%	87%	60%	67%	89%	77%	80%	72%	73%	100%	67%
BASW	10%	13%	21%	20%	0%	29%	12%	22%	3%	0%	4%
CPAG	0%	10%	0%	13%	0%	9%	6%	10%	0%	73%	0%
Other pressure group	5%	28%	7%	13%	11%	16%	24%	31%	8%	64%	14%
n =	21	319	83	15	9	70	244	59	37	11	21
	5%	73%	19%	3%	2%	16%	54%	13%	8%	2%	5%

SECTION THREE: EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

This section includes details on job titles, what organisational structure social workers work in, the length of time they have been in their current job, specialisation, and length of time in field social work as a whole.

Job title and organisational structure

Table 6.6: Current job title by sex and local authority

	Male	Female	Nottingham	Manchester	Total	Total %
Director/Assistant Area Director	5	4	5	4	9	2
Senior Social worker	45	25	49	21	70	16
Social worker	97	147	142	102	244	54
Specialist Social worker	20	39	51	8	59	13
Social work assistant	8	29	27	10	37	8
Welfare rights Officer	9	2	5	6	11	2
Other	7	14	12	9	21	5
Total	191	260	291	160	451	100%

The whole range of job titles and responsibilities are covered; over 300 (67%) are social workers (generic or specialist), 79 (18%) are in management, 37 (8%) are social work assistant level. Those who are

categorised as "other" include group workers, mobility officers, field work supervisors, project workers and rehabilitation officers. Women dominate in generic, specialist and SWA posts. Males dominate in senior posts, WRO posts and, slightly, in area director/assistant director posts.

One hundred and four (23%) are employed in area office long-term teams, 26 (6%) in area office intake teams. A further 67 (15%) are employed in area offices with both duty and long-term functions, 127 (28%) are employed in area offices with both duty and specialist social work functions. One hundred and nineteen are defined as "other". This includes all those working in specialist centralised or sector social work teams for the mentally ill, mentally handicapped, juvenile delinquent, physically handicapped, deaf, welfare rights, group practice attachment, family centres, patch teams, emergency duty teams, centralised adoption or fostering units, homelessness units, visually handicapped. Over 70% of social workers are area team based. The remainder are predominantly in specialist teams covering a number of geographical areas with specialised client responsibilities or specialised role responsibilities (e.g. welfare rights, adoption).

Length of time in current post

Sixty one social workers (14%) have been in their current post for under 6 months. A further 74 (16%) have been in post for 6 months - 1 year; nearly one third of all social workers have therefore only

been in their current post for one year or under. Eighty four (19%) have been in post for 1 - 2 years, 123 (27%) 2 - 5 years, 55 (12%) 5 - 10 years and only 51 (11%) over 10 years.

The data suggest that there is a fairly rapid turnover of social work staff. Nearly half of the sample have been in post for under 2 years. As a group the Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers appear to be relatively young and occupationally mobile.

Specialisms

Table 6.7 shows the specialisms - formal and informal - of the sample. The numbers exceed 451 because many social workers have a number of related specialisms (e.g. child care, fostering).

Nearly 40% formally specialise in some form of child care work, another 20% informally specialise in this type of work.

Table 6.7: Formal and informal specialisms of the sample

	Formal		Informal	
	F	%	F	%
Child care	177	39	84	19
Psychiatric	72	16	48	11
Mental handicap	68	15	49	11
Elderly	67	15	50	11
Fostering and adoption	62	14	43	10
Disabled	50	11	35	8
Intermediate treatment	35	8	21	5
Welfare rights	24	5	59	13
Community work	15	3	39	9
Other (specified)	51	11	15	3

Note: "Other" includes visually handicapped, deaf, ethnic minorities, under 5s, homeless, training, debt counselling and action research, alcohol and drug abuse, guardian ad litem work, emergency duty work, group work. Numbers exceed 451 and 100% due to multiple responses.

Formal specialisms are a useful indicator of the type of work that respondents are most likely to be involved in, the recognised "substance" of their everyday practice. Informal specialisms indicate other areas of work, but which might not be the main or recognised focus of specialisation. Welfare rights work is the second most mentioned informal specialism, indicating that a substantial number are involved in this type of work. In fact more social workers do welfare rights or community work in an 'informal' capacity than are actually employed directly to specialise in these areas.

Length of time in field social work as a whole

Nearly one in ten have only recently started a job in field social work and have been employed for under one year (Table 6.8).

Table 6.8: Length of time as field social worker

	F	Percent	Cumulative %
Less than 6 months	16	4	4
6 months - 1 year	20	5	9
1 - 2 years	40	9	18
2 - 5 years	98	22	40
5 - 10 years	126	28	68
10 years or over	142	32	100
Total	442	100	100%

Sixty percent have been in field social work for 5 years or more; one third of the total for over 10 years. The data suggest that many respondents stay in field social work for considerable lengths of time, although as a group, they may change jobs within social work quite frequently. The Local Government Training Board (1986) estimate that nationally 7% or more of social service staff leave social work each year.

SECTION FOUR: QUALIFICATIONS

This section includes details of the professional and educational qualifications of Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers.

Social work qualifications

Three hundred and sixty two (80%) have a CQSW (83% of males and 78% of females). Eight (2%) have a CSS, 32 have other qualifications which include Home Office Certificates in Child Care, Diplomas in Social Work, Advanced CCETSW courses, Psychiatric Social Work Diplomas, Awards for working with the blind. About 90% of specialist or generic social workers have a CQSW, 8 out of 10 seniors, 7 out of 10 area directors. One quarter of WROs have a CQSW.

One hundred and nineteen (26%) spent one year training for their qualification, 221 (49%) spent two years, 12 (3%) three years, 33 (7%) four years. Very few (n = 42) have two of the social work qualifications listed above. Of these, 20 spent a further one year working for their second qualification, 10 spent two years, 1 spent three years, 7 four years. The remainder trained on day release or took under 1 year to get their second social work qualification.

Nine (2%) obtained their first social work qualification between 1940 and 1960. Thirty four (8%) qualified between 1961 and 1970, 62 (14%) between 1971 and 1975, 131 (29%) between 1976 and 1980, 143 (32%)

between 1981 and 1985. Eleven (2%) qualified in 1986. Nearly two thirds obtained their first qualification since 1976. Of those with a second social work qualification, over half (n = 24) obtained it since 1976. These data support the picture established by the age distribution information: Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers are relatively young and to a large extent recently qualified.

Data from the first ever national survey of manpower and qualifications in British social services, conducted by Bell at the Local Government Training Board (1986) found that about 85% of social work staff in field work services have a social work qualification. The Nottingham and Manchester sample equates very closely with this national picture (see also Murray, 1986, 6). Recent national data by CCETSW (1987) suggest that social workers with a CQSW are far more likely to enter field social work practice than, for example, residential social work.

Other educational or occupational qualifications

Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers are well qualified in other respects as well. Two hundred and fifty one (56%) have a Bachelor's degree. Of the 190 who reported the subject, 6 have degrees in teaching, 19 in sciences or mathematics, 33 in arts or classics, 50 in sociology or social administration and 82 in another social science discipline such as psychology or politics. Fifty eight percent of males and 53% of females have a Bachelor's degree.

Nine out of 10 WROs have a Bachelor's degree, 6 out of 10 seniors, 5 out of 10 area directors or social workers and 3 out of 10 SWAs (Table 6.9).

Fifty six (12%) have a Master's degree. Thirty four are Masters of Social Work, with another 10 having a Master's degree in another social science subject. One third of area directors have a Master's degree, 3 out of 10 WROs, 2 out of 10 seniors and 1 in 10 social workers (Table 6.9). One hundred have diplomas. Of those reporting the subject, 10 have diplomas in social administration, 20 in "social science" (so described), 9 in social work, 5 in teaching, 3 in business, 2 in youth and community work, 1 in nursing, 1 with the deaf. A further 22 have other teaching qualifications, for example a Certificate of Education.

Nineteen respondents have other "welfare related" qualifications, namely in nursing, education, welfare or deaf work. Thirty have a "business related" qualification, namely in typing, hotel catering, secretarial work, business studies, book-keeping or an award from the Institute of Bankers (Table 6.9).

Table 6.9: Job by qualification

PROPORTION OF EACH JOB TITLE WITH:

	QSW	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Diploma	Other welfare related qualification	Business related qualification	All in this job
Area Director	(68)	(56)	(33)	(44)	(11)	(0)	9 (2)
Senior	(84)	(64)	(17)	(26)	(1)	(7)	70 (16)
Social Worker	(91)	(57)	(12)	(23)	(5)	(6)	244 (54)
Specialist Social Worker	(88)	(56)	(12)	(25)	(5)	(3)	59 (13)
SWA	(8)	(30)	(0)	(5)	(5)	(19)	37 (8)
WRO	(27)	(91)	(27)	(9)	(0)	(9)	11 (2)
Other	(76)	(43)	(10)	(14)	(5)	(0)	21 (5)
All with this qualification	362 (80)	251 (56)	56 (12)	100 (22)	19 (4)	30 (7)	451 (100)

SECTION FIVE: WORK AND VOLUNTARY EXPERIENCES PRIOR TO BECOMING FIELD SOCIAL WORKERS

This section includes data on the point of life at which respondents decided to become field social workers and information on their prior voluntary and work experiences.

Becoming a field social worker: point in life

Sixty two (14%) decided to become field social workers before leaving school (3% of all male and 21% of females). Eighty seven (19%) made their decision during study in higher graduate or non graduate education, 27 (6%) whilst unemployed, 75 (17%) whilst in social services and 177 (39%) during work or experience in a non social services setting (48% of all males and 33% females). Fifteen others either decided at a point of "crisis" in their lives - a "mid life" crisis, after the death of a parent - or during or after some other activity such as research, living abroad, or church youth work. The single largest group of respondents decided to become social workers while working in non social services employment.

Prior voluntary and work experiences

Respondents provided details of how long they had spent in (i) paid work related to social work, (ii) voluntary work and (iii) work other than that related to social work before starting as field social workers. Fifty percent of respondents spent no time or less than one

year in paid work related to social work before becoming field social workers. Another quarter spent 1-2 years. Paid work of this type includes residential work with the elderly, handicapped or children, youth work, nursing, teaching, social work assistant, education welfare, community work, play scheme leaders, nursery work, DHSS, police, night shelters, meals on wheels, social service administrators, instructors at adult training centres, home helps, neighbourhood care schemes, volunteer organisers.

Nearly two out of 3 spent some time doing voluntary work before becoming field social workers. Twenty six percent spent under 1 year, 17% between 1 and 2 years. One in five spent over three years. This type of work includes community service volunteers, visiting the elderly, sick or disabled, youth work, care assistants in residential establishments, escorting duties, befriending a range of client groups, visiting probation clients, CAB work, welfare rights and advice work, local care groups work, VSO, literacy and numeracy, playgroups, soup runs, hospital visiting, self help groups, womens aid, MIND, Homestart, WRVS, meals on wheels, Samaritans, Age Concern, kibbutz volunteers, hospice work, victim support, gardening, I.T. volunteers, St. John's Ambulance, Church work. The vast majority of respondents who have done voluntary work did so in more than one capacity.

One in five never worked "outside" social services or social work before becoming field social workers. Another quarter have only

worked in non social work jobs for under a year. Nearly half have therefore either never worked outside social work or have done so for under one year. At the other extreme, 12% have worked in non social work jobs for over 10 years before becoming field social workers. This type of work includes scientific research, shop work, clerical work, insurance, engineering, armed forces, police, domestic work, factory work, secretarial, hospital portering, laboratory work, labouring, sales, accountancy, catering, driving, haulage, banking, Inland Revenue, retailing, building, bar work, journalism, butchery, market research, post office, civil service, mining, pastoral work.

SECTION SIX: SOCIAL CLASS AND FINANCIAL BACKGROUND

This section includes data on the type of area lived in, social class origins, type of parental occupation and financial circumstances of respondents during their childhood.

Type of area lived in during childhood

One hundred and thirty five (30%) social workers lived mainly in rural areas as children. Sixty eight percent lived in urban areas and 11 (2%) moved frequently. One hundred and forty eight (33%) lived in towns, 103 (23%) in villages, 80 (18%) in large cities, 77 (17%) in city suburbs and 18 (4%) in small cities. Eight out of 10 social workers who thought they had quite wealthy backgrounds came from rural villages.

Social class

Social workers' class origins were analysed using both the Census Classification of Occupations (OPCS, 1981) and Goldthorpe's social grading of occupations (Halsey et al; 1980, Goldthorpe, 1980). Goldthorpe's classification allows social workers' origins to be directly compared with the class origin of a wider representative sample from the 1972 Oxford Mobility Study. Additionally this allows social workers' class origins to be directly compared with the class origins of other professionals of an equal social class position.

Table 6.10 compares social workers' class origins with an equivalent group of professionals from social class II. These are contrasted with the class origins of the whole of the 1972 Mobility Study sample.

Table 6.10: Class origins of social workers compared with other professionals and a representative sample

Eight classes (a)	Three classes	Class origins of social workers	Class origins of equivalent other professionals (1972) (b)	Class origins of all 1972 representative sample (c)
I Higher-grade professionals, administrators, managers, and proprietors	S E R V	61 (15%) (21%)	(12%) (24%)	(7%) (13%)
II Lower-grade professionals, administrators and managers. Supervisors, and higher-grade technicians	I C E	27 (6%)	(12%)	(6%)
III Clerical, sales and rank-and-file service workers	I N T	50 (12%)	(10%)	(7%)
IV Small proprietors and self-employed artisans. The 'petty bourgeoisie'	E R M E D	94 (22%) (37%)	(14%) (37%)	(14%) (33%)
V Lower-grade technicians and foremen. The 'aristocracy of labour'	I A T E	14 (3%)	(13%)	(12%)
VI Skilled manual workers in industry		99 (23%)	(21%)	(28%)
VII Semi- and unskilled manual workers in industry	W O R K I	78 (18%) (42%)	(18%) (39%)	(26%) (54%)
VIII Agricultural workers and smallholders	N G	3 (1%)	-	-
All		426 (100%)	1087 (100%)	9434 (100%)

Source: (a) Halsey et al, 1980, 17-18; (b+c) Goldthorpe, 1980, Table 2.4, 44.

One fifth of the Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers had fathers in service classes; another 37% had intermediate class origins and 42% had working class origins. Social workers themselves are in social class II. This suggests a fair degree of social mobility has taken place for many respondents; 8 out of 10 have 'moved' from 'intermediate' or 'working' class origins to a 'service' class destination.

When compared with the class origins of other professionals in social class II, it can be seen that these social workers' backgrounds are fairly representative of the class origins of other professional workers in a similar class. Nearly one quarter of other professionals in social class II had fathers in a service class; 37% had intermediate class origins and 39% had working class origins. Proportionately slightly more social workers had working class origins and slightly less had service origins than other professionals in the equivalent social class. But, on the whole, the picture is very similar. The Nottingham and Manchester social workers have class origins which correspond closely with the class backgrounds of other professionals in the equivalent social class.

However, when compared with the whole of the 1972 Oxford Mobility Study sample it is clear (and perhaps not too surprising) that social workers and other professionals are more likely than the representative total sample to have service social class origins and are less likely to have working class origins.

Summary

These social workers originate from social class origins which appear to be similar to the class origins of other professionals. Social workers, when contrasted with these other professionals, do not seem to be disproportionately recruited from a specific class origin. However, when compared with the representative sample as a whole, they do appear to be disproportionately recruited from service class origins and appear far less likely to be recruited from manual or working class backgrounds.

Class and access to education

Among the wider public those who originate from non manual social class backgrounds are far more likely to go into higher education, and especially to degree level, than those from manual class origins. For example, amongst the general public aged 25-49, 38% of those with degrees in 1983/4 had professional fathers from social class I, while another 16% had social class II origins. Only 11% of those with degrees came from manual/working class origins (OPCS, 1984, Table 7.12, p.107). Similarly two out of three people who had been to higher education below degree level had non manual social class origins (ibid; see also Halsey et al, 1980, pp.182-183).

The data on social workers' class origins and educational achievements suggest, however, a different picture to that nationally. Forty two percent of social workers with a bachelor's

degree come from working class origins. This is in sharp contrast to only 11% of the public with degrees who come from these origins (Table 6.11).

Table 6.11: Educational achievements by class origins

Socio-economic Group	OQSW	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Diploma	Business qualification
1 Professional	6%	7%	2%	5%	11%
2 Employers and managers	14%	18%	23%	15%	17%
3 Intermediate and junior non manual	31%	33%	28%	29%	18%
4 Skilled manual	31%	27%	21%	35%	29%
5 Semi skilled manual	12%	10%	16%	11%	14%
6 Unskilled manual	6%	5%	8%	5%	11%
n =	100% (262)	100% (251)	100% (56)	100% (100)	100% (30)

Note: SEG classification derived from OPCS, 1981.

Table 6.11 shows that nearly half the social workers with a Master's degree or OQSW had working class origins. A manual social class origin does not seem to 'restrict' access to educational or professional social work qualifications. The data suggest that, as far as these social workers are concerned, social class origins play little part in restricting access to the educational qualifications listed. Those who become social workers appear to be far more

socially mobile than the general public - in terms of movement from their original class origin to a social class II destination, and in terms of their access to and ability to secure higher or professional education and training.

Parents' occupation - "type" of service

Social workers' parents' occupations were classified by the degree to which that occupation led to direct contact with the public. The 5 categories are:

1. **HUMAN SERVICES:** this relates to occupations which involve a direct human service. These include teaching, social work or social services work, probation, nursing, medical or other health work, policing, dental work, home help, etc.

2. **SERVICES : DIRECT CONTACT WITH PUBLIC:** this relates to occupations which involve direct contact with the public but are not human services as outlined in (1) above. These include clerical work in banks, post offices, shop keeping, bus driving, milk or postal delivery, market trading, librarians, waitressing, hairdressing, doctors receptionist, publican, etc.

3. **SERVICES : LITTLE CONTACT WITH PUBLIC:** this relates to occupations which involve little or no contact with the public. These include factory work, personal secretaries, typists, fitters, miners, tax officers, draughtspersons, lorry, train and other

drivers, farmworkers, labourers, motor mechanics, administrators, civil servants, french polishers, physicists, armed forces, guards, toolmakers, warehousemen, bricklayers, plumbers, printers, accountants, textile workers, cooks, etc.

4. **SUPERVISORY AND MANAGERIAL:** this relates to occupations which specifically involve managerial or supervisory responsibilities and little contact with the public. These include bank and other managers, company directors, business executives, under managers, foremen, retail or wholesale managers, etc.

5. **HOME RESPONSIBILITIES:** this relates to occupations which specifically entail service to the home or family group. Many in categories (1) - (4) will have home responsibilities as well. Category (5) refers to those whose prime or exclusive occupation is home responsibility.

Table 6.12 makes use of this classification for social workers' fathers' and mothers' occupations.

Table 6.12: "Type" of service of parents during social workers' childhood

	Fathers		Mothers		Employed Mothers	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. Human services	51	11	57	13	57	28
2. Services - - direct contact	54	12	46	10	46	22
3. Services - - little contact	280	62	100	22	100	48
4. Supervisory/managerial	46	10	4	1	4	2
5. Home responsibilities	0	0	184	41	-	-
No answer or unclassifiable	20	5	60	13	-	-
Total	451	100%	451	100%	207	100%

Notes: The "no answer" category is important: over one tenth of social workers did not complete data on mothers' occupation; in many of these cases it is likely that the mother will have been exclusively involved in home responsibilities. The figure for home responsibilities for mothers consequently may underestimate the true extent by anything up to another 13%. 'Employed mothers' recalculates the proportions for mothers who are 'economically active' (n = 207).

One in 10 fathers and 13% of all mothers were employed in human services. Similar proportions were employed in direct services. Nearly one quarter of social workers' mothers and fathers, therefore, had direct contact with the public or were in human services. Of those mothers who were in employment, exactly half were in human or direct contact forms of service.

Over half of social workers' fathers had little contact with the public; one in 10 was a manager or supervisor. Anywhere between 41 to 54% of mothers had full-time home responsibilities (no fathers were in this category); only 1% of all mothers were managers, or 2% of those in employment.

Financial circumstances during childhood

Table 6.13 shows social workers' perceptions of their financial circumstances during childhood.

Table 6.13: Financial circumstances during social workers' childhood

	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Quite wealthy; very comfortable	14	3	3
Pretty comfortable; no real financial problems	103	23	26
Had most things we needed; quite comfortable; but occasional financial problems	250	55	81
Financial problems quite common, life pretty difficult	71	16	97
Severe and recurrent financial problems; life in general very difficult and uncomfortable	12	3	100
Total	450	100	100

Nearly one third of social workers had wealthy or pretty comfortable financial backgrounds. Over half had most things they needed with

only occasional financial problems. One in 5 came from families where there were more frequent problems or difficult financial circumstances. But only 3%, however, came from the most severe financial background, where life was very difficult and uncomfortable and money problems were severe and recurrent. For the vast majority of social workers - 4 out of 5 - their childhood financial situation was not characterised by money difficulties. Very few had experienced serious financial problems or financial poverty.

Data suggest the existence of a link between class origins and financial problems. This is not surprising. Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers who had working class (manual) origins are more likely to recall their financial circumstances as difficult; over half of those from social class V had common financial problems compared with only 3% from social class I. Two thirds of social workers from social class 1 were quite wealthy or pretty comfortable during their childhood. Only 7% from social class 5 were pretty comfortable.

Summary

Data presented in this section provides a picture of the social class origins and financial background of social workers. The data suggest that:

First, as a group slightly more social workers originate from non manual backgrounds. One fifth had fathers in 'service' classes; just

under two fifths had 'intermediate' class origins and just over two fifths had 'working' class origins. These class origins are very similar to other professionals in an equivalent social class position. However, when compared with the public it is not too suprising to find that fewer social workers had working class origins than the public as a whole.

Second, among the general population, those from non manual backgrounds are more likely to go on to higher education, and in particular, degree courses. However, class origins do not appear to be such a significant variable as far as these social workers' access to education is concerned. Nearly half the social workers with a degree or a CQSW are from working class origins. The data suggest that to have such access to professional and higher educational qualifications, and, to a social work post, many social workers will have been very socially mobile.

Third, as a group, only about one fifth of social workers thought that their financial circumstances during childhood were difficult or severe. Most came from backgrounds of relative financial comfort. Perhaps not suprisingly, social workers with non manual social class origins (and particularly social classes I and II) are most likely to have had financial backgrounds which were comfortable and relatively free of money problems. Social workers from working class origins are more likely to have had financial problems during their childhood.

SECTION SEVEN: CURRENT STANDARD OF LIVING, HOUSING TENURE AND
"TYPE" OF AREA OF RESIDENCE

This section includes data on social workers' perceptions of their current standard of living, housing tenure and the social and economic characteristics of the type of area in which they live.

Perceptions of current standard of living

Mack and Lansley have shown how the lower a person's living standard the more likely they are to be dissatisfied with it (1985, 166, 167). Table 6.14 compares social workers' perceptions with those of a national representative sample (the "public").

Table 6.14: Standard of living

Standard of living	Social Workers		Mack and Lansley's respondents (a)
	F	%	%
Very satisfied	128	29	17
Fairly satisfied	223	49	58
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	60	13	8
Fairly dissatisfied	38	8	10
Very dissatisfied	2	1	7
Don't know/no opinion	0	0	0
Total	451	100%	

Source: (a) Mack and Lansley, 1985, p.291.

Twenty nine percent of Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers are very satisfied with their standard of living, with nearly another 50% being fairly satisfied. Only 40 (9%) are dissatisfied to one degree or another. Female social workers have more intense feelings of satisfaction; 37% of female workers said they are very satisfied, compared with 17% of males; only 7% of females are dissatisfied compared with 13% of males.

Mack and Lansley's representative sample have a similar pattern of perceptions, although fewer are very satisfied and more are very dissatisfied. This is perhaps not surprising: social workers are likely to be relatively "better off" than the public generally and consequently have a higher standard of living.

Data on housing tenure confirm that social workers have a higher standard of living; housing is one of the factors that make up this standard, and 84% of Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers own their homes. This is far greater than the national average (Table 6.15).

Table 6.15: Social workers' housing tenure, compared with the national average

	Social Work Respondents		National figures (1985) (a)
	F	%	%
Rented from council	15	3	28
Privately rented	31	7	7
Rented from housing association	10	2	2
Owner occupier	378	84	61
Other (specified)	17	4	2
Total	451	100%	100%

Source: (a) OPCS, 1986, Table 7, p.6.

Of the 17 (4%) living in "other" accommodation, 9 live as lodgers, 5 live in tied accommodation, 1 with parents, 1 with friends, and 1 in a housing cooperative.

The data suggest that social workers are far more likely than the general public to own their homes; eighty four percent of social workers are owner occupiers compared with just over 60% of the general public. Additionally, social workers are far less likely, perhaps not suprisingly, to rent their homes from the local authority. Nearly 30% of the public are council tenants; only 3% of social workers are in this category.

Home ownership, whilst some indication of standard of living, does

not give a precise picture of the standard of housing or of the socio-economic geography of the location of residence. It tells us nothing about the kind of area that social workers live in.

Cluster analysis

A major computing company, CCN Systems, has developed a national social-geographical classification for each of the postcode areas in Great Britain. The classification is constantly updated for the purpose of direct mailing and assessment of credit worthiness. The system provides a 1 - 58 cluster classification for the 1.3 million postcodes in Great Britain. Social workers' postcodes were fed into the CCN computer to provide a classification of the social and economic characteristics of the areas in which they live. This is the first time the system has been used for a purpose other than determining credit worthiness. The potential value for further social work research is outlined elsewhere (Becker and MacPherson, 1986).

CCN's system

There are approximately 22 million residential addresses in Great Britain. Each address belongs to one of the 1.3 million full postcodes, each postcode containing between five and seven characters. While some postcodes contain as many as 150 addresses and others only one, the majority of postcodes contain around 15 addresses each. These 1.3 million postcodes have each been separately classified by CCN on the basis of the fullest amount of

information available about the people who live in them. Fifty four pieces of information are used to determine the 1 - 58 code that is given to each postcode. The 54 variables are derived from financial, demographic, housing and Census sources. The data is constantly updated by use of debt and credit information; annual electoral rolls (providing data on types of household, sex, size, ages); the postal address file (providing data about the age and type of property). The classification code given to each postcode depends on the financial, demographic and housing statistics for that particular postcode. But it also takes account of information from the Census for the fieldwork area in the general vicinity of the postcode.

The 1 - 58 Mosaic classification provides a more up-to-date and geographically discriminating analysis than a system relying solely on 1981 Census data. For the purpose of analysing the type of area that social workers live in the 58 Mosaics have been reduced to 10 separate classifications. These inevitably lose some of the detail of the fuller classification, but enable a more general grouping of area characteristics to be analysed. The 10 classifications and the numbers of social workers living in each area is shown in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16: Where social workers live: socio-economic characteristics of the area

Mosaic	General Description	F	%
A	High status areas with older owner occupiers	70	16
B	Inter war middle income semis with high employment level	36	8
C	Older middle/lower income areas, older owner-occupiers and tenants	70	15
D	Areas of private flats and single people, mostly inner city	57	13
E	Low income council housing, mostly high rise high unemployment	8	2
F	Socially stable older council housing with older age group	6	1
G	Council housing with young families, low rise, high unemployment	13	3
H	Post war private housing, couples with younger children	76	17
I	Small towns, villages and scattered farms	27	6
U	Unclassified - incomplete or inaccurate postcode	53	11
NA	No answer	35	8
Totals		451	100%

Notes: 11% of respondents inaccurately recorded their postcode. The CCN system identifies all incomplete or inaccurate postcodes and assigns them to Mosaic U.

Table 6.16 shows that the vast majority of social workers live in areas that are not characterised by relative deprivation. Only 6% live in areas characterised primarily by council housing, low incomes and high unemployment (Mosaic E, F, G) while another 13% live in inner city areas characterised by private flats and single people

(Mosaic D). The remainder live in high status areas (Mosaic A), middle income areas (Mosaic B and C) or in post war private housing or small towns (H and I).

Half of the area directors, 20% of seniors and 1 in 7 social workers live in high status areas (Mosaic A).

Areas that are characterised with particularly high concentrations of Labour supporters (over 75% of the total social work population living in that area) include Mosaic D (private flats and single people - inner city - 97% Labour supporters), Mosaic E, (low income council housing, high rise, high unemployment - 88% Labour supporters).

Areas with particularly high concentrations of Conservative supporters (over 10% of the total social work population) include Mosaic F (socially stable older council housing with older age group - 33% Conservative supporters) and Mosaic B (inter war middle income semis with high employment level - 14% Conservative supporters).

Areas with particularly high concentrations of Alliance supporters (over 35% of the total social work population) include Mosaic G (council housing with young families, low rise, high unemployment - 39% Alliance supporters) and Mosaic H (post war private housing, couples with younger children - 36% Alliance supporters).

Summary

Social workers have a higher standard of living than the general public. More own their homes and relatively few live in areas characterised by relative deprivation. Social workers who support the Labour party are more likely to live in areas of relative deprivation than Conservative or Alliance supporters.

SECTION EIGHT: EXPERIENCE OF CLAIMING SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT

This section includes data on the numbers and characteristics of social workers and their families who have claimed supplementary benefit (SB).

Two hundred and one social workers (45%) have claimed supplementary benefit (SB) at one stage; 149 before and 52 since 1980. Over half of all social workers also have a close family member who had claimed SB; 124 before and 116 since 1980.

Table 6.17 shows the number and proportions of male and female social workers who have claimed SB, by the length of time which they were dependent on it, and compares this with members of social workers' families who had also claimed SB.

Female social workers are slightly less likely to have claimed SB than their male colleagues. Nearly half of all social workers who have claimed SB did so for under 3 months. This contrasts sharply with members of social workers families. Nearly half of these members have claimed SB for over 2 years.

Direct experience of claiming

By job

Welfare rights officers are the most likely to have claimed SB.

Table 6.17: Dependency on supplementary benefit

	Never been dependent on benefit	Dependent <3 months	Dependent 3-6 months	Dependent 6 months to 1 year	Dependent 1-2 years	Dependent 2 years or more	Total who claimed	All
Male social worker	86 (46)	49 (26) (48)	30 (16) (28)	16 (8) (16)	6 (3) (6)	2 (1) (2)	103 (54) (100)	189 (100)
Female social worker	163 (63)	42 (16) (45)	31 (12) (33)	12 (5) (13)	4 (2) (4)	5 (2) (5)	94 (37) (100)	257 (100)
All social workers	249 (55)	91 (21) (46)	61 (14) (31)	28 (6) (14)	10 (2) (5)	7 (2) (4)	197 (45) (100)	446 (100)
Social workers' families	211 (47)	34 (7) (14)	30 (7) (13)	37 (8) (15)	26 (6) (11)	113 (25) (47)	240 (53) (100)	451 (100)

Notes: Second bracketed percentage relates to proportion of those
who have claimed benefit only.
X2 = 119.18453
p< 0.0001

Ninety percent have claimed SB, although well over half of this group claimed before 1980. Only three out of 10 area directors and seniors, half the social workers (generic and specialist) and 2 out of 10 SWAs have claimed SB.

By support for a political party

Nine out of 10 supporters of the Conservative party have never claimed SB themselves (Table 6.18). Labour supporters are the most likely to have claimed SB - over half have claimed directly; of these nearly half have been dependent on SB for under 3 months, and only 1 in 10 have been dependent for over 1 year. One third of Labour supporters who have claimed SB did so for 3 - 6 months.

Table 6.18: Dependency on SB by support for political party

	Political		Support		
Dependency on SB	Conservative	Labour	Liberal/SDP	Other	All
Under 3 months	1 (5)	73 (23)	12 (15)	3 (19)	89 (20)
3 - 6 months	1 (5)	52 (16)	4 (4)	1 (7)	58 (13)
6 months - 1 year	0 (0)	24 (7)	3 (4)	1 (7)	28 (6)
1 - 2 years	0 (0)	9 (3)	1 (1)	0 (0)	10 (2)
2+ years	0 (0)	9 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (2)
Never claimed	18 (90)	151 (48)	63 (76)	10 (67)	248 (57)
All	20 (100%)	318 (100%)	83 (100%)	15 (100%)	436 (100%)

By group membership

Two out of 10 BASW members, half of Labour party members and 7 out of 10 CPAG members have claimed SB directly; the vast majority in all cases before 1980. Half of CPAG members who have claimed did so for under 3 months (Table 6.19).

Table 6.19: Dependency on SB by group membership

	CPAG	BASW	Union	Political Party
Under 3 months	11 (32)	10 (15)	77 (22)	19 (19)
3 - 6 months	6 (18)	1 (2)	52 (15)	19 (19)
6 months - 1 year	4 (12)	4 (6)	25 (7)	7 (7)
1 - 2 years	1 (3)	0 (0)	10 (3)	3 (3)
2+ years	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (2)	2 (2)
Never claimed	12 (35)	50 (77)	179 (51)	51 (51)
All	34 (100%)	65 (100%)	351 (100%)	101 (100%)

Summary

Nearly half of Nottingham and Manchester social workers have claimed SB at one time or another; most before 1980. Over half of all social workers have a close family member who has claimed SB. Of those social workers who have claimed, the largest group were dependent on benefit for under 3 months. Very few were ever dependent for longer than 6 months. Welfare rights officers, Labour supporters and CPAG members are most likely to have claimed, although again, only for a short period of time.

SECTION NINE: WHAT SOCIAL WORKERS READ

This section includes data on the journals and newspapers that social workers read, and compares this, where possible, to data from the first National Readership Survey of Social Workers and a recent readership survey of the public at large.

Journals

Table 6.20 shows the journals that social workers study in some detail, glance at or don't see at all. This is compared with national data from the first Readership Survey of Social Workers.

Community Care is studied in most detail by Manchester and Nottinghamshire social workers. The journal Insight is relatively unknown. Very few social workers ever see New Society, and only 4% of the total study it in any detail. Child Poverty Action Group publications (Poverty, Welfare Rights Bulletin) are studied in some detail by 14%, but only another quarter of the total glance at them. About one in ten social workers see other journals, especially B.A.A.F. publications and National Youth Bureau material. The New Statesman, British Medical Journal, British Journal of Social Work, Legal Action Group publications are each studied in detail by only one social worker. Roof was studied in detail by two. Few Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers appear to study journals in any detail. Of those that are looked at, Community Care

Table 6.20: Journals read by social workers - sample compared with national readership survey of social workers

Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers				Taylor Nelson National Readership Survey of social workers (percent only)			
Don't see at all	Total who see journal	Detailed study	Glance at	Read more than half (1)	Read half or under (2)	Average total readership(3)	Average issue readership(4)
Community Care	36 (8)	415 (92)	177 (39) (43)	238 (53) (57)	(39)	(53)	(61)
Social Work Today	68 (15)	383 (85)	130 (29) (34)	253 (56) (66)	(40)	(54)	(49)
Insight	378 (84)	73 (16)	24 (5) (33)	49 (11) (67)	(33)	(58)	(4)
New Society	319 (71)	132 (29)	19 (4) (14)	113 (25) (86)	NF	NF	(8)
CPAG publications	283 (62)	168 (38)	62 (14) (37)	106 (24) (63)	NF	NF	NF
Others	397 (88)	54 (12)	36 (8) (67)	18 (4) (33)	NF	NF	NF

Source: Taylor Nelson, 1987.

Notes: NF denotes no figures available. Second percentage bracket in 'detailed study' and 'glance at' relates to proportion of social workers who see the journal.

(1) and (2) Average of managerial and non managerial (derived from Taylor Nelson, 1987, p.80).

(3) A social worker is counted as a 'total reader' if, in the case of a weekly publication, he/she claims to have read or looked at, at least one issue in an average month. The figures in this column are the aggregate average of data for social workers in area offices employed in County Council and Metropolitan areas, in managerial/non managerial roles (derived from Taylor Nelson, 1987, p.5).

(4) A social worker is described as an 'average issue reader' if they claim to have read or looked at an issue of that publication within the last seven days. The figures in this column are the aggregate average of data for social workers in area offices, employed in County Council and Metropolitan areas, in managerial/non managerial roles (derived from Taylor Nelson, 1987, p.7).

is the most popular.

National Readership Survey of Social Workers

The same proportion of social workers who nationally read more than half of Community Care also study it in detail in Nottinghamshire and Manchester. Similarly the same proportion nationally (53%) reading half or under also glance at Community Care in Manchester and Nottinghamshire. The two populations appear to be very similar in their readership of Community Care, in so far as the questions are comparable. Additionally the national average readership figure is almost identical to the totals in Manchester and Nottingham who see this journal.

The proportion of Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers who read Social Work Today is very similar to the national picture. Eighty five percent of Nottingham and Manchester social workers see Social Work Today; the average national total readership is 86%. Fewer Nottingham and Manchester social workers appear to see New Society or Insight than do social workers nationally. Insight readership is closer to the national average issue readership (24%) than the average total readership.

Newspapers

Two out of three Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers read a daily newspaper. This compares with the national average for "the public" - about 70% of the public read a daily paper (HMSO, 1984).

Only a few social workers read more than one. The Guardian is by far the most popular, 49% of all Nottingham and Manchester social workers read it regularly. Forty one read the Daily Mirror, 21 read the Daily Mail or Daily Telegraph, 10 read the Daily Express or Times, 7 read the Sun, 6 read the Morning Star or Today, 5 read the Star, 4 read Irish newspapers or the Financial Times. The survey was undertaken before the birth of The Independent newspaper; it is expected that Guardian readership may have suffered as a result of this new rival.

Seven out of 10 respondents read a Sunday paper regularly. The Observer is the most popular. One hundred and ninety nine (44% of the total) read it regularly. The Sunday Times is next most popular (73 read it regularly), followed by the Sunday Mirror (37), Mail on Sunday (28), Sunday Express (25), Sunday People (18), News of the World and Sunday Telegraph (14 each), Today on Sunday (7) and Irish Sunday Papers (3). Since the survey was undertaken Today on Sunday has ceased publication.

National Figures

Table 6.21 compares the Nottingham and Manchester data with figures for the national average social work readership for a number of daily papers. The reading habits of Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers are similar to the national average for area office based social workers (although slightly less similar for the "average issue" readership). Nottingham and Manchester social workers appear

Table 6.21: Newspapers read by social workers - sample compared with national readership survey and the public

	Nottingham and Manchester social workers	Taylor Nelson National Readership Survey of social workers		The 'public' (percent only)
		Average of social workers in area offices	"Average issue" readership (1)	
The Guardian	221 (49)	9,548 (38)	8,364 (28)	(5)
Daily Mail	21 (5)	1,420 (6)	3,340 (10)	(12)
Daily Telegraph	21 (5)	1,172 (5)	1,803 (6)	(10)
Daily Express	10 (3)	813 (3)	2,752 (9)	(12)
The Times	10 (3)	1,149 (5)	1,390 (4)	(4)
All social workers	451 (100%)	24,931 (100%)	30,441 (100%)	

Sources: Taylor Nelson, 1987; OPCS, 1984; New Society, 1986.

Notes: (1) A social worker is counted as an "average issue" reader of a daily newspaper if he/she claims to have read an issue yesterday. Figures in the column are the aggregate average for all managerial/non managerial social workers in area offices employed in County Councils and Metropolitan areas (derived from Taylor Nelson, 1987, 9).

to be broadly representative of the national readership pattern for social workers as a whole, although a larger proportion of social workers in Manchester and Nottinghamshire read The Guardian than appear to do so nationally.

Table 6.21 also compares social workers' readership of some newspapers with that of the public. It shows that Nottingham and Manchester social workers and social workers nationally are more likely to read the Guardian than the public at large. Readership by social workers of other papers, especially tabloids, is well below the average for the public. The most popular paper amongst the public is the Sun (a comparison with social workers is not possible as Taylor Nelson did not ask social workers about their readership of this paper). The Sun is read by 1 in 4 of the British paper reading public (New Society, 1986; see also Seabrook, 1986, 25, for a discussion of the Sun as a bearer of ideology and Golding and Middleton, 1982, for a discussion of the role of the media generally in influencing attitudes to poverty).

