CHILDREN OF POVERTY

Research, Health, and Policy Issues

Edited by
Hiram E. Fitzgerald
Barry M. Lester
Barry Zuckerman

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CHILDREN OF POVERTY

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Preface

Proceedings of a Society for Research in Child Development Round Table

In agreeing to sponsor the 1993 Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) round table discussions, "Children of Poverty," we at the Irving B. Harris Foundation knew that the way had been cleared for a formidable process to begin. As Hiram Fitzgerald, the program's organizer, wrote to me, the intent of the round tables was "to help chart the course for child development research, health care, and public policy for the next ten years." We believe the papers presented and the round table discussions, along with their broader distribution in this volume, do indeed offer useful insights and powerful guidance to researchers, policy makers, and practitioners and interventionists with a vast range of professional training.

Importantly, this work constitutes a charge to SRCD and its membership to respond to the plight of children of poverty by redoubling its commitment to sound research, taking into account the myriad methodological proposals and issues of perspective touched on in this text. Moreover, it is a call for more attention to the impact of research in the realms of practice and policy. Some people believe that it is foolhardy to address this awesome problem. Nonetheless, we can all agree that confronting poverty is critical, particularly because it affects so many children. Its ramifications are alarming, and I would argue that it is equally foolhardy for us to ignore the cycle of poverty and to go blithely about our lives thinking the problem will solve itself. Researchers must cooperate, as Lerner suggests, not only with program staff but with community members to understand

the context in which efforts to ameliorate poverty operate, and to emphasize longitudinal research spanning decades. They must also take into account the persistently disproportionate representation of African Americans, Hispanics, and other minority groups among the poor, examining not only how their experiences differ from those of the majority, but studying within-group variation and how the *same mechanisms* which are at work in *all* families differentially affect the poor. The papers presented here point the way for increasingly interdisciplinary, methodologically integrated, and contextually-based research. They set an agenda for the decade to come.

However, as round table participants began to realize, good research alone is not enough. It is bound inextricably with an interest in the dissemination and use of the results for children's well-being. It seems to me that the actualization of this phenomenon, as implicitly or explicitly addressed in the present work, involves activity in three primary areas: program development and evaluation, training, and public policy. Each of these merits further illumination.

Developmental research can be of great use to intervention programs, in guiding their development and evaluating their effectiveness. Researchers must exercise caution, however, in responding to the need for evaluations. They must offer their wisdom about appropriate methodology, scope, and timing while remaining sensitive to the needs of those served as well as those paying for programs. Based on my own experience in the philanthropic community, I have realized that there seems to be some law ordained in heaven requiring most foundation trustees (and most government funding agencies as well, I suspect) to favor innovative projects which they can fund for one to three years. After that, the program by their definition is no longer innovative and is presumably old enough to replicate or abandon as a bad idea. Most new programs with which I have been associated are lucky if, in their third year, they are beginning to operate more or less in the way they were originally planned. It takes at least another three years from that point forward for such programs to stabilize so they can be intelligently evaluated. The community of SRCD can provide another voice in the call for thoughtful, timely, and cost-efficient

rather than cost-cutting, evaluation that recognizes but does not bend to the will of politics.

A second area for SRCD to consider is the necessity for training good staff. Our nation is very, very slow in the training of sorely needed public health nurses, nurse practitioners, early childhood development people, social workers, occupational therapists, and paraprofessionals in all of these categories. As a consequence, even if we had all the money necessary to mount huge programs, it would take us at least ten years to rev up and train the needed personnel. Researchers in child development could be of significant practical assistance by contributing their knowledge to the generation of effective training programs. More importantly, they can work closely with future social scientists to help them learn as much about asking questions as answering them. They can foster, by example, a willingness to integrate their work with that of scholars from other disciplines, thereby amplifying our understanding of complex issues like poverty. Finally, they can help young academics see how their piece of the poverty puzzle fits with those of other professionals such as interventionists, advocates, and policy makers. In fact, as Houston suggests in this volume, we might even train our graduate students to write for audiences such as policy makers as well as other scholars.

Communicating with the policy community represents, perhaps, the most exciting and challenging aspect of the work outlined here. The number of poor is growing faster than the population as a whole. Any sensible person must realize we cannot just wait for the problem to correct itself. If doing nothing can be called a policy, then that has been our national policy. I think of it as "Let's not rock the boat—let's just sink quietly." Today, however, with heath care reform and welfare reform both on the national policy agenda, we have a choice opportunity to rock the boat in support of poor children. Barnard and Morisset, as well as others in this volume, have a clear notion of where to start.

> The ultimate answer to changing the lives of children at risk due to poverty and inadequate parenting are intervention strategies that provide preventive interventions that begin in pregnancy and continue

> through the early years of the child's life. It is not enough to help the parent or child alone. These interventions must address the family as a whole and integrate health, behavioral, vocational, and educational services. There must be a new attention to relationships in all these service systems, particularly for the socially at-risk client. Additionally, neighborhood and community contexts must be considered. Parents and children cannot thrive where family and community violence are a fact of daily life. Only by reducing the risk factors (poverty, stress, etc.) and increasing resilience through supportive services can we stop stealing developmental competence and health from our nation's children. Poverty of the individual is compounded by poverty of the neighborhood and community. (pp. 189–190, this volume)

Their question is whether we will find the social will to act on this knowledge.

I would assert that we *must* find the will because *it is not only the poor who are in trouble. We are all in trouble.* We are at risk of losing our Social Security benefits through the inadequate development of society's human capital invested in its children. We should all join in and ask *why* so many poor African Americans, poor Hispanics, and poor whites have to live lives of despair, only to end up in hospitals, welfare lines, prisons, and morgues. When we know the answers it will become clear to those who read the chapters which follow that "the larger point is about honesty: Children fare better in some circumstances than others, and no decent society will remain silent when it comes to pointing out which circumstances are which" (Chester Finn, former assistant secretary of education under William Bennett, quoted in Harris, 1990).

Now is the time for the Society for Research in Child Development to accept this obligation to share its collective knowledge about "Children of Poverty." Participants in this round table discussion outlined several action steps for consideration including recognizing and promoting a variety of research strategies, training the next generation of its members, requiring its members to consider the policy relevancy of their work as part of the publication process, and condensing and

crystallizing findings for policy makers. I look forward to seeing their results in the coming decade.

We in the larger society have an obligation as well. We must support their efforts and be strong advocates for children of poverty. We must reinforce their messages about the long-term, resource-intensive, and integrated strategies necessary to make a real difference in the lives of children and families. What appears costly now is but a pittance compared with the costly ramifications of neglecting our children. As Kliman and Rosenfeld put it in their book, *Responsible Parenthood,* "It makes a real difference to *you* whether *my* child turns out to be, say, a dedicated teacher or a narcotics peddler. If my child is retarded or delinquent, you—without any vote in the matter—help foot the bill or could be one of his or her victims. All children are everyone's children . . ." All of us share responsibility for our children. At the Irving B. Harris Foundation, we are pleased to support the work of the Society as it takes action.

Irving B. Harris

Introduction

By the year 2000, the population of the United States is estimated to be 275 million, and by the middle of the 21st century, demographers project a population of 375 million. In 1991, 35.7 million people (roughly 14% of the population of the United States) had incomes below the federally defined poverty level. Assuming no change in the percent of the population falling below the poverty level, by the end of the century the number of people living in poverty will be 38.5 million, and by 2050 it will exceed 50 million.

The National Center for Children in Poverty's (NCCP) analysis of 1990 census data indicate that 14 million of America's poor are children, with approximately 5 million of these under the age of six years. In 1989 the ten worse cities for children under six years of age had poverty rates ranging from 52.4% (Detroit, Michigan) to 44.8% (Laredo, TX). The Children's Defense Fund's analysis of 1990 census data indicate that among minority children living in large urban areas, "...42.1 percent of blacks, 35.3 percent of Latinos, 34.4 percent of Native Americans, and 22.9 percent of Asian Americans were poor." (CDF Reports, Aug. 1992, p. 8). According to the NCCP, Erie, PA ranked first among the ten worse cities in the United States for poverty among African American children (62.0%) and for Latino children (68.5%). In addition, the 1990 census data indicate that:

- 23% of all children under six years of age live in poverty.
- Children under six are more likely to be poor than any other age group.
- Roughly 25% of all poor children under six live with a single parent who worked full-time, or with married

parents who combined worked the equivalent of one full-time job.