Summary

A large number of Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers do not appear to study the social work journals to any large extent. One third do not read a daily paper. However half read the Guardian regularly, many more than the "general public". A comparison with the first National Readership Survey of Social Workers suggests that the reading habits of Nottingham and Manchester social workers is similar to that of social workers nationally.

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CHAPTER 7

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY RESULTS:

VIEWS AND OPINIONS ABOUT POVERTY AND THE POOR

Introduction

This chapter is divided into a number of sections:

- Section one: general reading and views on poverty
- Section two: qualities and characteristics associated with the rich and poor
- Section three: beliefs about the poor in general
- Section four: beliefs about people on supplementary benefit and the adequacy of supplementary benefit scale rates
- Section five: social workers' perception of necessities - The Breadline Britain framework
- Section six: perceptions on the extent of poverty amongst clients
- Section seven: perceptions of differences between poor claimants and poor clients
- Section eight: beliefs about "cash and care"

SECTION ONE: GENERAL READING AND VIEWS ABOUT POVERTY

This section includes data on the type of "poverty" books that social workers read and their general beliefs about the causes of poverty.

Books

Social workers identified which of 4 books, spanning 15 years and central to the British literature on poverty, they have ever read. One hundred and seventy eight (40%) have read "Poverty the Forgotten Englishman", published in 1970. Two hundred and twelve (47%) have read Townsend's seminal work "Poverty in the U.K.", published in 1979. Three hundred and thirty three (74%) have read the latest (1985) CPAG Welfare Rights Handbook. Only 33 (7%) have read Mack and Lansley's "Poor Britain", published recently in 1985.

Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers do seem to have widespread access through their work to the CPAG handbooks. But they generally do not appear to read, seek out or keep up-to-date with more academic publications - even recent ones like "Poor Britain". Data from section nine of the last chapter also suggests that many only glance at social work journals.

General opinions about poverty

Using the same question as employed by both Mack and Lansley (1985) and the EEC survey on perceptions of poverty (1977), social workers identified why they thought people live in poverty. Table 7.1 shows

their answers.

Table 7.1: General opinions about why people live in poverty;
comparison of surveys

	Social work respondents		1976 EEC survey (UK results) (a)	1985 Mack and Lansley survey (b)
	N	%	%	%
Because they have been unlucky	12	3	10	13
Because of laziness and lack of willpower	8	2	43	22
Because there is much injustice in our society	371	82	16	32
It is an inevitable part of modern progress	28	6	17	25
No answer or combination of above	32	7	14	8
Total	451	100	100	100

Source:(a) EEC, 1977, p.72, Table 29;(b) Mack and Lansley, 1985,p.296

Eight out of 10 of these social workers think that people live in poverty because of social injustice. This compares dramatically with both the EEC and "Poor Britain" findings. In 1977 only 16% of the U.K. public thought that people live in poverty because of injustice. By 1985 twice that amount thought this. Despite this "softening of attitudes" amongst the general public (as Mack and Lansley call it) social workers are far more likely to perceive of the cause of

poverty in structural terms. Very few blame laziness, bad luck or the inevitability of modern progress (see also chapter nine for a discussion of what social workers mean by these concepts - derived from the interviews). The public - in 1977 and 1985 - are still much more likely to blame the poor for their poverty.

SECTION TWO: QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH THE "RICH" AND "POOR"

This section includes data on the personal characteristics that social workers associate with the rich and poor.

The Rich

Table 7.2 shows what qualities are associated with rich people.

Table 7.2: Characteristics associated with the rich

	Numbers of social workers mentioning this	Percentage of all social workers mentioning this
Negative qualities	157	35
Drive and motivation	145	32
Insular/isolated	105	23
Privileged background	88	20
Other (recorded)	70	16
Can't/won't generalise	52	12
Postive qualities	45	10
Luck/chance	43	10
No specific qualities	43	10
Education	24	5

Notes: Totals exceed 451 and 100% due to multiple responses.

Social workers very often see the rich in negative but dynamic terms. The most frequent comments, mentioned by 1 in 3 of these social workers, refer to the rich as greedy, ruthless, arrogant, devious, selfish, smug, intolerant, patronising, aggressive, mean, judgemental, manipulative, hypocritical, racist, grabbing,

condescending, rude, insensitive and domineering. Slightly less mention a quality related to the drive, motivation and charisma of the rich. Words such as determined, hardworking, able, confident, ambitious, assertive, self-assured, risk-taking, decisive, competitive, committed, ingenious, pushy, single-minded, industrious, aspiring, forceful, directive, motivated, dedicated are used by 32% of all social workers.

Nearly one quarter think of the rich as an insular or isolated breed of people. The rich are described as ignorant of reality, lacking in understanding (especially of how the poor live), narrow-minded, self-centred to the detriment of others, indifferent to suffering, lacking in compassion, unconcerned or unaware of other peoples financial problems, out of touch, sheltered, isolated.

One in 5 think that rich people have privileged backgrounds, are "born into" or inherit their wealth.

A diverse range of comments are made by just under a fifth of all social workers. These refer to the rich as Conservative, capitalist, owning large houses, large cars with large boots, living in affluent areas with affluent jobs, secure, loving their leisure, snobbish, knowing how to beat the system.

Only 1 in 10 refer to the rich in explicitly positive terms mentioning their generosity, sensitivity, altruism, flair, caring,

intelligence, kindness, cleanliness, good taste, charitable and sociable nature.

These social workers are far less likely to be "positive" towards the rich than a national representative sample of the general public. Gallup found that 12% of the public admired the rich, another 15% respected the rich, and another 12% liked the rich. Four percent disliked them, 12% were irritated by them, 13% envied them, and 46% were indifferent to them (Heald and Wybrow, 1986, Table 8.7, p.256).

Summary

As a group Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers generally tend to think of the rich in negative terms, emphasising some negative quality, their insular and isolated nature or their privileged backgrounds. But at the same time the rich are seen as a highly motivated, dynamic and charismatic group of people, driven to create or keep their wealth. Most social workers think of the rich in a number of ways and cite a number of characteristics.

The Poor

The characteristics that are associated with poor people are very different. These are not simply a "reverse mirror" of characteristics associated with the rich, but are actually a quite different set of opinions and beliefs (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3: Characteristics associated with the poor

	Numbers of social workers mentioning this	Percentage of social workers mentioning this
Powerlessness/structural	200	44
Positive qualities, concern for others	85	19
Background, education, cycle of deprivation	70	16
Can't/won't generalise	63	14
Lack of drive or motivation	56	12
No specific qualities	53	12
Negative qualities	44	10
"Other" qualities	43	10
Luck	25	6

Notes: Numbers exceed 451 and 100% due to multiple responses.

Nearly half the social workers mention the powerlessness of the poor or structural inequality. Comments include: victims, forgotten, taken advantage of, vulnerable, suppressed, worn and ground down, humiliated, abused, downtrodden, brutalised by poverty, trapped, exploited, demoralised, degraded, oppressed, stifled.

One in 5 view the poor in explicitly positive terms, emphasising their concern for relatives and neighbours, their sensitivity, understanding, sense of humour, generosity, caring, gentleness, honesty, friendliness, resourcefulness, strength, resilience, creativity, hard-working nature, warmth, humility and courage.

Comments relating to the cycle of deprivation (poor parents, lack of life chances, socialisation, deprived background, large families) and the educational backgrounds of the poor are mentioned by just under 1

in 5 social workers. One in 10 comment that the poor lack drive, motivation and ambition and use words such as lazy, lacking in foresight, poorly motivated, complacent, afraid of work, lacking in direction, indolent, slothful, to describe them. Another 1 in 10 refer to the poor in negative terms and describe them as grasping, mean, spendthrift, unintelligent, prejudiced, squanderous, racist, bigoted, reluctant to defer gratification, unable or unwilling to manage family or budget, ignorant, immature, unhygienic, judgemental, naive, inadequate.

The "other" qualities mentioned by one tenth of social workers refer to the poor as addicts, handicapped, ill, old, working class, black, disabled, female or single parent.

Summary

The poor are generally seen by these social workers as a powerless group, their poverty caused by structural inequalities or policy decisions beyond their immediate control. But linked, however, is a fairly strong belief by many in the cycle of deprivation, that the poor have poor parents and come from places where there are few opportunities or life chances. Many social workers think that this combination of factors causes the lack of drive, motivation and apathy that is often ascribed to the poor. Social workers place little emphasis on the role of luck and fate in the cause of poverty.

Twice as many social workers think positively about the poor as do

about the rich. Generally the rich are seen in much more negative terms than the poor. But most of these social workers also emphasise a number of characteristics for both the rich and poor. Both negative and positive terms are used by individuals to describe each group. Certainly on a general level the poor are seen very much as victims of injustice and inequality (see also Table 7.1). But on an individual level the range of responses suggest that these social workers have a complex and perhaps sometimes contradictory number of opinions about the rich and poor.

SECTION THREE: BELIEFS AND OPINIONS ABOUT THE POOR

This section includes data and analysis of social workers' beliefs and opinions about poor people in general.

Introduction

Social workers were provided with 20 statements about poor people and asked to indicate along a scale the proportion of poor people that they thought each statement applied to. Some statements were identical to those used by Golding and Middleton (1982). Others were generated by a search of a number of attitude to poverty instruments, including Peterson's Disguised Instrument and MacDonald's Poverty Scale. The final 20 statements represent a cross-section of the main trends in ideas and beliefs about the poor. Each carries an implicit understanding about the cause of poverty.

The statements were presented in random order on the questionnaire (see appendix two). When used in the past respondents have been asked whether they agree or disagree with each item (Golding and Middleton, 1982, 197). The Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers were instead asked for the proportion of poor people that each statement applied to; this enables a more complex and detailed range of answers to be provided, allowing for the more subtle expression of beliefs. For example, whilst most social workers would disagree with a statement that "the poor fail to manage their money

properly" (especially given their answers in section two of this chapter), they generally will accept that a proportion of the poor will fail to budget adequately. This proportion may be anywhere from 1 percent to 100 percent. By providing statements and answers in these terms social workers' perceptions of delicate and sometimes controversial issues can be examined in some detail; a simple choice of disagree/agree would have been likely to elicit "blanket" responses and little useful information. The "proportions" approach allows the analysis to break away from a simple "positive" and "negative" view of attitudes. It enables "shades" of opinion and the degree to which beliefs are held to be assessed.

"Clusters" of opinion

Similar to the methodology adopted by Golding and Middleton, certain statements have, for analysis purposes, been grouped together. These "clusters" are groups of statements that relate closely with a particular explanation or view of poverty and the poor. The seven clusters for the 20 statements are:

Cluster 1: statements that relate to the wasteful spending patterns and financial ineptitude of the poor ("wasteful spending patterns").

Cluster 2: statements that relate to the lack of motivation of the poor ("lack of motivation").

Cluster 3: statements that relate to the imprudent breeding habits,

fecklessness and lack of control of the poor ("imprudent").

Statements in clusters 1 - 3 relate directly to Golding and Middleton's "Prodigality" explanation of poverty; being to do with the "wasteful spending patterns, financial ineptitude, imprudent breeding habits and sheer fecklessness or lack of motivation of the poor" (1982, 197).

Cluster 4: statements that perceive of poverty as a product of injustice and inequality - the poor as victims ("injustice and inequality"). This relates directly to Golding and Middleton's second explanation, "Injustice":

"a positive explanation of poverty as the converse of wealth and a direct consequence of the exploitative or unfair distribution of financial reward". (1982, 197).

Cluster 5: statements that relate to the notion of a cycle of deprivation ("cycle of deprivation thesis"). This category is identical to Golding and Middleton's "Ascribed Deprivation" explanation:

"to do with the bad luck involved in choosing one's parents unwisely, or being brought up in places where there is little opportunity for most people. It is the cycle of deprivation thesis ... and includes the notion that rewards are fairly distributed according to talents and merits that the poor unfortunately lack". (1982, 197)

Cluster 6: statements that relate to the notion of the cycle of deprivation, but are related to the possibility of "escaping" or "breaking out" of it ("cycle of deprivation - escape").

Cluster 7: statements that relate to the influence of fate or luck ("fate and luck"). This category is identical to Golding and Middleton's "Fatalistic" explanation:

"The individualistic version of fatalism, poverty being seen to descend randomly on people anywhere in the social structure as a result of sheer bad luck - perhaps a bad illness or some such unpredictable bad break." (1982, 197)

Figure 7.4 summarises and compares Golding and Middleton's classification with the 7 cluster categorisation adopted for the social workers' survey.

Figure 7.4: Attitudes to the poor: cluster classification

Golding and Middleton's categorisation	Social workers' survey	Nature of explanation
Prodigality	{Cluster 1 - wasteful spending patterns {Cluster 2 - lack of motivation of the poor {Cluster 3 - imprudent breeding, lack of control	Dispositional explanation "negative"
Injustice	Cluster 4 - injustice and inequality, (poor as victims)	Situational explanation "Positive"
Ascribed Deprivation	{Cluster 5 - cycle of deprivation thesis {Cluster 6 - cycle of deprivation, possibility of "escape"	Dispositional "negative/interactive"
Fatalistic	Cluster 7 - fate and luck	Interactive explanation

The following seven tables and graphs show the statements relating to each cluster, the proportion of poor people that social workers as a group think the statement applies to, and the graph that plots the "pattern" of opinions for each cluster.

Cluster one: Wasteful spending pattern of the poor

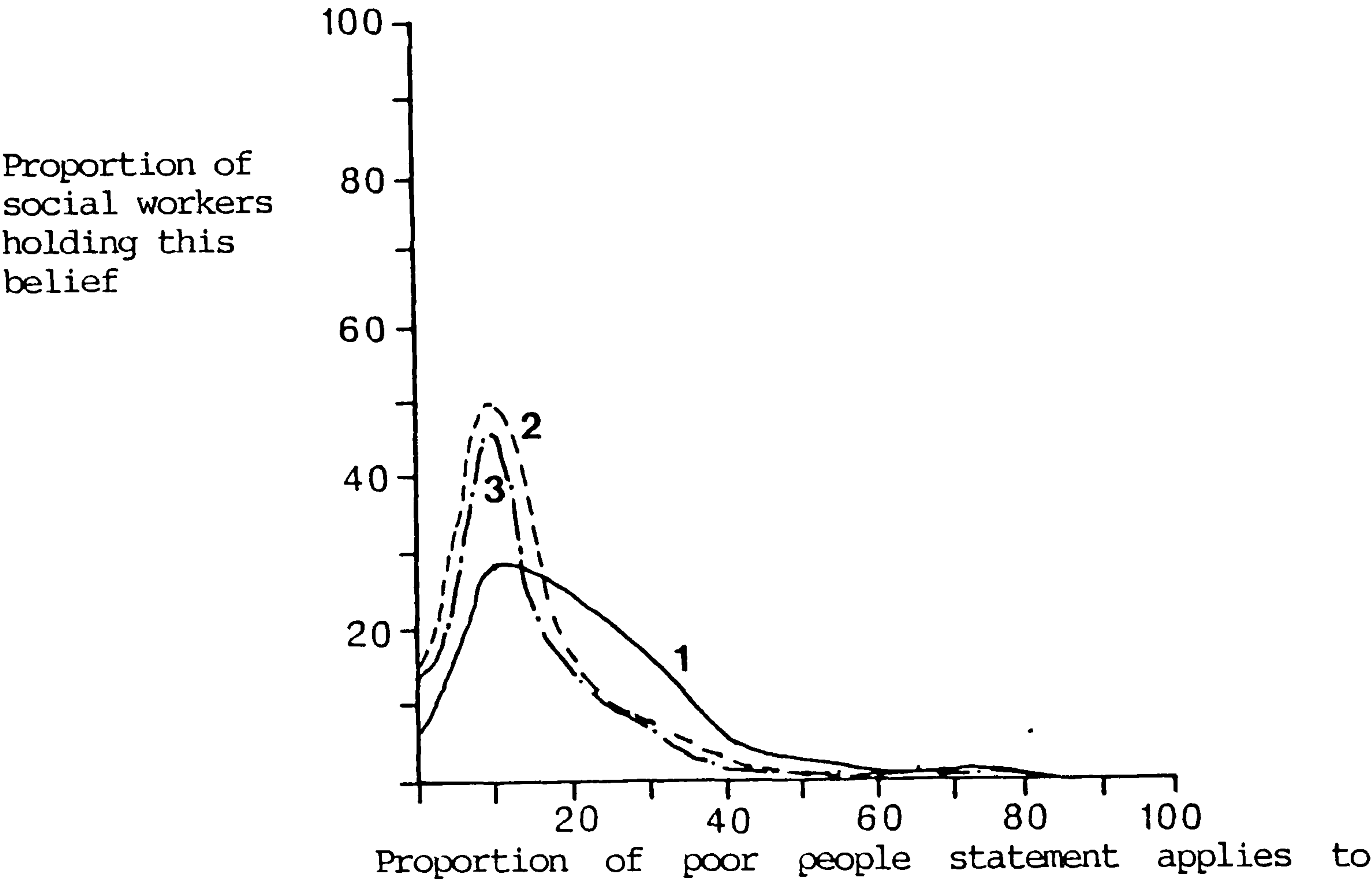
Table 7.5(a):Opinions of the proportion of poor people who waste their money

Proportion of poor people each statement applies to (%) :													
Statement	NA	0%	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-99	100%
They don't manage their money properly	3	7	28	26	19	7	4	2	2	2	0	0	0
They waste their money on drinks	14	14	51	15	9	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
They waste their money on gambling or smoking	4	15	48	16	9	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	0

Note: (a) Proportion of social workers with belief

Statements in this cluster:

- 1. They don't manage their money properly
- 2. They waste their money on drinks
- 3. They waste their money on gambling or smoking



Cluster two: Lack of motivation of the poor

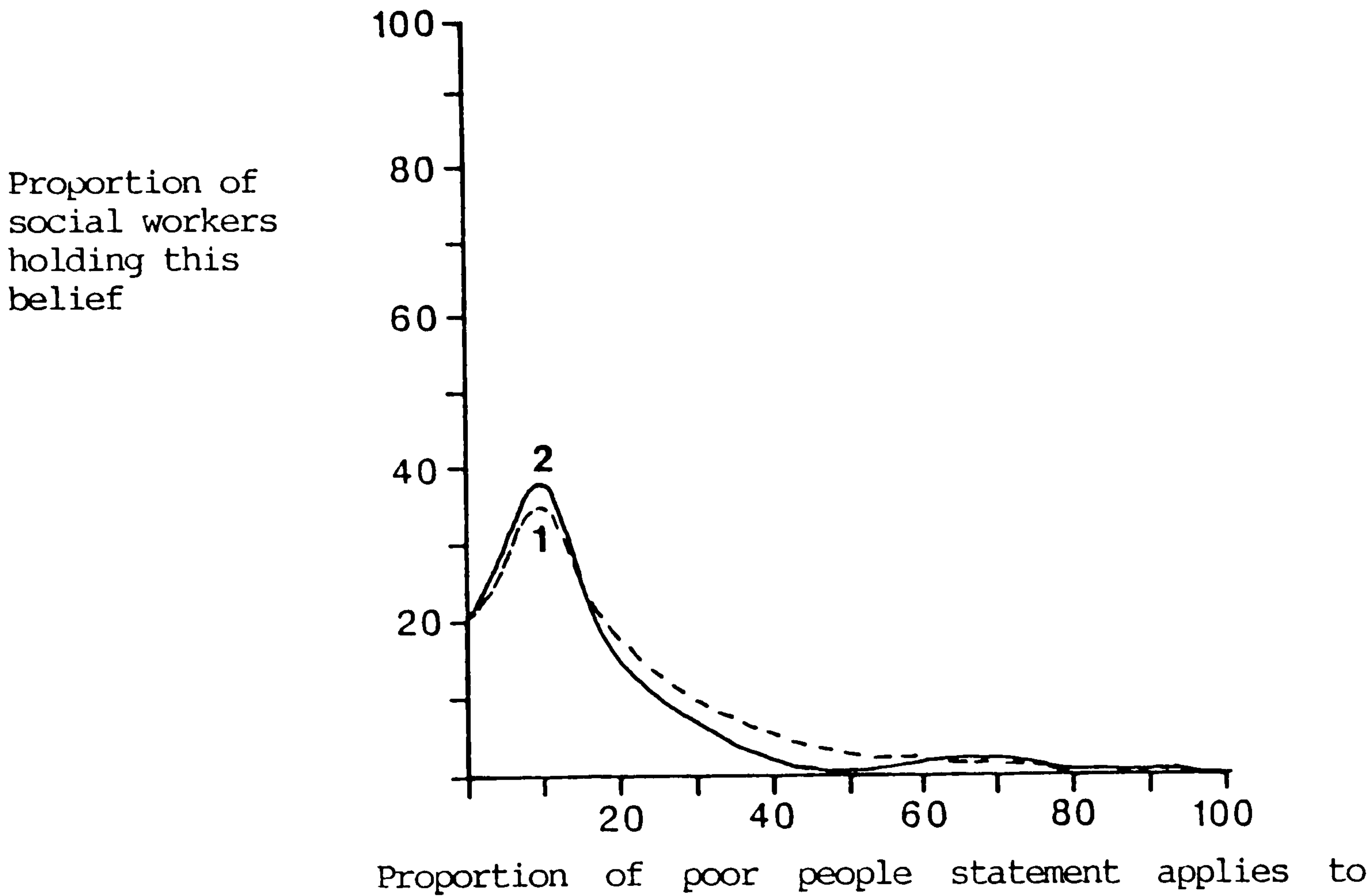
Table 7.6(a): Opinions of the proportion of poor people who lack motivation

Proportion of poor people each statement applies to (%) :													
Statement	NA	0%	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-99	100%
They don't care about getting ahead	4	19	36	16	12	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	0
They don't try very hard to better themselves	7	20	39	16	9	4	1	2	2	0	0	0	0

Note: (a) Proportion of social workers with belief

Statements in this cluster:

- 1. They don't care about getting ahead
- 2. They don't try very hard to better themselves



Cluster three: Imprudent breeding, lack of control

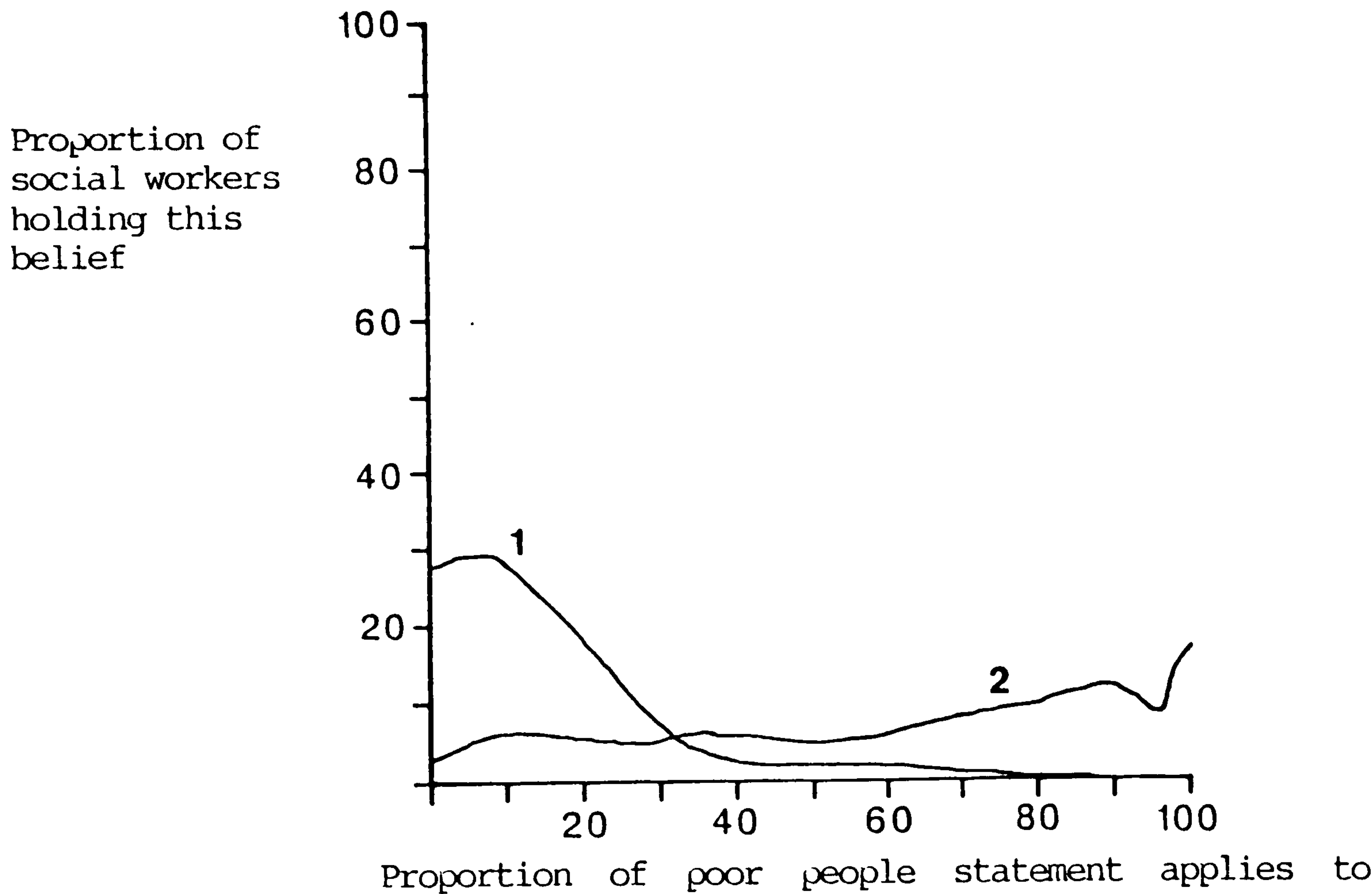
Table 7.7(a): Opinions of the proportion of poor people who have too many children or lack control

Proportion of poor people each statement applies to (%) :													
Statement	NA	0%	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-99	100%
They have too many children	6	28	30	19	7	3	2	3	1	1	0	0	0
They have little control over their lives	6	2	7	6	6	7	5	6	9	10	13	8	15

Note: (a) Proportion of social workers with belief

Statements in this cluster:

- 1. They have too many children
- 2. They have little control over their lives



Cluster four: Injustice and inequality

Table 7.8(a): Opinions of the proportion of poor people who are victims of injustice and inequality

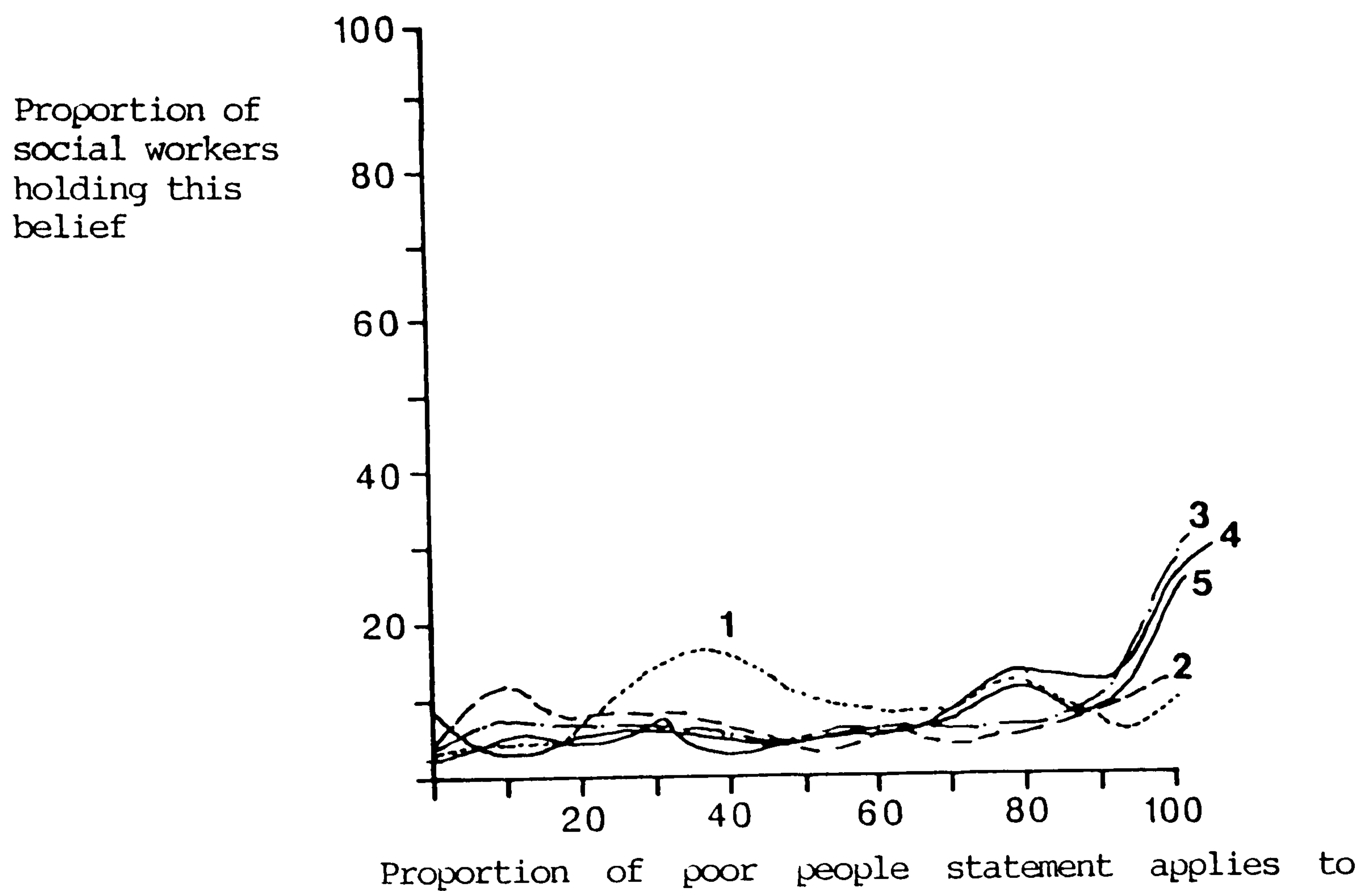
Proportion of poor people each statement applies to (%) :													
Statement	NA	0%	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-99	100%
They work in jobs which are poorly paid	3	1	1	5	14	16	11	9	9	11	8	4	8
They are taken advantage of by rich people	6	4	11	8	10	8	6	5	4	8	7	4	19
They do badly in life because rich people get more than their fair share	4	4	6	6	6	5	3	5	6	7	9	8	31
They should be viewed as victims of injustice and inequality in society	3	3	4	4	5	3	4	6	6	7	13	12	30
Their fate depends upon the state of the world they live in	5	8	3	5	5	4	5	6	6	13	9	8	23

Note: (a) Proportion of social workers with belief

Table 7.8 Continued

Statements in this cluster:

1. They work in jobs which are poorly paid
2. They are taken advantage of by rich people
3. They do badly in life because rich people get more than their fair share
4. They should be viewed as victims of injustice and inequality in society
5. Their fate depends upon the state of the world they live in



Cluster five: Cycle of deprivation

Table 7.9(a): Opinions of the proportion of poor people who are in a cycle of deprivation

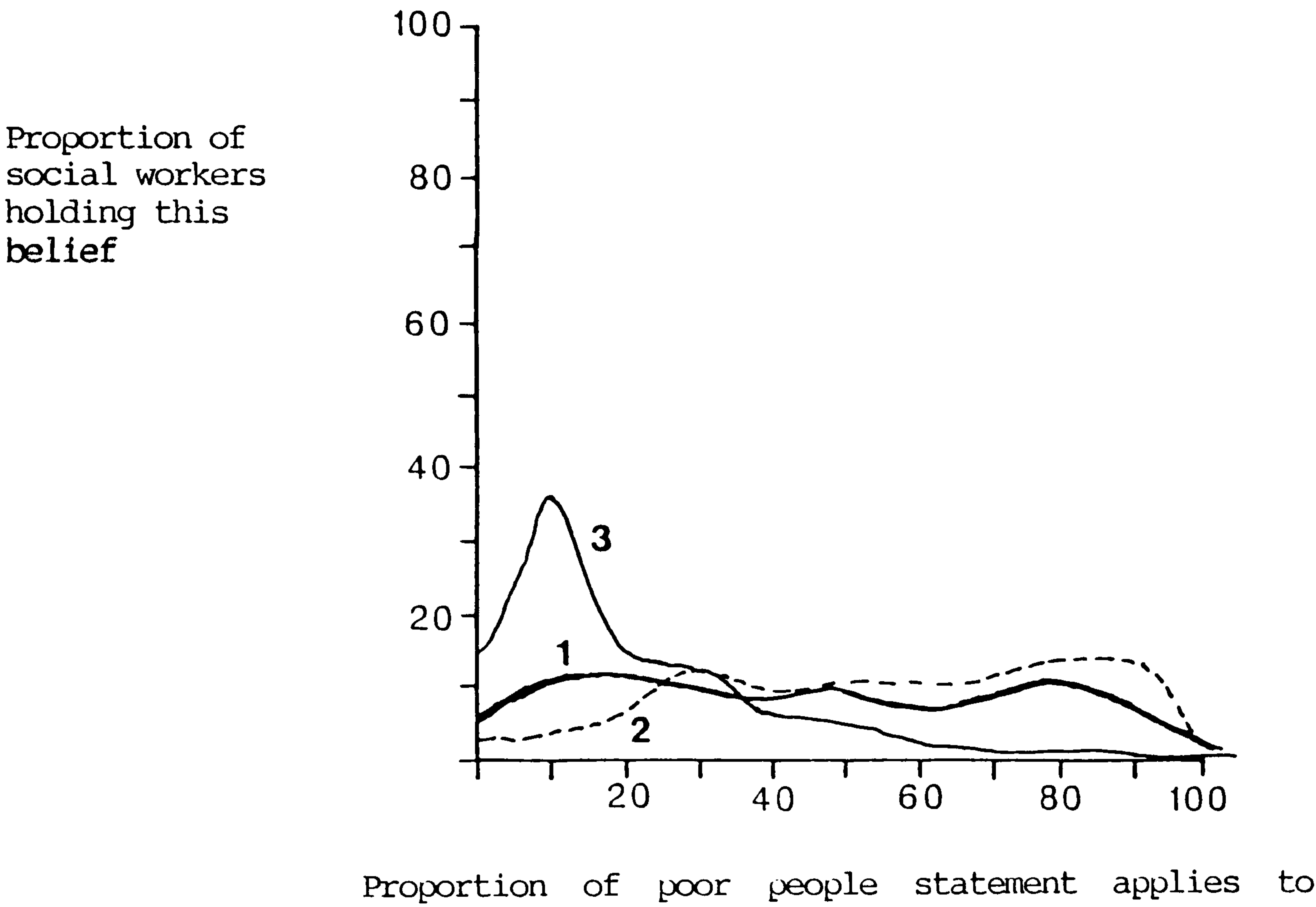
Proportion of poor people each statement applies to (%) :													
Statement	NA	0%	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-99	100%
They never stood a chance because their parents were poor	5	6	11	11	10	8	10	7	8	11	8	4	1
They came from places where there is little opportunity for most people	4	2	3	6	11	8	10	10	11	14	14	5	2
They aren't very bright or talented	6	14	35	14	13	7	6	2	1	1	1	0	0

Note: (a) Proportion of social workers with belief

Table 7.9 Continued

Statements in this cluster:

- 1. They never stood a chance because their parents were poor
- 2. They came from places where there is little opportunity for most people
- 3. They aren't very bright or talented



Cluster six: Cycle of deprivation - escape

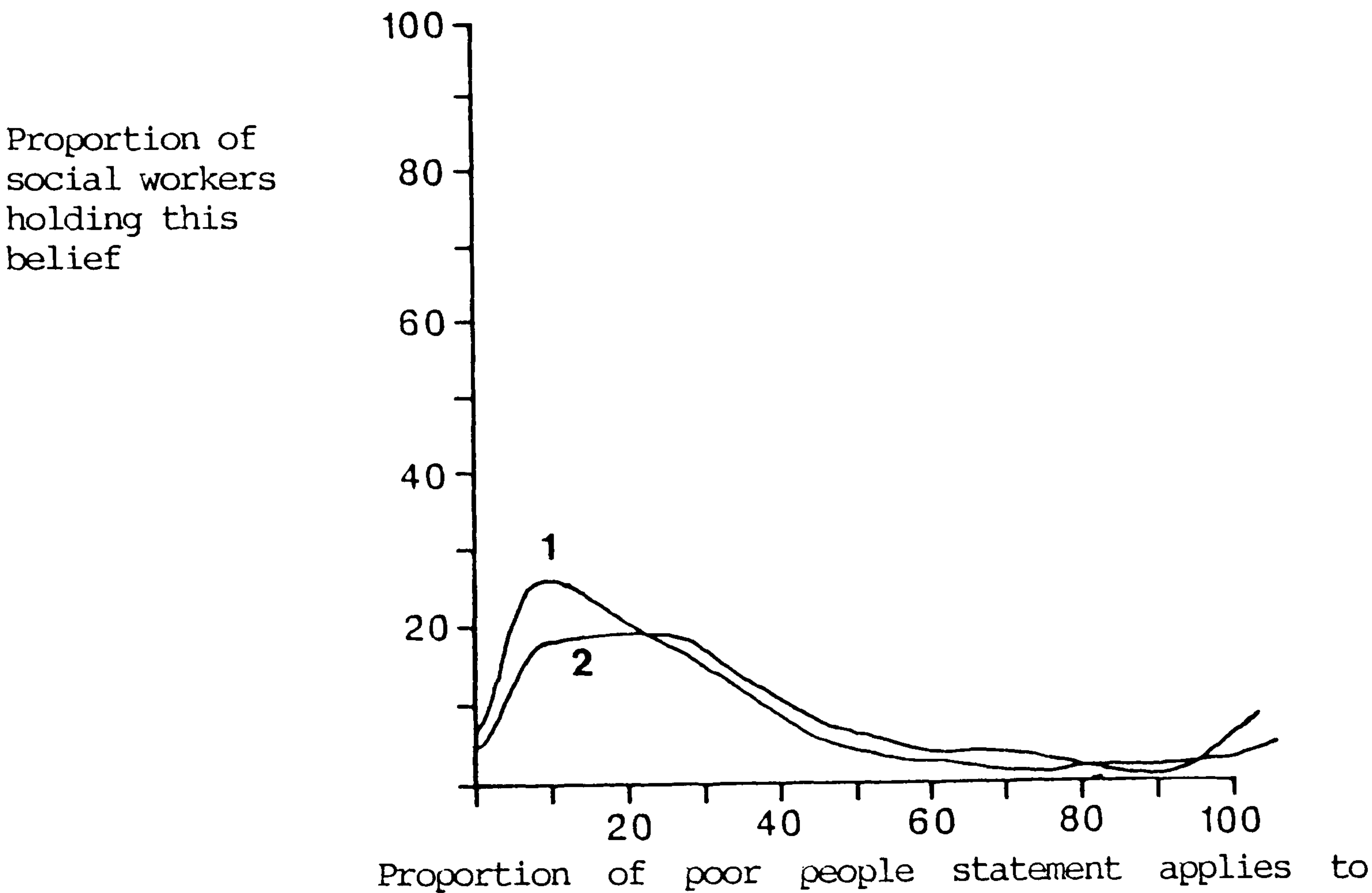
Table 7.10(a): Opinions of the proportion of poor people who have a chance of escaping from poverty

Proportion of poor people each statement applies to (%) :													
Statement	NA	0%	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-99	100%
They have a chance of escaping from poverty	4	6	27	21	17	8	5	4	2	1	2	1	2
Their children have a chance of escaping from poverty	5	3	19	20	18	11	7	5	4	2	1	1	4

Note: (a) Proportion of social workers with belief

Statements in this cluster:

- 1. They have a chance of escaping from poverty
- 2. Their children have a chance of escaping from poverty



Cluster seven: Fate and luck

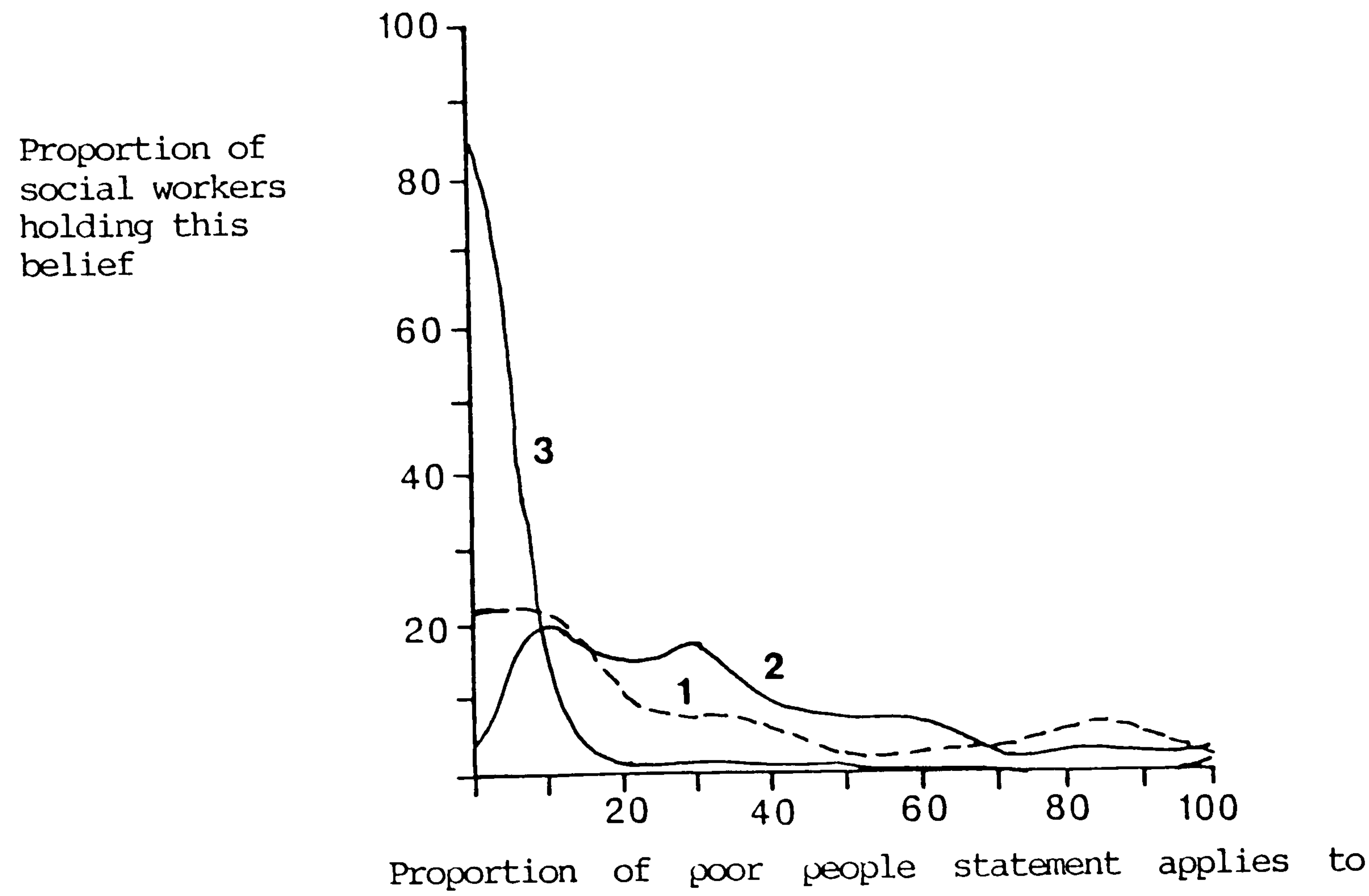
Table 7.11(a): Opinions of the proportion of poor people who are unlucky

Proportion of poor people each statement applies to (%) :													
Statement	NA	0%	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-99	100%
They are just unlucky individuals	7	22	22	10	8	6	3	3	3	5	6	3	2
They have had a bad break at some time in their lives	5	4	20	15	18	9	8	7	2	3	3	2	4
Their fate is predetermined by God	6	86	4	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Note: (a) Proportion of social workers with belief

Statements in this cluster:

1. They are just unlucky individuals
2. They have had a bad break at some point in their lives
3. Their fate is predetermined by God



Discussion

The Poor as "wasteful, lazy, imprudent"

The tables and graphs for clusters 1 to 3 illustrate that most Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers believe that some of the poor waste their money, lack motivation, or have too many children. For most statements a perfect "positive attitude" curve for social workers as a group would either be a straight line along the vertical axis (all social workers reject the statement totally, thinking that the item applies to none of the poor), or a straight line along the horizontal axis (not one social worker thought that any of the poor are in this category).