- 58% of poor children are minorities, although only 33% of all children under six are minorities.
- Children under six living with single parents are 5 times more likely to be poor than are children living with two parents.
- The United States has the highest rate of child poverty among the world's industrialized nations.
- The proportion of full-time workers whose wages are too low to bring a family of four out of poverty now comprises 18% of the work force.
- The age group of women most likely to bear and rear children (18 to 34 years), experienced a shift in the proportion paid low wages from 29% in 1979 to 48% in 1990.

In the Fall of 1992, the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) published a "Social Policy Report" in an effort to inform its members about the crisis of child poverty. That publication painted a gloomy picture about America's resolve to eradicate child poverty. In contrast to powerful stereotypes and myths about child welfare, the facts suggest that America's children receive fewer benefits than any other age group. According to Strawn (1992), "The federal government spent an average of $11,350 per elderly person in 1990—compared to just $1,020 in federal spending per child under age 18." (p. 18).

This volume then, addresses the topic of poverty. It is the first in a series of studies involving children that will focus on the research, health care, and public policy issues that must be addressed by developmentalists as the twentieth century draws to a close and as society begins to articulate its agenda for the twenty-first century. Crime, substance abuse, child abuse, divorce, adolescent pregnancy, racism, infant mortality and morbidity, childhood communicable diseases, chronic illness, depression, and hopelessness visit every socioeconomic class. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that in highly industrialized, technologically sophisticated societies, these

uninvited visitors aggregate in lower socioeconomic groups and exacerbate risk for poor developmental outcomes.

If American society in the year 2050 believes that it will be able to contain 50 million poor people, it does not understand the notion of critical mass. Early childhood education specialists often refer to "sleeper effects" to describe long term positive outcomes of early interventions. In other words, although early interventions may not show immediate positive outcomes, it does not preclude such outcomes appearing later in the life cycle. For example, an early intervention may not significantly raise the preschool age child's cognitive level of functioning, but it may be directly responsible for that child's decision to remain in school rather than drop out, thereby leading to long-term gains in skilled performance and cognitive functioning. However, sleeper effects are not exclusively linked to positive outcomes. Violence among teenage youth has increased 25% since 1980; homicide is the second leading cause of death among all 15–24 year olds in the United States; over 3 million children annually witness parental abuse; and hundreds of thousands of guns and knives are taken to school each day in the United States. Are these the sleeper effects of poverty? It is no longer meaningful or relevant to describe 35 million people in terms of a percentage of the population. Poverty affects people, not percentages.

How does the scientific community deal with these issues? Some scientists believe that social problems are government's problems. Others believe that the scientific community must become actively involved in attempts to resolve social problems. That is to say, scientists have an obligation to generate knowledge, but they also have an obligation to see that knowledge generation leads to knowledge application. To this end, an interdisciplinary group of applied developmental scientists met in New Orleans, one day prior to the 1993 meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, to discuss research, health care, and public policy issues as they impact on children of poverty. Each participant's ten minute presentation was followed by a roundtable discussion. This volume contains expanded versions of each presentation, along with the discussion that followed the original presentations. The roundtable discussions that follow each chapter are direct

transcriptions from audiotapes recorded at the time of the meeting. Chapters 5 and 8 are completely new for this volume. For each of these chapters, two members of the roundtable were asked to provide questions for response by the authors. These answers are presented as Roundtable Commentaries, rather than as Roundtable Discussions. Although one of the roundtable participants choose not to prepare a chapter, we did include this colleague's contributions during the roundtable discussions.

In addition to the roundtable participants, 53 observers attended the day long session. Opportunities were provided for observers to participate in the discussion. We had intended to include their comments in this volume. However, the audiosystem we used was not sufficient to provide clear copy of their comments. Our apologies to Ed Tronick, Michael Salomon-Weiss, George S. Morrison, Harriet McAdoo, John McAdoo, Gary Resnick, and Nancy Thomas. Each of these colleagues were members of the audience and each offered valuable comments during the round table discussions. Our promise to include their comments in these proceedings is, therefore, a promise unfulfilled. We will do better next time.

Finally, we would like to thank the members of the SRCD Executive Committee for sponsoring the Roundtable, in part, via the SRCD Liaison to Pediatrics program. We are especially grateful for the financial support provided by the Irving B. Harris Foundation, and are delighted that Irving Harris has contributed introductory comments to the volume. Plans are underway for the next two roundtables, Children of Color and Children of Addiction.

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PART ONE

Research Agenda

CHAPTER 1

Toward an Understanding of the Effects of Poverty upon Children

Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Pamela Klebanov, Fong-ruey Liaw, and Greg Duncan

Living in poverty exacts a toll on children and families. Research on the dimensions of the untoward effects of poverty is accumulating at a rapid pace, as witnessed by several edited volumes, notably *Children in poverty* (Huston, 1991), *Escape from poverty: What makes a difference for children?* (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, in press), and *Effect of Neighborhoods upon Children and Families* (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Aber, in press), as well as special journal issues of *Child Development* (Huston, Garcia-Coll, & McLoyd 1993, in press), *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology* (Culbertson, in press), *American Behavioral Scientist* (1991), and *Children and Youth Services Review* (Danziger & Danziger, in press).

Current work tells us that we need to be concerned about poor children and their families. However, it does not inform us as to either the pathways by which poverty exerts its effects on children or on the relative importance of various dimensions of poverty in influencing children.

In this manuscript, we first look at how poverty is measured and how various measurement schemes alter interpretations of poverty effects. Absolute and relative indices of poverty are discussed; then, several recent attempts to use basic needs budgeting as a means to construct the income necessary to insure minimum levels of well-being are reviewed.

Next, we consider how various dimensions of poverty and income influence children's well-being. Our premise is that the multiple dimensions of poverty are rarely considered, rendering it difficult to provide much understanding of how poverty effects children. Both family and neighborhood poverty are considered in this chapter. Examples are given based on data from two sets of large longitudinal studies—the Infant Health and Development Program (IHDP)[1] and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID).[2]

Then, possible pathways through which poverty might exert effects on children are presented. The first set of pathways focuses on models derived from more macro-oriented disciplines—sociology, demography, epidemiology, and economics. Parental resources, including time, income, and emotional, cognitive, and social capital, are often the constructs underlying this work. The second set of pathways is derived from more micro-oriented approaches, those typically encountered in developmental psychology, psychiatry, and pediatrics. Risk and protective models are often used in developmental approaches. Several examples of additive risk, cumulative risk and double jeopardy models are presented, to see how family processes and risk factors play out in the context of poverty. A brief section considers a more complete model, attempting to marry the different disciplinary approaches (Brooks-Gunn, Phelps, & Elder, 1991; Duncan, 1991). This model is presented in more detail elsewhere (Brooks-Gunn, in press a).

What Is Poverty?

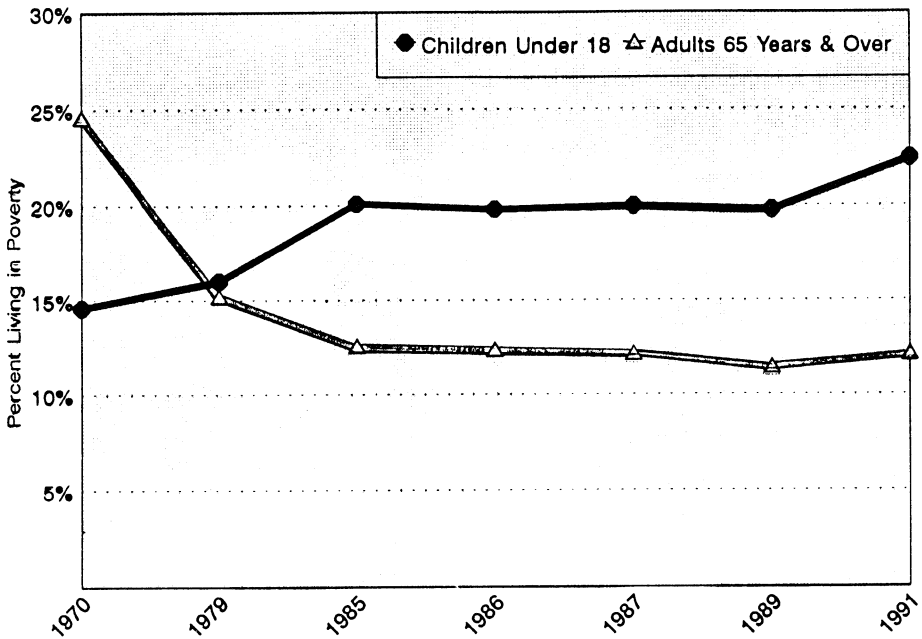
Official Poverty Threshold

The official poverty level is established by the federal government. It is based on the estimated cost of an "economy food budget" or shopping cart of food, multiplied by three. The multiplier was based on the premise that food accounted for about one-third of a family's after-tax income (Orshansky, 1965; Fisher, 1992). The poverty level is adjusted for family size, the