The graphs suggest that in fact the majority of these social workers think that a minority of the poor waste their money, don't care or try to get ahead, etc. Within this overall pattern some important observations and variations deserve comment.

First, slightly more social workers think that more of the poor waste money on drinking than waste it on gambling or smoking. Nearly half the social workers think that up to 10 percent of the poor waste their money in these ways, but the number of social workers thinking that any more of the poor waste their money on these items decreases dramatically.

Second, a large minority of social workers feel that fairly large numbers of the poor fail to manage their money properly. The graph

curve suggests that the spread of opinions for this item is not as varied as for the other statements.

Third, more than 1 in 3 social workers believe that at least 10 percent of the poor don't care or try to better themselves. Over half of all social workers believe that up to one fifth of the poor are like this. Few respondents believe that the proportion of poor people in this category is any higher.

Fourth, nearly one third of social workers believe that at least 10 percent of the poor have too many children. Another 1 in 5 think that 20 percent of the poor are in this category.

Fifth, a significant minority of social workers think that all the poor have little control over their lives. Ninety eight percent believe that some of the poor are in this category.

The graph curve for this statement suggests that the reasons for this "little control over their lives" may be perceived in terms of injustice and inequality rather than personal inadequacy; the curve is closer to the injustice curve than anything else. The poor may have little control over their lives because of factors beyond their control and external to them.

The poor are poor because of injustice and inequality

The 5 statements in cluster 4 show social workers' breadth of opinion

about injustice and inequality. Significant numbers feel that all the poor do badly in life because of the rich, injustice and inequality. The view that the poor are victims is widespread amongst the majority of social workers. A majority think that the majority of the poor are exploited. Very few of these social workers believe that injustice and inequality play no part whatsoever in the cause of poverty.

The graph pattern shows that nearly every social worker believes that some of the poor are poor because of injustice and inequality. While the curve is far from a totally "positive" shape, it does become vertical towards the end for most statements, showing that a large number of respondents subscribe totally to the inequality/injustice explanation.

The cycle of deprivation thesis

Most social workers believe that some of the poor are trapped in a cycle of deprivation - that they never stood a chance because their parents are poor or that they come from places where there are few opportunities. A larger number of respondents reject the statement that the poor aren't bright or talented, although over one third think that at least 10 percent of the poor are in this category; few respondents believe that the number of poor people in this group is large. This is in contrast to the two statements relating directly to the cycle of deprivation: a significant proportion of social workers believe that some of the poor (from 10 percent - 80 percent)

are poor because of the cycle of deprivation.

Cluster 6 shows respondents' beliefs about the chance of escaping from the cycle. Very few respondents believe that all the poor (and/or their children) have a chance to escape. The majority of social workers think that only small proportions of the poor can escape from poverty.

Fate and luck

Very few social workers believe that luck or fate is a significant cause of poverty. Some respondents do think it is an important factor for small proportions of poor people. The vast majority of respondents, nearly 9 out of 10, reject totally the statement that the fate of the poor is predetermined by God.

Summary

As a group these social workers have a complex range of opinions and beliefs about the poor. Opinions have been classified into 7 clusters; each cluster relates to a specific area of attitude or perceptions. By asking social workers to identify the proportion of poor people that each of 20 statements applies to, the analysis of attitudes becomes more intricate and subtle. It is clear that considerable emphasis is placed on the role of injustice and inequality in the causation of poverty. This view sees the poor as victims rather than the perpetrators of their poverty. This is consistent with findings outlined in the preceeding sections of this

chapter. But many of these social workers also believe that significant numbers of the poor waste their money, lack motivation, have poor parents, come from places where there are few opportunities and have little chance of escaping from poverty.

As a group and as individuals the Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers cannot be categorised simply as having "positive" or "negative" attitudes to the poor; they have different beliefs and opinions varying with the type of issue that is being explored. On some subjects their attitudes are perhaps "more positive", on others less so - within the group a wide range of attitudes to the poor and about different aspects of poverty can be identified.

SECTION FOUR: BELIEFS ABOUT CLAIMANTS OF SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT AND THE ADEQUACY OF THE SCALE RATES

This section includes data on social workers' general beliefs about supplementary benefit claimants and their opinions about the adequacy of supplementary benefit scale rates for different claimant groups.

Supplementary benefit claimants in general

Using the identical questions to that of Mack and Lansley, social workers were asked to give their views about people on supplementary benefit. Table 7.12 compares social workers' opinions with those of "the public".

Table 7.12: Beliefs about claimants of supplementary benefit

Statement		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
		%	%	%	%	%
Most people claiming SB are in real need	Social workers	78	20	2	0	0
	"Public"	25	44	8	16	3
A lot of people who are entitled to claim SB don't claim it	Social workers	53	36	6	4	0
	"Public"	23	51	8	10	2
Many people claiming SB are on the fiddle	Social workers	1	7	12	32	47
	"Public"	25	37	9	17	6

Notes: The "public" figures are from Mack and Lansley, 1985, p.301; Mack and Lansley's sample is a national representative sample.

Seventy eight percent of social workers strongly agree that most people claiming supplementary benefit are in real need. Only 2% neither agree nor disagree or tend to disagree. This compares dramatically with Mack and Lansley's national representative sample. The public have far less intense feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants as being in need; over one quarter neither agree, disagree or disagree to some extent with the statement. Social workers are far more likely to strongly believe that people on supplementary benefit are in real need.

Just over half the social workers strongly agree that a lot of people entitled to supplementary benefit fail to claim it. Another third agree with this. One in 10 neither agrees nor disagrees or tends to disagree. Four out of five respondents in the 1984 British Social Attitudes Survey agreed that "large numbers who are eligible for benefits these days fail to claim them" (Bosanquet, 1986, 131). This figure is close to that of Mack and Lansley's, where three quarters of respondents agreed to some extent that "non take-up" was a problem. Whilst Mack and Lansley's respondents are similar to Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers in their overall level of agreement with the statement, they nonetheless felt less strongly about this issue than social workers as a whole.

Nearly 1 in 10 social workers agree that many supplementary benefit claimants are "on the fiddle". Another tenth neither agrees nor disagrees. Eighty percent disagree to some extent. Mack and Lansley's respondents are far more likely than social workers to believe that supplementary benefit claimants are involved in criminal acts; sixty two percent agree to some extent that many supplementary benefit claimants are on the fiddle. A quarter of Mack and Lansley's respondents strongly agree that this is the case. Two thirds of the 1984 British Social Attitudes Survey respondents also thought that large numbers of people "falsely claim benefits" (Bosanquet, 1986, 131).

Adequacy of supplementary benefit scale rates

A couple with 2 children

Over nine out of ten social workers think that £68.05 is too low to provide an adequate existence for a couple with 2 young children. Twenty eight (6%) think it is about right. None think it is too high. Six out of ten members of the public believe that the supplementary benefit scale rate is too low, one third think the level is about right and 3 percent think it is too high (Mack and Lansley, 1985, 300). These social workers are much more likely than the general public to believe that the supplementary benefit scale rate for a couple with 2 young children is inadequate.

One hundred and four pounds is the average that social workers think such a family needs to live on each week. The lowest level stated by

some is £70, the highest is £200 per week. Seventy nine social workers are unable to state a figure; many of these have no idea of what an appropriate level of benefit should be (n=47), others make reference to the average industrial wage or minimum wage legislation.

Other claimant groups

Social workers gave their opinions about the adequacy of scale rates for other claimant groups. Table 7.13 shows their answers.

Table 7.13: Adequacy of supplementary benefit scale rates for different claimant groups

Social workers think that the supplementary benefit rate for this claimant group is :								
Claimant group	Too high		Too low		About right		Don't know	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Single parent and baby	2	1	426	94	18	4	5	1
Unemployed couple, no children	1	0	410	91	35	8	5	1
Pensioner couple	2	1	397	88	46	10	6	1
School leaver at home, parents on benefit	2	1	356	78	88	20	5	1
School leaver at home, parents in work	13	3	284	63	149	33	5	1

Ninety four percent of respondents think that the weekly supplementary benefit rate of £39.60p for a single parent and baby is

too low. Ninety one percent feel that the rate for an unemployed couple is too low; 88 percent think it too low for a pensioner couple; 78 percent feel it is too low for a school leaver with parents on benefit and 63 percent for a school leaver with parents in work. Thirteen (3%) respondents think that the rate of £18.20 a week for a school leaver (with working parents) is too high; one third think that the level is about right. This compares sharply with attitudes to the supplementary benefit rate for a school leaver with parents on benefit. The rate of supplementary benefit is exactly the same at £18.20 a week. But only 2 respondents feel it is too high, and 88 (20%) believe it is about right. Some social workers believe that a school leaver with parents in work should be financially supported by them. There is a more generous attitude to school leavers with claimant parents. In this case perceptions of the adequacy of the scale rates are based upon the school leavers right to benefit in his/her own accord. At a general level social workers believe that the supplementary benefit rates are mostly inadequate for all claimant groups. But, depending on which group is being discussed, some rates are "more inadequate than others". Single parents are perceived of as getting the worst deal from the supplementary benefit system, followed by a couple with 2 children, an unemployed couple without children, a pensioner couple, and finally school leavers.

Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers are more likely than the general public to feel that the level of benefit for the

unemployed is inadequate. The 1986 British Social Attitudes Survey found that only 40% of the public think that the benefit level for the unemployed was too low (Mann, 1986, 27). Ninety one percent of social workers think it is too low.

Summary

At a general level these social workers appear to be very supportive of supplementary benefit claimants, acknowledging with some intensity their degree of real need and their failure to take up all their benefit entitlements. The public are far more likely to believe that supplementary benefit claimants are on the fiddle, and are less likely to have strong feelings about them being in real need. On the issue of take-up of benefits there is broad agreement amongst social workers and the public that a lot of people entitled to supplementary benefit fail to claim it, although again social workers feel more strongly about this.

Many social workers, whilst acknowledging that most supplementary benefit claimants are in real need, also feel that many are on the fiddle. The two factors are not necessarily contradictory. The British Social Attitudes Series shows, for example, how the public generally acknowledge low levels of "take-up" whilst at the same time believing that claimants are on the fiddle. It is quite possible to conceive of some claimants failing to claim their entitlements whilst others 'fiddle' their benefits.

Social workers generally feel that the supplementary benefit scale rates are inadequate for all claimant groups; although within this overall pattern there is some variation in attitudes towards different groups of supplementary benefit claimants. The rate for single parents is seen as particularly inadequate by most social workers.

SECTION FIVE: SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS OF NECESSITIES

This section includes data on social workers' perceptions of necessities, their attitudes towards redistribution, and compares these with the perceptions of the "general public" to the same issues.

The Breadline Britain Framework

The Breadline Britain survey (Mack and Lansley, 1985) asked respondents to distinguish between a range of items which are necessary and which all adults should be able to afford, and items which may be desirable, but are not necessary. Social workers were asked to make exactly the same choices. Table 7.14 shows the results. The items have been ranked in order of most necessary through to least necessary. Mack and Lansley's equivalent percentages and ranking order are also given in brackets.

Table 7.14: Social workers' perceptions of necessities

Ranking	Item	Necessary, should be able to afford		Not necessary, but may be desirable		Don't know	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1= (4)	Bath (not shared with another household)	445	99 (94)	4	1 (6)	2	* (*)
1= (5)	Beds for in household	445	99 (94)	4	1 (6)	2	* (*)
3= (2)	Indoor toilet (not shared with another household)	443	98 (96)	6	2 (3)	2	* (*)
3= (1)	Heating to warm living areas of the house if it is cold	443	98 (97)	6	2 (2)	2	* (*)
3= (7)	A warm water-proof coat	443	98 (87)	6	2 (11)	2	* (*)
6 (3)	Damp-free house	442	98 (96)	7	2 (3)	2	* (*)
7 (6)	Public transport for one's needs	434	96 (88)	14	3 (11)	3	1 (*)
8 (13)	Toys for children, e.g. dolls or models	431	96 (71)	16	3 (20)	4	1 (9)
9 (8)	Three meals a day for children	425	94 (82)	23	5 (8)	3	1 (10)

contd ...

Table 7.14 contd.

Ranking	Item	Necessary, should be able to afford		Not necessary, but may be desirable		Don't know	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
10 (15)	Celebrations on special occasions such as Xmas	422	94 (69)	25	5 (30)	4	1 (1)
11 (9)	Self contained accommodation	405	90 (79)	43	9 (20)	3	1 (1)
12 (22)	Presents for friends or family once a year	398	88 (63)	49	11 (36)	4	1 (1)
13 (19)	A hobby or leisure activity	379	86 (64)	67	15 (34)	5	1 (*)
14 (12)	Refrigerator	378	84 (77)	70	15 (22)	3	1 (*)
15 (10)	Two pairs of all weather shoes	376	83 (78)	71	16 (21)	4	1 (*)
16 (11)	Enough bedrooms for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own bedroom	358	79 (77)	90	20 (15)	3	1 (8)
17 (18)	New, not second hand, clothes	344	76 (64)	103	23 (34)	4	1 (1)
18 (17)	A washing machine	342	76 (67)	102	22 (32)	7	2 (*)

contd ...

Table 7.14 contd

Ranking	Item	Necessary, should be able to afford		Not necessary, but may be desirable		Don't know	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
19 (23)	A holiday away from home for one week a year not with relatives	341	76 (63)	105	23 (36)	5	1 (*)
20 (14)	Carpets in living rooms and bedrooms	339	75 (70)	109	24 (29)	3	1 (*)
21 (27)	A "best outfit" for special occasions	296	66 (48)	150	33 (50)	5	1 (1)
22= (32)	A night out once a fort- night	294	65 (36)	152	34 (62)	5	1 (1)
22= (31)	Children's friends round for tea/a snack once a fortnight	294	65 (37)	153	34 (53)	4	1 (10)
24 (24)	Leisure equipment for children, eg. sports equip- ment or bicycle	291	64 (56)	157	35 (35)	3	1 (9)
25 (26)	A tele- vision	267	59 (51)	176	39 (48)	8	2 (*)
26 (20)	Two hot meals a day	261	58 (64)	184	41 (35)	6	1 (1)

contd ...

Table 7.14 contd.

Ranking	Item	Necessary, should be able to afford		Not necessary, but may be desirable		Don't know	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
27 (16)	A roast meat joint or its equivalent once a week	256	57 (67)	187	41 (32)	8	2 (1)
28 (21)	Meat or fish every other day	246	55 (63)	195	43 (35)	10	2 (1)
29 (25)	A garden	238	53 (55)	209	46 (44)	4	1 (*)
30 (29)	An outing for children once a week	219	49 (40)	226	50 (50)	6	1 (11)
31 (33)	Friends/ family round for a meal once a month	212	47 (32)	234	52 (66)	5	1 (1)
32 (30)	A dress- ing gown	211	47 (38)	230	51 (60)	10	2 (1)
33 (28)	Telephone	72	16 (43)	371	82 (56)	8	2 (1)
34 (35)	A packet of cigarettes every other day	66	15 (14)	357	79 (82)	28	6 (4)
35 (34)	A car	30	7 (22)	413	92 (76)	8	2 (1)

Source: Mack and Lansley, 1985, pp 294-295.

Note: * denotes less than 1 percent.

Discussion

Table 7.14 shows the order in which Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers rank the importance of each of the 35 items, from most necessary to least necessary. Social workers believe that a bath (not shared with another household) and beds for everyone in the household are most important and necessary; 99% of social workers think this. In next shared place comes an indoor toilet, heating, and a warm waterproof coat. These items and the next in the ranking - a damp-free house - are seen in absolute terms; necessary for subsistence. But among the remaining items ranked as necessities by large majorities of social workers are many that are culturally specific and relative, allowing for more than a basic subsistence view of necessities. Hobbies, presents, celebrations, enough bedrooms, washing machines, carpets, a night out, are all in this category.

Items 30 to 35 are the only ones which a majority of social workers do not view as necessities. These items include a weekly outing for children, friends/family round for a meal once a month, a dressing gown, telephone, cigarettes and a car. Twenty nine of the 35 items are ranked as necessities by a majority of social workers.

Mack and Lansley's national representative sample have a similar perception of necessities. Table 7.15 shows the ranking and proportion of their respondents classifying each of the items as a necessity.

Table 7.15: The public's perception of necessities

Standard-of-living items in rank order	% classing item as necessary
Heating to warm living ares of the home if it's cold	97
Indoor toilet (not shared with another household)	96
Damp-free home	96
Bath (not shared with another household)	94
Beds for everyone in the household	94
Public transport for one's needs	88
A warm water-proof coat	87
Three meals a day for children*	82
Self-contained accommodation	79
Two pairs of all-weather shoes	78
Enough bedrooms for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own*	77
Refrigerator	77
Toys for children*	71
Carpets in living rooms and bedrooms	70
Celebrations on special occasions such as Christmas	69
A roast meat joint or its equivalent once a week	67
A washing machine	67
New, not second-hand, clothes	64
A hobby or leisure activity	64
Two hot meals a day (for adults)	64
Meat or fish every other day	63
Presents for friends or family once a year	63
A holiday away from home for one week a year, not with relatives.	63
Leisure equipment for children, eg sports equipment or a bicycle*	57
A garden	55
A television	51
A 'best outfit' for special occasions	48
A telephone	43
An outing for children once a week*	40
A dressing gown	38
Children's friends round for tea/a snack once a fortnight*	37
A night out once a fortnight (adults)	36
Friends/family round for a meal once a month	32
A car	22
A packet of cigarettes every other day	14
Average of all 35 items = 64.1	

Source: Mack and Lansley, 1985, table 3.1, p 54.

Notes : *For families with children only.

The first six items classified by "the public" as necessities are exactly the same six identified by social workers, although in a slightly different order. The first five items have the support of between 97% to 94% of the public. The first 6 items chosen by social workers have the support of 99% and 98% of social work respondents. "Toys for children" is placed notably higher (at least 5 ranked places) by social workers than the public, as are presents for friends or family once a year, a hobby or leisure activity, a best outfit, a night out once a fortnight, childrens' friends round for tea. More social workers define more items as necessary than the public. Social workers generally have more intense views of what constitutes a necessity than the public at large. Social workers tend to put the majority of items in this category. On only 6 items do fewer social workers than the public perceive of the item as a necessity. These items are: two hot meals a day, a roast meat joint or equivalent, meat or fish every other day, a garden, telephone and car.

Summary

These social workers have similar perceptions to the public as to which items are the most necessary - their ranking. But where social workers differ to the public is in the level of their commitment to the items. A majority see nearly all the items as necessities. Only meat, fish, gardens, telephone and cars are not thought to be necessary by a majority of social workers.

Redistribution

Similar to Mack and Lansley's sample, social workers were asked to decide whether they would support or oppose the payment of an extra 1 and 5 pence in the pound income tax to enable everyone to afford the items they chose as necessities. Table 7.16 shows the figures.

Table 7.16: Views about redistribution

	Social Workers		The Public	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
One penny tax increase	96%	3%	74%	20%
Five pence tax increase	84%	13%	34%	53%

Notes: Figures for "the Public" are derived from Mack and Lansley, 1985, p.296.

Social workers are far more likely than the general public to support both a 1 penny and a 5 pence tax increase to help the poor. Large majorities of social workers support both tax increases. A majority of the public do not support a 5 pence in the pound tax increase to help the poor afford items selected as necessities.

SECTION SIX: PERCEPTIONS OF THE EXTENT OF FINANCIAL POVERTY AMONGST CLIENTS

This section includes data on social workers' perceptions of the extent to which claimants dominate in referrals, and the extent to which poverty directly impacts upon referrals for social work services.

The extent to which social workers believe that claimants, and supplementary benefit claimants in particular, dominate social work referrals is shown in Table 7.17. The table also shows what proportion of referrals social workers think are financial, benefit and housing problems.

Table 7.17: Perceptions of the extent to which financial poverty impacts upon referrals to social workers

Social workers ' perceptions of the									
	Proportion of referrals from all claimants			Proportion of referrals from SB claimants			Proportion of referrals that are financial/ benefit and housing problems		
	F	%	C%	F	%	C%	F	%	C%
Under 10%	1	*	*	0	0	0	1	*	*
11-20%	2	*	*	3	*	*	15	3	3
21-30%	7	2	2	12	3	3	33	7	10
31-40%	11	2	4	28	6	9	45	10	20
41-50%	18	4	8	50	11	20	71	16	36
51-60%	29	6	14	76	17	37	94	21	57
61-70%	87	20	34	98	22	59	91	20	77
71-80%	149	33	67	107	24	83	62	14	91
81-90%	93	21	88	58	13	96	26	6	97
91-100%	41	9	97	9	2	98	3	1	98
No answer	13	3	100	10	2	100	10	2	100
	451	100	100	451	100	100	451	100	100

Note: * denotes less than 1 percent. C% = cumulative percentage.

Claimant status

One in three Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers believe that 70% or under of referrals are from claimants of DHSS benefits. Another third think that 71 - 80% of referrals are from claimants. In fact data presented in chapter five (and in Becker and MacPherson, 1986) analysing over 150,000 referrals during the period 1983-1985 suggest that about 88% of referrals are from claimants and that 52% are from supplementary benefit claimants in particular. Only 1 in 5 social workers actually thinks that between 80 - 90% of referrals are from claimants generally. A majority of respondents underestimate the extent to which claimants dominate referrals to social work services.

Social workers are also inaccurate about the extent of referrals from claimants of supplementary benefit. One in 3 social workers think that 70% or under of referrals are from supplementary benefit claimants. Social workers generally overestimate the extent to which supplementary benefit claimants dominate in social work referrals.

Three quarters of all social workers think that financial, benefit and housing problems make up 70% or under of referrals. Data in chapter five suggest that in fact these types of problem constitute about 64% of all referrals. Only 1 in 5 social workers is accurate in this assessment. The majority underestimate the extent to which these problems dominate referrals.

Summary

These social workers generally underestimate both the extent to which claimants dominate referrals and the proportion of all referrals that are directly poverty related. As a group they overestimate the proportion of referrals from claimants of supplementary benefit in particular. Some individual social workers are clearly confused about the distinction between supplementary benefit claimants and "all" claimants; a number think that more referrals come from supplementary benefit claimants than come from claimants of all kinds of benefit.

SECTION SEVEN: PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN POOR CLIENTS AND POOR CLAIMANTS

This section includes data on social workers' beliefs about the differences between poor clients and other poor people not in contact with social services.

Social workers were given 21 statements about possible differences between poor clients in general and other poor people not in contact with social services. They were asked to indicate whether, in their opinion, each statement was true or false. The answers are shown in Table 7.18 ranked in order of those statements most agree with (true) through to those least agree with (false).

Table 7.18: Perception of differences between poor claimants and poor clients

Poor clients, in general, are more likely than other poor people ...

Rank	Statement	True		False		Not sure	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	To be unable to cope socially	256	57	178	39	17	4
2	To have little control over their lives	248	55	190	42	13	3
3	To have been sick or ill	242	54	193	43	16	3
4	To have relationship problems	240	53	199	44	12	3
5	To come from places where there is little opportunity for most people	226	50	211	47	14	3
6	To have had poor parents	219	48	220	49	12	3
7	To have marital problems	213	47	220	49	18	4
8	To lack education	210	46	224	50	17	4
9	To have had a bad break at some point in their lives	203	45	228	51	20	4
10	To be victims of injustice and inequality in society	201	45	236	52	14	3
11	To be taken advantage of by others	191	42	243	54	17	4
12	To have no chance in escaping from poverty	191	42	246	55	14	3
13	Not to manage their money properly	178	39	252	56	21	5
14	To fail to claim all the benefits they are entitled to	163	36	272	61	16	3
15	To be in real need	153	34	284	63	14	3
16	To lack foresight	144	32	286	63	21	5
17	To have too many children	67	15	368	80	21	5
18	To make no efforts to get on in life	58	13	373	83	20	4
19	To smoke their money away	55	12	374	83	22	5
20	To waste money on drinks and gambling	52	12	376	83	23	5
21	To be on the fiddle	20	4	410	91	21	5

Clusters

The 21 statements about poor clients can be grouped into 10 clusters which link items of a similar nature. These clusters are similar to those outlined for the poor in general (Section three). The 10 clusters, in order of popularity to Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers are:

1. Personal problems (statements 1, 3, 4, 7).
2. Cycle of deprivation (statements 5, 6, 8, 16)
3. Victims (statements 9, 10, 11)
4. Cycle of deprivation - escape (statement 12)
5. Fail to claim entitlements (statement 14)
6. In real need (statement 15)
7. Imprudent/lack control (statements 2, 17)
8. Wasteful spending patterns (statements 13, 19, 20)
9. Lack motivation (statement 18)
10. Criminal (statement 21)

As a group these social workers are more likely to feel that poor clients have personal problems (cluster 1), come from a cycle of deprivation (cluster 2), are victims (cluster 3), etc. through to cluster 10.

Findings

A majority of social workers agree with the first four statements;

that poor clients in general are more likely than other poor people to be unable to cope socially, have little control over their lives, have been sick or ill, and have relationship problems. Exactly half think that poor clients come from places where there is little opportunity for most people (cluster 4).

Under half of respondents agree with the remaining 16 statements (ranked 6 to 21 in Table 7.18). Statements that stress the "inadequacy" or "criminality" of poor clients are not at all popular; **very few social workers** think that poor clients are more likely to be on the fiddle, waste their money on drinks and gambling, smoke their money away, make no effort to get on in life or have too many children (clusters 7 - 10).

A majority of social workers do believe, however, that poor clients are more likely than other poor people to have personal problems (items 1 - 4), as opposed to more extreme financial problems. Some other statements also command fairly widespread support: statements that relate to poor clients being more likely to be "victims" of inequality or injustice (items 9, 10, 11) are all popular, with over 40% of respondents supporting these. Statements relating to the cycle of deprivation thesis (items 5, 6) have the support of about half of the respondents. Statements relating to poor clients being more likely, in some sense, to be "bad managers" (items 13, 16) are supported by around one third of social workers. Between 3 - 5% of respondents are unable to answer these questions stating that they

have no idea of the differences between poor clients and poor claimants (see also chapter nine for further discussion of social workers' perceptions of these differences, based upon information derived from the interview schedules).

Re-analysis in chapter five of data supplied by Richard Berthoud indicates some of the actual differences between the two groups. The PSI data suggest that social work clients are no more likely to be in severe poverty than the rest of the claimant population. Client/claimants generally do not report a significantly higher degree of hardship than other supplementary benefit claimants. But poor clients are more likely to be in receipt of or have a need for "special expenses" - DHSS single payments or other additional payments. These are especially common among families with children, and especially couples with children, than among claimants without children.

Summary

Statements from the first ranked cluster, referring to the belief that poor clients are more likely than other poor people to have personal problems, are agreed with by most Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers. Additionally the belief that poor clients are more likely to be trapped within a cycle of deprivation, to have poor parents and come from places where there are few opportunities (cluster 2) are also popular amongst about half the respondents. The remaining statements in the clusters ranked 3 - 10

do not command widespread support, although a large minority of social workers do hold some of these views concerning possible differences between poor clients and other poor people.

SECTION EIGHT: BELIEFS ABOUT "CASH", "CARE" AND THE SOCIAL FUND

This section includes data on social workers' use of section one and their opinions about the controversial Social Fund. The implications for the Government's approach to "selling" the Social Fund to social workers is also discussed.

Direct financial payments

Eighty three percent of all Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers make section one payments. Of these 56% do so once a month or less, 22% do so more than once a month, 11% do so once a week, 9% do so more than once a week and 2% make payments more than once a day. Giving out money is a task that is not popular; nearly half of these workers would prefer to dispense cash less frequently. Only 18% want to dispense cash more often.

Section one, however, is seen as having a place in social work practice by the majority of social workers, although three quarters think it should be limited to an occasional small or large payment.

Only 57 (13%) think that social workers should never make section one payments at all. This view is more prominent amongst male workers and welfare rights officers.

Nearly another tenth think that section one should be used regularly

to help people in need. Social workers who make frequent section one payments are more likely to take this view. Only 1% think that social workers should make all cash payments to people in need.

Social Fund

Introduction

The Social Fund will be fully operational by April 1988, following the Conservatives electoral victory on June 11th 1987. It is the Government's hope that social workers will assist social fund officers in some of the discretionary decision-making relating to the Fund. Social workers are used to making professional judgements and assessments based upon need, and the intention is that some of these skills should be transplanted into the DHSS context. By doing this, the argument goes, the social security system will become more flexible and responsive to human need.

Certainly one of the main criticisms of the social security system expressed by social workers is that it is generally inflexible and produces, because of administrative errors, delays and inadequacies in benefit levels, considerable and inappropriate work for the personal social services. Social workers are concerned that they are increasingly being forced to sort out "DHSS problems" and do the DHSS's job. Proposals to make the benefit system more responsive and flexible are quite attractive to many social workers.

Findings

When it comes to helping the DHSS make Social Fund decisions these social workers have diverse views. One hundred and thirty nine (31%) are outrightly hostile to the proposal and think that it would be better if social workers did not help the DHSS whatsoever in this type of decision-making. The remainder envisage some contact, but generally of a limited and residual nature. One hundred and ten (24%) think that social workers should only assist such decisions in exceptional and rare circumstances; another 113 (25%) think that they should only help the DHSS with decisions relating to existing social work clients. But 60 (13%) feel that they should help the DHSS make such decisions whenever asked for assistance, and 12 (3%) feel that social workers should make all such decisions relating to people in need.

Male social workers are more likely to feel that social workers should not help the DHSS at all with these decisions; female workers are more likely to think that any help should only relate to existing social work clients. The greatest hostility to any collaboration comes from the most senior levels of the social work hierarchy (Table 7.19).

Table 7.19: How much collaboration? Social workers' views on involvement with Social Fund decisions

	Area or Assistant Director	Senior Social Worker	Generic Social Worker	Specialist Social Worker	SWA	WRO	Other	Row Total
Social workers should								
not help DHSS at all	3 33%	27 39%	72 29%	17 29%	7 19%	9 82%	4 19%	139 (31%)
give DHSS help in exceptional or rare cir- cumstances only	3 33%	15 21%	60 25%	14 24%	9 24%	1 9%	8 38%	110 (24%)
help DHSS make decisions about social work clients only	3 33%	20 29%	58 24%	15 25%	12 32%	0 0%	5 24%	113 (25%)
help DHSS make decisions when- ever asked	0 0%	6 9%	38 16%	7 12%	6 16%	0 0%	3 14%	60 (13%)
make all such decisions	0 0%	1 1%	6 2%	3 5%	1 3%	1 9%	0 0%	12 (3%)
Unsure	0 0%	1 1%	10 4%	3 5%	2 6%	0 0%	1 5%	16 (4%)
Column total	9 (2%)	70 (16%)	244 (54%)	59 (13%)	37 (8%)	11 (2%)	21 (5%)	451 (100%)

Note: Percentages in grid refer to percentage of each job title with that opinion.

Not one of the nine area or assistant area directors think that social workers should help the DHSS whenever asked, and nearly 40% of all senior social workers felt that social workers should not help the DHSS at all.

Nearly 30% of field social workers think that they should not help social fund officers, although well over a tenth feel that they should help the DHSS whenever asked. Welfare rights officers employed within social services are the group most hostile to the proposals; 9 out of 11 rejected any collaboration with the DHSS on this issue.

Social workers' opinions about the Government's proposals are divided along party political lines. The Labour party has expressed considerable hostility to the Social Security Act and had promised to defer its implementation indefinitely if returned to power in June 1987. This view is reflected among social workers who would support Labour if there were a General Election tomorrow. Over a third of Labour supporting social workers feel that social workers should not be involved in any form with Social Fund decisions. Fifteen percent of Alliance and Conservative social workers hold this view.

Those most hostile to any collaboration are social workers who are members of the Labour party and those involved in pressure groups such as CPAG. The greater the level of political activity, the more organised and politically consistent are beliefs, then the more likely it is that a social worker will reject any form of co-operation with the DHSS over the Fund. As the vast majority of social workers - over two thirds - are Labour supporters and over one fifth of all social workers are Labour party members, the Government is likely to have a hard job in persuading many social workers to

change their mind. Certainly BASW and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities were still refusing to discuss the Fund with the DHSS in July 1987, and the ADSS was still very concerned about the implications of the Draft Guidance (DHSS, 1987) for the operation and practice of social work.

The Interface of cash and care

Those who rarely give out section one money or who would like to give out cash more often are more likely to think that social workers should help social fund officers make discretionary decisions whenever asked. Conversely those social workers who frequently give out section one money are more likely to feel that any collaboration over the Social Fund should be in exceptional circumstances or with existing clients only. The more direct the involvement that Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers have with their own cash services the more guarded they are about helping the DHSS make Social Fund decisions. The more social workers become entwined with the cash system, the less they like it and the less they want to help the DHSS make decisions about the Social Fund.

Wider implications

A number of important implications arise from these findings.

First, if the Government and DHSS wish to allay the hostility of the organised pressure groups, local authority organisations and social workers with more structured and partisan beliefs then they will need

to modify some of the principles governing the current Social Fund proposals. Certainly the hostile reaction of the ADSS, local government bodies and the Social Security Consortium toward the proposals is representative of the bulk of social workers feelings on the subject. The Draft Guidance for social fund officers (DHSS, 1987) did nothing to allay this hostility.

Second, as far as most of these social workers are concerned intricate details of principle are not at the forefront of concern. To them, questions of the appropriate division in practice between cash and care services are far more pressing. There are similarities between the Social Fund proposals and the existing use by social workers of section one money. Discretionary judgements are nothing new to social workers; section one payments are tightly limited from fixed and cash limited budgets; clients have no right of appeal against social work decisions relating to money. What many social workers are more concerned about is being dragged deeper and deeper into work which ceases to have any resemblance to what they think social work is all about. The more involved in direct cash services they become the more reserved they are about helping the DHSS any further.

Third, the vast majority of these social workers feel that any involvement in the cash system - either directly through section one or indirectly through helping social fund officers - must be of a residual and limited nature. Sizeable numbers would simply prefer to

have nothing to do with either.

Fourth, if the Government is to make the Social Fund proposals more attractive to field social workers it will need to stress that any social work involvement will be residual, and in exceptional circumstances or with existing clients only. Certainly this is the approach that the Government is now taking. The then social security minister, John Major, had recently stated: "I fully appreciate that social workers do not wish, nor would we expect them, to act as gatekeepers to the Social Fund, but there will be circumstances where their advice will be helpful to their clients and will enable social fund officers to take better decisions" (ACC Conference, December 1986; see also Community Care, 18/25 December, p.4). Creating new poor clients from previously independent claimants who seek help from the Social Fund is not a process that is welcome to social workers. Most would prefer to have less to do with the cash system rather than more. Most would prefer to have less poor clients rather than more.

Fifth, the Government will in particular need to allay the fears of senior social workers and management from Directors downwards, on issues of principle and matters of practice. Most Nottinghamshire and Manchester field social workers envisage some limited and minimal collaboration with the DHSS. What remains to be done as far as the Government is concerned will be to get as many of the main organisations around the negotiating table, build upon this and work out the details before the full scale implementation in April 1988.

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CHAPTER 8

INFLUENCES ON SOCIAL WORKERS' ATTITUDES TO POVERTY AND THE POOR

Introduction

The editors of the 1984 British Social Attitudes Report found that:

"... whereas a person's age seems to be the most powerful discriminator of some issues, sex, employment status, social class or party political differences explain much of the variation on others, and so on..." (Jowell and Airey, 1984, 8).

This chapter explores the range of possible influences on Manchester and Nottinghamshire social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor. The chapter is divided into seven sections, each of which focus on a number of related variables to assess whether there is an association with attitudes. For each variable the null hypothesis would state that there is no association or relationship and that any differences can be attributed to sampling fluctuations (see Kalton, 1976, 29; Nachmias and Nachmias, 1976, 272-73; Kane, 1985, 173).