age of the head of the household, and the number of children under age 18. Annual adjustments to the poverty index are made for the cost of living based on the Consumer Price Index. In 1991, U.S. poverty thresholds for families of three, four, and five persons were $10,860, $13,924, and $16,460, respectively. These thresholds are based on incomes before taxes.

One of the advantages of an absolute poverty level such as the U.S. thresholds is that comparisons may be made on an annual basis. Estimates of the number of persons living below the poverty threshold have been made yearly since 1959 by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (Hernandez, 1993). The comparative usefulness of the poverty threshold is illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the percentage of elderly persons and children in poverty for the past 20 years. As can be seen rates of poverty for the elderly have declined over the time period. In contrast, poverty rates for children have increased during this time period (although rates dropped between 1959 and 1969, not shown in Figure 1). Rates were in the mid-teens during the 1970s, and then rose to about 20% in the 1980s. The percentage of children who were poor continues to be 20% or even higher in the 1990s (currently 23%).

Much has been written about the causes of the increases in poverty rates for children; causes include (a) structural changes in the economy, including reduction of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, stagnation of the economy (unemployment rates and wage rates), movement of jobs from inner cities, (b) changes in federal programs, including the failure of government benefits for poor people (e.g. AFDC) to keep up with inflation (eroding the impact of income transfers on families and on the movement of families above the poverty line), and increases in inequalities between the affluent and the poor (in part due to tax changes), and (c) structural changes in the family (increases in childbearing outside of marriage, increases in single parent households due to divorce, increases in maternal employment without the assurance of adequate child care). See Brooks-Gunn and Maritato (in press); Danziger and Stern (1990); Danziger and Weinberg (1986); Duncan (1991); Ellwood (1988); Garfinkel and McLanahan (1986); Hernandez (1993); Palmer, Smeeding, and Torrey (1988); Wilson (1987).



Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 168.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of Elderly and Children in Poverty over the Past 20 Years

Poverty as a Relative rather than an Absolute Concept

As just stated, the United States uses an absolute standard of poverty, based on what is believed to be necessary for a family's basic needs (or was believed to be necessary in 1959). While this measure is adjusted for the cost of living, it is based on a standard, which allows for comparisons over time as to how many individuals are poor or not poor.

Relative measures of poverty are not based on a standard. Instead, they are relative to the entire population's income, and as such change over time. The argument for relative measures has to do with the fact that minimum standards, as viewed by the society, are not static. As incomes rise, standards may also rise. Rainwater (1974, 1992) has presented data pursuant to this line of reasoning very persuasively. For example, public opinion polls from the 1930s through the 1960s have asked questions about how much income families need to "get along" and what income level is low or inadequate. Generally, these polls indicate that about 50% of the median for family income is defined by the population as necessary for basic needs.

Some countries, such as Canada, define poverty relative to the median income of the population. Using such a definition, in the United States, the "absolute" poverty line was .46 of the median income in 1965, and it was .41 of the median income in 1983 (Duncan, 1991; Huston, 1991). Clearly, the number of families categorized as poor would be higher if we used a relative standard such as Canada does.

In a recent volume by Hernandez of the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1993), relative poverty rates were calculated based on having less than 50% of the median family income for each year, following the work of Rainwater (1974). Relative poverty rates are about 37% higher than the official poverty rates for children.

Poverty Rates and Federal Programs

Another indicator of poverty involves the needs standards set for eligibility for various federal programs. Typically, families

are eligible for programs if their family incomes are 150% or 185% of the poverty threshold for their family size (eligibility criteria vary by program). If children who live in families within 150% of the poverty threshold are included as poor (often the group between 100% and 150% is labeled "near poor"), the percentage of children age six and younger who would be classified as poor would be over 40%, not just over 20% (National Center for Children in Poverty, 1991).