The sections are:

- Section one: past background
- Section two: work situation
- Section three: personal characteristics
- Section four: educational level
- Section five: experience of claiming benefit
- Section six: past and present housing
- section seven: political values and group membership

Each section examines social workers' attitudes to a number of issues concerned with poverty and the poor: attitudes and strength of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants, the adequacy of benefits, "fiddling", take-up of benefits, attitudes to the poor in general, helping the poor through increases in income tax, differences between poor claimants and poor clients. Findings on opinions and beliefs about these poverty related issues, and the intensity to which beliefs are held, enables an overall picture of the influences on social workers' attitudes to be assembled. Attitude position and intensity are inferred from a range of opinions and beliefs about a number of inter-related issues (see for example chapters three and four). These beliefs and opinions indicate social workers' attitudes to poverty in general and toward those issues specifically. Influences on attitudes may vary considerably depending on the type and nature of the issue being examined. As the editors of the British Social Attitudes Series suggest, different variables may influence attitudes to different issues in different ways. This chapter examines in turn the possible association between a number of variables and attitudes towards a range of poverty related issues. It assesses whether some variables are associated negatively or positively with attitude position and intensity.

SECTION ONE: PAST BACKGROUND

This section explores the association between attitudes and a number of variables related to respondents' backgrounds: social class, financial circumstances during childhood, parents' occupation, experiences prior to field social work.

Findings

Class and financial background

The questionnaires provide valuable data on the class and financial backgrounds of social workers. However, the data suggest that social class background is not associated with social workers' current attitudes to poverty and the poor. Nor was an association found between social workers' financial circumstances during childhood and their current attitudes to the poor. Class origin and past financial circumstances seem to play little part in influencing social workers' current attitudes to poverty and the poor.

Father's and mother's occupation

There appears to be an association between the type of occupation that respondents' parents were in and social workers' attitudes to poverty.

Fathers

First, social workers whose fathers were employed in human services (teaching, social work, health work, etc.) or as managers, appear

more likely to believe that large numbers of the poor are victims of injustice and inequality, are taken advantage of by rich people, depend on the state of the world for their fate and do badly in life because rich people get more than their fair share.

Second, social workers whose fathers were in human services or managers are also more likely to believe in the cycle of deprivation thesis; that most of the poor have poor parents and come from places with little opportunities.

Third, social workers whose fathers were in human services are more likely to think that poor clients are victims, have been sick or ill, lack education, but do make an effort to get on in life. Those whose fathers had less contact with the public (i.e. "little contact" through to "managers") are least likely to think this about poor clients.

Mothers

Social workers whose mothers were in human services or had close contact with the public seem to have a stronger belief in the cycle of deprivation thesis. Social workers whose mothers had home responsibilities seem to be less supportive of claimants generally and believe less in the "poor as victims" thesis. Social workers whose mothers were in close contact with the public (but not human services) are most likely to think that large numbers of the poor are victims.

Conclusion

Perhaps suprisingly, both class origin and financial background do not seem to be directly associated with social workers' attitudes to poverty or the poor. However, there is some association between attitudes and the type of occupation that social workers' parents were in during a respondent's childhood.

Social workers whose fathers were in human services or were managers generally have more 'positive' attitudes to the poor (if positive is equated with emphasis on structural explanations). Social workers whose mothers were in close contact with the public (but not human services) also generally have more positive attitudes.

Experiences prior to becoming a field social worker

Are different types of experience, prior to field social work, associated positively or negatively with attitudes towards a number of issues? If so, what influence does the length of this experience have upon attitudes? The discussion has important implications for the selection for training of prospective social workers and for the types of experience that would be considered beneficial and worth encouraging.

Intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants

Experience in paid work related to social work

Social workers with five or more years' experience in social work related employment prior to becoming field social workers feel less strongly about a number of issues concerning supplementary benefit (SB) claimants; of those with the most experience of this type - 10 years or over - 53% strongly agree that supplementary benefits claimants are in real need. This compares with 61% with 5-10 years' experience, 79% (3-5 years'), 82% (1-2 years'), 73% (under 1 year) and 79% who have spent no time in this type of work prior to becoming a social worker. Social workers with lengthy experience of this sort appear to feel less strongly that SB claimants are in real need.

Additionally only one third of social workers who have spent over 10 years and just over one third who have spent 5-10 years in this type of work strongly disagree that many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle. This compares with half of those who have been in this type of work for 1-2 years and 56% of those who have spent 3-5 years in this type of work. Forty seven percent of social workers with no experience of this type of work strongly disagree with the statement. Again, those with lengthy experience of this type seem to feel more strongly that SB claimants are on the fiddle.

Voluntary work experience

Those with three years' or more experience in voluntary work feel less strongly about some issues concerned with supplementary benefit claimants than those with under 3 years' experience. Those who spent up to 3 years in voluntary work have more intense attitudes - in a positive direction - than those who spent no time in voluntary work.

Forty seven percent of those with 10 years' or more experience, 60% of those with 5-10 years' experience, 64% of those with 3-5 years', 81% of those with 1-2 years' and 84% of those with under one year's voluntary work experience strongly agree that most supplementary benefit claimants are in real need. Seventy eight percent of those with no voluntary work experience hold this view.

On the subject of "fiddling" only one third of those with over 5 years' voluntary experience strongly disagree with the statement that many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle. Additionally only 39% of those with 3-5 years' experience strongly disagree. This compares with over half (54%) of those who had up to 3 years' experience in voluntary work. Forty six percent of those with no voluntary work experience hold this view. At least one in ten social workers with over 3 years' experience of voluntary work strongly agree that many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle. No worker with less experience thinks this. Lengthy voluntary work experience seems to be negatively associated with

intensity of feelings towards a number of issues concerning SB claimants.

Non social work employment

Eighty two percent of social workers with no experience of "outside" employment strongly agree that most people claiming supplementary benefit are in real need. An almost equal proportion of those with under one year's experience also think this. Under three quarters of those with between 1 and 5 years' experience think this, 70% of those with 5-10 years' and two thirds of those with 10 or more years of non social work employment.

One third of social workers with over 5 years' experience strongly disagree that many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle. Well under one half of those with 1-5 years' experience have this view. This compares with 55% of those with no experience of "outside" work who strongly disagree with the statement.

Experience of non social work employment appears to be associated - in a negative direction - with 'intensity' of attitudes towards issues relating to SB claimants.

Assessment of an adequate supplementary benefit scale rate for a family with two children

Social workers with experience of non social work employment appear less generous in their assessment of an adequate supplementary

benefit scale rate. Those who had spent up to 2 years doing voluntary work, or over 3 years in paid work related to social work make the most generous assessment. Social workers with under 3 years' experience of paid work related to social work are no more generous in their assessment than those who spent no time at all in this type of employment.

Past social work type experience is not necessarily associated positively with beliefs about the appropriate level of supplementary benefit. Figure 8.1 summarises the findings on associations between different types of experience and social workers' attitudes towards a number of these and other issues.

Perceptions of the differences between poor clients and other poor people not in contact with social workers

There is no significant association between voluntary work experience or experience of paid work related to social work and opinions about the differences between poor clients and other poor people not in contact with social services. However, a note of caution should be added about lengthy periods of voluntary work experience; those with over 5 years' experience of this type are more likely to think that poor clients make no effort to get on in life, waste their money drinking or gambling, or don't manage their money properly.

Those with experience of "outside", non social work employment, are less likely to think that poor clients have relationship problems,

Figure 8.1: Summary of associations between attitudes and type of experience prior to social work

Attitude/ Perception	Paid work related to social work	Voluntary work	Non social work employment
Attitudes towards SB claimants	Experience associated positively with attitude intensity. <u>But</u> those with <u>under one year or over 3 years</u> have <u>less</u> intense feelings than those with <u>no experience at all</u> , or 1-3 years experience. (Optimal experience is perhaps 2-3 years.)	Experience associated positively with attitude intensity. But those with experience <u>over 3 years</u> have less intense feelings than those with under 3 years experience. (Optimal experience is perhaps 2 years.)	Any experience associated negatively with attitude intensity. The longer the experience the stronger - in a negative direction - the feelings. (Optimal experience = 0 years.)
Assessment of the appropriate SB scale rate	Experience associated positively with generosity of assessment. Those with <u>over 3 years</u> experience are most generous; those with between 0-2 years are least generous. (Optimal experience = 3 years and over.)	Experience positively associated with generosity of assessment. But those with up to 2 years experience are the most generous; those with over this are even less generous than those with no experience at all. (Optimal experience = 1-2 years.)	Any experience associated negatively with generosity of assessment. Those with no experience or very little experience. (under 1 year) are most generous.
Attitudes to the poor in general	Little association between experience in general and range of attitudes to the poor. However, those with over 10 years experience are more likely to think that large numbers of the poor mismanage their money, don't care about getting ahead, and <u>aren't</u> victims of injustice and inequality.	Those with over 3 years experience, and especially those with over 10 years experience, are more likely to think that large numbers of the poor mismanage their money, don't care about getting ahead, and <u>aren't</u> victims of injustice and inequality.	Those with experience and especially more than 5 years, are more likely to think that large numbers of the poor don't try or care about getting ahead, mismanage their money, aren't victims of injustice and inequality.

are in real need, or are victims of injustice and inequality. Those with considerable experience of this sort - 10 years or over - are more likely to think poor clients waste their money.

Discussion and conclusions

Data suggest that experience in employment "outside" social work, and, particularly considerable experience of this type, is consistently associated with a more negative attitude position to the poor and less supportive feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants in particular. This has important implications for the selection of prospective social workers. Those with experience of "outside" employment obviously need not be excluded from the profession (unless their attitudes are intensely hostile to the poor). Selection and training, however, would need to address "bias" or stereotyping in attitudes to the poor, just as it would wish to address and confront biased, stereotyped, sexist or racist attitudes towards racial, ethnic or minority groups.

Experience of voluntary work or paid employment related to social work appears to be associated, in a positive direction, with attitude position and intensity. Prospective social workers should be encouraged to seek these types of experience prior to becoming field social workers. But the length of time of this experience is problematic; on some issues short experiences are positively associated with attitudes, for others more lengthy periods are positively associated. It appears that lengthy experience of this

sort may have a 'backlash' association with some attitudes; the optimal period of voluntary work experience might be between 1 to 2 years; for paid work related to social work this might be 2 - 5 years. These periods are generally associated most positively with a number of issues concerning poverty and the poor. However data elsewhere in this chapter (section two) suggest that respondents who decide to become field social workers during social services related work may have more negative general attitudes to the poor than those who decide at other points in their lives. This is not inconsistent with findings here; extensive or prolonged contact with social services or social work prior to becoming a field social worker may be negatively associated with attitudes towards some issues and positively with others. From the data presented here it is only possible to generalise about what periods of social service experience have the most beneficial or negative influence on particular attitudes.

SECTION TWO: WORK SITUATION

This section examines the association between attitudes and a number of variables related to social workers' work situations: job position, time spent in social work, point in life of decision to become a field social worker.

Job title

The job title that a social worker has (area director, senior, social work assistant, welfare rights officer) also represents a number of other important variables; for example, place in the social work hierarchy, income level, direct contact with poor clients, length of time in social work, age, etc.

Crudely, those at the top of the hierarchy are generally older, have higher incomes, little direct contact with poor clients, and have been in social work longer. Obviously there are important exceptions to this; for example, the place of welfare rights officers (WROs) in this is somewhat ambivalent, and it is not uncommon to find very experienced social work assistants (SWAs) who cannot climb the hierarchy for lack of professional qualifications or the opportunities to take them. When discussing 'job title' we are therefore also implicitly considering a whole range of factors in the process of getting to a particular job position, as well as the job title itself.

Findings

Intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants

There is fairly consistent and strong support for supplementary benefit claimants from social workers of all job descriptions. About 80% of area directors, social workers and seniors strongly agree that supplementary benefit claimants are in real need; 91% of WROs think this and 54% of SWAs. WROs feel most strongly that supplementary benefit claimants are in real need, fail to claim all their entitlements, and are not on the fiddle; SWAs feel least strongly on these three issues.

On the issues of 'take-up' and 'fiddling' there are some important differences in perceptions between social workers in different jobs. Table 8.2 shows social workers' beliefs about take-up of benefits and fiddling. Welfare rights officers and area directors feel most strongly that a lot of supplementary benefit claimants fail to claim their entitlements. Only half of generic social workers feel as strongly, and just two fifths of SWAs. As far as 'fiddling' is concerned, all the WROs and three quarters of area directors strongly disagree with the statement, but only about half of all social workers and seniors feel this strongly, and under 30% of SWAs. 1 in 5 SWAs agree or strongly agree that many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle. Beliefs that supplementary benefit claimants are involved in criminal acts vary according to different job titles. The data suggest that SWAs have the least supportive feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants, whilst

Table 8.2: Strength of feelings towards the issues of 'take-up' and 'fiddling', by job title

"Many people claiming SB are on the fiddle" (2)																
Statements "A lot of people entitled to SB, don't claim it" (1)																
	Area Director	Senior Worker	Social Worker	Specialist Social Worker	SWA	WRO	Other	Total	Area Director	Senior Worker	Social Worker	Specialist social worker	SWA	WRO	Other	Total
Strongly agree	7 (78)	45 (64)	120 (50)	36 (61)	14 (40)	10 (91)	7 (33)	239 (54)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (1)	0 (0)	2 (6)	0 (0)	1 (5)	6 (1)
Tend to agree	2 (22)	20 (29)	96 (40)	16 (27)	16 (46)	1 (9)	9 (43)	160 (35)	1 (13)	5 (7)	17 (7)	1 (2)	5 (14)	0 (0)	0 (0)	29 (7)
Neither agree nor disagree	0 (0)	3 (4)	15 (5)	3 (5)	4 (11)	0 (0)	4 (19)	29 (7)	0 (0)	8 (11)	30 (12)	8 (14)	6 (17)	0 (0)	3 (14)	55 (12)
Tend to disagree	0 (0)	2 (3)	11 (5)	4 (7)	1 (3)	0 (0)	1 (5)	19 (4)	1 (13)	19 (28)	81 (34)	19 (32)	13 (35)	0 (0)	11 (5)	144 (32)
Strongly disagree	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (74)	38 (54)	111 (46)	31 (52)	10 (28)	11 (100)	6 (29)	213 (48)
All job titles	9 (2)	70 (16)	242 (53)	59 (13)	35 (8)	11 (3)	21 (5)	447 (100)	8 (2)	70 (16)	242 (53)	59 (13)	36 (8)	11 (3)	21 (5)	447 (100)

Notes: (1) x2 = 37.58111, p<.05 (2) x2 = 53.93389, p<.005.

WROs have the most. There is a range of support in-between varying with job positions. Generic social workers appear to have less intense feelings of support than specialist social workers or senior social workers.

Attitudes to the poor in general

In response to the 20 statements about poor people (questions 53-72) welfare rights officers again stand out as feeling most strongly about the poor and have the most clear cut answers; half answered most questions by selecting the "all" or "nothing" option. Social work assistants are most likely to think that large numbers of the poor waste their money on drink and gambling, don't try hard to better themselves, etc. The overall pattern of answers is similar to that established by the data on strength of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants.

Attitudes towards redistribution

The vast majority of all respondents - over 90% of all job titles - support a one penny tax increase to help the poor. Fewer support a five pence tax increase but this support is not associated in any large degree with their job title.

Perceptions of the differences between poor claimants and poor clients

Job title does, however, appear to be associated with beliefs about possible differences between poor people in contact with social

workers and poor people who are not in contact with personal social services.

Table 8.3 shows the proportion of each job title who think that poor clients in general are more likely than other poor people to be taken advantage of by the rich, etc. (questions 110-130). The data suggest that, as a group, WROs do not believe that poor clients differ from poor claimants to any large degree, except that poor clients are more likely to have been sick or ill. However there are some important differences in perceptions between other job titles. Area directors are most likely to support the cycle of deprivation thesis and feel that poor clients lack education, have been sick or ill or have other relationship problems. Social work assistants and WROs are least likely to think this.

Those furthest up the social work hierarchy are more likely to think that poor clients are trapped within a cycle of deprivation, lack education, had poor parents and have personal relationship problems (such as marital problems). This is particularly the case for area directors - the highest in the hierarchy - and the most distant from everyday practice and contact with poor clients. Senior social workers are also more likely to think that poor clients in general have relationship problems or have been sick or ill. Most generic social workers think that poor clients are unable to cope socially or have relationship problems. Specialist social workers place particular emphasis on poor clients not coping socially. It is clear

Table 8.3: Opinions about the differences between poor clients and other poor people not in contact with social workers, by job title

Poor clients, in general, are more likely than other poor people ...

			% of each job title agreeing with statement						
	Cluster		Area Director	Senior	Social worker	Specialist social worker	SWA	WRO	Other
to be taken advantage of	V		56	50	42	37	32	18	57
	I								
to have had a bad break	C		44	49	47	46	30	27	48
	T								
	I								
to be victims of injustice and inequality	M		56	53	42	51	43	18	43
	S								
to lack foresight		D	44	39	29	34	35	9	43
	C	E							
to have had poor parents	Y	P	67	53	50	46	35	9	57
	C	R							
	L	I							
to have had little opportunity	E	V	56	57	51	53	41	18	38
		A							
	O	T							
	F	I							
to lack education		O	89	56	46	41	30	27	62
		N							
to have no chance in escaping from poverty	ESCAPE		44	46	45	39	30	18	43
to have relationship problems		P							
		E							
		R	67	60	53	49	43	27	67
		S							
		O							
to be unable to cope socially		N	78	54	59	64	41	9	67
		A							
		L							
to have been sick or ill		P	89	59	50	49	54	55	81
		R							
		O							
		B							
to have marital problems		L	68	51	46	48	43	27	52
		E							
		M							
		S							

contd ...

Table 8.3 continued:

Poor clients, in general, are more likely than other poor people ...

% of each job title agreeing with statement								
	Cluster	Area Director	Senior	Social worker	Specialist social worker	SWA	WRO	Other
to have too many children	I M P R	11	11	16	14	16	-	29
to have little control over their lives	U D E N T	89	60	54	54	43	18	81
to waste their money on smoking	W A S T E F U L	11	11	14	9	19	-	5
to fail to manage their money properly		44	40	39	49	35	-	48
to waste money on drinking and gambling		11	11	12	12	11	-	19
to make no effort to get on	LACK MOTI- VATION	-	7	14	10	19	-	33
to be on the fiddle	CRIMINAL	-	3	5	2	10	-	-
to fail to claim all their entitlements	T A K E U P	33	36	37	31	46	18	38
to be in real need	N E E D	33	41	35	27	24	36	33
All job titles	451 (100)	9 (2)	70 (16)	244 (54)	59 (13)	37 (8)	11 (2)	21 (5)

from the data that many social workers of all job descriptions regard poor clients as people with relationship or coping problems; this appears particularly so for management (see also chapter nine for more discussion of this, using information generated from the interview schedules).

This has important implications for the operation and practice of social work. Managers exert a strong influence and direction on the working definition, nature, aims and methods of social work practice. Most field social workers have commented in the interviews that practice is determined, constrained and directed by the policy of committees and the priorities of management. Social workers generally take this to mean "casework" directed at helping individuals or families cope better with their social conditions and surroundings. Managements' perceptions of the reasons why some poor people are clients whilst others are not clearly may influence their definition of the boundaries of acceptable social work practice. The current ethos among directors and social workers that poor clients operate at a "less able level" than other poor people is likely to contribute to the nature, type and style of social work services that are provided.

And yet these beliefs are not based on any comparable evidence; because social workers know little of the characteristics of the millions of poor people who do not become clients their assessment of the possible differences between these groups is based on their observations of the characteristics of the poor with whom they are in

contact. But poor claimants not in contact with social workers may be equally or more unable to cope socially, or be trapped in a cycle of deprivation. The actual differences between poor clients and other poor people not in contact with social workers requires extensive investigation and must be a priority if social service departments are to respond effectively to the needs of the poor. At the moment many of those who use social services are seen as 'not coping'. Services aimed at 'non copers' are likely to be quite different to services directed to clients with other defined needs.

Summary and conclusion

There appears to be some limited association between job title and attitudes to poverty and the poor. Welfare rights officers and area directors have the most supportive attitudes and intense feelings towards supplementary benefits claimants, SWAs have the least. However this association is not as significant as the association that exists between job position and perceptions of the differences between poor clients and other poor people not in contact with social workers. Those at the higher managerial end of the social work hierarchy are more likely to think that poor clients lack education, and place more emphasis on the notion of a cycle of deprivation, regard poor clients as having personal or coping problems. It has been suggested that these views and especially those relating to poor clients as being unable to cope socially are fairly widespread. Additionally these perceptions may be an important influence on the operation and practice of social work. Because a person's position

in the social work hierarchy also represents a number of other factors (e.g. age, time in social work), job title is perhaps an unhelpful variable from which to speculate about the reasons for these associations. More "self contained" variables are examined in the forthcoming sections.

Time spent in field social work

Is the length of time spent in field social work practice associated with attitudes to poverty and the poor? The data suggest that it is to some degree.

First, newly appointed social workers (under 6 months' practice) are least likely to believe in the cycle of deprivation thesis. Only one third of this group think that 40% of the poor or more have poor parents; two thirds of those who have been in social work 6 months to 1 year think this, and nearly 60% of those who have been in social work between 1 to 5 years. Interestingly those who have been in social work for even longer periods - over 5 years - appear less likely to believe in the cycle of deprivation; acceptance of the cycle of deprivation thesis appears to weaken after more extensive social work practice of 5 years or over, but appears to be particularly strong amongst those with a few years of social work experience.

Second, social workers with over 1 year's experience appear more likely to think that large numbers of the poor don't try hard to

better themselves and don't care about getting ahead. One tenth of these social workers think that at least 40% of the poor don't try hard. None of the social workers who have been in practice for under 1 year hold this view. Additionally those who have been working for over 1 year appear more likely to believe that large numbers of the poor waste their money on drink and don't manage their money properly. Nearly one in ten of these social workers think that 40% or more of the poor are in these categories compared with no newly appointed social workers who think this. Those who have practised the longest (5 years or over) are the most likely to think that poor clients are 'bad budgeters'.

Finally, social workers who have been in practice for long periods of time are more likely to feel that poor clients have relationship problems, lack foresight, have poor parents and have had a bad break in life. Those who have practised for 10 years or over are especially likely to think poor clients lack education and have marital problems. Nearly two thirds of those employed for 10 years or more think this, compared with about one third of those employed for under 2 years.

Summary and conclusion

Longer periods in field social work practice seem to be negatively associated with some attitudes to the poor. Newly appointed social workers do not seem to have developed some of these attitudes and generally are less negative to the poor on a number of issues. Those

who have practised social work for longer periods of time - sometimes just a year or over - are more likely to adopt a "pathology" model for poor clients, thinking that they have relationship or marital problems, lack foresight and education or have had a bad break in the past. Attitudes to the poor (and especially as poor clients) appear to be influenced by the length of time that social workers have been in practice. Could it be that prolonged working contact with poor clients, most often on an individualised 'casework' basis, influences perceptions of the poor and clients? Do individualising methods of working with the poor lead to perceptions that locate poverty in the context of individual abilities and coping mechanisms?

Point in life of decision to enter social work

Respondents who decided to become social workers during experience/work in social services appear to have the most consistently negative attitudes and least intense feelings towards the poor in general and supplementary benefit claimants in particular. Only 40% of these social workers strongly disagree that many supplementary benefit claimants are on the fiddle, compared with nearly two thirds of those who decided to enter social work as students. Additionally only 7 out of 10 of those who decided whilst in social services strongly agree that most supplementary benefit claimants are in real need. This compares with nearly 90% of those who decided when students or before leaving school. This is consistent with other findings from the data; those who have spent a year or more in field social work generally have less positive

attitudes towards the poor. Consequently if respondents have actually been employed in some form of social services work before becoming field social workers, then it is possible that they will have spent longer in social services work than those who decided at other points in their lives. On some issues this longer contact, prior to or after becoming a field social worker, is associated with negative attitudes. Figure 8.4 summarises the associations between the point in life when this decision was taken and attitudes to the poor in general and supplementary benefit claimants in particular.

Respondents who decided to enter social work whilst unemployed have the most consistently positive attitudes to the poor. They are most likely to see the poor as victims and least likely to think that the poor mismanage their money. This is consistent with findings on the experience of claiming; social workers with experience of claiming benefit themselves are generally more supportive of the poor (see section five in this chapter). Respondents who decided to become social workers when students or before leaving school also have fairly positive attitudes to the poor and supplementary benefit claimants. Respondents who decided to become social workers whilst working in non social work employment have fairly negative attitudes on a number of issues. No association was found between the point in life when this decision was taken and attitudes towards the cycle of deprivation or redistribution.

The data suggest that those with the most positive attitudes to the

poor and claimants on a number of issues are respondents who decided to become social workers earlier on in their lives - before leaving school or during their student days - or whilst unemployed. However, the data also suggest that those who decided to become social workers while working (social work related or otherwise) have the most negative attitudes on a number of issues. Again, could it be that those who decided to become social workers while unemployed, during school or as students have a long standing or firmer commitment to working with the poor than those who decided whilst in social services or other work?

Figure 8.4: Summary of associations between attitudes and strength of feelings to various issues and point in life of decision to enter social work

	Intensity of feeling to SB claimants		Attitudes to the poor in general			
Point in life of decision to enter social work	As people in real need	As on the fiddle	Poor as victims	Do badly because rich get more	Mismanage money	Don't care or try hard
Before leaving school	✓		✓			
As a student	✓	✓	x			✓
In non social work employment				x		x
In social services employment	x	x	x	x	x	
Whilst unemployed			✓	✓	✓	

Notes: A ✓ denotes that social workers who decided at this point in their life have the most positive/intense attitudes/feelings to the poor or SB claimants on this issue. A x denotes the most negative attitudes/feelings. A number of ✓'s and x's denotes a similarity of attitudes/feelings on this issue amongst social workers who decided at different points in their lives.

SECTION THREE: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

This section explores the associations between attitudes and a number of variables relating to the personal characteristics of social workers: age, sex, marital status, religion.

Findings

Age

If, as has been suggested in the previous section, those who have been social workers for long periods of time are more hostile in their attitudes than newly appointed social workers, then, ipso facto older social workers may also be more negative towards the poor.

The data suggest that there is an association between age and social workers' attitudes to a number of issues on poverty and the poor. First, the youngest and oldest social workers (under 25 and over 50) are far more likely than other age groups to think that large numbers of the poor don't try hard to better themselves, waste their money on drink and don't manage their money properly.

Second, social workers under 45 are far more likely to think that the poor depend on the state of the world for their fate. About three quarters of this age group believe that 40% or more of the poor are in this category, compared with under half of social workers over 45 who think this. Social workers between 25-40 are the most likely to

think that large numbers of the poor are victims of injustice and inequality; nearly 90% of social workers in this age group believe that 40% or more of the poor are victims compared with 70% of under 25s who believe this, 60% of those in their 40s and 55% of those in their 50s. Social workers under 30 are particularly likely to think that large numbers of the poor are taken advantage of by rich people.

Intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants

Social workers under 25 and over 45 have the least intense feelings and most negative attitudes to supplementary benefit claimants. Just half of the under 25s and about 60% of the over 45s strongly agree that supplementary benefit claimants are in real need, compared with about 80% of the 25-45 age group. Additionally social workers under 25 and over 50 have the least supportive feelings on the issue of 'fiddling'. Only about one quarter of social workers in these age bands strongly disagree that 'many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle' - another quarter actually agree with the statement. This contrasts with about half of the 25-40 age group and 40% of the 41-50 age band who strongly disagree and only about 7% who agree with the statement. Those aged 31-35 are most likely to strongly disagree with the statement.

Poor clients

The data suggest that, again, older social workers have the most negative views about poor clients. Those aged 45 or over are more likely to believe that poor clients, in general, lack foresight,

waste their money on smoking, don't manage their money properly, etc.

Summary and conclusion

There is evidence to suggest that older social workers, and in some instances the youngest ones as well, have the least intense feelings and most negative attitudes to the poor across a number of issues. These social workers are most likely to believe that large numbers of the poor waste their money and don't try hard and that large numbers of supplementary benefit claimants are not in real need and are on the fiddle. Social workers in their 30s and 40s are more likely to believe that the poor are victims and less likely to view poor clients in "pathological" terms.

These findings may be related with other data about the length of time spent in field social work. Those who have practised longer (and are therefore usually older) seem to have more negative attitudes to the poor on a number of issues.

Sex, marital status and number of dependants

The data suggest that there are no sex differences in social workers' attitudes towards poverty and the poor. No variations by sex were found in attitudes towards the cause of poverty, or in the clusters of opinion relating to the poor, or in intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants. Similarly social workers' marital status, or the number of dependants living with them, do not appear to be associated to any degree with their attitudes or

strength of feelings.

The data suggest, however, that there is a small group of male respondents - about 10% of all males - who consistently answer in the most extreme form; for example that 100% of the poor are exploited, do badly in life because of the rich, etc.; or feel very strongly that supplementary benefit claimants fail to claim all their entitlements, are not on the fiddle, etc (see section seven for some analysis of this group). Despite the existence of this small group of male respondents the data support Flint's findings (1981) in a non social work sample that sex is not associated with attitudes to poverty.

As far as the individual and group discussions are able to illuminate this issue, the sex of the interviewee is again not associated with a specific attitude position or intensity. Women in the group interviews were, however, more likely to recognise and be concerned with the unequal burdens of responsibility placed on women and especially mothers in poor households. Whilst sex was not related to attitudes towards poverty and the poor, the experience of women social workers was often an important factor associated with the themes and issues that they thought important to discuss in a group context.

Religion

Intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefits claimants

Social workers who practise a religion have the least intense feelings on a number of issues concerning supplementary benefit claimants. Only 19% of those practising a religion strongly agree with the statement "most people claiming supplementary benefit are in real need", compared with 44% of those with no religion and 35% of those who are non practising.

To the statement "a lot of people entitled to supplementary benefit don't claim it", only 21% of those practising strongly agree, compared with 46% of those with no religion at all and 31% of those non practising.

To the statement "most people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle" only 20% of those practising strongly disagree, compared with 48% of those with no religion and 31% of those non practising.

Additionally, those who think that their religious beliefs consciously influence the way in which they work - the most religious respondents - feel less strongly about these issues than those who are religious but whose beliefs do not influence their work.

Social workers who have no religion at all have the most intense feelings - in a supportive direction - towards supplementary benefit claimants. However, whilst religion is associated with attitude intensity it does not appear to be associated with the overall

attitude position. Similar proportions of those with and without religion feel that supplementary benefit claimants are in real need, don't claim all their entitlements, etc. Those without religion, however, tend to feel more strongly about these issues.

Attitudes to the poor in general

There is no association between religious practice and the vast majority of attitudes to the poor. However out of the 7 clusters of opinions relating to the poor (questions 53-72; see also chapter seven, section three) there is a strong association between religion and the one cluster of opinions that view the poor as victims of injustice, inequality and of circumstances beyond their control. Tables 8.5 to 8.8 show social workers' attitudes to the statements in this cluster. The data suggest that social workers who don't practise a religion are more likely than those who do:

- (i) to think that larger numbers of the poor are victims of injustice and inequality (Table 8.5), and,
- (ii) to think that larger numbers of the poor are taken advantage of by the rich (Table 8.6), and,
- (iii) to think that larger numbers of the poor do badly in life because the rich get more than their fair share (Table 8.7), and,
- (iv) to think that larger numbers of the poor depend on the state of the world for their fate (Table 8.8).

Social workers who do practise a religion are less likely to believe

that large numbers of the poor are victims of injustice, inequality and circumstances beyond their control. Social workers who have religious beliefs which consciously influence the way they work are more likely than those who are practising to disagree with the 'poor as victims' thesis. Practising a religion is not, however, associated with any of the opinions from the other 6 clusters outlined in chapter seven. Nor is there an association between religious practice and attitudes towards redistribution and poor clients.

Social workers who have a religion but are non practising tend to be closer in opinions to those who practise a religion, rather than those who have no religion at all.

Table 8.5: Beliefs about the proportion of the poor who are victims of injustice and inequality, by religion

Proportion of social workers				
Proportion of the poor that are victims of injustice and inequality	No Religion	Practising	Non Practising	All
%	%	%	%	%
0 - 20	6	13	16	12
21 - 40	2	10	12	8
41 - 60	6	15	11	10
61 - 80	11	15	15	14
81 - 100	75	47	46	56
	100%	100%	100%	100%
n =	177	101	167	445

Notes: x2 = 79.79471, p = <0.05, DF = 56

Table 8.6: Beliefs about the proportion of the poor who are taken advantage of by the rich, by religion

Proportion of social workers				
Proportion of the poor that are taken advantage of by rich people	No Religion	Practising	Non Practising	All
%	%	%	%	%
0 - 20	18	25	32	25
21 - 40	15	25	18	19
41 - 60	12	14	12	13
61 - 80	10	15	13	13
81 - 100	45	21	25	30
	100%	100%	100%	100%
n =	177	101	167	445

Notes: $\chi^2 = 75.34181$, $p = <0.07$, $DF = 48$

Table 8.7: Beliefs about the proportion of the poor who do badly in life because rich people get more than their fair share, by religion

Proportion of social workers				
Proportion of poor who do badly in life because the rich get more than their fair share	No Religion	Practising	Non Practising	All
%	%	%	%	%
0 - 20	10	20	20	17
21 - 40	6	12	16	11
41 - 60	8	12	7	9
61 - 80	8	18	18	15
81 - 100	68	38	39	48
	100%	100%	100%	100%
n =	177	101	167	445

Notes: $\chi^2 = 93.09899$, $p = <0.0005$, $DF = 52$

Table 8.8 Beliefs about the proportion of the poor who are dependent
on the state of the world for their fate, by religion

Proportion of social workers				
Proportion of poor people that depend on the state of the world for their fate	No Religion	Practising	Non Practising	All
%	%	%	%	%
0 - 20	12	19	19	17
21 - 40	4	15	12	10
41 - 60	8	13	13	11
61 - 80	20	22	17	20
81 - 100	56	31	39	42
n =	100% 177	100% 101	100% 167	100% 445

Notes: $\chi^2 = 75.34181$, $P = <0.01$, $DF = 48$

Summary

First, social workers who support the Labour party are most likely to have no religion at all. Alliance and Conservative supporters are more likely to practise a religion (see chapter six, section one).

Second, practising a religion is generally not associated with attitude position. There is, however, some association between practising a religion and attitudes to the poor as victims of injustice and inequality. Social workers who practise a religion are less likely to view the poor as victims. Religious practice is not associated with attitudes towards any other clusters or issues.

Third, religion is associated with attitude intensity. Social

workers who practise a religion feel less strongly about a number of issues concerning supplementary benefit claimants. Social workers who have no religion tend to feel more strongly that supplementary benefit claimants are in real need, fail to claim all their entitlements and are not on the fiddle (Figure 8.9).

Figure 8.9: Summary of associations between religion and attitudes

PRACTISING A RELIGION	
Associated with	Not associated with
(i) attitudes towards the poor as victims. (ii) attitude intensity In both cases the direction of this association is a negative one; those who practise a religion are <u>less</u> likely to see the poor as victims and less likely to have strong feelings of support towards them.	(i) general attitudes towards the poor. (ii) attitudes towards redistribution. (iii) opinions about differences between poor clients and poor people not in contact with social workers.

SECTION FOUR: EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

This section explores the association between social workers' possession of a number of educational and professional qualifications and their attitudes.

Findings

People in poverty

Thirty two social workers have a bachelor's degree only, 139 have a CQSW only, 1 has a Master's degree only, 169 have a CQSW plus bachelor's degree, another 5 have a CQSW plus master's degree and another 55 have no qualification at all (n = 401). The remainder have other types of qualification. Nearly 90% of social workers with one or two qualifications think that injustice is the cause of poverty. Only 70% of those without a qualification believe this: 15% of the "no qualification" group think that poverty is an inevitable part of modern progress. Those with qualifications are far more likely to view poverty in structural/injustice terms.

Intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants

Intensity of feelings towards issues concerning SB claimants are associated with qualifications. On the issue of supplementary benefit claimants being in real need, under half of those with no qualifications strongly agree with the statement. Seventy four percent of those with a CQSW only, 78% of those with a bachelor's degree only, 83% of those with a CQSW plus bachelor's degree and 100%

of those with a master's degree and CQSW strongly agree. Those with no qualifications have the least intense feelings towards SB claimants on this issue.

The same picture exists for the other two issues examined: take-up and fiddling. Again those with no qualifications at all are less likely to feel strongly that there is a problem with take-up and are far more likely to feel that claimants are on the fiddle. Only 42% of social workers without qualifications strongly agree that many claimants fail to claim all their entitlements. Forty eight percent of those with only a CQSW think this, 56% of those with a bachelor's degree only think this, 57% of those with a CQSW and bachelor's degree and 100% of those with a CQSW and master's degree. Those with a CQSW are slightly more likely than those with no qualifications at all to believe that there is a problem with take-up. Those with degrees, and particularly a master's degree (most often in social work) are far more likely to have strong feelings on this subject.

Only one in four social workers with no qualification strongly disagree that "many people claiming SB are on the fiddle". Another 35% agree or neither disagree or agree. The 'no qualification' group feel least strongly about this issue. Forty percent of those with a CQSW, 44% of those with a bachelor's degree, 54% of those with a CQSW plus bachelor's degree and 60% of those with a CQSW plus master's degree strongly disagree with the statement. Again, those with the most advanced level of education, CQSW plus bachelor's degree and

CQSW plus master's degree, have the strongest feelings - in a supportive direction - towards claimants on this issue.

Adequacy of benefit and attitudes to the poor in general

Again, those with qualifications are more likely to think that the scale rate of SB is inadequate: 95% of social workers with any qualification think SB is too low for a family with two children. Eighty six percent of those with no qualification think this.

This picture is confirmed by data on attitudes to the poor in general. Those without any qualification are least likely to view the poor as victims, dependent on the world for their fate, etc., and most likely to see the poor as wasteful and not trying to get ahead. Additionally they are less likely to think that the poor have poor parents and come from places where there are few opportunities. Half of those with no qualifications think that 40% or under of the poor are victims of injustice and inequality and depend on the state of the world for their fate. Only about one in ten of qualified social workers think this - they are far more likely to think larger numbers of the poor are victims. Those with a CQSW plus a bachelor's degree or master's degree are far more likely to think that large numbers of the poor are victims of injustice and inequality. Those with just a CQSW are more likely than non qualified workers to believe in the 'poor as victims' thesis, but are less likely to believe this than those with a degree.

Attitudes to poor clients

Social workers without any educational or professional qualification are slightly most likely to think that poor clients have relationship problems, marital problems, and don't manage their money properly. Social workers with qualifications are less likely to view poor clients in pathological terms and more likely to view them as victims of injustice and inequality.

Conclusion

Data on educational and professional attainments suggest that those with qualifications are more positive in their attitudes and more intense in their feelings towards the poor, and are more likely than those without any qualifications to see poverty in structural terms. The data also suggest, however, that those with a CQSW are more positive in their attitudes than those without, but that the possession of a degree - usually in social science - is more likely to be associated with positive attitudes and intense feelings. Consequently those with a degree only appear more positive than those with a CQSW only, and those with a CQSW plus a degree are more positive than the remainder. The higher the level of attainment, the most supportive are social workers' attitudes. The combination of professional training plus higher education to degree standard appears to be associated most positively with attitudes and strength of feelings.

SECTION FIVE: EXPERIENCE OF CLAIMING SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT

This section explores the association between attitudes and social workers' direct experience of claiming supplementary benefit. The analysis is concerned to examine the influence on perceptions of both length of time on benefit and how recently that benefit was claimed.

Findings

Intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants and attitudes towards the poor in general

Social workers who have had contact with the supplementary benefit system - either directly as a claimant or indirectly through a close family member - have the strongest and most supportive feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants. Eighty one percent of social workers with either of these forms of contact strongly agree that supplementary benefit claimants are in real need, compared with only 65% of those with no experience at all. Similarly 56% of those who have had some contact strongly agree that a lot of supplementary benefit claimants fail to claim all their entitlements. Under half (41%) of those without any experience think this. Fifty one percent of social workers with benefit experience also strongly disagree that many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle, compared with only 36% of those with no experience.

Direct or family experience of claiming is also associated with some

beliefs about the poor in general. Social workers who have had contact with the benefit system are less likely to believe that the poor mismanage or waste their money and are more likely to view the poor as victims of injustice or inequality: one quarter of social workers with direct or family experience of the benefit system believe that all the poor are taken advantage of by the rich (10% of those without experience think this); one third with experience feel that all the poor should be viewed as victims (compared with 16% of those without experience).

The data suggest that social workers who have had contact with the supplementary benefit system are more likely to have intense feelings and supportive attitudes towards the poor and supplementary benefit claimants.

The remaining discussion in this section focuses on the association between social workers' own experience of claiming supplementary benefit and their attitudes.

Perceptions of the adequacy of supplementary benefit

Most social workers think that the scale rate for a couple with two young children is too low. There appears to be some association between social workers' assessment of an adequate level of benefit and whether and how recently they themselves had claimed supplementary benefit (Table 8.10). Over one quarter of social

workers who had claimed supplementary benefit since 1984 think £140 or above is a more appropriate rate. This compares with only 9% of those who had never claimed supplementary benefit or who had claimed before 1980, and one fifth of social workers who had claimed between 1981-1983 who think this. Social workers with no personal experience or more distant experience of claiming tend to state less generous amounts.

Additionally there appears to be some association between the level of supplementary benefit that is felt to be adequate and the length of time that social workers had themselves been claimants. The results are, however, perhaps surprising. Social workers who had been dependent on benefit for the longest period (2 years or more) are least generous in their assessment. All these social workers feel that under £100 is an adequate level. This compares with 77% of those who had never claimed, 68% of those who had been on supplementary benefit for less than 3 months, 55% of those on it for 3 - 6 months, 71% of those on it 6 months to 1 year and 55% of those on benefit for 1 - 2 years who also think that under £100 is an adequate amount for a couple with 2 children.

Those who had been claimants for 1 to 2 years are most generous in their assessment; one third think that £140 or more is an adequate rate (compared with under 10% of those who had been on benefit for under 3 months, under 15% who had been on it 3 - 6 months, under 20% of those who had been on it 6 months to 1 year). Those who had

Table 8.10: Perceptions of the appropriate rate of SB for a family with 2 children, by direct experience of being on SB

Amount of SB necessary for family and 2 children	CLAIM STARTED					CLAIM LASTED				All social workers
	Never claimed	Before 1980	1981-1983	1984-1986	Under 3 mnths	3-6 months	6-12 mnths	1 yr-2 yrs	2+ yrs	
£										
70-80	33 (16)	15 (13)	2 (7)	1 (7)	10 (13)	4 (8)	1 (5)	1 (11)	2 (29)	51 (14)
81-90	44 (21)	21 (18)	5 (18)	3 (20)	10 (13)	11 (21)	6 (29)	1 (11)	1 (14)	73 (20)
91-100	82 (40)	47 (38)	9 (32)	5 (34)	31 (42)	14 (26)	8 (37)	3 (33)	4 (57)	143 (38)
101-110	6 (3)	4 (3)	2 (7)	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (8)	1 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (3)
111-120	16 (8)	10 (8)	3 (11)	2 (13)	8 (10)	7 (13)	1 (5)	1 (11)	0 (0)	31 (9)
121-130	5 (2)	5 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (3)	3 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (2)
131-140	3 (1)	8 (7)	1 (4)	0 (0)	7 (10)	2 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (3)
141-150	15 (7)	7 (6)	4 (14)	2 (13)	4 (5)	4 (8)	3 (14)	2 (22)	0 (0)	28 (8)
150+	4 (2)	3 (3)	2 (7)	2 (13)	2 (3)	3 (6)	1 (5)	1 (11)	0 (0)	11 (3)
All social workers	208 (56)	120 (32)	28 (8)	15 (4)	73 (20)	52 (14)	21 (6)	9 (2)	7 (2)	n=371 (100)

claimed for between 3 - 6 months are also fairly generous in their assessment of adequacy; 45% of these social workers (and an almost equal proportion of those who had been dependent for 1 - 2 years) suggest levels in excess of £100.

Summary

There appears to be an association between social workers' personal experience of claiming supplementary benefit and their attitudes towards the adequacy of supplementary benefit scale rates. The data suggest:

First, that most social workers, irrespective of claiming experience, feel that the supplementary benefit scale rate for a couple with 2 young children is too low.

Second, when asked to state a more appropriate level of benefit, social workers with recent direct claiming experience state higher levels of benefit than social workers who have never been claimants or those whose experience is more distant.

Third, perceptions of this more adequate level appear to be associated with the length of time that social workers were themselves claimants. Social workers who had been on benefit for 2 years or over made the least generous assessment. Social workers who had been on benefit for 1 - 2 years are the most generous in this assessment, although those who had been on benefit for between 3 - 6

months are as likely as this group to opt for levels in excess of £100. The data suggest that the most generous social workers are those who had recently claimed supplementary benefit, or had been on it for between 3 - 6 months or 1 - 2 years.

Intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants

Eighty nine percent of social workers who had been claimants before 1980 strongly agree that most supplementary benefit claimants are in real need, compared with 71% who had never claimed, 72% of those who had claimed during 1981-1983, and 69% of those who had claimed between 1984 and 1986.

Sixty nine percent of social workers who had claimed benefit since 1984 strongly agree that many claimants fail to claim all their entitlements; this compares with under half of those who had never claimed, 61% of those who claimed before 1980 and just over half of those who claimed between 1981 and 1983.

Similarly 72% of social workers who had been claimants for 3 - 6 months and 78% of those who had been on benefit for 2 years or more strongly agree that a lot of people entitled to supplementary benefit don't claim it. This compares with only 48% of those who had never claimed, 53% of those who had been on benefit for under 3 months, 50% of those who had been on it for 6 months to 1 year, and 40% of those who had been on benefit for 1 - 2 years.

Forty four percent of social workers who had never been claimants themselves strongly disagree that many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle. This compares with about 53% of social workers - irrespective of when the claim started - who had claimed supplementary benefit with the same strength of feelings. Forty four percent of those who had been on benefit for over 2 years (the same proportion as those who had never claimed supplementary benefit themselves) strongly disagree with the statement. Fifty eight percent of those who had claimed for under 3 months have the same intensity of opinion.

This data on social workers' strength of feelings towards issues relating to supplementary benefit claimants is summarised in Figure 8.11.

Conclusion

The strength of feelings towards different issues relating to supplementary benefit claimants ('take-up' of benefits, 'fiddling', 'real need') are associated in different ways with social workers' direct experience of being claimants. It is too simplistic to say that social workers with a recent history of claiming have more intense or supportive attitudes towards supplementary benefit claimants in general. The data suggest that recent claiming experience is associated with strong feelings on the issue of 'take-up' but for the issue of 'need' the opposite association

Figure 8.11: Summary of associations between strength of feelings towards issues concerning SB claimants and direct experience of claiming

Issue/statement	How recent social workers claimed	Duration of social workers' claim
'real need': "Most people claiming SB are in real need"	Social workers who had themselves claimed <u>before 1980</u> agreed most strongly with the statement.	No association
'take-up': "A lot of people entitled to claim SB don't claim it"	Social workers who had themselves claimed <u>since 1984</u> agreed most strongly with the statement.	Social workers who had themselves been dependent on SB for 3-6 months or over 2 years agreed most strongly with the statement.
'fiddling': "Many people claiming SB are on the fiddle"	Social workers who had themselves claimed SB - irrespective of when the claim started - disagreed most strongly with the statement.	Social workers who had been dependent on SB for long periods of time agreed most strongly with the statement: their attitudes were closer to those who had never claimed.

occurs. Similarly on the issue of 'take up' those who had been claimants for lengthy periods feel most strongly that claimants fail to claim all their entitlements. On the issue of 'fiddling' those with extensive claiming experience seem to have the least supportive feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants.

Attitudes towards redistribution

A similar complex picture is suggested by findings relating to social workers' attitudes towards redistribution. Social workers who had been on benefit for 2 years or more are least supportive of a 5 pence tax increase to help the poor (67% support a 5p tax rise compared with 84% of those who had never claimed, 78% of those on benefit for under 3 months, 93% of those who had been on benefit for 3 - 6 months and 100% of those on benefit for 1 - 2 years). Lengthy periods of dependency on supplementary benefit are not always associated with the most supportive attitudes towards the poor or redistribution. The direction of association may vary according to the issue being examined.

Attitudes towards the poor in general

The data suggest that direct experience of claiming is associated with some attitudes to the poor, but not to all the attitude clusters described previously.

For example, there appears to be no association between the direct experience of claiming (when the claim started and its duration) and

issues relating to the poor as wasteful in their spending patterns, having too many children, fate and luck (having a bad break, etc.), and the chance of escaping from poverty.

There does appear to be some association, however, between the experience of claiming and attitudes towards the poor as victims, trapped within a cycle of deprivation, and opinions about the motivation of the poor. These are examined briefly in turn.

Victims: Social workers who had claimed supplementary benefit are far more likely to feel that large numbers of the poor are victims, are taken advantage of by the rich, do badly in life because rich people get more than their fair share and depend on the state of the world for their fate. The more recent the claim the more likely that this view is held. Social workers who had been on benefit for 2 years or more are least likely, amongst those with experience of claiming, to believe that large numbers of the poor are victims. Those most likely to believe in the "poor as victims" thesis are those with recent experience of claiming or those who had been on benefit for 3 - 6 months or 1 - 2 years.

Cycle of deprivation: Social workers who had recently claimed benefit (since 1984) are most likely to believe that large number of the poor have poor parents or come from places where there is little opportunity for most people. Duration of claiming experience does not appear to be associated with these opinions.

Motivation: Social workers who had recently claimed benefit (since 1984) are most likely to believe that only a few of the poor lack motivation, don't try very hard to better themselves and don't care about getting ahead. Many social workers who had never claimed supplementary benefit or who had distant experience of claiming put a larger proportion of poor people in this category. Social workers who had been claimants for 3 - 6 months are the most supportive of the poor on this issue.

Summary

The direct experience of claiming (start of claim and duration) is not associated with all attitudes to the poor, nor are any associations always in the same direction. The experience of claiming appears to be related to three specific areas of opinion about the poor; namely beliefs about the poor as victims, opinions about the motivation of the poor and opinions about the cycle of deprivation. For the first two of these areas (clusters) social workers with the most recent experience of claiming are the most supportive of the poor - believing that large numbers are victims of injustice and inequality and that only a few lack motivation or don't care about getting ahead. These social workers are also most likely to think that large numbers of the poor come from places where there is little opportunity. Social workers who had never been claimants or who had distant experience are generally the most negative in their attitudes.

The data also suggest that social workers who had been on benefit for 3 - 6 months (as opposed to 2 years or any other duration) are amongst those most likely to be supportive of the poor on these 3 issues.

Perceptions of the differences between poor clients and other poor people not in contact with social workers

Social workers who had never been claimants are more likely to think that poor clients are victims of injustice and inequality, come from places where there is little opportunity, have poor parents, have relationship and marital problems and are not able to cope socially. Additionally these workers are more likely to feel that poor clients do not manage their money properly and have no chance of escaping from poverty. Social workers who had been recent claimants are generally least likely to think this. Social workers who had claimed prior to 1980 are closer in their opinions to those who had never claimed, especially concerning poor clients as having relationship problems, little chance of escaping from poverty and not being able to manage their money properly.

The length of time that social workers had been on supplementary benefit does not seem to be associated with these perceptions to any large degree.

Conclusion

There are a number of different associations between the direct experience of claiming supplementary benefit and social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor. The nature of this association was analysed by how recently social workers had started their claim and how long they had been on benefit. The data suggest that both these factors are associated with attitudes in different ways, depending on the issue or subject matter that is being explored. It is far too simplistic to state that social workers who have been claimants themselves have more positive (or negative) attitudes towards the poor. The pattern of the data suggest that for some issues the first might be true, for other issues the second may be more accurate.

Figure 8.12 shows the range of factors that are associated in different ways with different issues. It can be seen that recent experience of claiming is associated in a positive way with attitudes towards the adequacy of supplementary benefit, the poor as victims and as a motivated group, and also with strength of feelings about the non take-up of benefit. Those with recent claiming experience are also more likely to endorse the cycle of deprivation thesis. Dependency on benefit for 3 - 6 months is associated in a positive direction with attitudes towards the adequacy of supplementary benefit, the poor as victims and being a motivated group and with strength of feelings about take-up of benefits. Dependency on supplementary benefit for 2 years or over

Figure 8.12: Summary of associations between attitude position, intensity and direct experience of claiming

Issues	Factors associated with a more positive attitude position or intensity	Factors associated with a more negative attitude position or intensity	Factors not associated with attitude
Adequacy of SB (attitude position)	Experience of claiming since 1984; dependency on SB for 3-6 months or 1-2 years	Dependency on SB for 2 years or over	-
SB claimants as:			
- 'in real need'	Experience of claiming before 1980	-	Duration of claim
- 'failing to claim entitlement'	Experience of claiming since 1984; dependency on SB for 3-6 months or over 2 years	-	-
- 'on the fiddle' (attitude intensity)	Experience of claiming - irrespective of when claim began	No experience of claiming; dependency on SB for 2 years or over	-
The poor:			
in general (all other clusters)	-	-	Duration of claim or when claim started
'as victims'	Experience of claiming since 1984; dependency on SB for 3-6 months or 1-2 years	Dependency on SB for 2 years or over	-
'in a cycle of deprivation'	Experience of claiming since 1984	-	Duration of claim
'lacking motivation' (attitude position)	Experience of claiming since 1984; dependency on SB for 3-6 months	No experience of claiming; distant experience of claiming	-
Redistribution (attitude position)	-	Dependency on SB for 2 years or over	When claim started

is associated with more negative attitudes towards the adequacy of supplementary benefit, the poor as victims, redistribution and feelings towards claimants as 'fiddlers'.

The picture is complex. It suggests that perhaps an optimal length of time for social workers to be dependent on supplementary benefit would be 3 to 6 months - a period which many may experience as students. This time span is associated with positive attitudes towards a number of important issues. Very long term dependency (2 years or over) may have the opposite effect on attitudes to some issues, but not all. For other issues (the poor in general) the duration of claim or when it started appear to have no association with attitudes. For more specific issues, different experiences are associated in different ways.

SECTION SIX: HOUSING - PAST AND PRESENT

This section examines the association between attitudes and a number of variables relating to social workers' type and condition of housing - both now and during their childhood.

Findings

Area of residence as a child

The data suggest that there is no association between past area of residence and strength of feelings towards the three specific issues concerning supplementary benefit claimants or attitudes to supplementary benefit levels. However, there does appear to be an association between where social workers lived during their childhood and some attitudes towards the poor in general.

First, social workers who lived in rural areas as children are slightly more likely to think that significant numbers of the poor don't manage their money properly, waste their money on drink, don't try hard or care about getting ahead. Of this group social workers from villages are most likely to hold these views.

Second, social workers who lived in small cities as children are more likely to think that large numbers of the poor should be viewed as victims of injustice and inequality or depend on the state of the world for their fate.

There appears to be no association between past location of residence and the range of other attitude clusters relating to the poor.

Perceptions of the differences between poor clients and other poor people

The data suggest that the association between past location of residence and these perceptions is very limited. First, social workers from rural backgrounds are slightly more likely than those from urban backgrounds to think that poor clients have personal problems (such as an inability to cope socially, marital problems) and not manage their money properly (wasting it on drink, etc.). Second, whilst social workers from small cities strongly endorse the view that the poor in general should be seen as victims of injustice and inequality, they are less likely than those from other environments to think that poor clients are victims, and far more likely to see them as having had a bad break at some point in their lives.

Summary and conclusion

An association appears to exist between past area of residence and social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor in general; those from rural areas appear to have more negative attitudes, thinking that large numbers of the poor waste their money, don't care about getting on, etc. Social workers from small cities are more likely to view large numbers of the poor as victims of

injustice and inequality. The influence that past residence has on attitudes appears, though, to be very limited; the vast range of attitudes and opinions are not associated with past location of residence. Does the current area of residence and the type of housing that social workers presently live in affect or reflect their attitudes? This is examined next.

Current housing tenure

Most social workers (84%) are owner occupiers. The type of housing that social workers choose to live in is unlikely to be associated with their attitudes to poverty and the poor; the choice of whether to buy or rent a house, and if to rent from whom, rests upon many personal, financial and practical considerations which are most often unrelated to one's values and attitudes about poverty. Nonetheless the data was examined to see whether an association did exist.

Findings

The data suggest that, as expected, no association exists between current housing tenure and attitudes to redistribution and the poor in general. Neither is it associated with the intensity of feelings towards issues concerned with supplementary benefit claimants. Only one association was found: social workers living in private rented accommodation (and there are very few of them - 31, or 7% of the total) are more likely than others to think that large numbers of the poor are victims of injustice and inequality

and depend on the state of the world for their fate. No other associations appear to exist. Current housing tenure appears to have no association with social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor. Given that the large majority of social workers are owner occupiers this is not surprising.

The social characteristics of social workers' current area of residence

As outlined in chapter six, social workers' home postcodes were fed into CCN's computer to provide a detailed mosaic of the most salient characteristics of each postcode area. The condensed 10 Mosaic Grid (Table 6.16) shows exactly what type of area social workers live in. The type of housing tenure appears not to be associated with these attitudes. But where social workers buy their house or rent their home may well be. The choice of area relies much more upon perceptions of the "type" and quality of the area and its residents, the available local resources, etc.

The data suggest that there is a very strong association between the type of area that social workers live in and their attitudes towards the poor in general. Figure 8.13 illustrates the overall pattern of findings.

Social workers from relatively deprived mosaic areas 1, 3, 4 and 5 are most likely to have positive attitudes to the poor in general, although there are some variations by particular issues. The vast

Figure 8.13: Summary of associations between attitudes to the poor, redistribution and type of area in which social workers live

ATTITUDES TO THE POOR:						
Mosaic type	Motivation of poor	Wasteful spending patterns/drink	Poor as victims	Poor depend on world for their fate	Poor have poor parents and come from places where there is little opportunity	Most chance of escape from poverty
1 High status areas with older owner occupiers		+	+	+	✓	
2 Inter war middle income semi's with high employment levels		-			✓	
3 Older middle/lower income areas, older owner occupiers and tenants			+	+	✓	
4 Areas of private flats and single people mostly inner city	+	+	+	+	✓	
5 Low income council housing, mostly high rise, high unemployment	+	+	-	-	X	
6 Socially stable older council housing, with older age group		-	-	-		-
7 Council housing with young families, low rise, high unemployment	-			-	X	-
8 Post war private housing, couples with younger children	-					
9 Small towns, villages and scattered farms	-	-			X	-
10 Unclassified						

Notes: + denotes social workers in this area are most positive to the poor on this issue
 - denotes social workers in this area are most negative to the poor on this issue
 ✓ denotes social workers in this area are most likely to think this
 x denotes social workers in this area are least likely to think this

majority of these social workers think that most of the poor are motivated to better themselves, are victims, depend on the world for their fate and don't waste their money. Social workers from areas 7, 8, 9 and in particular 6 are the most hostile over a range of issues, including redistribution by a 5 pence in the pound tax increase. Social workers from areas 1, 3 and 4, at the same time as being the most positive to the poor, are also the most likely to believe in the cycle of deprivation thesis, that the poor have poor parents and come from places where there is little opportunity.

Intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants and perceptions of the adequacy of supplementary benefit

Social workers living in mosaic area 6 (socially stable older council housing with older age group) have the least intense feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants over the three issues examined (need, take-up, fiddling). Over one third of these social workers agree that supplementary benefit claimants are on the fiddle and disagree that there is a problem with take-up of benefits. Social workers from mosaic area 5 (low income council housing, high rise, high unemployment) have the strongest supportive feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants. Figure 8.14 illustrates these and a number of other findings. This pattern is confirmed by data on what social workers believe is an appropriate level of benefit for a couple with 2 children to live on. The average level that social workers in mosaic areas 3, 4 and 5 feel appropriate exceeds £110 per week. All these three area types are generally low income areas,

Figure 8.14: Summary of associations between strength of feelings towards claimants, attitudes towards adequacy of benefits and the type of area in which social workers live

ATTITUDES TOWARDS SB CLAIMANTS AND SB LEVELS									
MOSAIC TYPE	Intensity	Average:family with 2 children	Single parents	School leavers	Pensioner couple	School leaver parents working	Unemployed		
1 High status areas with older owner occupiers									
2 Inter war middle income semi's with high employment levels									
3 Older middle/lower income areas, older owner occupiers and tenants		+ exceeds £110 p.w.							+
4 Areas of private flats and single people mostly inner city		+ exceeds £110 p.w.	+		+				+
5 Low income council housing, mostly high rise, high unemployment	+	+ exceeds £110 p.w.	+		+				+
6 Socially stable older council housing, with older age group	-		-						-
7 Council housing with young families, low rise, high unemployment			+	+		+			+
8 Post war private housing, couples with younger children									
9 Small towns, villages and scattered farms			+		+				
10 Unclassified									

Notes: + denotes social workers in this area are most positive to the poor on this issue
- denotes social workers in this area are most negative to the poor on this issue

inner city or council tenancies with high unemployment. Social workers from all the other mosaic areas believe that under £100 on average is adequate for a couple with 2 children to live on per week.

Perceptions of the adequacy of supplementary benefit for different claimant groups

The data also suggest that there is an association between the type of area that social workers live in and their beliefs about the adequacy of supplementary benefit for specific groups of claimants. Social workers living in areas characterised by single people, inner city, high unemployment, council housing are most likely to think that current supplementary benefit provision is too low for single parent families. Social workers from mosaic area 7 (council housing with young families, high unemployment) are most likely to think that the rate of supplementary benefit for school leavers - with or without parents in work - is inadequate. Eighty five percent of social workers in this area feel that the rate of supplementary benefit for a school leaver with working parents is too low. Under 60% of social workers in most other areas think this.

Social workers living in mosaic areas 4, 5 and 9 are most supportive of pensioner couples, and those in areas 3, 4, 5 and 7 are most supportive of the unemployed.

Perceptions of the differences between poor clients and other poor people

Those who live in areas characterised by high unemployment and relative deprivation are most likely to think that poor clients fail to claim all their entitlements, have had a bad break, have been sick or ill, and are least likely to think that poor clients have relationship problems, can't cope socially, mismanage their money or smoke it away.

Social workers living in areas characterised by more relative affluence are far more likely to think that poor clients have relationship problems, don't cope socially, have marital problems, do not manage their money properly.

Summary and conclusion

The type of area that social workers currently live in is strongly associated with their attitudes towards the poor in general and their perceptions of the adequacy of supplementary benefit for particular claimant groups. Where there is a choice involved in deciding in which area to locate one's home, then this choice will involve assessing widely the "attractiveness" of a particular area and its residents. Many factors will be involved in this process. The data suggest that social workers who live in areas characterised by inner city, high unemployment, council housing and poverty (mosaic areas 3,4 5 and 7) have the most positive attitudes to the poor in general and are most generous in their assessment of an adequate

supplementary benefit rate for a family. Social workers living in these areas are also amongst those with the most supportive attitudes towards the unemployed, pensioner couples, and single parents, but the least optimistic about the possibility of the poor escaping from poverty.

It is uncertain what direction this influence on attitudes takes. Social workers who choose (again, where a choice is involved) to live in areas characterised by relative deprivation seem to have stronger feelings and more positive attitudes to the poor. But this choice does not necessarily involve a social worker in positively selecting a poor area to live in, but may rather be a more "passive" decision, based on "not minding" living in an area of relative deprivation. Similarly for social workers who live in other areas, characterised by greater social, geographical and economic distance from the poor, the selection of where to live may involve choices which do not necessarily indicate that they have hostile attitudes towards the poor. However the data do suggest that those with the most intense feelings and most positive attitudes towards the poor are located in areas of relative deprivation. It is uncertain whether they come to these areas with such attitudes or whether living in this type of area influences or informs their perceptions and feelings. It is perhaps likely to be a combination of both these processes.

SECTION SEVEN: POLITICAL VALUES AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

This section explores the associations between social workers' political values, their membership of numerous groups and their attitudes.

Findings

Political values

Over 9 out of 10 social workers who support the Labour party cite injustice as the cause of poverty. This compares with nearly 8 out of 10 Alliance supporters and only one quarter of all Conservative supporters (Table 8.15).

Table 8.15: Explanations for poverty by support for political party

	Conservative	Labour	Alliance	Other	Total
Unlucky	3 (18)	1 (0)	6 (9)	1 (8)	11 (3)
Laziness	1 (6)	5 (2)	2 (3)	0 (0)	8 (2)
Injustice	5 (29)	291 (94)	57 (79)	9 (69)	362 (88)
Inevitable	8 (47)	10 (3)	6 (9)	3 (23)	27 (7)
Total	17 (5%)	307 (75%)	71 (17%)	13 (3%)	408 (100%)

Notes: x2 = 116.90665, p = <.001

Labour supporters are far more likely to cite injustice, while Conservative supporters are the most likely to cite the inevitable part of modern progress, or bad luck. Social workers across the

political spectrum rarely mention laziness when explaining the cause of poverty. A majority of Alliance supporters also explain the cause of poverty in terms of injustice.

Attitudes to the poor in general

The association between political support and attitudes to the poor is equally significant. Data from the 20 statements about poor people (questions 53 - 72) suggest the direction of this association (Figures 8.16 to 8.19)

Figure 8.16: Attitudes to the poor strongly associated with support for the Conservative party

Social workers who support the Conservative party
are far more likely than Labour supporters to believe
that large numbers of the poor ...

Statement/attitude	Association
i) spend their money in wasteful ways, drinking, gambling, etc.(1)	(1) $\chi^2 = 134.33158$ p = <.001
ii) don't manage their money properly(2)	(2) $\chi^2 = 163.39502$ p = <.001
iii) lack motivation (3), don't care or try very hard to better themselves (4)	(3) $\chi^2 = 184.69$ (4) $\chi^2 = 117.52039$ p = <.001
iv) have too many children (5)	(5) $\chi^2 = 90.91517$ p = <.01
v) aren't very bright or talented (6)	(6) $\chi^2 = 109.27559$ p = <.001
vi) have a chance of escaping from poverty (7), as do their children (8)	(7) $\chi^2 = 74.88673$ p = <.10 (8) $\chi^2 = 95.90256$ p = <.01

Figure 8.17: Attitudes to the poor strongly associated with support for the Labour party

Social workers who support the Labour party are far more likely than Conservative supporters to believe that large numbers of the poor ...

Statement/attitude	Association
i) are victims of injustice and inequality(1), are taken advantage of by rich people (2), do badly in life because the rich get more than their fair share (3).	(1) $x^2 = 197.89056$ $p = <.001$ (2) $x^2 = 141.30078$ $p = <.001$ (3) $x^2 = 155.33778$ $p = <.001$
ii) depend for their fate on the state of the world in which they live (4)	(4) $x^2 = 99.91295$ $p = <.001$
iii) have little control over their lives (5).	(5) $x^2 = 89.11819$ $p = <.05$

Additionally there are some other attitudes which, whilst the association is perhaps not as strong as those outlined in Figure 8.17 above, are also associated with support for the Labour party (Figure 8.18).

Figure 8.18: Other attitudes to the poor associated with support for the Labour party

Social workers who support the Labour party are also more likely than Conservative supporters to believe that large numbers of the poor ...

Statement/attitude	Association
i) are trapped within a cycle of deprivation, never stood a chance because their parents are poor (1), came from places where there is little opportunity for most people (2).	(1) $x^2 = 65.677518$ $p = <.50$ (2) $x^2 = 77.8244$ $p = <.2$
ii) have little chance of escaping from poverty (3).	(3) $x^2 = 74.88673$ $p = <.10$
iii) have children with little chance of escaping from poverty (4)	(4) $x^2 = 95.90256$ $p = <.01$

Social workers who support the Liberal/SDP Alliance fall in between the Conservative and Labour positions for all the clusters recorded above. In

terms of their attitude position Alliance supporters are not as 'positive' towards the poor on these issues as Labour supporters, but neither are they as 'negative' as the Conservative supporters.

No association was found between political support and the opinions relating to the role of fate and luck. Again, fate and luck is an unpopular explanation for poverty, few social workers - of any political persuasion - subscribe to it in any degree.

Summary

The data from the 20 statements about poor people suggest that social workers who support the Labour party are far more likely to believe that large numbers of the poor are victims of injustice, inequality and of other systems beyond their control. Social workers who support the Conservative party are far more likely to believe that large numbers of the poor lack motivation and spend their money wastefully. The belief in the notion of a cycle of deprivation is slightly more popular among Labour supporters, although the significance of this is not as marked as the other associations; many Conservative and Alliance supporters also believe in the cycle of deprivation.

Conservative social workers tend to place more emphasis on the role of individual choice and motivation, believing that large numbers of the poor can break out of the cycle, whereas Labour supporters are

less confident about this. Alliance supporters have attitude positions which come in between those of Conservative and Labour supporters.

Attitudes towards redistribution

Attitudes towards redistribution via increased tax payments also appear to be associated with political support. Over 90% of all social workers support a 1 penny tax increase to help the poor. But whilst 90% of Labour supporters approve a 5 pence tax increase, under 75% of Alliance supporters and under half of Conservative supporters approve of this higher tax rate to help the poor.

Intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants

Political support also seems to be associated with the strength of feelings towards issues concerning supplementary benefit claimants. Labour supporters are far more likely to feel strongly - in a positive direction - on issues of 'need', 'take-up' and 'fiddling'. The majority of Labour supporters strongly agree that supplementary benefit claimants are in real need and fail to claim all their entitlements. A majority strongly disagree that supplementary benefit claimants are on the fiddle (Tables 8.19 to 8.21). Conservative social workers are much less likely to have such strong feelings of support towards supplementary benefit claimants on all these issues. Again, the data show that Alliance supporters' strength of feelings come somewhere in between those of Conservative and Labour supporters.

Table 8.19: Strength of feelings towards the issue of "claimants as people in real need", by political support

Statement				
Most people claiming supplementary benefit are in real need	Conservative	Labour	Alliance	Total
Strongly agree	5 (24%)	270 (85%)	50 (60%)	325 (77%)
Tend to agree	12 (57%)	43 (14%)	30 (36%)	85 (20%)
Neither agree/ disagree	2 (10%)	4 (1%)	3 (4%)	9 (3%)
Tend to disagree	1 (5%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0%)
Strongly disagree	1 (0%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0%)
All	21 (5%)	319 (75%)	83 (20%)	432 (100%)

Notes: $\chi^2 = 73.76941$, $p = < .001$

Table 8.20: Strength of feelings towards the issue of "claimants as failing to claim all entitlements", by political support

Statement				
A lot of people who are entitled to claim supplementary benefit don't claim it	Conservative	Labour	Alliance	Total
Strongly agree	6 (30%)	197 (61%)	26 (31%)	229 (55%)
Tend to agree	9 (45%)	103 (33%)	35 (42%)	147 (35%)
Neither agree/ disagree	1 (5%)	11 (4%)	13 (16%)	25 (6%)
Tend to disagree	4 (20%)	5 (2%)	9 (11%)	18 (4%)
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
All	20 (5%)	316 (75%)	83 (20%)	419 (100%)

Notes: $\chi^2 = 72.09020$, $p = < .001$

Table 8.21: Strength of feelings towards the issue of "claimants as on the fiddle", by political support

Statement

Many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle	Conservative	Labour	Alliance	Total
Strongly agree	1 (5%)	3 (1%)	1 (1%)	5 (1%)
Tend to agree	6 (30%)	13 (4%)	7 (8%)	26 (6%)
Neither agree/ disagree	5 (25%)	28 (9%)	18 (22%)	51 (12%)
Tend to disagree	6 (30%)	98 (31%)	32 (39%)	136 (33%)
Strongly disagree	2 (10%)	174 (55%)	25 (30%)	201 (48%)
All	20 (5%)	316 (75%)	83 (20%)	419 (100%)

Notes: $\chi^2 = 73.41669$, $p = < .001$.

Summary

There appears to be a significant association between support for different political parties and attitudes towards poverty and the poor. Both attitude position and intensity are associated with this political support.

Labour supporters are far more likely to believe that large numbers of the poor are victims of injustice and inequality, do badly in life because the rich get more than their fair share or because of circumstances beyond their control. Additionally Labour supporters have more intense feelings (in a "positive" direction) towards supplementary benefit claimants in particular.

Conservative supporters are more likely to believe that large numbers of the poor are wasteful in their spending patterns or lack the motivation to better themselves. Conservative social workers are also less likely to have intense feelings of support for supplementary benefit claimants.

Alliance supporters fall in between the Labour and Conservative positions. They are not as 'negative' in their attitude positions as Conservative supporters, but neither are they as 'positive' as Labour supporters. As far as intensity of feelings are concerned, Alliance supporters are again generally placed somewhere in between Labour and Conservative supporters: they do not feel as strongly about the issues as Labour supporters but feel more strongly than Conservatives.

Membership of groups

Attitudes to the poor by membership of the Labour party

One hundred and ten of the 116 social workers in a political party are members of the Labour party. Only 1 is in the Conservative

party, 2 are in the Alliance, the remainder are in other 'left wing' parties such as the Communists or Socialist Workers party. An association exists between political support and attitudes to poverty and the poor. There is also a strong association between being a Labour party member and strength of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants in particular. On the three issues relating to supplementary benefit claimants, members of the Labour party have far more intense feelings of support than social workers who are not members of the Labour party. This result should not be surprising given that those who support the Labour party have been shown to have the most intense feelings towards the poor. More importantly, though, members of the Labour party have more intense feelings of support towards supplementary benefit claimants than Labour supporters generally: nearly three quarters of Labour party members strongly disagree that many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle. This compares with just over half of Labour supporters only who have the same intensity of opinion.

Membership of a pressure group

Data on strength of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants suggest that members of pressure groups not necessarily connected with poverty (e.g. CND, MIND, Greenpeace, etc.) have more intense feelings of support for supplementary benefit claimants than non pressure group members. Ninety one percent of those in pressure groups strongly agree that supplementary benefit claimants are in real need (compared with 67% of those not in pressure groups); 64%

of those in pressure groups strongly agree that supplementary benefit claimants don't claim all their entitlements (compared with 33% of those not in pressure groups); 67% of those in pressure groups strongly disagree that many supplementary benefit claimants are on the fiddle (compared with 41% of those not in pressure groups).

Membership of CPAG

CPAG is a pressure group specifically concerned with campaigning for the poor. The data suggest that CPAG members in particular have very intense and supportive feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants. Ninety seven percent strongly agree that supplementary benefit claimants are in real need, 77% strongly agree that supplementary benefit claimants don't claim all their entitlements and 67% strongly disagree that many supplementary benefit claimants are on the fiddle. Members of CPAG have more intense feelings of support towards supplementary benefit claimants than non CPAG members, and more intense feelings than members of other pressure groups, Labour supporters and Labour party members. This is not surprising given the specialised nature and concerns of the group.

Membership of BASW

BASW members are no different to non members in their intensity of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants. There is no association between BASW membership and attitude intensity or position.

Discussion

Data on attitude positions, generated from the 20 statements about poor people, support the conclusions offered above on strength of feelings towards supplementary benefit claimants. Members of the CPAG, Labour party, other pressure groups (in that order) are more likely to believe that the poor are victims of injustice and inequality and place greater emphasis on structural causes of poverty than workers who are not members of these groups.

Many members of these groups appear to have far more clearcut and 'set' attitudes; about one third of all social workers in a political party and about half of all CPAG members gave a most extreme or clearcut answer; that all the poor are victims; none of the poor waste their money, etc.

The more active a social worker is politically and the closer they are to more elitist and informed centres of power or information, the more ordered and clearcut are their political and social attitudes. Social workers in the Labour party, CPAG, and other pressure groups appear to conform to this pattern. However the picture is far from simple, neither is it always predictable.

Most social workers in CPAG or other pressure group, and of course all those in the Labour party, are mostly Labour supporters anyway. For example 90% of CPAG members are Labour supporters and over half are members of the Labour party as well. Labour supporters have been

shown to have the most intense feelings and positive attitudes to the poor. Consequently it is difficult to speculate about the reason for an association between group membership and attitudes; it may be that associations have little to do with group membership per se, but rather reflect the political values of those in such groups, who are more similar than different.

Closely related, it is not possible to state categorically whether membership of these groups cause or intensify feelings and attitudes, or merely reflect and consolidate the attitudes of people with already intense feelings. It is quite likely that social workers with more consistent and ordered political and social beliefs or intense feelings of support towards the poor are attracted towards the Labour party, pressure groups and CPAG in particular. At this stage, in the absence of further research, all that can be said with a strong degree of confidence is that an association does exist between social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor and their membership of CPAG, the Labour party and other pressure groups.

Chapter conclusion

The data on associations presented in this chapter are very often subtle, sometimes surprising but always complex. There does appear to be some association between a number of variables and positive or negative attitudes or intense feelings towards poverty and the poor. The direction of association appears to vary depending on the issue being examined, whether it is specific or generalised. Additionally,

these associations are not always present for all attitudes; for example religious practice is associated with beliefs about the poor as victims, but is generally not associated with other attitude clusters. Figure 8.22 brings together in summary form the main associations outlined in this chapter.

Figure 8.22: Summary of factors associated with social workers' attitudes, position and intensity

Variable	ATTITUDE		POSITION		ATTITUDE INTENSITY		NO ASSOCIATION	
	Positive	Negative			Intense	Weak		
Past background	Father in human services or manager Mother in close contact with public Voluntary work/over 3 years social work related employment	Father with little contact with public Mother with home responsibilities Non social work employment			Up to 3 years voluntary work experience	Prior lengthy experience in social work related employment Over 3 years voluntary work experience Prior experience in non social work employment	Social class origins Past financial circumstances (childhood)	
Work situation	Welfare rights officer Newly appointed Decided to become a social worker while at school, unemployed or as a student	Social work assistant Over one year in practice Decided to become a social worker in social services or other work experience			Welfare rights officer	Social work assistant Decided to become social worker while in social services related work	Job title (with attitudes towards redistribution) Point in life of decision (with attitudes towards re-distribution and cycle of deprivation)	
Personal characteristics	25s-40s No religion (cluster on victims only)	Youngest (under 25) and oldest (late 40s and 50s) Practising a religion (cluster on victims only)			No religion	Under 25 over 45 Practise a religion (and in particular those whose work is influenced by religion)	Sex Marital status Number of dependants Religion (attitude position)	
Educational level	CQSW Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, CQSW plus bachelor's, CQSW plus masters' (in this order)	No qualifications at all			CQSW, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, CQSW plus bachelor's CQSW plus master's (in this order)	No qualifications at all		
Experience of claiming SB	Recent claiming experience Claimed for 3-6 months 1-2 years (Both especially in relation to the poor as victims and motivated)	No claiming experience (or distant experience) Dependent on benefit for over 2 years			Claiming experience (Important exceptions - see Figure 8.11)	No claiming experience		
Housing past and present	Lived in small cities during childhood Live in private rented accommodation (cluster on victims only) Live in deprived area	Lived in rural (village) areas Live in less deprived area			Live in deprived area	Live in less deprived area	Past area of residence (intensity) Current housing tenure	
Political values and group membership	Support for the Labour party Labour party member CPAG member	Support for Conservative party			Labour Member of pressure groups CPAG Labour party	Conservative	BASW	

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CHAPTER 9
TALKING ABOUT POVERTY

Introduction

Over fifty social workers were interviewed in depth on their attitudes towards poverty, the poor, supplementary benefit, poor clients, and social work practice with the poor (see appendix three for an outline of the individual and group interview schedule and method of recording). This chapter is based upon those interviews. The chapter is divided into four parts; each places considerable emphasis on allowing social workers to speak for themselves. The four sections in the chapter are:

- (i) Perceptions of poverty - causes, definitions and experiences.
- (ii) Beliefs about supplementary benefit - purpose and adequacy.
- (iii) Perceptions of social work users and poor clients.
- (iv) Social work practice with the poor: beliefs and opinions about aims and means.