Basic Need Budgets

The food basket approach to defining poverty thresholds, while easy to understand, is limited. Reasons include the following—food today accounts for about one-fifth of a family's expenditures (housing costs having increased substantially since 1959), the official poverty level only includes cash income (excluding in-kind transfers such as food stamps and medical care), and the current level does not take into account regional variation in living costs (with housing and transportation being two costs that vary greatly).

The food basket approach estimates what a family requires to meet its basic needs (by using a multiplier). Recently, several economists have built basic needs budgets in a slightly different way than Orshansky did (Ruggles, 1990; Watts, 1993). Watts terms the food basket approach the gross-up approach and the basic needs budget approach the category standard approach. Expenditure norms are derived for a small number of categories, usually food, housing, transportation for employed adults, health care, child and dependent care, clothing and clothing maintenance, personal care and miscellaneous. The budgets are, as Watts says, *lean*. They do not include what developmental psychologists would call learning or stimulating experiences (no books or other reading material, no recreation, no educational expenses). They do not take into account the cost of obtaining quality child care or moving to neighborhoods with high quality schools. They do not include what we might call "start up" costs (furnishing an apartment). Even so, in the Ruggles (1990) calculation, the number of single parent families living below the poverty line in 1989 would be 39% using the official poverty

threshold and 47% using their basic needs budget (rates for children would be 48% vs. 56%).

It is clear that there is no consensus as to whether the poverty level should be determined by a method other than the food basket by three method, whether it should be adjusted for regional variations in cost of living, whether it should be based on expenditures, rather than income, or whether it should include in-kind transfers. However, this brief discussion does illustrate the difficulty that today's family at the poverty line or slightly above it has in making ends meet.

Life below the Poverty Threshold

We have still not confronted what it means to live below the poverty threshold. First, it is clear that individuals below the poverty line cannot meet basic expenses. Our colleague, Ann Doucette-Gates, has provided an estimate of basic income needs for a family of four in New York City. She includes housing (rent), food, basic needs, and taxes. Estimates of income are made for a family on AFDC, a family where one individual works a 40-hour week at minimum wage ($4.25 an hour), and a family where one individual works a 40-hour week at $10 an hour. The family with an employed adult is below the poverty line, as is the family on AFDC. These two families bring in over $350 less than what their basic expenditures are (not including health care and child care costs). The family where the wage earner brings home $10 an hour just about breaks even.

The poverty threshold makes no distinction between receipt of income from AFDC, from employment, or from both. Debates centering on the possible existence of a welfare culture and on the inadvisability of requiring poor mothers to enter the work force would benefit from such information (Smith, in press; Zill et al., in press; Wilson, Ellwood, & Brooks-Gunn, in press). It also makes no distinction between families who are close to the poverty threshold and those who are way below it.[3]

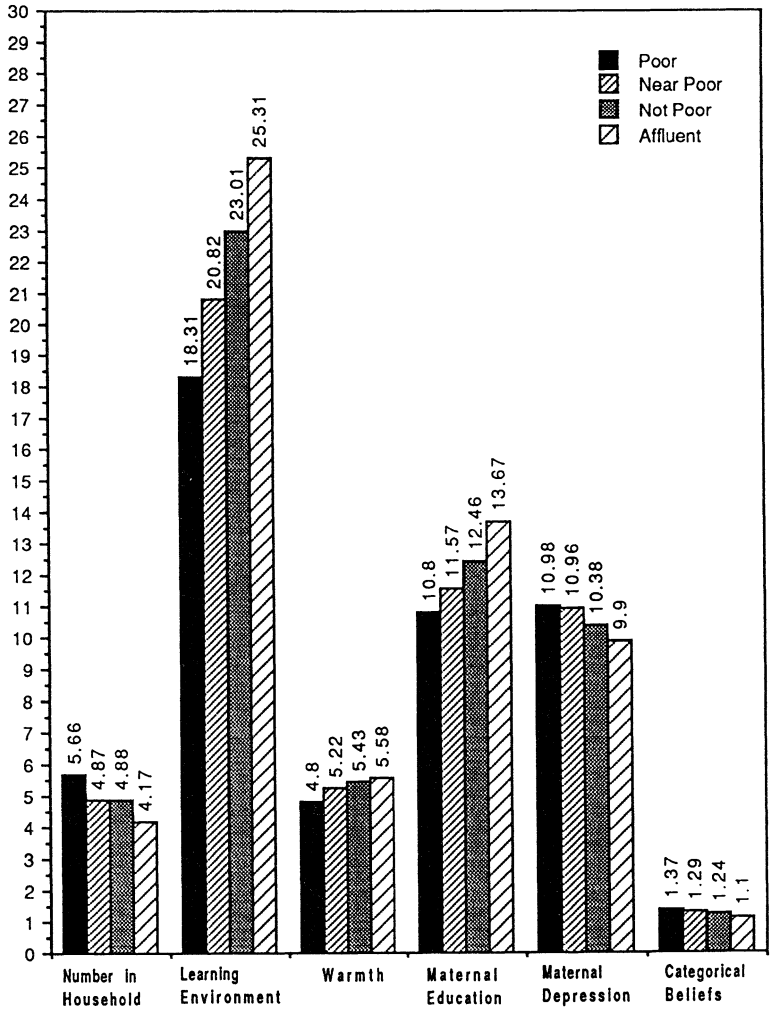
Estimates of effects of poverty upon children are often made looking at income, rather than focusing on "a" poverty line. However, unless non-linear models are employed to see if income effects are more pronounced at the bottom of the income