The chapter aims to illustrate the diversity and complexity of social workers' attitudes towards these subjects and issues. As a group social workers do not have uniform attitudes, although certain

dominant themes and concerns are discernable. On an individual level attitudes are perhaps even more complex, varied, and often inconsistent. The discussions presented in this chapter should be read in conjunction with the earlier questionnaire survey findings reported in chapters six to eight. They build upon that quantitative data to explore the depth and breadth of beliefs and the existence of subtle "shades of opinions" which cannot be easily captured or recorded by the questionnaire survey method.

In particular the discussions presented here on supplementary benefit and perceptions of poor clients complement and lead on from the earlier data. They add substance to the findings outlined in chapters six to eight. Additionally the discussions contained here on definitions of poverty develop on from the questionnaire survey's concern with perceptions of why people live in poverty and characteristics associated with the poor. Again, the section should be read in conjunction with chapter seven. The discussions which centre around aims and methods of social work practice with the poor provide valuable new information on a subject which was outside the scope of the questionnaire survey.

The chapter is structured in the manner of a "rolling documentary". Narrative, however, is kept to a minimum; the emphasis is on using social workers' own words as far as possible. The dominant perceptions of social workers as a group are presented, but so too are the range of views on each of the issues examined. The aim is

to break away from neat compartmentalisations and illustrate the diversity and subtlety of social workers' opinions and beliefs - both as a group and as individuals.

SECTION ONE: PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY: CAUSES, DEFINITIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Causes

The way in which a person defines poverty reflects their underlying assumptions about its cause, nature and effect. Social workers, as a group, most often associate the cause and experience of poverty with some form of "injustice" and "inequality" - the poor as victims (see chapter seven, for example). The meanings given to "injustice" or "inequality" vary considerably amongst social workers: some understand these concepts in small scale "human" terms, others in terms of restricted life opportunities and restricted access to resources; being trapped in poverty. Lack of access or opportunities for access to higher income, wealth or resources is a common component of the injustice/inequality notion:

"... people don't have the same opportunities, openings or even start off with the same ability to take opportunities that are offered and that is a kind of basic injustice. Then there is actual injustice in the way people are handled, provided for" (area director, early 40s).

"I was thinking ... in terms of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer ... I was thinking more nationally than internationally" (senior social worker, late 40s).

"Hard work does not necessarily mean you will make it. Many people who work incredibly hard in their lives and still can't really manage at the end of it. It's nothing to do with personal achievement. I am sure there are some individuals who can get out of the society in which they are born because they might be very outstanding - but I can't think of many" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"I was almost certainly thinking just of the distribution of wealth, the way in which a very small minority

monopolise the majority of wealth and income ... the way in which people tend to be trapped into lower incomes" (social worker, early 30s).

"I was thinking of the class structure and situations like unemployment which are really outside of most people's control. Also the view that poverty breeds poverty, in that once you are in the poverty trap it is difficult to climb out of it. There are not equal opportunities, it is difficult to get opportunities" (fieldwork supervisor, early 30s).

"Society is stratified and clearly the people all don't have an equal chance of achieving the same resources. As well there is obviously inequality between nations, but it is not something which I have in mind while I am doing the job. I was thinking more about the fact that the poor sods in () haven't got much of a chance" (senior social worker, early 40s).

Other social workers believe that poverty is an inevitable part of modern progress. Here they have in mind poverty being caused by economic advancement, industrialisation or capitalism - systems beyond the control of the poor themselves:

"... the stresses coming out of technology and unemployment ... it causes stress related diseases, people haven't the ability for different reasons to adjust, and also if they adjust there is not the employment" (senior social work practitioner, early 50s).

"Yes, like capitalism and its victims ... I think all these things have got to be seen structurally and it is to do with capitalism and the way that uses and abuses people and the way it affects every aspect of our lives, from child care, relations between men and women" (social worker, late 20s).

"I see poverty as very symptomatic of the way society is organised. I think it is much more inherent in our society, much more inevitable in that sense. Injustice is a symptom ... the way we organise and run our society is the cause and that isn't changing" (social worker, late 20s).

Only a few social workers think that poverty is caused by bad luck.

These social workers generally find the "structural determinism" of the "injustice/inequality/part of modern progress" explanations too wide to relate to. They prefer explanations that they can relate directly to poor people. Bad luck is an explanation that is rooted more in their everyday experience:

"Maybe other people find it easy to relate concepts of general inequality and injustice in society to particular families they know. To me it doesn't mean anything. Each individual family is unique in its own right and only rarely can I directly relate that to a case of injustice, unfair dismissal or something like that, rather than structural injustice which to me does not have much meaning in individual terms" (senior social worker, early 30s).

"I do believe there is a certain amount of luck involved as to where you are born and who you are born to ... injustice is too simplistic, it implies it is all somebody else's fault and it isn't always. I think it is a devaluation of people if you assume it is just injustice" (social worker, late 30s).

"I suppose just having a rough deal, just being in the wrong place at the wrong time" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"People are unlucky because of education, large families, wrong place at the wrong time" (social worker, early 30s).

Definitions

Perceptions of the cause of poverty relate closely to definitions of poverty. Few social workers think of poverty in strict absolute terms - such as the lack of "necessities" or "basics" essential to life:

"I suppose ... it would be along the lines that there is not enough money to pay for actual things, what is essential ... if we assume a definition of essential it is

when you haven't got enough money to pay for it" (senior social worker, late 40s).

As a group, social workers are far more likely to think of and define poverty in relative terms - relative to other countries, times - or relative to the needs and wants of the majority of a population. In these terms poverty is very much about the lack of opportunities to live an "adequate" or "reasonable" life, relative to others. This is also associated with explanations for poverty which rest on notions of injustice and inequality - the poor lack access to opportunities, resources and an adequate lifestyle because, to a degree, they are victims:

"I fully appreciate that in world terms I am stinking rich, I haven't any doubt about that" (senior social worker, late 40s).

"... relative to the particular society that you're in - what is an adequate amount to live an acceptable life, not absolute" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... people are in poverty when they lack resources to live as the rest of society do" (group respondent, February 1987).

"Poverty is a relative concept ... you may feel deprived relative to others. But poverty is about lack of resources, a lack of money. At the end of the day, because of their sparse incomes their potential to do things and to be regarded as respectable members of society - whether rightly or wrongly - is reduced, and it boils down to money at the end" (group respondent, February 1987).

To live an "adequate" type of lifestyle requires that the poor have incomes above subsistence level and which allow them to exert choices in how this money is spent. Many social workers associate the absence of choice with the definition and experience of poverty:

"... poverty - I suppose poverty is having not enough money to have the basics and not enough money over to have a choice about what things other than basics one would like" (social worker, late 30s).

"... people, within whatever level one accepts, should actually have some choice. If they choose to spend what they have got on heating to be hot all over the house, that is fine. If they choose to cut down on that, they have genuine choices, not absolute choices, but genuine choices. So I am saying poverty is not being able to pay for what you need plus an element of genuine choice in certain areas" (senior social worker, late 40s).

This belief that people should have choice, and a "real" or "genuine" choice in particular, is widespread amongst social workers:

"Poverty is where, if you expand in one area like the use of a telephone, you have got to cut down on something else ... this ... is not a positive choice but a negative choice because you have to deprive yourself of food, or activities, or going out, so if its cold and you have to have extra heat, then you can't afford something else" (group respondent, February 1987).

"It's depriving yourself of one necessity to be able to pay for another necessity ... heat and food are both necessities in life so you may have to go without one to pay for the other" (group respondent, February 1987).

Social workers are concerned that every person should, as of right, have the opportunities and resources to make real choices and exert control over their lives:

"... choices about lifestyle, about their own future and the future of their children, about where they live, what they do in their leisure activities, about what to eat" (fieldwork supervisor, early 30s).

"It is a lack of command over resources ... it could be the ability to actually get from one place to another ... the ability to choose to go here or there" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... it's the basic removal of choice, of not being able to do things, of having to weigh up whether you can afford bus fare to go into the DHSS even ... where I work it costs £1.80 to get to the DHSS - it's a removal of their basic freedom of choice of where they are going" (group respondent, February 1987).

Poverty is very much associated by social workers with powerlessness - lack of choices, opportunities and resources - to live a life and lifestyle that allows people to "participate" in the customs and traditions common to the "non poor" population:

"... the opportunity to live as comfortably as we want and to have sufficient money not to have to scrimp and save, so we can buy a chicken for Sunday lunch" (senior social worker, early 30s).

"By poor I mean that they are very rarely able to get out of their house and go to the shops and spend money on something that they are not absolutely desperate for. They don't have money for extras at all; life is carried out at a subsistence level rather than being able to take advantage of some of the luxuries of life ... most of the people I work with find just the paying of fuel bills a major difficulty, because it's a big bill and a major factor in people's lives ... they grind along from day to day but are unable to participate in the extras ... a lot of people I work with can't afford the basics either ... if you deny that participation you actually deny people's humanity and the right of people to take part not in everyday life, but everyday social life if you like, you deny people a social existence" (social worker, early 30s).

Experiences

Many social workers equate the experience of poverty and the denial of social participation with the anxiety and despair of many of the poor. The poor worry about their social status, fear the next bill arriving, fear the unanticipated (or anticipated) extra expense that drains their income. In particular they dread the giro - the

lifeline - not arriving:

"... they worry if they can't pay their bills when they come around ... they worry about electric, gas cut offs or eviction for non payment. One of my clients is frequently cut off. She's got five kids and all the worry that brings" (social worker, early 40s).

"... people in poverty have no choice. If you are living on supplementary benefit you live from day to day, waiting for your giro" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... your income is tied totally to the day before your giro arrives ... you become prone to loan sharks ... a spiral develops which drags you down even more. Even something as simple as a giro not turning up can be catastrophic" (group respondent, February 1987).

This constant apprehension and restricted life style is not only a symptom of financial poverty, but a cause of further despair and isolation. The poor often live in places where choices and opportunities are also restricted because of the ascribed deprivation of the area as a whole. The poor are multiply deprived. The areas in which they live often lack resources and facilities that many others take for granted: this enforces further lack of choices and opportunities for participation:

"Poverty involves issues such as education, housing, race. It is to do with a number of factors that combine - income on its own is the major indicator of poverty - but you are in a network where a particular income may be ameliorated by other different factors, like community support, family, neighbours" (group respondent, February 1987).

"Most of the poor in the deprived areas in which I work don't have milk deliveries, taxis at night to take you in or out, house insurance. That's a whole area of deprivations. Whether you have money or not you are labelled by the area ... you are sometimes denied credit - but certainly not by money lenders who are much more expensive" (group respondent, February 1987).

Many social workers think that the poor experience poverty as a "vicious cycle". Restricted lifestyles and stunted opportunities to participate lead to further restrictions of life chances. The poor are trapped within "cycles of disadvantage" which are structurally caused, but which are often maintained by the personal abilities, inabilities or dispositions of the poor themselves. Poverty not only affects peoples' ability to manage their money but, in some cases, is also a product of those abilities:

"If someone smokes a lot and drinks and gambles, then things get to a low edge financially, these people do get in an uncertain precarious position. They are not only poor but precariously poor because it effects their ability to manage their money" (senior social worker, early 50s).

"... poverty is an inability to manage your income in such a way that keeps your head above water" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"... they may do something reckless, like a holiday or stereo system or something ... that sort of response is like a habit or so regular that it is debilitating ... for some families it may be something which feeds back into itself, it perpetuates" (fieldwork supervisor, early 30s).

These beliefs are very much linked in with other beliefs and opinions about a cycle of deprivation:

"There are a group of people who through generations and a cycle of poverty, who are actually poorly educated, live in poor home conditions, come from families who find it difficult to move out of that sort of lifestyle ... and there is a trend that develops, that takes place over generation to generation, and they always tend to be at the bottom of the heap" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... children of the poor turn out to be poor almost inevitably. As a social worker I am dealing and

interviewing children now who were in care themselves and whose grandparents were in care ... And the way that it comes out in case conferences and discussions, its put down to inadequate parenting, lack of parenting skills, lack of nurturing that the parent had in her childhood ... it's seen in a very individualistic way which in that particular family may well be the case but I don't think that any explanation of why that family is in that position can actually stop there. I accept that that happens, but I don't accept that the reasons those families are in those positions are to do with any fault or any blame or any inadequacy being passed on from generation to generation ... it's a trap ... society allows very very few individuals a way out of it" (social worker, late 20s).

"... they are unable to get out of that group because of the low incomes and the lack of opportunities to meet the right people, to get the right ideas, to absorb ... I think it's very much more structural, that's the difficulty, but there are so many elements to it ... bad environment, structural factors which tend to, you know, overcrowded houses, inability to study because of that, poor food, all those sorts of things" (social worker, early 30s).

Many social workers believe in the idea of a cycle of deprivation. However, most, if not all, reject the notion of the "genetic" transmission of poverty in favour of transmission through structural inequalities, cycles of disadvantage and multiple deprivations. But, at the same time, many accept that personal abilities and familial processes interact with these wider social structures to maintain cycles of deprivation and disadvantage. Inadequate housing is a factor of especial importance in this process:

"The cycle begins with the run down housing and it continues because of low incomes ... bad housing is a result of not being able to do things with your housing, not being able to improve it because you are on low income, not being able to afford fuel to keep it dry and free of mould and things like that, not being able to decorate it because you haven't got enough money to pay for your food, never mind fuel bills and decorating ... The cost of fuel is a major factor and the illness arising from damp, cold and overcrowding ... is overwhelming and people just don't

get out of that sort of problem at all ... it's a major drain on people's coping capacities" (area director, early 40s).

Bad housing is only one factor. Other facets interact to "stack the cards" against the poor. Some individuals will have greater ability, strength, resilience or commitment to "break out", but most social workers are generally very pessimistic about the likelihood of the poor - and their children - being able to escape or break free from poverty and deprivation:

"... there's a strong economic and political intention to keep people in poverty - wages are kept down wherever there's high unemployment and poverty, because there's many willing to work for low wages" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... having become poor, society, government, make sure you stay poor. It's a trap" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... it's so hard to break out of. You have your place in a burrow. I do feel that there are some people who have certain qualities and personal qualities that can get out ... but it's hard to do that. You can have a strong personality and you can have a real will to survive ... but people who are poor and live in scummy areas ... haven't got a hope in hell, a lot of them, no matter what their personal qualities are" (social worker, under 25).

"I very much believe that you have to get them pretty young if they are going to break out ... I think it's based very much on the education system. I think it's a belief in themselves. If people believe that they can do something, that they are not going to be treated like dirt by the DHSS, by the police, or even us, especially us, often, it's very theoretical, I feel you have to make kids grow up believing there is something better ... but I think probably there isn't" (social worker, under 25).

This sense of pessimism goes hand in hand with the belief amongst most social workers that, for the poor at least, things are unlikely to get better given current economic and political priorities and

concerns. The numbers living in poverty or on its margins are increasing and the experience of poverty is getting no easier:

"Again if you break it down into things like adequate shelter, food, fuel, I think we are moving backwards to absolute poverty in some respects and very specifically I think, things like the cost of fuel and the quality of housing. It is still possible for people to eat in this country reasonably although the way food is packaged and marketed tends to have people spending much more than they need to, but I think the housing stock whether private or local authority is becoming quite a problem, I think the quality of housing is going backwards. Fuel costs are getting to the point where some people in some circumstances cannot afford basic warmth, and that is going back to absolute poverty, if you come through a winter like we have just had (group respondent, February 1987).

As one social work assistant, expressing the view of many, put it:

"The most awful thing about poverty is that for most people there appears to be no way out, no matter what they do they are trapped, absolutely trapped" (group respondent, February 1987).

Summary

Social workers, as a group, place considerable emphasis on the part that injustice and inequality have in the causation of poverty. By this they are specifically referring to the poor having restricted life opportunities and chances which block their access to income, wealth, resources and power. But other social workers reject this analysis. They place more emphasis on factors such as bad luck - "being in the wrong place at the wrong time".

Social workers' definitions of poverty reflect their underlying

assumptions about its cause, nature and effect. Few define poverty in absolute terms. The vast majority define poverty in a relative way as the lack of resources and opportunities to live a lifestyle which allows for social participation and opportunities for real choice. The poor are unable to participate; they exist from day to day. The experience of poverty is powerlessness, which involves anxiety and despair. But poverty is often associated with multiple deprivations: the poor are trapped within cycles of deprivation and disadvantage; escape is rare.

Many social workers believe that the processes that "keep" the poor in poverty are structural in nature and beyond the control of the poor themselves. But many social workers also believe that individual abilities and family processes often help to maintain people in poverty. This is not necessarily the cause of their poverty in the first place, but rather its effect. It is a "vicious spiral" which many social workers believe is unlikely to get better.

SECTION TWO: BELIEFS ABOUT SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT: PURPOSE AND ADEQUACY

Purpose

There is a divergence of opinion about the adequacy and purpose of supplementary benefit (SB). Beliefs about adequacy rely very much upon opinions on the purpose of SB. If a social worker believes that SB should only provide for "basic" subsistence needs, then SB, as currently structured and delivered, is more likely to be thought of as adequate. These beliefs are also related to definitions of poverty. Where social workers define poverty as a condition or situation which does not allow for social participation and choice, they are more likely to feel that SB should provide for relative needs, and, that currently, it fails to do this. Where social workers define poverty in more absolute terms, then SB is afforded a more restrictive role. All the social workers who defined poverty in absolute terms thought that "bad luck" was the major cause of poverty. They also thought that SB should provide for subsistence needs only and that it was currently "adequate" for most claimant groups:

"... it should be about a very basic standard of living, not the sort of level that would enable people to live the lifestyle that they would ideally like to live, but so that by and large they are not going to be hungry or ill shod or whatever, so that most people could meet the basic necessities out of that and no more than that ... I certainly think that is what it does provide. I think basically I believe that is what it should provide as well" (senior social worker, early 30s).

"If I was put in a corner and made to give an answer I would say it should provide for a subsistence level. I wouldn't argue that it should have to be more" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"It should cover food, heating and the replacement of clothes and other items. If SB is raised too much it will act as a disincentive to work ... for a sizeable minority of people" (social worker, early 30s).

Beliefs in the protestant work ethic are strongly associated with attitudes towards benefits and beliefs about the adequacy and purpose of SB. Social workers who strongly value the work ethic are more likely to be wary of increasing benefits to a level beyond that which provides for subsistence needs. Benefits in excess of subsistence undermine the work ethic:

"I think that if benefits are too high people will be discouraged from working. I personally have known several youngsters who actually have been getting board and lodgings money plus £9 for themselves and have done better than people who have been in jobs earning £30 per week who actually can't afford to pay the amount that is needed to keep body and soul together and they have had to go unemployed to get the higher rates of money. We are taking something away from the young person by getting them to be dependent on benefits. People lose something. There are some people who perhaps haven't got the same motivation ... the balance is definitely wrong. We have people who just cannot afford to go to work ..." (social worker, late 30s).

"There should be some money on SB for leisure, but there shouldn't be an enormous amount. I feel that personally. If there are jobs around people should go for them ... there are people who earn more by working in the black market and by being on benefits - working on the side ... I was always brought up to put a lot of value on work ... as professionals we do have to work pretty hard ... we don't have time to do a lot of things other people can do" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"... it's a question of the working population supporting the non working population, which is basically unfair and that I regard as unjust. So if you have got into the realms of people having a choice of income - they either

work for a living or they draw benefit - that I would regard as very unjust; where there is a choice" (senior social worker, early 30s).

"If you work then you ought to get more for it" (senior social worker, early 40s).

"If I am working you should be able to earn a bit more" (senior social work practitioner, early 50s).

These beliefs about the value of the work ethic are sometimes "mixed in" with beliefs that the poor are somehow "fiddling" their benefit; getting more than they are entitled to or "working on the side":

"I have never yet met anyone who is on SB and is not on the fiddle in some way, whether it's they are working or are claiming for a spade and they haven't got a garden or whatever ... they usually apply for six lots of blankets in one year and they must know that they won't get away with it, but they certainly have a go" (social worker, under 25).

"Many of those on SB are on the fiddle. This I have come across every day, every single day. I can virtually say that every one of my clients is on the fiddle in some way or another ... I don't blame them from the point of view that they should have more money but I disagree with it because it is making criminals of people ... I certainly object to it from the point of view that it is my tax payers money that is being used and fiddled and that annoys me" (social worker, early 40s).

"A lot claim benefits and do jobs on the side, while on benefit. If you do that and then are faced with a very routine, unpleasant and low paid job I think you would probably end up in a position of saying, 'well, I am not taking that!' " (senior social worker, late 30s).

There are other social workers, of course, who strongly value the work ethic and believe that many claimants "fiddle" their benefits, but who also believe that benefits should provide for relative needs and be more generous overall. These social workers tend to associate work very much with self esteem, respect, status and power.

To be out of work is to be denied social status, opportunity and choice:

"I believe in work anyway. I believe without work you lose your self-respect so if people who are unemployed and want to stay unemployed because they are on the same money that I am on that would not interest me, from the point of view that I want to work and have always wanted to work for my own self-respect" (social worker, early 40s).

"I think most unemployed people would prefer to be out engaged in some constructive activity which gave them a living wage rather than drawing benefits. I think we are dealing with a media system in this country which makes a big deal out of people that are able to work the system" (social worker, early 30s).

"... there are always people who will take a level of benefit rather than go out to work but I don't think they are by any means a majority, in fact I think they are a tiny minority because I think people gain a lot of status and feelings of self worth from working and that is the primary reason for people going to work ... it gives me some feelings that I'm contributing something, I'm worth something in other people's eyes ... " (social worker, early 30s).

Most social workers feel that SB should provide for relative and social needs. This is consistent with the dominant social work definition of poverty. Poverty is seen as the lack of adequate resources to allow for social participation and real choice. Consequently the purpose of SB is seen as the provision of adequate income sufficient for this style of living and participation:

"I suppose an adequate level of any of those things would be a level that did not restrict anyone's choices ... It is difficult to be concrete about that because some of the people I have seen in poverty perhaps aren't aware of the choices and accept things" (fieldwork supervisor, early 30s).

"Benefits rates should allow people to know that they can afford food for the entire family seven days per week and they can afford food that is enjoyable and healthy to eat. They should be able to afford to clothe themselves adequately and to be able to replace clothing as it wears out or as it becomes unfashionable. They should be able to afford and know that bills can be paid. That basic bills like heating, rates, TV licences can be paid for ... they are just the absolute necessities. People who are dependent on benefit should know it is not going to be a crisis point and are not going to go without food when an emergency strikes, like Christmas, or like a family birthday or like a family funeral" (social worker, late 20s).

"SB should provide ... now here's a difficult one isn't it, basic needs ... what is basic needs? well obviously food and shelter ... but everyone needs a certain amount of socialisation ... so I would have thought that social security should provide for that in addition to food and shelter" (social worker, over 55).

"At a minimum level I don't think people's health ought to be damaged. I think it blurs at the margin, whether everyone is entitled to a holiday I don't know. To some extent people make choices within that ... you could say that everyone is entitled to at least warm clothes and you might say everybody is entitled to not wear 1969 clothes. I do find it quite difficult to know but I think there are certain things which are now acceptable as being part of a significant or acceptable member of society - like not having to ignore the fact that Christmas comes round or not being immediately picked out in the street as a DHSS client" (senior social worker, early 40s).

Adequacy

Most social workers, and especially those who believe that SB should provide for relative and social needs, feel that SB is inadequate. In particular it is seen as insufficient to enable claimants to set up a "fabric" of possessions and resources for longer term life. Claimants on SB are not able to build up stocks of clothes or food; benefit levels do not permit good quality, adequate quantity or regular replacement of items. Standards very often

deteriorate, especially for those who have been dependent on benefits for long periods of time:

"SB allows for just living, very basic living. It doesn't allow for major items really, unexpected things. Shoes are a constant problem with children, especially with teenagers. It doesn't allow teenagers to have pocket money. It needs a very careful budgeting week after week after week, and that's a very hard thing for anybody to do" (senior social work practitioner, early 50s).

"I think people should be able to live adequately. I don't feel it does cover the basics. It's difficult. Everyone has their personal idea of what basics should be but I don't see why people should suffer ... people should be able to eat properly, they should be able to buy fresh vegetables, fresh fruit - there is a lot who can't - they should be able to clothe their children properly - and I am not talking about lovely clothes or pretty clothes - I am talking about shoes, etc. I think that's being basic. Like fuel; people can't afford fuel throughout the winter" (social worker, under 25).

Reservations are expressed, even among the few social workers who think that SB is "adequate":

"I think that if you are very, very bright, very intelligent, you can manage on SB. In the long term I don't think it gives you enough to live on and make life comfortable, but in the short term people can get by on it, can manage on it. I think people would manage well on SB, people like pensioners who have extra incomes from shares, or people who have had money in the past, who have nice homes that they have built up - they should be alright" (social worker, late 30s).

Summary

As a group social workers have a wide range of opinions about the adequacy and purpose of SB. Some believe that SB should provide for subsistence needs only. These social workers are more likely to believe that SB, as currently structured, is adequate. Concern that the work ethic will be undermined by high benefits is associated with this perspective. But most social workers are more generous in their assessment of the purpose of SB. They feel that SB should provide for relative needs and allow for social participation and choice. This is consistent with the dominant social work definition of poverty which is relative rather than absolute in nature. SB, as currently structured, is seen as inadequate to provide for these needs by the majority of social workers. Examples are cited of claimants having to make choices between basic items in order to manage, often on a mundane and monotonous level, from day to day.

SECTION THREE: PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORK USERS AND POOR CLIENTS

Self referrals

Most social workers think that the large majority of people who make use of social services are poor. For some services, such as those for the single homeless, the clientele is almost entirely, if not exclusively, poor. Perceptions vary considerably, though, as to why some people - and not others - use social services. This includes a variety of explanations about the differences between poor people in contact with social services and those poor people who are not social work users or clients. The process of referral is complex. Some people refer themselves, others are referred by a third party; some are willing users of social services, others are reluctant or even hostile. For those that refer themselves (most often with financial or benefit problems) many social workers generally believe that this "coming for help" is a symptom of an "inability to cope":

"... people with better coping mechanisms, these are the people we don't see" (group respondent, February 1987).

"We have a group of people who come to us because of their coping ability - which is not very strong or well developed - they have not had the experiences in life, training, whatever, to enable them to be able to cope well with stress and adverse circumstances. I would guess the people who don't come to us are those who, because of their up-bringing and experiences, may still be in poverty but have better coping abilities, more determination perhaps, the sort of personalities and networks that have enabled them to cope even though they are in poverty" (area director, early 40s).

"The people that for one reason or another aren't coping

with the position they find themselves in, maybe in terms of their relationships or responsibilities as parents, or maybe in terms of some other demand that society makes on them or in terms of self care" (fieldwork supervisor, early 30s).

"I suppose some people are much more astute at managing their money than others. Some people are much better at looking at all their money and deciding how much they are going to put towards their gas and electricity and other things. Some people aren't able to do that" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"I think some families can manage better than others, but I also think there are a lot of people out there that need our help and are too proud to ask for help. When somebody knocks on social services' door they come in and say 'help - I have failed - can you help me'. I think that takes a bit of doing because I couldn't see myself doing it" (social worker, early 40s).

"I suppose most poor people that don't come to our attention cope with their poverty for better or worse" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"... there are some very poor people who are never known to social services, are not in debt to anybody because they have got intelligence and the ability to manage their affairs, haven't they" (social worker, over 55).

But not all social workers take this perspective. Some in fact think that coming for help is a form of strength and determination, not weakness:

"I wouldn't say it is 'less able' to ask for help. I think that is very positive, because if I need help and cannot sort it out on my own I will ask someone to give me a hand ... people that don't come or who are referred are less able than those that walk through the door" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... people who refer themselves are quite courageous in the first place - it takes some guts to go to social services and present yourself as someone who is quite clearly admitting that they are not coping and that they are in a financial mess - that takes courage and most self referrals generally speaking are dealt with well and quite quickly" (group respondent, February 1987).

The likelihood of a person coming to social services for some form of help is associated with, and may be a reflection of, the availability of alternative sources of help or assistance. These alternatives include advice agencies, family networks, personal and financial resources. But, in some instances, coming for help may be little more than a reflection of the actual distance between home and social service office:

"I guess other poor claimants have either got more resources or they see themselves as having more resources - personal, not financial ones - in order to deal with their difficulties without approaching our department" (senior social worker, early 30s).

"... people who do present themselves generally at the office have run out of their own networks and support systems for whatever reason" (group respondent, February 1987).

"The different networks of welfare rights agencies available affect what comes to social services. But each office also create an expectation - some offices will be seen as more capable and willing to deal with certain types of problems" (group respondent, February 1987).

"If you have got people with the same level of problem - the same type of problem - some come to our notice and some don't. It could be that they have more resources to draw on; it could be that they don't choose to come or that they are not referred or that it is less visible - or they don't perceive it as a problem" (senior social worker, early 40s).

"... they have got extra problems or lack of social support or when lack of money is caused by relationships that are very strained. They have usually got extra things or have got some members of the family that are handicapped. I think some people are very socially isolated and they have many more problems. They might live in areas with a lot of other people who haven't got much to give them" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"The ones that come are closer to the office. It's to do

with accessibility. We have a much higher referral rate from those areas close to our office, self referral, than we do from other parts that are that much away". (group respondent, February 1987).

Seeking help, especially from social workers, involves entering a relationship of inequality and stress. This sometimes reflects potential users' misapprehensions about what social services are for and what they can provide. But for others it involves a denting of their pride and independence, an admission that they can't or can no longer help themselves:

"I think people that won't take up help from social services are doing it from a sense of pride or 'I should have managed and how has it come to this?'. It's a feeling of failure, whereas other people quite rightly understand that's what the agency is there for ... for some people it is absolutely devastating to have to come to social services, and other make it a lifetime's work" (social worker, early 30s).

"I think people come to our department for help because they believe we can give them help and also they are willing to accept that and be in that position. I know what the social services can offer to people but I wonder if I was in that position whether I would. I know what's available but I am not sure I could come along" (senior social worker, early 30s).

"... a lot of people that have problems that fall into our remit don't either refer themselves or avoid getting referred to us because of that stigma" (senior social worker, late 30s).

The very process of seeking help or becoming a client may create more dependency on others. Many social workers are concerned that the help they give can be part of the problem rather than the solution:

"... we de-skill them ... It is true that the DHSS are more likely to respond to a social worker than they are to a client ... people who are quite capable of arguing their own case given the opportunity, aren't allowed to because

they have no credibility at all" (group respondent, February 1987).

"There is often quite a history of family involvement with social services or other institutions and I think some of that is about personal dependence. There are a number of clients I am dealing with who have spent their lives in care and cannot make decisions - social workers make decisions for you. A client a few weeks ago said she thought she was pregnant and I said 'are you sure, how overdue is your period?' And she said 'I don't know'. She didn't know when her last period was, she was so bloody dependent. I said I don't keep a note of your menstrual cycle in my diary ... I've come to the conclusion that the State makes worse parents than even bad parents" (social worker, late 20s).

Poor clients

Again, the process by which some referrals become cases whilst others do not is complex and varied. As a group, social workers have a wide range of opinions about why some poor people become cases whilst others are dealt with at the referral/duty point only. Poor clients are often perceived of in negative terms: social workers generally believe that those who become cases have mismanaged their money or budget, have extra problems of a personal or relationship type nature, lack intelligence or motivation to better themselves, lack willingness to travel any distance to work, or, more subtly, would "manage better if they made better choices". Other "cases" were thought of as "sinners" or social "nuisances", needing controlling or monitoring:

"... no case is allocated purely for financial reasons. There must be other concerns - usually about quality of care that children are receiving - or a risk that children may come into care or may be abused" (group respondent, February 1987).

"I felt that a lot of people who are poor don't manage their money properly and it's just my experience of working with people, they don't manage their money according to how we think they should manage their money" (social worker, under 25).

"... if a person comes down to the office two days before a giro is due there's an assumption that it's down to bad planning - not a lack of income" (group respondent, February 1987).

"Poverty can very often be an additional stress, but I don't think it's the only one. I think relationship factors are quite strong, drink dependent, drug dependent, aggression and depression" (social worker, late 30s).

"... you are dealing with people who are not over-endowed intellectually, culturally I suppose as well, so therefore personally I don't like clients of mine to go gambling and throwing their money away on bookies which some of them do" (social worker, over 55).

"Another thing I have found out is that people are not willing to travel to work. For instance, I travel from () to () every day by car. Okay, I have got a car, but if I haven't got the car I travel by train. But if I suggest to anybody in this area that they travel to () for a job - 'I'm not going to () all that way' - this I could never understand" (social worker, early 40s).

"I think financial problems are only a symptom. Poverty problems manifest themselves more readily I think where there is a limited income ... but the problems are all different, aren't they? Sin, to get back, is the real cause of most of my clients' problems ... what do I mean by Sin ... dishonest, misuse of money, lack of ability, you see there are so many people that are inadequate, aren't there, where you could give them all the money in the world they would still be inadequate. They would have no idea of handling their finances wisely ... whether it's tied down to their genetic inheritance, that ability, I do not know. But they are definitely inadequate in some direction" (social worker, over 55).

Some families have been known to social services over generations.

They are "thick file families" - their case notes span numerous volumes and numerous social workers:

"I think there is very definite historical family links with social services which tends to come up again and again and again. The same families tend to be referred because they are known to different professional groups and have a long family history of referral to the social service department and just never disappear off the books and they come up again" (social worker, early 30s).

Beliefs about why these and other families become long term cases do not rely solely on negative explanations such as "inadequacy" or "bad management". Most social workers believe that many people are "forced" into contact with social services because of a complex matrix of deprivations, poverty, family and personal circumstances or abilities:

"... frequently people we deal with have multiple problems having unstable backgrounds, having long term unemployment, very few resources, poor housing, or housing over which they have not got very much control, violent situations and sometimes isolated" (senior social worker, early 40s).

"... if you are on such a tight budget that they are on, you really have to account for every penny that is going and they badly handle their money ... they shop at one shop, mainly because supermarkets are out of the way and buses are awkward for them, so they go by taxi to bring back the shopping. They use money lenders which are rife in this area ... from the point of view of Christmas they want £100 and they borrow it to have a good Christmas and sod it and pay it back afterwards. And they have debts they can't pay back - they have to pay them back - every Friday night there's the knock on the door, they have to pay it back, no matter what else they have to pay for" (social worker, early 40s).

"... an awful lot of the clients we deal with do cope at a slightly less able level than others. For some reason they do not seem able to cope with complex bureaucracies. They don't seem able to, not that they don't manage their poverty any better - they are just slightly handicapped by possibly different layers of handicapping factors ... they just get overloaded with different layers of deprivation and handicapping factors which in total just swamp their ability to cope. But we also get just the families who are on a low income and perhaps dad goes out for a drink on

Friday night and he drinks most of the money away" (social worker, early 30s).

Social workers confirm that they come across clients who lack will-power or ability. But most social workers believe that this is the result of poverty and "layers of deprivation", rather than the cause of their clients' situation. Again, though, the picture is far from simple. Many social workers also believe that some people are more "visible" than others: visibility to "caring" and other agencies (police, nursery staff, teachers, etc.) may be an important factor in whether a person becomes a social service client or not. Patch teams, community social work, neighbourhood offices will all bring social workers into closer contact with the deprived, who will become more visible, not less. But this acknowledgement of "visibility" causes many social workers considerable anxiety. It infers that many people with similar or serious problems are 'undetected' because they are less visible or more able to protect their privacy. This is of especial concern in the area of child abuse:

"I think agencies tend to report more on perhaps poor families. They don't report wealthier families in the same way, they give them more chances. And that person is more skilful at disguising it in the wealthy families, more professional families. A school will report much more on poor families and I suppose it makes it easier to accept that it could come out of poverty that they could abuse their children. But so many poor people don't abuse their children" (senior social work practitioner, early 50s).

"... better off people to an extent can avoid being referred to us on matters like this or they can find other mechanisms for resolving the problem. Or they can simply just shut the door and keep out of the way ... we are dealing with that part of the problem that is brought to

our attention in one way or another ... middle class people probably have similar problems but don't come to the attention of agencies that are likely to pass them on to us" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"... the rich are able to effectively shield themselves from social workers - have the power to come back at us - articulately or by legal powers. It's perpetuated because the poor are put into socially deprived areas, the standard of schooling is less, the standard that they reach is less, so they become less articulate and less able to fight back. We de-skill them and disable them in their abilities to actually come back at us. Then we fool ourselves that we're doing it for their sake as a caring role. But are we? How many social workers go into middle class areas and how often ... the everyday nitty gritty is done among the socially deprived" (group respondent, February 1987).

"I think in a lot of ways it is bad luck on their part that they get caught ... we catch them ... and I often look at people and think there must be hundreds like you but you happened to hit your child and we caught you. I think in a lot of ways it's misfortune on their part" (social worker, under 25).

"... it's a function of our perspective. If you are only dealing with a very small part of the population - the poor - you assume that the problems, like abuse, are a function of poverty ... there may be connections, but it doesn't mean that other people don't abuse for other reasons" (group respondent, February 1987).

Summary

Social workers generally accept that nearly all users of social work services are financially poor. Many social workers believe that those who approach social services for help (especially because of financial/benefit problems) are unable, for whatever reason, to cope. Some social workers express concern that social services may be stigmatising in their nature and deter people from seeking help. Many factors are associated with coping - personalities, abilities, external networks, family, alternative advice or helping agencies.

Some social workers, however, believe that coming for help is a positive sign. However, all those seeking help from social workers enter a situation of inequality and stress. Other social workers are concerned that they merely reinforce this situation and increase the dependency of the poor, rather than alleviating it to any extent. This is perhaps especially so for those that become longer term cases - poor clients.

Poor clients are generally thought to have problems other than or additional to poverty which lead to them becoming established cases. These may include personal or relationship problems, mismanagement of money, lack of motivation, inadequacy. Some poor clients and their families have been known to social services for generations. However, most social workers believe that personal abilities and family circumstances interact with other depriving conditions to lead to some people becoming cases whilst others do not. Many poor clients experience "layers of deprivation". But also they are more "visible" to social and other welfare workers and hence more likely to become social work cases. Social workers are anxious that many people - perhaps in more affluent environments - may require social work help, but, because of their lower visibility, are not likely to be 'seen' by social workers. This concern is of especial importance as far as the "dark figure" of child abuse is concerned.

SECTION FOUR: SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH THE POOR: BELIEFS AND OPINIONS ABOUT AIMS AND MEANS

Social work - purpose and method

Social workers' opinions about what, in practice, they can and should do for poor clients or about poverty, are shaped by a multitude of factors. These include their perceptions of the appropriate role and aims of social work in general, about appropriate methods, and about restraining factors. The vast majority of social workers believe that social work itself is about "helping individuals cope better with their social and personal circumstances". Many acknowledge that this definition of social work's purpose carries a strong social control element:

"I think we are there to try and strengthen people's coping ability - not so that they will cope with anything - but so that they will perhaps be able to make some of the choices they are not able to make ... to make more informed decisions about what is and isn't possible for them and their families" (area director, early 40s).

"Social workers by and large practice ... to enable people to fit into the system - I think local authority social workers can be seen as agents of social control" (group respondent, February 1987).

"I think we reinforce the system ... we very much encourage people to live within their means, to be satisfied with their lot, survival mechanisms ... we are a safety net to prevent great suffering and not necessarily to alter things largely, but only slightly, to stop the worst effects" (group respondent, February 1987).

"Our remit isn't to change structure ... it's to make people in society accept the people that we deal with ... and to get those people to accept society" (group respondent, February 1987).

This "individualising" role of social work is associated by social workers with the dominant social work practice methodology - casework. Casework, to simplify, involves using a choice of techniques (contract, task centred, brief, extended, psychotherapy, etc.) which focus, in most instances, on individuals and families as the locus for change or adaptation. Most social workers believe that the practice of casework is the prime social work function. Both purpose and method become inextricably entwined - both are self reinforcing and self justifying. The majority of social workers agree with this emphasis on 'casework for individual change':

"I see a social work role as really a kind of counselling role, having identified particular problems that we feel it's appropriate for us to get involved in. I accept that poverty might be a contributing factor to some people's problems. I would argue that it is not the root cause, the bottom line" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"... traditionally social work is seen as an individualist service and not to do with money matters. Money matters may come into your dealings with a family or individual but it is seen as separate traditionally ... if you are asking me if we have any impact on issues of poverty in general then I don't think we do because we are not in that business basically. There is little we can do that is going to have an impact anyway, apart from ensuring people know what their rights are and what they are entitled to, and so on" (senior social worker, early 30s).

"The bread and butter is casework, relationships and so on ... I think we would have a lot fewer clients, though, if we weren't dealing with the benefit bit" (social worker, early 30s).

Social work with poor people

Many social workers are unsure where their view equating social work with casework actually comes from. Some think that their

professional training was an important influence; others think that these views had developed through practice and their expectation of what management wanted from workers. Certainly most believe that these views play a significant influence on what they, as social workers (individually and collectively) feel is the appropriate or achievable scope for individual or social change. As far as social work with poor people is concerned, nearly every social worker believes that they can only be effective on a small scale - helping individuals or families in poverty through the provision of services, such as advice or money or items such as toys. Their effect on poverty, as a social issue or problem, can at best be marginal:

"Well I suppose social workers can and do things in individual cases. For individual people we have access to sums of money under various pieces of legislation ... we are aware of private charities that can be tapped, again for individual cases having argued their particular need. So for individual cases yes we can do something, but as a general political issue social workers cannot affect poverty at all" (senior social worker, late 30s).

"I think changes can be made on an individual level. I am not saying that people haven't got the capacity to change or that small changes within a family can't result in other small changes, but that's all that social workers are asking for from poor parents. We are not asking them for anything massive. We might be asking them to get a baby sitter when they go out and get pissed on a Saturday night instead of leaving the children on their own. It's quite often changes at that sort of level that we are talking about. I think social work input can actually achieve those sorts of things" (social worker, late 20s).

"As a worker I have to accept the system that is around and the structures that people have to live within and I see my job as ensuring that they get all the resources that the structure makes available, by that I mean benefits and knowledge about getting housing transfers, about making choices re schools - resource things like that - and beyond that there is nothing I can do about the structural side of

poverty. What I am then working on is - if I am looking at the poverty side - I am looking at how that person or family deals with the poverty situation they are in" (fieldwork supervisor, early 30s).

"We do get involved in a fair bit of structural manipulation ... but this is within a fairly narrow field - we arrange nurseries, special tuition - we negotiate with education and housing departments about schooling and housing issues ... We actually remove kids for structural reasons to help the particular child ... the intention is to structurally change that child's environment for whatever reason ... but when we address the poverty issue we're far more muddled ... when social work is addressing major issues like child abuse, sexual abuse, at risk elderly or whatever, then we're clearer. The financial bits disappear to a large extent as being far less important" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... social work cannot tackle poverty. Poverty is a universal problem and we are a selective service ... you can't counsel people out of poverty, you tell them to live with it" (group respondent, February 1987).

"I don't really know what else to do for these people. Social work is based very much on what you are and I cannot go in and say to people 'Oh God! It's terrible!' - or they would kill themselves and me along with it probably. I think you have got to give people some hope that things can improve ... if they want to move to a better part of town - even if that part of town is terrible - if it's better than where they are living now, then that's fine. It's a step in the right direction. It makes them feel good. It makes them feel like they have achieved something. I think people have to achieve something in their lives" (social worker, under 25).

"There is little you can do about poverty. If anything comes my way - material possessions - I never refuse them because I have got somebody for it. If I can help with material possessions I will ... little bits and bobs, toys for kids, etc ... it helps the kids. The kids are not being stimulated because there is nothing in the house to stimulate them ... I am doing nothing at all to alleviate the problem of poverty ... I think I have a job which involves looking after individual families to the best of my ability. I don't see my job outside that brief" (social worker, early 40s).

Toys

Some social workers are concerned, however, that giving toys is a sad reflection of the state of affairs and can be a stigmatising act in itself - especially when the toys are second hand:

"... we get Christmas presents from the Lions Club and they are all wrapped up and they have on labels saying things 'for a good girl' ... and you open it and it's a packet of felt tips that have been used and a crayoning book that has been used" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... we didn't do toys this year, because it was so hard to get the money last year. I had one family that did get something - I bought something - saying it was my charity contribution. They have no outside help. They come in here to have a drink and biscuits and crisps and it's like coming to afternoon tea. It's a treat. I think that's very sad" (senior social work practitioner, early 50s).

Welfare rights

Helping individual clients materially, with welfare rights advice and (rarely) advocacy, and section one assistance, is seen by some social workers as an important part of social work with the poor. But, as far as section one is concerned, there is a strong core of resistance. Similarly there is a fair element of ambivalence towards welfare rights work in social services. Many social workers complain about having to advise clients about benefits. Some teams refuse to give welfare rights advice at all, referring people with benefit

problems on to other agencies:

"... on my individual cases I check welfare rights. I have just been on a course and I have got to check them reasonably well. You can do a rough check and know it's roughly correct. But when I have gone into some of them in detail there is a lot of things missing. But the intake team don't see it as their job to do it though. They say people coming in should go to a welfare rights officer; I see it as part of social work" (senior social work practitioner, early 50s).

"I think in this area and especially on the intake team they need to be very knowledgeable of welfare rights. They have no choice but to because the welfare rights officer cannot deal with all the welfare rights work. It has to be dealt with by duty officers ... we best use the WRO for more complex work ... but intake workers need to be knowledgeable and they need to know the limits of their knowledge, they need to recognise when it needs passing to the WRO" (area director, early 40s).

"If I am going round to work with a woman who has just had a mentally handicapped child there is obviously the emotional question there. I think it's quite hampering to get bogged down in the change in benefit and 'I have been made redundant - can I check this and that' ... it's not something most social workers enjoy" (social worker, early 30s).

Section one

As far as section one is concerned, social workers feel a fair degree of ambivalence toward its use. Most will use it, but often as a residual payment in the last resort. Generally social workers are uncomfortable in giving out cash directly. The way section one is used by different workers or areas varies considerably. Decisions about payments are based on a number of criteria and judgements:

"I fall into the category of social workers who don't believe we should be into this very often and regard it as a fund to be used only when all other avenues have been

tried and failed and where you can justify it in terms of what the budget is for - although we bend the rules an awful lot" (senior social worker, early 30s).

"I happen to think I would do a damn sight more good if I went out with money and milk than a lot of good words. We have such a large budget for section one ... at the end of the year it makes me sick because we have got a lot of it left and we are patting each other on the back. People need money. There is no doubt about it ... we never pay it without going first to the DHSS ... we only hand it out when it prevents a child coming into care. It's very strict ... I am not daft enough to hand out money to people I think are on the grab all the time ..." (social worker, under 25).

"I wouldn't use it strictly just to prevent children coming into care" (social worker, early 40s).

"I think it is also because they don't perceive us as having a bottomless pit of money ... they know that perhaps the most anyone gets is a fiver or whatever. They don't see us as having a lot of money, therefore they don't come in and demand a lot of money" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... two or three pounds per week ... can make just the difference in that person's life ... it sustains the person and shows that you are interested enough to bother about them. I think this is very therapeutic. They get a few pounds which enables them to do something" (group respondent, February 1987).

"If you start attaching money to social work that gives a push to the moralistic bits. Judgements are made because of our monetary powers; they don't come first" (group respondent, February 1987).

Budgeting advice

Some social workers feel that an important element of social work with poor clients is teaching "budgeting skills":

"Money management might be employed. People who have had money management have done amazingly well after. Budgeting can be quite hard. It's quite a skill and it needs to be taught sometimes. Freedom of choice to make decisions about what you want and within the limit of the budget"

(social worker, late 30s).

But other social workers are not happy with this role at all. They complain that giving budgeting advice is an attempt to force poor people to live on inadequate incomes:

"I don't think any of us are really great on budgeting yet we have to go out there and tell these people how to budget miniscule amounts of money - it's a real nightmare ... but I don't think it helps in giving them too much money. There has got to be budgeting" (social worker, under 25).

"... the margin of error if you're on SB is so narrow that it forces social workers to make very fine judgements ... the margin of error available to us is very wide ... If you give everyone in this room £20 per week and said live on it, some would make it and other wouldn't ... one wouldn't in other circumstances be moralistic about the people who wouldn't ... everyone would agree here that £20 isn't good enough and a certain percentage would fail ... the fact that some might succeed doesn't make them any better people" (group respondent, February 1987).

Community and neighbourhood approaches

There is a variation of opinion among social workers towards "wider" approaches which aim to ameliorate some of the harsher consequences of poverty. Many are suspicious of community or neighbourhood approaches:

"... most social workers are very much against neighbourhood services ... I think they don't want accountability, they don't want to be in a block of flats with the community. They want to be at a safe distance, deciding when you see somebody, not when somebody comes in to you" (social worker, early 30s).

"If you really want to overcome a system, one gigantic way of doing it is to have a revolution. If you could accept that that's unlikely, then you are talking about incremental changes, working towards little bits of change

here and there ... you can actually get into a system and start to overturn it, such as the way neighbourhood services are coming along now. I think they are going to happen because the political motivation is there ... we could actually get in at the beginning of this and use it to alter the system" (group respondent, February 1987).

"I always thought I was a caseworker ... I don't confuse that with community work ... that is not my job. It is for other people to do that. Not social workers" (fieldwork supervisor, early 30s).

"It's alright having organisational change, but if you don't change your method of working, the whole idea of participation without local people making decisions ... then you are changing nothing. You are just increasing work at duty referral points" (group respondent, February 1987).

Constraints

Many social workers who had sympathy with "wider" approaches felt constrained from attempting to do anything more significant about poverty. Pressure of work, specialisation by cases rather than issues, and the overburdening demands of bureaucratic procedures and statutory duties are all identified by social workers as major barriers to an alternative approach:

"Sometimes you are under so much pressure that you can't do what you would want to do ... it gets to a stage in our office sometimes where we have to prioritise and we have to when we are allocating work - deal with those that look very pressing - and then the others just have to wait ... we feel constantly under pressure in our team ... we would like to do much more work in the community with groups of people ... we don't have the time and we don't have the resources" (group respondent, February 1987).

"The way we break down into specialisms mitigates against the community approach ... if you are in a long term child care team, you get cases handed on to you so you don't get the broad spectrum of what comes into intake and where social problems are. You deal with individuals because you can't help not doing so" (group respondent, February 1987).

"If I didn't fill all these forms in and do all this paper work I could double my case load and therefore help a lot more families than we are doing ..." (social worker, early 40s).

Whilst these constraints are seen as a powerful restriction on social workers' activity, some social workers do believe that, within the casework relationship itself, there is room to provide clients with an alternative perspective:

"... one way of attempting to combat poverty ... is through people's self image and education ... If I talk to people about their benefit problems... you can widen the conversation out to 'you're not the only person who's got this problem, all people on the estate ...' Driving people outwards so that it's not their pathological problem. So you're doing a political education bit ... that's essential ... people who get every addition in the world are still poor" (group respondent, February 1987).

"... when people join forces they can do their bit - stropfully say 'this needs to happen' and people listen ... if you can mobilise that impetus" (group respondent, February 1987).

Summary

On the whole social workers feel that they can do little or virtually nothing about poverty. They are able, they believe, to provide small scale help to individuals in poverty. These perceptions are associated with beliefs about the appropriate role, aims and methods of social work in general, and about possibilities for social change through social work in particular. Social workers generally view their objectives very much in "individualising" terms - helping individuals cope better with social and personal circumstances. Casework is not only the dominant method, but also the method that most social workers believe is the legitimate focus

(and purpose) of their work. Methods and purpose become inextricably interwoven. Other social workers believe that within the casework relationship itself, there is room to increase the consciousness of poor clients.

Helping individuals in poverty through advice, the provision of services, money, toys, or "minor structural manipulation" (for example helping clients move up a housing list) are seen as the natural limits to effective and appropriate social work practice with poor people. However, there is an ambivalence towards some of this work, especially welfare rights advice and advocacy. Additionally, the use of section one budgets vary considerably between offices and between social workers within offices. There is little consistent overall direction or strategy for social work with poor people.

"Wider" approaches such as community work or neighbourhood services are viewed by many workers with suspicion. Some fear the break with the casework model. Others believe that these approaches can do little to address the issues of structural inequality or poverty. Overall social workers feel that any impact they can have on poverty will be marginal. They believe that they are most effective in helping poor people cope or adapt to their circumstances. This is not social workers' "blaming the victim" - most social workers clearly locate poverty in the context of structural inequality. Rather it is an approach that accepts the restraints on social

workers' ability to influence both these structures and wider social change, and is based upon definitions of means and ends which are individualising in focus. Whether social workers justify the nature of this practice with poor people by then defining the limits of their practice in such a way, or whether their practice is mediated by definitions of appropriate means and ends, is uncertain. For some social workers their definitions of appropriate action are likely to serve as legitimation for their existing styles and methods of working. For others conceptual definitions of appropriateness may follow failed or difficult attempts to practice in a different way.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to illustrate, through the use of direct quotation, social workers' attitudes towards the definition and meaning of poverty; their beliefs about the adequacy and purpose of SB; their perceptions of users of services, including poor clients; and their beliefs and opinions about the appropriate means and aims of practice with poor people. Throughout the chapter the intention has been to highlight the similarities and variations in attitudes between social workers and the preoccupations, concerns and contradictions in attitudes of individual social workers. Some of these areas are logical extensions of concerns in the questionnaire survey. Others - for example social workers' practice with the poor - are new areas of interest.

The limits to a mailed questionnaire survey of attitudes to poverty have been discussed in chapters three and four. The subtlety of opinion and the shades of variation and emphasis are more clearly understood through direct interviewing techniques. It is clear from social workers in conversation that attitudes towards these issues are far from uniform and cannot, or should not, always be compartmentalised. Perceptions reflect a range of concerns and preoccupations which are best expressed when social workers talk individually and collectively about poverty. The quantitative survey data provides a necessary and complementary backdrop from which these discussions should be viewed.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Negative images of welfare and attitudes to the poor are informed, and maintained, by historic and economic processes and social and cultural traditions. Fimister has argued that social workers are centrally placed to combat these widespread and persistent anti-welfare ideologies (1986, 147-150).

Little is known, however, about social workers' own attitudes to welfare and poverty, or how these ideologies affect their work with poor people. Without such knowledge, understanding of both current practice and any potential role will be extremely limited.

As a profession social work has developed, operates within and contributes to dominant, and often contradictory, welfare belief systems. As individuals, social workers are affected by these. For centuries and across continents the poor, and especially those who have become dependent on welfare support, have been labelled as lazy, criminal and responsible for their poverty. Controversy has also been attached to the systems of welfare that have supported, maintained and, often, controlled them. Distinctions between those who are "deserving" of state or charitable assistance and those who are not have been paralleled by mechanisms to regulate and police the "non deserving" and to target "cash" and "care" services to those in

most need.

Such distinctions necessitate criterion of selection and moralistic judgements. These, and the hostile and contradictory climate of opinion in which they are made, have considerable impact upon the way in which the poor view themselves and each other.

Social workers and clients

As central agents in the provision and administration of social welfare, field social workers are in everyday contact with many of the poor and deprived. Material hardship or financial poverty is a critical, precipitating factor behind much voluntary or involuntary contact with personal social services. In Great Britain nine out of ten users of social work services are claimants of social security and over half the total are claimants of supplementary benefit in particular. Nearly two-thirds of all referrals to social workers are for benefit, DHSS or housing problems. Most of the information and advice that social workers ever give is related to money. In 1982 one in five supplementary benefit claimants was in contact with a social worker, one-third for benefit advice; in 1987 this is more than two million supplementary benefit claimants and their dependants. Claimants are poor before they become social work clients, but more and more are becoming clients because they are poor. Increasingly, social services are becoming services for claimants.

Many field social workers, however, are ambivalent or even hostile to roles and tasks associated with money. Most view the use of "section one" as a necessary but embarrassing evil, a "bolstering up" of an inadequate benefit system, a residual payment of last resort. Many are also reluctant to get involved in anything more than the most superficial of welfare rights work, the majority do not get involved in approaches requiring advocacy or challenge. Professionally, social workers are concerned not to enter further into income maintenance work. Social work itself is defined in terms of helping individuals and families cope or adapt to their personal, social and economic circumstances. Individualising methods generally support and reinforce this view of the appropriate purpose of social work practice.

Attitudes and practice

Most of the 451 field social workers surveyed in 1986 were very supportive of the poor. Most define and perceive of poverty in relative terms, as a function of injustice and inequality, the poor as victims of forces and processes outside their own - and social workers' - control. When compared with the British public, social workers are far more likely to locate poverty in the context of structural inequalities. However, most also contend that they can have little strategic impact upon the nature of the problem itself; they respond on the margins because it is at this level that change is most likely to occur. Social workers are not blind to issues concerned with poverty and deprivation. But most simply do not know

what to do about them.

And yet, social workers are increasingly tackling head on complex and controversial issues relating to race and gender. Not least, they have become more sensitive to how their assumptions in these areas effect their practice and service delivery. Cheetham (1987) for example has argued that "colour blindness" amongst social workers can, and does, have many negative consequences for the welfare of black children and their families. Social workers' beliefs about clients "clearly shape the help that will be offered" (p.11). But many social workers have been slow, and others reluctant, to respond to parallel issues concerned with poverty and deprivation. Few have insight into how their attitudes affect the help that is given and, ultimately, the help that is requested by poor people - the main users of social work services.

Past studies

Few studies of attitudes to poverty have been concerned specifically with those in direct contact with the poor, and fewer still with social workers in particular. In the United States, where most studies have been done, a large proportion have focused on student social workers' attitudes rather than those in practice. But the two groups can be, and often are, quite different in their perceptions. Practice itself appears to be associated, in a negative direction, with both attitude position and intensity.

Different surveys have indicated that attitudes to poverty are associated with a number of background experiences and personal characteristics. But studies have often found different, and conflicting results. In the United States for example, Alston and Dean (1972) suggest that older people, females and those with lower education are more likely to have positive attitudes. But Feagin (1972A, 1972B) suggests that younger Americans have more positive attitudes while Flint (1981) found no sex differences in attitudes and Williamson (1974A, 1974B) suggests that highly educated people are more likely to have positive attitudes. Buttel and Flinn (1976) and Osgood (1977) suggest that those from rural backgrounds have more negative attitudes. Sargent et al (1982) found that this type of background is not associated with attitudes to any large extent. In Britain, Golding and Middleton (1982) found that the experience of claiming benefit was negatively associated with attitudes to the poor, but Schlackman (1978), Redpath (1979), Dunleavy (1979A, 1979B) and Freeman (1984) suggest that the opposite association occurs.

Studies of social workers' attitudes have also produced a variety of conflicting findings, adding to the degree of confusion and contradiction. In the United States, Grimm and Orten (1973) suggest that social work students with higher class origins have more positive attitudes to the poor; Friedman and Berg (1978) found the reverse. Varley (1963, 1968) suggests that young, female workers with no previous social work experience are more positive in their attitudes. But Grimm and Orten (1973) suggest that those who have

always worked in social services related jobs before becoming social workers have the most positive attitudes. Bernard (1967) and Sharwell (1974) found that qualified workers had more positive attitudes, but Cryns (1977) found the opposite and Hayes and Varley (1965) suggest training has no effect at all.

Some of these earlier American studies have tended to interpret attitudes within narrow boundaries: they have based their explanation on a few discrete socio-economic or personal characteristics of respondents. As survey techniques have become more complex, so too has the interpretation of the findings. A number of recent British researchers (for example Furnham, 1982A, 1982B, 1982C; Wagstaff, 1983; Furnham and Gunter, 1984) have placed the interpretation of attitudes in the context of overlapping and overarching ideological and political orientations. These are themselves often associated with basic socio-economic characteristics of respondents. It is rare for social workers' attitudes to poverty to be examined, or interpreted, within such an ideological framework.

British social workers' attitudes

This study of 451 Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers is the first in Britain to address many of these issues and suggests that, for these social workers, political ideology is a crucial factor associated with their attitudes and perceptions. But a number of other important associations were found, some of which support, while others refute, findings from other studies.

The survey was conducted in the first instance by a mailed questionnaire between June and August 1986, and followed by detailed interviews with selected respondents between December 1986 and February 1987. It was concerned to examine social workers' attitudes to poverty (both position and intensity); to interpret and explain a number of associations with these attitudes; and to explore respondents' perceptions of appropriate social work roles with poor people.

Confirming many previous findings the survey data suggest that social workers have particularly "positive" attitudes to the poor: they define poverty in terms of powerlessness, lack of choice and as a product of injustice and inequality. Macarov's (1981) comparison of social work students' attitudes to poverty in three countries also found that American and Australian students saw socio-economic/political systems as major causes. Orten (1981) also suggests that social work students have particularly positive attitudes to the poor, although as a group they feel less intensely about poverty than respondents in the early 1970s. Direct comparison with the current British survey data is problematic: the American studies were conducted on student social workers, the Nottinghamshire and Manchester study was conducted on practising social workers. However, it does appear that social work students (who then go on to be social workers) are a self selecting group with particularly positive attitudes towards the poor.

As far as practice is concerned, the interview data suggest that social work with poor people is defined in individualised terms employing individualising/casework methodologies. As with Hendrickson and Axelson's (1985) American respondents and Macarov's (1981) American and Australian students, British social workers often believe that the "solution" to poverty requires widescale structural change. But, confirming Epstein's findings (1968, 1981) British social work, similar to that in the United states, is "case" based rather than "cause advocacy" orientated, directed at helping individuals and families cope with their circumstances. This is particularly so for social work with poor clients (Epstein, 1981). Even as advocates, Epstein found that social workers were relatively conservative in defining their role or methods. Earlier Epstein (1968) suggests that social workers perceive themselves most effective, in terms of strategies to improve clients' welfare, when they assume traditional professional roles. Political roles, conflict strategies or "wider approaches" were considered outside the boundaries of appropriate social work practice and more the domain of other, non social work, activists. British social workers appear very similar in their perceptions of appropriate social work roles with poor people; they "define-out" approaches that whilst consistent with their positive attitudes generally, are seen as incompatible with their status as state employed social workers.

These are important findings. Silberman (1977) has asserted that

those who are "hostile" to the poor are more likely to implement such sentiments in their actual behaviour: those more positive to the poor are prevented from transforming attitudes into actions because of institutional or other constraints. Both American data and the present study confirm this. If social work in general and social service departments in particular are to address the implications of widespread poverty amongst users then they must firstly address and confront the barriers and contradictions inherent within their own organisations, which constrain and impede effective anti-poverty social work.

Interpreting attitudes

The study also aimed to explore a range of associations between past and current circumstances and attitudes. The choice of variables enables some comparison with previous findings, again mostly from the United States. Consequently educational level, class origin, marital status, past experiences and so on were examined in relation to associations with attitudes to poverty. Other important variables - notably beliefs in a just world, the protestant work ethic, post materialist values - were not examined per se. These have only recently been associated with attitudes to poverty amongst non social work samples. All, however, have been shown to be associated with political ideology. Possible associations between social workers' attitudes and political ideology were explored, and it is therefore possible to make some comments on the importance of just world beliefs and beliefs in the work ethic on attitudes to poverty and

the poor.

The survey data suggest that social workers who are most likely to have positive attitudes towards the poor are young (male or female aged 25-40), who are highly educated and professionally trained (especially with a combination of degree and CQSW), with some experience of claiming benefit, who decided to become social workers earlier in their lives (before leaving school or as students), or while unemployed, who lived in small cities during their childhood and who now live in relatively deprived areas, with considerable prior experience of social work related or voluntary work, who are relatively new to field social work practice. Additionally they will support the Labour party (and may well be members of it), will be involved in pressure groups - either poverty related (for example Child Poverty Action Group) - or non poverty related (for example CND). Class origins, past financial circumstances, sex, housing tenure, marital status, number of dependants and religious practice do not appear to be associated with social workers' attitudes to poverty to any large extent. Many of these social workers will also have the most intense feelings towards the poor.

Those with the most negative or hostile attitude positions are social workers who, as children, lived in rural (village) areas, decided to become social workers while in some form of work (social services or other non related), are under 25 or over 40, have no or few educational or professional qualifications, spent time in non social

work employment before becoming a social worker, have never claimed benefit (or have claimed it some considerable time ago), live in relatively affluent areas, support the Conservative party and are not members of pressure groups. Again, many of these will also have the least intense feelings towards the poor.

These findings conflict with Grimm and Orten (1973) who suggest that marital status and number of dependants are associated negatively with attitudes; conflict with Friedman and Berg's (1978) finding that lower class origins are positively associated with attitudes and Grimm and Orten (1973) who found the reverse; conflict with Cryns (1977) who suggests that social work training is negatively associated with attitudes and Hayes and Varley (1965) who suggest that training has no effect on attitudes to the poor.

The findings support those of Bernard (1967) and Sharwell (1974) who conclude that social work training is positively associated with attitudes; may support Hepworth and Shumway's (1976) suggestion that training increases social workers' openmindedness; support Jacobs (1968), Wasserman (1970), and Blau (1974) who argue that social work practice is negatively associated with attitudes, and Epstein (1968, 1981) that practice is casework orientated and individually based. The findings also support Grimm and Orten (1973); prior working experience in non social work employment is negatively associated with attitudes and higher education and younger age are associated with positive attitudes.

The findings can also be contrasted with a number of results from attitudes to poverty surveys amongst non social work samples. For example they support Feagin (1972A, 1972B), Feather (1974), Freeman (1984) who suggest that older people have more negative attitudes; support Flint (1981) who found that the sex of a respondent did not matter; support Alston and Dean (1972) who suggest that skilled or professional workers have more positive attitudes; support Schlackman (1978), Redpath (1979), Dunleavy (1979A, 1979B) and Freeman (1984) who suggest experience of claiming or "consumption sectors" is associated positively with attitudes; support Williamson (1974A, 1974B) who found that high education is associated with positive attitudes; partly support Buttel and Flinn (1976) and Osgood (1977) who found that living in rural areas is negatively associated with attitudes; and strongly support Pandey et al (1982), Furnham (1982A, 1982B, 1982C), Wagstaff (1983), Furnham and Gunter (1984) who found that Conservative ideology (and its associated characteristics of older age, religious participation, not active politically) are associated negatively with attitudes to poverty. Whilst not specifically explored in the study the findings may also support the hypothesis that a strong just world belief, a strong belief in the work ethic and materialist values are associated with negative attitudes to the poor. Certainly social workers seem to embody many of the characteristics of the post materialists (highly educated, young, politically active, less religious, high socio-economic status).

The findings conflict with Alston and Dean's (1972) suggestion that older people, females and the lower educated have more positive attitudes and conflict with Golding and Middleton's (1982) that experience of claiming benefit is negatively associated with attitudes.

Complexity and contradiction

These explanations for attitudes to poverty depend very much upon the type of survey questions that are asked and the associations that researchers then go on to explore. The British survey data suggest that attitudes are complex constructs inferred from a range of responses to a number of different issues presented on a number of dimensions. There appears to be no such thing as a social worker's "attitude" to poverty: rather social workers have a matrix of opinions, beliefs and values about a number of poverty related issues, varying from the general to the specific, the real to the abstract, and so on. The position and intensity of their attitudes range along a continuum from "positive" to "negative". But there is not one overall continuum, rather a large number that relate to each issue and dimension being examined. As a group, social workers have a number of clusters of opinions and beliefs which appear to be associated with positive attitudes towards the poor: they reject many statements that view the poor as lazy, criminal and responsible for their poverty, they are supportive of increased tax payments to help the poor. Additionally, as a group, they feel strongly about a

number of issues concerning supplementary benefit claimants, namely that claimants fail to "take-up" all their entitlements, are in "real need" and are not involved in criminal acts of fraud. Certainly social workers feel more strongly about these issues than a representative sample of the general public.

But on an individual level attitudes are not always consistent nor are they consistently supportive. Individual social workers are often "positive" or feel more strongly about one issue, but may be more "negative" or feel less strongly about other issues. Consequently social workers have different opinions about the adequacy of benefits for different claimant groups, believe that some claimants fail to claim their entitlements whilst others defraud their benefits, and so on. To suggest that social workers are "positive" or "negative" in their attitudes is perhaps misleading. The terms "positive", "negative" and "attitude" are themselves averaging concepts which disguise the variety, complexity or inherent contradiction of many of the opinions, beliefs and values that are held. Additionally the labels "positive" and "negative" are also based upon researchers' own value standpoints: "positive" attitudes are seen as something altogether better than attitudes which explain poverty in individualistic and personal terms. But who is to decide when a person is a victim of wider social injustice is of central importance.

This study of social workers' attitudes adds both to knowledge and

thinking. It generates evidence of social workers' attitudes to poverty and allows a comparison with earlier studies; findings and data on associations are contrasted and explored. But equally as important, the study enables us to develop thinking on attitudes to poverty research. Thus, attitudes are a complex patterning of opinions, beliefs and values. They are characterised by inconsistencies, paradox and contradiction. Social workers have a range of clusters of ideas and beliefs about poverty and the poor. As a group they have been seen to be socially mobile, often moving from working class origins to their current professional status, a status which places them at the centre of the contradictions in the welfare state. These contradictions are inherent in the operation and practice of social work: social workers are empowered with roles of care but also control; service provision, but also restriction, rationing and gatekeeping; encouraging and facilitating developments in the voluntary and other sectors, but also their monitoring; helping poor people cope with poverty, but also their regulation and control. At a practice level the contradictions are equally as stark: foster parents receive social services allowances to care for the children of the poor; expensive intermediate treatment experiences act as a positive but temporary interruption in the lifestyles of juvenile offenders, who return to deprived environments and often further offending; community care without community or the resources for caring; procedures and guidelines directed at protecting vulnerable clients which increasingly create bureaucracy and client alienation.

Whilst most social workers recognise the structural inequalities that generate and maintain poverty, they direct their practice at helping the poor adapt to poverty and disadvantage. There will be notable exceptions, of course, but social work with poor people rarely attempts to combat or confront these structural dimensions. Social workers' professional concerns, priorities and boundaries appear to have an overarching impact upon their practice orientations.

It is not surprising perhaps to find that social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor are themselves characterised by contradiction and paradox. These exist, perhaps more so, because the subject matter is poverty and the subjects are social workers. Whilst studies of attitudes to welfare and poverty amongst non social work samples suggest that contradiction in attitudes do occur, the extent of this may be greater amongst social workers who professionally operate and contribute to the contradictions of welfare. The implications and impact of these contradictions will be felt most strongly by the vulnerable, powerless and alienated - the main users of social work services.

Further research

These findings have implications both for the technical study of attitudes to poverty and for the operation and practice of social work. As far as studies of attitudes to poverty are concerned, it

seems clear that the mailed questionnaire survey should be complemented by detailed interviewing techniques. Attitudes are inferred from a range of responses; by talking directly to social workers about their opinions and beliefs additional and valuable information can be generated to complement survey data. Future surveys might wish to concentrate on specific areas of association. For example the association between attitudes and other ideological or belief systems - such as a belief in the work ethic, just world, materialist values and so on. The data reported here suggest that as a group Nottinghamshire and Manchester social workers embody many of the characteristics associated with the "post materialists", but more work needs to be done on this. There is considerable scope, too, for comparative studies amongst different groups of professionals employed in the network of welfare agencies.

The findings have implications for the selection and training of prospective social workers. How can professional training confront negative attitudes to the poor? Likewise, how can it overcome the effect of past experiences, current circumstances and particular ideological orientations that appear to be associated with negative images of the poor?

The implications of widespread poverty amongst both social work users and long term clients also requires urgent consideration on a number of levels. Organisationally how can social workers best respond to poverty? More fundamentally this calls into question central issues

of definition and purpose, means and ends in social work.

Similarly, if practice itself appears to be associated with a more negative orientation towards the poor, how can social service departments combat inherent tendencies within organisations to restrict creative and pro-active anti-poverty approaches or purposeful methods of working with the poor?

Until social workers, their managers and agencies understand how poverty impacts upon clients and how attitudes, structures and contradictions effect the nature and delivery of social work services, then it is unlikely that the poor will receive a service that is appropriate to their needs.

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APPENDIX 1

THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The research programme was divided into a number of stages:

- (i) A search of the relevant literature (reported in chapters one to four).
- (ii) An examination of the extent and nature of poverty amongst users of social work services (reported in chapter five).
- (iii) A survey of British social workers' opinions and beliefs about poverty and the poor. First, by means of an extensive self completion questionnaire to all field social workers in two large local authorities. Second, by complementary individual and group discussions with some of these workers (reported in chapters six to nine).

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The main areas of interest for the literature review were identified as

- (1) the extent of poverty amongst clients
- (2) attitudes to poverty and the poor
- (3) social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor.

Using a number of key words (e.g. social work, attitudes, poverty,

poor) two international computerised literature searches were conducted from the main library at Nottingham University. Different combinations of key words generated hundreds of abstracts on the three identified areas of interest. Computerised literature searches were conducted on Dissertation Abstracts International and Sociological Abstracts. From the resulting abstracts over 100 articles were ordered, which in turn led to hundreds more being "discovered" through the reference and bibliography sections of each work.

Additionally manual searches were conducted on Social Work Research and Abstracts, International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, Social Service Abstracts, and the Reference Manuals on current research in British academic institutions. This latter method led to a number of contacts being made with academics in related fields, although only one reference referred specifically to current British research on social workers' perceptions of poverty. On following this up with the researchers (Clegg and Sullivan at University College, Cardiff), it was discovered that the project had never started and was unlikely to start. The manual searches generated many additional articles, mostly from the United States. A manual search of the last three years of Dissertation Abstracts International and Sociological Abstracts generated no new references to those produced by the computer search. Similarly a manual search of a few volumes of Social Science Citation Index produced no further discoveries.

The ESRC data archive section was asked to search their data for references on the extent of poverty amongst clients and social workers' attitudes to poverty and the poor. Whilst some periphery sources were detected there were none that covered the specific areas in question.

The manual and computerised searches accompanied by cross checking bibliographies generated an extensive number of references from home and abroad. Whilst there is a fairly extensive literature on attitudes to poverty and social workers' attitudes to poverty (especially from the United States) there were no references whatsoever on British social workers' attitudes to poverty or on the extent of poverty amongst clients. Neither was there any British research in progress on these themes. To get information on the extent of poverty amongst clients required direct contact with a number of local authorities, researchers and academics.

APPENDIX 2

THE MAILED QUESTIONNAIRE

Making contact

Manchester and Nottinghamshire social service departments' principal research officers were first contacted at the end of March 1986 to discover whether their departments would be interested in participating in the research programme. Following telephone conversations with both research officers a letter outlining the proposed research strategy was sent to both departments. The letter provided general background information and intended dates for the distribution of the questionnaire and the commencement of the interview schedule. Additionally the research officers were provided with a copy of the research statement drawn up shortly after the start of the project, copies of some previous related publications, a copy of a curriculum vitae and a "flyer" for the forthcoming publication of "Poor Clients "(Becker and MacPherson, 1986).

Manchester and Nottinghamshire social service departments were chosen as target areas because they covered a wide range of geographical and multiracial areas (rural through to deprived inner cities); provided services to the whole range of client groups (disabled, elderly, mentally handicapped/ill, delinquent, etc); had generic and specialist social workers working from a range of organisational settings employing a wide range of skills and methods. Additionally

Nottinghamshire social services had been the subject of a related study some years earlier (Becker, MacPherson and Silburn, 1983) and was keen to be involved in this project as well.

Early negotiations

A meeting was arranged for the 10th April to discuss the project with Nottinghamshire's principal officer (child care). There, agreement was made that Nottinghamshire would co-operate providing the pilot study was a success. This agreement was not surprising; Nottinghamshire social services had agreed over one year earlier to co-operate with the research and had funded the author whilst employed as a social worker to study for a Ph.D. part-time at the University. It was agreed that the pilot survey would take place about one month later on ten social workers in one city area office. The necessary arrangements were made by the principal officer directly with the appropriate area director. He also brought the project to the attention of all the other area directors at a senior management meeting. The author was asked to write, on behalf of the director of social services, a letter to all area directors and specialist team leaders confirming the research timetable. This was distributed, under the director's signature, after the pilot study had taken place and two weeks before the full survey was to take place.

The pilot study

The area director of the pilot study area was visited to discuss the project and to provide him with the background research statement. It was agreed that the pilot study would be conducted on ten or a dozen social workers on the 14th May. On that day twelve social workers with different levels of responsibility, from three different teams, were asked to complete the questionnaire. Each of the workers had been forewarned about the research and were happy to co-operate. They all timed how long it took to complete the questionnaire, which was filled in at their desks, amongst their everyday work and with the possibility of the full range of interruptions that social workers have to face. This was felt to be important. In practice this is how and where social workers would be likely to complete their questionnaires and so gave the most realistic indication of time and effort. The social workers were left alone to complete the questionnaire, although each was asked after about twenty minutes whether there were any problems that needed clarification. Following completion every worker was de-briefed and asked to go through the questionnaire with the author, to highlight ambiguous or difficult to answer questions, problems, errors, what they thought of the questionnaire and how it might be improved. Four workers who had not completed the questionnaire or who did not have time to discuss it were seen the next day.

On average the questionnaire took about half an hour to complete. There were no refusals to co-operate; indeed the pilot study

provoked considerable discussion about the subject matter, in particular the possible differences between poor clients and other poor people not in contact with social workers.

The revised questionnaire and second pilot study

Following the pilot study a revised questionnaire was immediately prepared on the word processor. Some of the measurement scales were simplified, ambiguous statements and questions were removed, and some terms were amended to make them more "accurate" to social workers. Specifically the changes included:

- (i) additional preamble on the introductory page guaranteeing confidentiality; giving the estimated time that it would take to complete the questionnaire; inviting written comments to be added throughout the questionnaire if it clarified answers.
- (ii) Prefixing the words "social worker" with "field" to distinguish more clearly between field and residential social workers (questions 12, 13, 18, 20, 22).
- (iii) Introducing a second tick box for those who have completed more than one training course (questions 15, 16).
- (iv) Adding on to question 26 a simple statement about why it was necessary to have a respondent's post code and to allay fears that the aim was to "track" down a respondent's home address.

(v) The total re-writing of questions 41 and 42 in order to generate the type of responses sought.

(vi) Adding on to question 47 a statement encouraging respondents to answer the question.

(vii) Abandoning the 1 - 5 strongly agree/strongly disagree scale (questions 110 to 131) and replacing it with a simpler true/false classification.

(viii) Adding to question 134 the words "or approve the use of" for managers and seniors.

(ix) Introducing question 138 inviting comments.

(x) Modifying the back page "thank you" to improve the layout and address slip.

The revised questionnaire was piloted on 12 MA/CQSW students at the University two days later during a welfare rights class. The questionnaire was answered in every case; the revisions did not cause any problems. The questionnaire was shown later that day to six of the twelve original piloted social workers, who were asked for comments. They confirmed that the amendments satisfied the concerns that arose during the original pilot and that the revised

questionnaire was a more "user friendly" document.

Following both pilot studies the principal officer (child care), the principal research officers and the pilot study area director were contacted to confirm the usefulness of the pilot survey. Agreement was formally made for the full survey to go ahead.

Manchester's agreement

Manchester's director of social services confirmed in writing on the 15th May the willingness of her department to participate in the project. This followed a meeting where Manchester's senior research officer had presented the research outline to all managers in the casework division. The full survey would commence in the second week of June 1986.

Revising the questionnaire format

The questionnaire used on both pilot studies covered twenty two sides of A4 paper with over one hundred and thirty separate questions. The "bulkiness" of the document was considered somewhat off putting. On the 19th May the final version was photographically reduced by one third and reprinted as an A5 pamphlet sized booklet. This new format used one quarter of the paper, was far easier to handle, read and store, did not appear as lengthy as the A4 version, and was far more novel and interesting in its appearance. The A5 booklet version was shown alongside the original A4 version to ten social work lecturers and social workers (four of whom had been involved in the

first pilot). Unanimous agreement opted for the A5 booklet; again it appeared far more "user friendly" and compact. Its other advantages over the A4 version were numerous:

(i) A smaller booklet was light and could be easily carried and completed in stages if necessary.