distribution or if a disjuncture in income effects occurs around 150% or 185% of the poverty line, then using income as a proxy for poverty provides little specific information on poverty *per se.* Instead, only the more general statement, "more income is beneficial for children" may be made.

Using the IHDP age 5 outcomes, we find linear and nonlinear effects of income upon child outcome (based on income-to-needs ratios derived using poverty thresholds; see Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, et al., 1993; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, in press, for a discussion of the income and poverty measures and the sample). Another approach to the premise that income effects may be discontinuous is to make comparisons between the poor and not poor. A variant on this theme involves looking at poor, near poor, and not poor, to see if the near poor are more similar to the poor or to individuals who are not poor. Again, using the IHDP data set, we first look at a few family characteristics of families categorized based on income-to-needs ratios. We divide the sample into poor (100% or less of the poverty threshold), near poor (101% to 150% of the poverty threshold), not poor (151% to 200% of the poverty threshold) and affluent (over 200% of the poverty threshold).

First we take a look at familial characteristics—structural variables—(household density and maternal education), maternal characteristics (maternal depressive symptomatology, categorical beliefs about childrearing), and parenting behavior (provision of learning experiences and warmth). These data suggest that poor and near poor families are not similar to one another except on depression, and that near poor families are more similar to the not poor on household density, warmth, and beliefs about childrearing. All groups are dissimilar on learning environment and maternal education (Figure 2).

Looking at child's IQ scores at age 5 as an outcome provides data similar to the familial characteristic data presented. The unadjusted mean IQ scores of children who are poor and near poor are quite similar to one another and are much lower than those for children who are not poor. Adding maternal education and single-parent household variables as



Source: IHDP
Note: Adjusted for site, treatment, gender, birth weight, and ethnicity.

FIGURE 2. Adjusted Means for Number in Household, Home Environment, and Maternal Characteristics at Age 3 by Four Income Groups

covariates alter the adjusted means somewhat (i.e., about a 4 point difference), but the income group differences still exist. Findings are somewhat different for behavior problems (Brooks-Gunn, in press a).

Poverty in Developmental Analyses

Family Poverty

Relatively little information exists in developmental literature vis-à-vis the effects of poverty upon children. Four of the most critical dimensions (and issues) are outlined here. These include: (a) the use of income versus social class measures; (b) the use of poverty measures which do not consider duration of poverty; (c) the use of poverty measures which do not consider the timing of poverty in children's lives; and (d) the use of poverty measures which do not consider the ecology in which children reside (see Brooks-Gunn, in press; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, in press, for a review of literature on these points).

Neighborhood Poverty

Few developmental studies include measures of neighborhood poverty, either, even though the contexts in which children live are of great interest, and are not limited to those involving the family. Sociologists and economists are more likely to study neighborhood income influences, as well as to detail some of the ways in which neighborhoods possibly influence behavior (Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Jencks & Petersen, 1992; Wilson, 1987).