(ii) As questionnaires were to be returned in freepost envelopes directly to the University the cost of that service would be substantially reduced by the reduction in paper weight. Similarly the cost of paper, printing and initial distribution would also be reduced.

(iii) With an anticipated 40% response rate the expected 320 returned questionnaires would take up a considerable amount of space and would prove to be bulky documents to code and store. The A5 booklet was far easier to work on from a coding point of view and for recording the written comments contained in question 138.

The A5 booklet went to the University printers on the 21st May. 1000 copies were ready for the second week in June for distribution to over 100 social work teams in Manchester and Nottinghamshire.

Free post

Each questionnaire would be contained in its own envelope which would also include a free post reply envelope. This streamlined the

replying process and meant that the Unit would only pay for the questionnaires that were returned. The idea that questionnaires could be returned in batches via the research sections of both authorities was rejected. It was felt to be of the utmost importance that potential respondents felt their answers were being sent to an independent destination.

Distribution

The questionnaires were delivered to Nottingham's research section on 12th June and Manchester on 16th June 1986. Both sections took responsibility for distributing the questionnaires to the agreed destination of all field social workers and their seniors in area or specialist teams. The destinations and numbers are shown in Tables 2 to 5. It took up to four days in both authorities for every destination to receive the questionnaire. A covering letter described exactly who should receive the questionnaire. A form was also enclosed asking area directors/seniors for the precise numbers of those given the questionnaire in order that accurate response rates could be calculated. Every area or team administrative officer was given two extra copies for distribution in case a social worker lost one and needed a replacement.

Area directors or team leaders were asked to give the questionnaire specifically to:

- (i) all senior social workers (or equivalent) in area offices or

specialist social work teams,

(ii) all field social workers, including all specialists in the area (e.g. I.T., fostering, etc.),

(iii) all social workers in specialist social work teams (e.g. deaf, I.T., homelessness, etc.),

(iv) all social work assistants (area or specialist teams).

For the purpose of this study and later discussion all these categories (i) - (iv) will be generally termed "social worker". Where a more detailed breakdown is required more specific terms will be used.

Number of social workers employed nationally, in Nottinghamshire and Manchester

In 1984 fifty eight thousand people were employed in the personal social services, in headquarters, area offices and field work divisions (HMSO, 1987, Table 7.38, p.135). The LGTB estimate that 30,800 people work in field work services in Britain, of which 25,000 are social workers, and 85.5% are qualified (LGTB, 1986, 7). The LGTB estimate that nationally 3,100 are team leaders/managers; 3,000 are senior social workers; 18,650 are social workers (including specialists); 3,250 are social work assistants and 2,800 are "others" (occupational therapists, etc.) (1986, 20).

The DHSS estimate that in 1984 about 451 were employed in Manchester City and 666 in Nottinghamshire social services departments (Table 1).

Table 1: DHSS estimates of Manchester and Nottinghamshire social services staff at 30 September 1984

	Manchester(1)	Nottinghamshire(2)
Directorary management, professional and advisory	108	101
Senior social workers	118	84
Social workers	271	388
Community workers	16	0
Trainee social workers	9	14
SWAs	37	79
Total	451	666

Sources: (1) DHSS, 1984, Table 1, p.7.
(2) DHSS, 1984, Table 1, p.11.

These DHSS estimates (which are the latest figures available) include many who were not targetted to receive the questionnaire. Directorary and county/town hall management were not to receive the questionnaire - the focus was on direct practitioners and area or team managers.

Nottinghamshire destinations

In Nottinghamshire a total of 488 social workers received the questionnaire. This does not include the additional twelve social workers who were the subject of the first pilot study and the twelve social work students who were the subject of the second. Three hundred and ninety eight workers were based in thirteen local area offices in over fifty different teams. A further ninety social workers were based in twenty one specialist teams for the deaf, mentally handicapped, mentally ill, visually handicapped, juvenile offenders, welfare rights and emergency duty.

Table 2 shows the number of area based workers and Table 3 the numbers of specialist team workers receiving the questionnaire in Nottinghamshire.

Table 2: Area based social workers receiving questionnaire in Nottinghamshire

Area Office	No. of seniors (1)	No. of social workers (2)	No. of SWAs	No. of specialist social workers (3)	Total in Team
A	4	14	5	6	29
B	5	15	5	5	30
C	3	13	3	6	25
D	5	16	5	5	31
E	6	18	7	6	37
F	7	19	6	11	43
G	3	13	4	6	26
H	4	15	4	3	26
I	2	16	3	3	24
J	4	14	5	5	28
K	4	15	6	10	35
L	5	25	7	6	43
M (4) (pilot area)	3	9	6	3	21*
All area team totals	55	202	66	75	398

Notes:
(1) "Senior" refers to the senior social worker in charge of an individual team in a particular area office. (2) "Social workers" refer to those workers who are appointed as generic workers but who may nonetheless have developed specific client focuses through the nature of the work. (3) Specialist social workers based in area teams include fostering and adoption officers ("substitute family care workers"); intermediate treatment officers; elderly specialists; ethnic minority workers. (4) Area M was the area in which the first pilot study was conducted on 14th May 1986. The figures presented in Table 1 are for the remaining social workers and exclude those who took part in the pilot study.

Table 3: Specialist team social workers receiving questionnaire in Nottinghamshire

Team	No. of senior social workers (1)	No. of specialist social workers (2)	No. of SWAs	Total in team
Deaf				
A	1	2	1	4
B (2 teams)	1	3	0	4
Community mental handicap teams				
A	1	1	1	3
B	1	1	1	3
C	1	3	2	6
D	1	3	1	5
E	1	4	1	6
F (6 teams)	1	2	0	3
Community mental health teams				
A	1	3	0	4
B	1	2	0	3
C	1	2	0	3
D (4 teams)	1	3	0	4
Visual handicap				
A	2	5	2	9
B (2 teams)	1	5	0	6
City I.T. teams (2 teams)	2	6	0	8
Welfare rights (1 team)	4	3	0	7
E.D.T. (4 teams)	4	8	0	12
All specialist team totals	25	56	9	90

Notes: (1) "Senior" refers to the senior social worker in charge of an individual specialist team which covers a distinct client group and geographical location. The Welfare Rights Team is the only exception. Senior welfare rights officers cover different aspects of welfare rights (e.g. training, employment, ethnic minorities). (2) Specialist social worker refers to those employed in specialist social work teams working with distinct client groups within specified geographical boundaries.

Manchester destinations

In Manchester a total of 311 social workers received the questionnaire. Two hundred and sixty six social workers were based in six local area offices in over thirty different teams (Table 4). A further forty five social workers were based in eight specialist teams covering adoption, emergency duty, deaf services, homeless persons and families, mental handicap and illness, epilepsy, alcoholics. Additionally in the first week of August 1986 twenty four Manchester welfare rights officers were also sent the questionnaire and asked to return it by the 12th September. Because welfare rights officers nationally had just been the subject of a survey by the Policy Studies Institute (Berthoud et al, 1986), the Manchester WROs were reluctant to participate in the poverty research and only eight replied. However they have been included in the numbers recorded under "specialist teams" shown in Table 5. In total 335 people received the questionnaire in Manchester.

Table 4: Area based social workers receiving questionnaire in Manchester

Area Office	No. of seniors	No. of social workers	No.of SWAs	No. of specialist SWs	Total
A	7	36	5	2	50
B	4	29	5	2	40
C	5	37	4	4	50
D	6	32	4	5	47
E	5	25	5	5	40
F	5	26	6	2	39
All area office totals	32	185	29	20	266

Table 5: Specialist team social workers receiving questionnaire in Manchester

Team	No. of senior social workers	No. of specialist social workers	SWAs	Total in team
Welfare rights		24 (WRO)		24(WRO)
Adoption	1	11	0	12
Emergency duty	3	6	0	9
Deaf	1	3	0	4
Homeless persons	1	7	1	9
Mental health/ handicap	2	8	1	11
Total	8	35 SW 25 WRO	2	45 SW 24 WRO

Timetable

All social workers in Nottinghamshire and Manchester received the questionnaire in the week beginning 16th June 1986. No deadline was given at that time; respondents were asked to complete and return the questionnaire "as soon as they could". This was deliberate; it was felt that a deadline at this stage may have led to a surge of responses just before the deadline date, rather than a gradual "flow".

Once the questionnaire had been received in the areas and by the specialist teams all area directors and specialist team leaders were contacted by telephone to clarify any matters or concerns. This personal contact was useful for both seniors and the author in that it allowed direct contact to be made and any anxieties to be relieved.

Reminder letters

There was no way of knowing exactly who had or had not returned a questionnaire (save for those who chose to identify themselves for the purpose of the interview schedule). Consequently reminder letters were sent to all seven hundred and ninety nine social workers and twenty four Manchester welfare rights officers via area directors and team leaders. The first reminder letter - which also served as a "thank you" to those who had returned a questionnaire - was distributed during the week beginning 7th July 1986. In the letter a final deadline was given for 29th August 1986. A second (final)

reminder letter/thank you was distributed to all social workers during the week beginning 4th August. In this letter those who had expressed an interest in being interviewed were told that they would be contacted shortly. A covering letter to area directors/team leaders gave precise return figures and asked them to encourage as many people to respond as possible. At that stage the response rate was nearly fifty percent but it was hoped it could be improved further. By the deadline four hundred and fifty six questionnaires had been returned, with a further one arriving seven weeks afterwards! The final number returned was four hundred and fifty seven. Of these six were excluded from the analysis; two because they were from occupational therapists; one from a social work student on placement; one from a social services interpretator; one was excluded because only the barest of personal details and none of the attitude questions were completed; one was excluded because it arrived too late. The final figure for analysis was four hundred and fifty one. Table 6 shows the return frequencies during the eleven week period from distribution to deadline.

Table 6: Weekly return rate of mailed questionnaire

Week ending	Weekly returns to Nottingham Manchester		Weekly return total	Cumulative total	Cumulative response rate
<u>1986</u>					
21.6	63	5	68	68	8%
28.6	84	28	112	180	22%
5.7	40	32	72	252	31%
12.7	30	11	41	293	36%
19.7	26	22	48	341	41%
26.7	10	16	26	367	45%
2.8	15	11	26	393	48%
9.8	9	15	24	417	51%
16.8	8	11	19	436	53%
23.8	4	6	10	446	54%
30.8	2	3	5	451	55%
Adjusted total	291	160	451	451	55%

Note: Returns were monitored on a daily basis. 451 is an adjusted total; 6 questionnaires were excluded from analysis. See text for discussion.

Well over half of those who would respond had done so by the end of the third week. The last three or four weeks saw a "trickle" in the number of returned questionnaires. The final response rate as an average for both authorities was 55%. For Manchester the response rate was 48%. For Nottinghamshire the response rate was 60%. This difference may be accounted for by a number of factors:

(i) The research was being conducted from Nottingham; local respondents may have thought the research more relevant to themselves.

(ii) The Benefits Research Unit had a growing reputation locally for high quality social research.

(iii) The author had been employed locally as a social worker for over two years and had come into contact with many prospective respondents as part of his past work.

These factors may have combined to increase the "credibility" of the research (and researcher) to Nottingham respondents. However the final overall response rate far exceeded expectations; in 1983 a mailed questionnaire survey of Nottinghamshire social workers and welfare rights officers achieved a 40% response rate (Becker, MacPherson and Silburn, 1983). This was the expected response rate for the attitude to poverty survey. The final 55% response rate was very encouraging.

Coding and loading the data

As the questionnaires arrived at the University they were checked to ensure proper completion and then coded. A coding frame had been devised which covered three and a quarter fields; each questionnaire had two hundred and sixty codable answers. In all nearly one hundred and twenty thousand answers were coded, a process which went on for over eight weeks. The coding was done jointly by the author and a paid assistant who met every three days to go over queries and to cross check for consistency in coding. The data was loaded on to the 2900 computer at Nottingham via the intervening Moses service. The loading took ten full days and was done, again, by a paid assistant. A print off of the data file was checked manually by the author and his wife. This involved one person reading aloud the data file and having it checked against the coding sheets for accuracy of loading. All one hundred and twenty thousand answers were checked, a task that took over six days to complete.

Once the data was loaded onto the computer it was a fairly straightforward task of creating the system file that brought together the data and the SPSSx instructions that would allow a job to run. By October 1986 two hundred and sixty frequency tables were available which were summarised in a report booklet for distribution to all participating teams and area offices. Cross tabulations were computed in December 1986, January 1987 and March 1987, before and after the main interviewing schedule started in February 1987. Ten

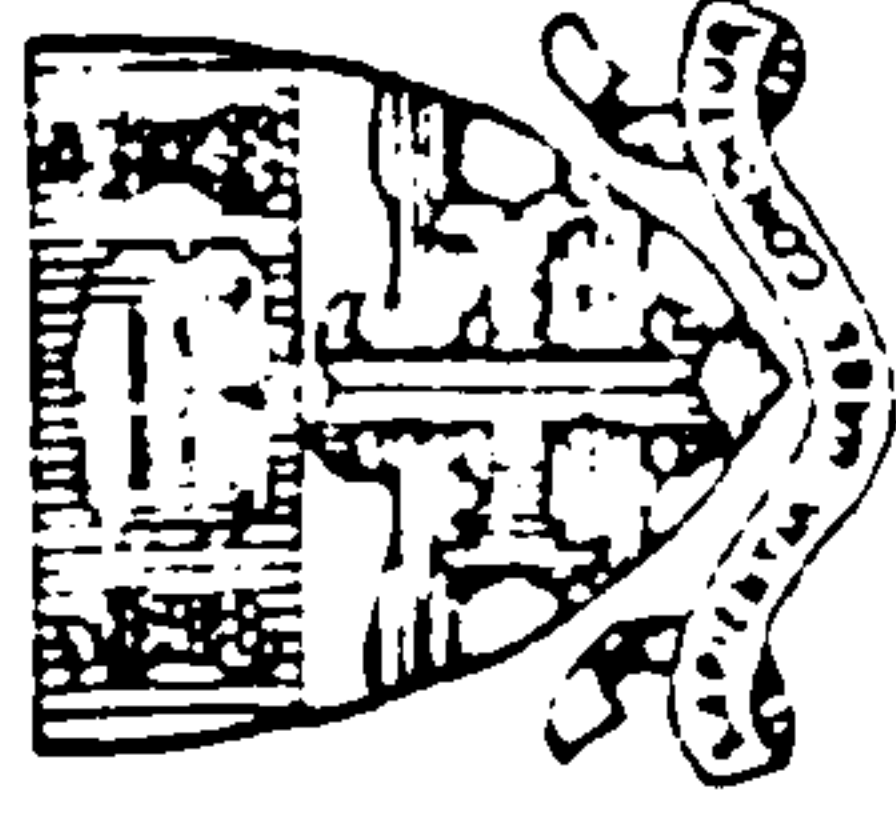
individual interviews were conducted in Nottinghamshire early in December to see whether any themes needed especially attention being paid to in the cross tabulation process.

UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

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SOCIAL WORK AND POVERTY

This is the first British survey to examine social workers' views and opinions on poverty and the poor. It is not concerned to 'test' your knowledge of social security benefits. Consequently there are no right or wrong answers. The questionnaire has been sent to all field social workers in Nottinghamshire and Manchester. It is part of a two year research programme, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council on poverty, deprivation and social work. The research started in October 1985. It is being conducted by Saul Becker of the Benefits Research Unit in the Department of Social Administration and Social Work at Nottingham University.

The questionnaire asks for your views and opinions. It also asks you for some background information about yourself. This is needed to allow us to see whether people with certain backgrounds and experiences have different opinions to other people with different backgrounds and experiences. The questionnaire will take no longer than half an hour to complete.

Please answer all the questions. The vast majority only require you to tick the appropriate box. You will have very little writing to do, and the questionnaire can therefore be answered quickly. We think you will find the questions interesting. Feel free to write comments on the questionnaire if it clarifies your answers. All your answers will be treated in confidence. No individual will be identified or identifiable in the data that is produced. Neither your employing body or anybody else will have access to any of your answers. Again, we emphasise, your answers are strictly confidential. In fact, it is not necessary for you to identify yourself by name unless you wish to do so.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it in the free post envelope that is attached, straight to the University. If you are interested in being involved in the next stage of the project - the individual or group discussions - then please tick the appropriate box on the last page of the questionnaire. We will make available a summary of the questionnaire findings. This will be sent to all area offices well before the end of the year.

Thank you for your cooperation with this survey. If you require any further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

Saul Becker
Researcher
Benefits Research Unit

Appendix 2 continued :

QUESTIONNAIRE

PERSONAL DETAILS

Sex :

Male ☐
Female ☐

Age :

Under 25 ☐
25 - 30 ☐
31 - 35 ☐
36 - 40 ☐
41 - 45 ☐
46 - 50 ☐
51 - 55 ☐
Over 55 ☐

3. Marital Status :

Married ☐
Widowed ☐
Separated/Divorced ☐
Single ☐

4. Can you tell me who lives with you as part of your household ? Please fill in the box below, stating their relationship to you, age and occupation, where relevant.

Relationship	Age	Occupation
.....
.....
.....

5. Religion :

No religion ☐
Practising ☐
Non practising ☐

6. Please state which :

Church of England ☐
Catholic ☐
Non Conformist ☐
Jewish ☐
Hindu ☐
Muslim ☐
Other (please specify) ☐
No religion ☐

7. Are you consciously influenced by your Religious beliefs in the way you approach your work ?

Yes ☐
No ☐
Don't know ☐

PRESENT EMPLOYMENT

8. Current Job Title :

Please state here

9. Organisational Structure :

Area Office (long term) ☐
Area Office (intake) ☐
Area Office (duty rota/long term) ☐
Area Office (duty/specialist) ☐
Other (please specify) ☐

10. How long have you been in your current post ?

Less than 6 months ☐
6 months - 1 year ☐
1 year - 2 years ☐
2 years - 5 years ☐
5 years - 10 years ☐
Over 10 years ☐

1. Specialisms :

Please indicate by a tick your formal specialism (if any) and any informal specialisation in your work. (Tick all appropriate boxes)

	Formal	Informal
Child care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fostering/adoption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Elderly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Psychiatric	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental handicap	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I.T.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welfare rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BECOMING A FIELD SOCIAL WORKER

12. At what point in your life did you decide to become a field social worker?

Before leaving school	<input type="checkbox"/>
As a student	<input type="checkbox"/>
During experience/work other than social services	<input type="checkbox"/>
During experience/work in social services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whilst unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify).....	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. How long have you worked as a field social worker, excluding time spent in training and placements?

Less than 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 months - 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 year - 2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 years - 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 years - 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Which, if any, social work qualifications do you have? (Tick all appropriate boxes)

CQSW	<input type="checkbox"/>
CSS	<input type="checkbox"/>
CASW	<input type="checkbox"/>
SCRCCYP	<input type="checkbox"/>
CRCCYP	<input type="checkbox"/>
DTMHA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify).....	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. How long was your training course(s) ?

1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify).....	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. In what year did you obtain your qualification(s) ?

1940 - 1960	<input type="checkbox"/>
1961 - 1970	<input type="checkbox"/>
1971 - 1975	<input type="checkbox"/>
1976 - 1980	<input type="checkbox"/>
1981 - 1985	<input type="checkbox"/>
1986	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. Do you have any other educational or occupational qualifications? Tick all appropriate boxes, and state subject in the space provided.

State subject

Bachelors degree	<input type="checkbox"/>
MAsters degree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other welfare related qualification	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business qualification	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

EXPERIENCE PRIOR TO FIELD SOCIAL WORK

How much time, in total, did you spend in paid work related to social work before becoming a field social worker (eg health, teaching, youth work, residential work, social work assistant, non social work jobs in social service departments)?

No time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 - 2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 - 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 - 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. Please list the type(s) of paid work you did:

.....
.....

20. How much time, in total, did you spend in voluntary work related to social work before becoming a field social worker (eg health, teaching, youth work, residential work, non social work jobs in social service departments)?

No time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 - 2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 - 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 - 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. Please list the type(s) of voluntary work you did:

.....
.....

22. How much time, in total, did you spend in work other than that related to social work before becoming a field social worker?

No time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 - 2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 - 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 - 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. Please list the type(s) of work you did:

.....
.....

24. The things people can buy and do - their housing, furniture, food, cars, recreation and travel - make up their standard of living. How satisfied or dissatisfied do you feel about your standard of living at present?

Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairly satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fairly dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know/no opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. What type of house do you live in?

Rented from the council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Privately rented	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rented from housing association	<input type="checkbox"/>
Owner occupier	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify).....	<input type="checkbox"/>

26. Please give your home's full postal code; this will indicate the area that you live in.

.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

32. Are you a member of any of the following groups ? Please tick all appropriate boxes.

27. What sort of area did you mainly live in as a child ?

Rural ☐ Urban ☐

Child Poverty Action Group ☐
B.A.S.W. ☐
A Trade Union (state which) ☐
A Political Party (state which) ☐
A Pressure Group (state which) ☐

28. Was it a :

Village ☐
Town ☐
Small city ☐
Large city ☐
City suburbs ☐
Other (please state)..... ☐

33. Have you or anyone in your family (grand parents, parents, aunts, brothers, partners, children), ever received supplementary benefit?

Yes ☐
No ☐
Don't know ☐

34. If yes, how long ago did you or they start to receive it ?

You Family

Before 1980 ☐
1981 ☐
1982 ☐
1983 ☐
1984 ☐
1985 ☐
1986 ☐

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

29. Here are five statements describing some family circumstances. Which is closest to your experiences as a child ?

Quite wealthy; very comfortable ☐
Pretty comfortable; no real financial problems ☐
Had most things we needed; quite comfortable; but occasional financial problems ☐
Financial problems quite common, life pretty difficult ☐
Severe and recurrent financial problems; life in general very difficult and uncomfortable ☐

30. What about your parents occupations when you were a child ?

Father's occupation

Mother's occupation

31. If there was a general election tomorrow, which party would you support ?

Conservative ☐
Labour ☐
Liberal/S.D.P. Alliance ☐
Other (please state)..... ☐

35. How long were you or they dependent on supplementary benefit ?

You Family

Under 3 months ☐
3 months - 6 months ☐
6 months - 1 year ☐
1 - 2 years ☐
Over 2 years ☐

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

YOUR VIEWS AND OPINIONS ABOUT POVERTY AND THE POOR

36. Do you see any of the following? Please tick in the first column all those that you study all or part of in detail, and in the second column all those that you glance at.

	Detailed study	Glance at
Community Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Work Today	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Services Insight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C.F.A.G. Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) (please specify).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

39. Have you ever read any of the following? Tick all appropriate boxes.

Coates & Silburn, (1970) "Poverty the forgotten Englishman"	<input type="checkbox"/>
Townsend, (1979) "Poverty in the U.K."	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mack & Langley, (1985) "Poor Britain"	<input type="checkbox"/>
C.F.A.G., (1985) "Welfare Rights Handbooks"	<input type="checkbox"/>

37. Please tick all national daily papers that you read regularly.

Don't read a daily paper regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily Express	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily Mirror	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily Mail	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Times	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Guardian	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Sun	<input type="checkbox"/>
Today	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Star	<input type="checkbox"/>
Daily Telegraph	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Financial Times	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

40. Why, in your opinion, are there people who live in need? Here are four opinions - which is closest to yours?

Because they have been unlucky	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because of laziness and lack of willpower	<input type="checkbox"/>
Because there is much injustice in our society	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is an inevitable part of modern progress	<input type="checkbox"/>

41. What personal qualities or characteristics do you associate with people who are rich?

.....
.....
.....

38. And how about Sunday papers?

Don't read a Sunday paper regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday Times	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Observer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday Telegraph	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday Express	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunday Mirror	<input type="checkbox"/>
The People	<input type="checkbox"/>
News of the World	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mail on Sunday	<input type="checkbox"/>
Today	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

42. And how about people who are poor - what personal qualities or characteristics do you associate with poor people?

.....
.....
.....

I'd like to ask you some questions about people on supplementary benefit. Here are some statements. I'd like you to circle the number by each statement which indicates how strongly you agree or disagree with each one.

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
--	----------------	---------------	----------------------------	------------------	-------------------

43. Most people claiming supplementary benefit are in real need.	1	2	3	4	5
--	---	---	---	---	---

44. A lot of people who are entitled to claim supplementary benefit don't claim it.	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

45. Many people claiming supplementary benefit are on the fiddle.	1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

46. People claiming supplementary benefit are people who are not working and who don't have enough to live on because their pension or income is below a certain minimum level. They receive 68.05p per week, excluding rent, for a couple with two young children. Do you think this amount is too high, too low, or about right?

Too high ☐
Too low ☐
About right ☐

47. If you answered too high or too low what amount do you think they need to live on each week? Please give an answer, whatever it is.

.....

Here are more basic rates of supplementary benefit for other groups. For each of them, do you think the amount is too high, too low, or about right?

48. Single parent and baby : £39.60p

Too high ☐
Too low ☐
About right ☐

49. School leaver, at home, with parent(s) who are also on benefit : £18.20

Too high ☐
Too low ☐
About right ☐

50. Pensioner couple : £60.00p

Too high ☐
Too low ☐
About right ☐

51. School leaver, at home, with parent(s) in work : £18.20p

Too high ☐
Too low ☐
About right ☐

52. Unemployed couple, no children : £47.85p

Too high ☐
Too low ☐
About right ☐

Below are a number of statements about poor people. Please circle a box on the scale by each statement, to indicate the proportion of poor people you think that statement applies to. For example, if you feel it applies to none, tick the '0' box. If you feel it applies to all, tick the '100%' box. If you feel it is between 21-30%, tick the box representing 21-30%, and so on.

53.They don't manage their money properly.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

54.They are just unlucky individuals.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

55.They work in jobs which are poorly paid.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

56.They don't care about getting ahead.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

57.They waste their money on drinks.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

58.They aren't very bright or talented.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

59.They waste their money on gambling or smoking.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

60.They don't try very hard to better themselves.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

61.They never stood a chance because their parents were poor.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

62.They came from places where there is little opportunity for most people.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

63.They are taken advantage of by rich people.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

64.They have too many children.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

65.They do badly in life because rich people get more than their fair share.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

66.They have had a bad break at some point in their lives.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

67.They have little control over their lives.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

68.Their fate is pre-determined by God.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

69.They should be viewed as victims of injustice and inequality in society.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

70.Their fate depends on the state of the world they live in.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

71.They have a chance of escaping from poverty.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

72.Their children have a chance of escaping from poverty.

0	1-	11-	21-	31-	41-	51-	61-	71-	81-	91-	100%
	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	99	

Here are a number of different items which relate to our standard of living. Please would you indicate by putting a tick in the appropriate column the living standards you feel all adults should have in Britain today. Column (A) is for items which you think are necessary, and which all adults should be able to afford and which they should not have to do without; column (B) is for items which may be desirable, but are not necessary. For each item, put a tick in column (A) or (B):

	(A) Necessary: should be able to afford	(B) Not necessary: but may be desirable
73. An outing for children once a week		
74. A garden		
75. A roast meat joint or its equivalent, once a week		
76. Meat or fish every other day		
77. Heating to warm living areas of the home if it is cold		
78. A dressing gown		
79. Two pairs of all weather shoes		
80. New, not second hand clothes		
81. A television		
82. Carpets in living rooms and bedrooms		
83. Telephone		
84. Refrigerator		
85. Indoor toilet (not shared with another household)		
86. Bath (not shared with another household)		
87. Beds for everyone in the household		
88. Damp free house		

	(A) Necessary: should be able to afford	(B) Not necessary: but may be desirable
89. A car		
90. Public transport for one's needs		
91. A night out once a fortnight		
92. A packet of cigarettes every other day		
93. A hobby or leisure activity		
94. A holiday away from home for one week a year, not with relatives		
95. Celebrations on special occasions such as Xmas		
96. Presents for friends or family once a year		
97. Friends/family round for a meal once a month		
98. Children's friends round for tea/a snack once a fortnight		
99. A "best outfit" for special occasions		
100. A washing machine		
101. Three meals a day for children		
102. Toys for children, e.g. dolls or models		
103. A warm water-proof coat		
104. Leisure equipment for children, e.g. sports equipment or bicycle		
105. Enough bedrooms for every child over 10 of different sex to have his/her own bedroom		
106. Two hot meals a day		
107. Self-contained accommodation		

"Poor clients, in general, are more likely than other poor people ..."

	TRUE	FALSE
119. to be unable to cope socially		
120. to come from places where there is little opportunity for most people		
121. to be taken advantage of by others		
122. to make no efforts to get on in life		
123. to have had a bad break at some point in their lives		
124. to have little control over their lives		
125. to be victims of injustice and inequality in society		
126. to have no chance in escaping from poverty		
127. to have been sick or ill		
128. to lack education		
129. to have marital problems		
130. to be on the fiddle		

131. What proportion of referrals to social service departments do you think are dependent on DHSS benefits of all kinds for their income?

Under 10%	
11 - 20%	
21 - 30%	
31 - 40%	
41 - 50%	
51 - 60%	
61 - 70%	
71 - 80%	
81 - 90%	
91 - 100%	

108. If the government proposed to increase income tax by one pence in the pound to enable everyone to afford the items you have said are necessities, on balance would you support or oppose this policy?

Support ☐
Oppose ☐

109. If the government proposed to increase income tax by five pence in the pound to enable everyone to afford the items you have said are necessities, on balance would you support or oppose this policy?

Support ☐
Oppose ☐

We want to get your views on possible differences between poor people in contact with social workers and poor people who have not been referred to social service departments. Here are some statements about possible differences between poor clients in general and other poor people. Please give your opinion on whether each statement is true or false.

"Poor clients, in general, are more likely than other poor people ..."

	TRUE	FALSE
110. to be in real need		
111. to fail to claim all the benefits they are entitled to		
112. to have relationship problems		
113. to lack foresight		
114. to smoke their money away		
115. to have too many children		
116. not to manage their money properly		
117. to waste money on drinks or gambling		
118. to have had poor parents		

132. What proportion of referrals to social service departments do you think receive supplementary benefit?

Under 10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 - 20%	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 - 30%	<input type="checkbox"/>
31 - 40%	<input type="checkbox"/>
41 - 50%	<input type="checkbox"/>
51 - 60%	<input type="checkbox"/>
61 - 70%	<input type="checkbox"/>
71 - 80%	<input type="checkbox"/>
81 - 90%	<input type="checkbox"/>
91 - 100%	<input type="checkbox"/>

133. What proportion of referrals to social service departments are for help with financial/material, benefits or housing problems?

Under 10%	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 - 20%	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 - 30%	<input type="checkbox"/>
31 - 40%	<input type="checkbox"/>
41 - 50%	<input type="checkbox"/>
51 - 60%	<input type="checkbox"/>
61 - 70%	<input type="checkbox"/>
71 - 80%	<input type="checkbox"/>
81 - 90%	<input type="checkbox"/>
91 - 100%	<input type="checkbox"/>

134. How often do you use or approve the use of Section 1 money?

Once a month or less	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than once a month	<input type="checkbox"/>
Once a week	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than once a week	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than once a day	<input type="checkbox"/>

135. Would you like to be less or more involved in dispensing cash, or is it about right?

Would like to dispense cash more often	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would like to dispense cash less frequently	<input type="checkbox"/>
About right	<input type="checkbox"/>

136. Here are five statements. Which is closest to your opinion?

Social workers should never make direct cash payments to people in need.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social workers should only make occasional and small payments to people in need.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social workers should only make occasional small or large payments to people in need.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social workers should make regular payments to people in need.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social workers should make all payments to people in need.	<input type="checkbox"/>

137. The Social Security Bill will reform the current social security system. It proposes that social workers should have an important part to play in helping the DHSS decide who should get cash help for certain needs from a social fund. Which of the statements below is closest to your opinion.

It would be better if social workers did not help the DHSS whatsoever in this type of decision making.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social workers should only assist such decisions in exceptional and rare cases.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social workers should only assist such decisions when they relate to a social work client.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social workers should help the DHSS make such decisions whenever they are asked for assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social workers should make all such decisions relating to people in need.	<input type="checkbox"/>

138. Have you any comments about social work and poverty, or about this questionnaire that you wish to add? If so, please do so below.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

November, December and January we are holding individual and group discussions in your area. The individual interviews will last about 45 minutes, while the group discussions will take about 1 hour 30 minutes. They will both be in office hours. These will provide further detailed information on social workers' views and opinions about poverty and the project. We are looking for people with a wide cross section of views and opinions who might be interested in taking part in this second stage of the project. Would you be interested in taking part in the individual or group discussions?

Individual interview Group discussion

Yes ☐ ☐ No ☐ ☐

If No to both of these, Please return your questionnaire in the freepost envelope. Thank you for your cooperation with this part of the Survey.

If Yes, we need to be able to contact you! Please complete the address slip at the bottom of this page. Return the questionnaire with the slip in the freepost envelope. (If you prefer to keep your questionnaire answers anonymous you could return the slip in a separate envelope). Of course, all your answers will be treated in confidence.

May we thank all of you for your help in this survey.

ADDRESS SLIP

I would be interested in taking part in the following:

Individual interview ☐ ☐
Group discussion ☐ ☐

Name:

Work address:

Work telephone no:

PLEASE

RETURN YOUR COMPLETED

QUESTIONNAIRE

IN THE FREEPOST ENVELOPE

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

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APPENDIX 3

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

One hundred and seventy eight different social workers from both authorities expressed an interest in being interviewed; 157 (35%) wanted to have an individual interview; 143 (32%) wanted to take part in a group discussion.

In designing the research programme interviews were considered an essential research method to complement the mailed questionnaire. The mailed questionnaire would provide quantitative data; interviews would provide more qualitative material to expand the analysis. In particular individual interviews would allow the range of questionnaire responses to be probed in more detail. Group discussions would centre upon certain themes and issues on social work and poverty, in particular social work practice with the poor.

Individual interviews

It was decided to interview respondents whose answers could expand on the whole range of responses produced by the mailed questionnaire. Included in this were those who saw poverty as being caused by injustice, laziness, modern progress or bad luck; those from different social and economic backgrounds, those with different political affiliations, those with different explanations for poverty, etc. The selected sample was not representative of the

wider group but was illustrative of the diversity and breadth of opinions and views. The aim, quite simply, was to interview people who illustrated different positions across the whole range of possible positions, views, attitudes, experiences and backgrounds.

All 178 possible interviewees were sent in November 1986 the 16 page booklet which gave an initial summary of the frequency tables generated by the questionnaire. Extra copies were sent to each of the area offices and specialist teams for distribution to all those **interested** in seeing these preliminary findings. It was felt important to provide feedback to the "field" as rapidly as possible. In the event this feedback via the booklet was greeted with much enthusiasm: social workers rarely see the results of their questionnaire filling.

Accompanying the booklet was a letter thanking respondents for agreeing to an interview and explaining that only a proportion could in fact be called upon to help in the next phase of the study. Twenty social workers were selected for individual interviews; 10 from each authority. All were contacted by phone in the last week of November. The Nottinghamshire respondents were interviewed in the first two weeks of December; the Manchester ones were interviewed in mid February 1987. The individual interviews lasted for approximately one hour each. The interviews were all recorded on a miniature voice activated tape recorder; the tapes were then transcribed directly by a typist. Notes were also taken during the

interviews to supplement the transcript and to act as a reminder of the author's thoughts and impressions during the interview. All 20 respondents selected for interview agreed to be interviewed. All also agreed to be recorded. The individual interviews covered the following areas, although each was unique in its own right and followed its own order.

(i) Personal data of interest (e.g. religious experiences, claiming experiences, financial background) and how these affected perceptions.

(ii) Why people live in need: explanation and discussion of questionnaire choice (question 40) (link to questions 53-72).

(iii) Definition/understanding of "poverty".

(iv) Supplementary benefit: what it does cover; what it should cover in respondents opinion (link to "necessities" chosen in questions 73-107).

(v) Thoughts about benefit levels and related issues; work ethic, deserving/non-deserving, less eligibility, incentives (link to tax questions 108-109).

(vi) The differences between poor clients and other poor people not in contact with social workers (refer to questions 110-130).

(vii) Cash and care, section one - discussion of place of cash help in social work, welfare rights.

(viii) Practice: what, as an agency and as individuals, do social workers do and can do about poverty?

Group discussions

Given the large number wishing to participate in the group discussions selection was again necessary. It was decided to provide six group discussions; three sessions in each of the two authorities, with up to seven social workers in each group. A total of thirty four social workers participated in the six group discussions. The selected respondents were offered one of three possible groups; all male, all female or a mixed group. The author was conscious of the growing debate in social work on the possible "inhibitive effect" of the presence of males in group discussions; males often tend to dominate such discussions and it was felt necessary to create the space in which female respondents could make their contributions in an uninhibited manner. Consequently even the mixed group had more females than males. Additionally it was felt important to examine possible different perspectives on certain issues by the two sexes. The aim of the group discussions was to examine selected issues with people who again illustrated the range of possible views and experiences.

In order to have about thirty respondents for the group discussions more would need to be invited. Some would be unable to attend or would not turn up on the day for a number of reasons. Forty five respondents were selected for the group discussions and were each sent in the first week of December 1986 a letter outlining the programme and giving them a day, date, and venue for their group interview. The Nottinghamshire discussions were all in a comfortable seminar room at Nottingham University's main library on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of February 1987. The Manchester group discussions were all at the newly opened social services training unit in Fallowfield on the 24th, 25th and 26th February. All sessions started at 9.30 am and lasted for two and a half hours.

Respondents were asked to tick a box on a reply slip saying whether they could attend the group discussion offered them. A free post reply envelope was supplied. Forty four social workers indicated that they would attend. In the event thirty four social workers attended the six discussions.

The programme for each group discussion was identical. Respondents were given a sheet outlining the proposed content (figure 7):

Figure 7: Group discussion - content outline (given to all participants)

SOCIAL WORK AND POVERTY
GROUP DISCUSSION
Proposed outline for the session

1. Aim of the session

(i) Discussion, based upon the personal and professional experiences of the group, of some central issues in social work and poverty and an examination of their implications for policy and practice.

(ii) Preparation of a "policy statement and agenda for action".

2. Method

(i) Group Discussion, lasting approximately 40 minutes.

(ii) Group Task, lasting approximately 50 minutes.

3. Content : Group Discussion

It is hoped that the discussion will address itself to a number of specific issues. In particular:

(i) Poverty: cause, nature and effect

- * What do we mean by poverty, deprivation and disadvantage?
- * How is poverty caused, maintained or transmitted - generally and for social work clients (why are some people poor and others are not; is there a difference between poor clients and poor claimants)?
- * How does poverty manifest itself and affect clients?
- * How do clients manage poverty - who takes the strain?

(ii) Attitudes

- * How do social workers' attitudes to poor people affect their practice with your clients?

(iii) Practice and Policy

- * What, as an agency and as individual social workers, do we do or can we do about poverty?
- * How do social workers use section one money?
- * What place does welfare rights have in this?

The linking element throughout the session is the implications of the

discussion for social work practice and policy. This is especially the case for the group task.

4. Content: Group Task

It is hoped that the group will direct its attention to the preparation of a collective "policy statement and agenda for action" on social work and poverty. A suggested outline might be:

(i) Statement: the main issues, concerns, anxieties.

(ii) Recommendations for policy and practice: Agenda for action - covering proposals for policy by the Department, training institutions, and practice for social workers.

Different groups may have different concerns, priorities and agendas. Where there is disagreement or diversity this should be recorded. Where recommendations are of the "ideal" sort and perhaps unattainable this should be noted. Please make the statement and recommendations as detailed as you can.

This format was followed in each discussion with the author acting as chairperson, steering the conversation through the various issues where necessary. Each discussion was recorded in full on tape. Each tape was then transcribed by audio-typist. Notes were also taken during each discussion to supplement the final typed transcripts. The extensive transcripts of both the individual and group interviews form the basis of chapter nine, "talking about poverty". Notes taken during the group task enabled the author to assess which themes and concerns are held by the majority of social workers and which were held by a minority. Again, this is explored in some detail in chapter nine.

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