Exceptions to this statement are provided by the Social Science Research Council's Committee on the Underclass. A working committee on Neighborhoods, Families, and Children has commissioned five data sets to attach geo-code Census Tract information. A volume on this endeavor is forthcoming (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn & Aber, in press). Our group has used the IHDP

and PSID to investigate the effects of neighborhood poverty upon child and adolescent outcomes. Summaries of our results for child outcomes at ages three and five and for maternal outcomes and parenting behavior at the 3-year assessment point may be found in Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, et al. (1993), Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov (in press), and Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, and Duncan (in press). These analyses are based on the framework provided by Wilson (1987, 1991) on how structural and family level processes in neighborhoods influence individual outcomes. Also, Jencks and Mayer (1990) have presented several possible models which might explain how neighborhoods might influence children's well-being. We have attempted to test the usefulness of these models in the IHDP and PSID. The models that have received the most support in our work are based on the premise that affluent neighbors, or the absence of poor neighbors, have positive influences on children. One is a "contagion" model, in that peers engaging in certain problem behaviors are likely to spread problem behavior. Another includes a set of "collective socialization" models, which focus on the benefits of role models and monitoring within neighborhoods. Wilson (1987, 1991), in his analysis of the structural changes in post-industrial society that contributed to an increase in the number of poor and jobless people in inner-city neighborhoods, provided insight into how "contagion" and "collective socialization" models might operate.

Taking this work as a starting point, we have begun to look for possible effects of neighborhood income upon children's well-being in the IHDP and PSID samples. The outcomes of interest are age-five IQ scores and behavior problem scores in the IHDP (sample size is 895 of the 985 children for whom we have enough information to geocode addresses; approximately 10% of the sample was Latino, and 55% African-American, and one-third white). The outcomes in the PSID were teenage childbearing (defined as having a birth prior to both the 20th birthday and first marriage) and high school drop-out (defined as having neither a high-school diploma nor a GED at the time competed schooling was measured, typically when the young women were in their early 20's). The PSID sample that we used included 1132 African-American and 1214 white women

between ages 14 and 19. The oldest cohort in the sample was age 14 in 1968 (and 19 in 1973) while the youngest cohort was 14 in 1980 (and 19 in 1985).

The two indicators of the socioeconomic composition of the neighborhood are the fraction of families in the Census tract with incomes under $10,000 ("low income") and the fraction of families with incomes over $30,000 ("affluent"). In regression equations, these are compared to the fraction of families defined as middle income families ($10,000 to $30,000).

In the IHDP, age-five IQ scores were associated with the presence of affluent neighbors, but not the absence of poor neighbors (the omitted category, to which both are compared, is the presence of middle class neighbors). Neighborhood residence also influences externalizing behavior problems at age five; the presence of low income neighbors increases the likelihood of behavior problems (see Brooks-Gunn, Duncan et al., 1993; Duncan et al, in press). In the PSID, the presence of affluent neighbors is associated with a lower rate of high school drop-out and out-of-wedlock teenage births. This effect is found after controlling for ethnicity, maternal education, and single parenthood.

These data suggest that collective socialization may be operating, in that the absence of affluent neighbors confers risks to both young children and adolescents. Whether this effect is due to the presence of role models, the absence of planful or efficacious families, or other mechanisms, is not known.

Familial Resources and Poverty

Poverty often co-exists with low levels of other parental resources. Research is necessary to describe not only the frequency and patterning of co-occurrence, but the ways in which lack of various resources may heighten children's vulnerability. Parental resources focus on family income and time available to engage in parenting activities (Hill & Stafford, 1985; Lazear & Michael, 1987).

Time and Income as Resources

Time and income are often associated within families in complex ways. For example, children in single parent households often have only one parent with whom to interact on a daily basis. Single parents, especially if working, have little time to spend with their children. This issue is not limited to single parent families. As more mothers enter the labor market, less time is presumably spent with their children. Little is known about how and whether increased material well-being through the mother's employment offsets possible negative effects of increased mother absence from the home. As another example, the birth of a sibling alters the time available to spend with older children; the addition of a family member also probably alters the distribution of financial resources in the home and perhaps even the overall level of resources, if a parent chooses to leave the work force or reduce the number of hours worked (which is more likely to occur with the birth of a second than a first child).

Family structure, maternal employment, familial income, density of children to adults, and maternal education may all be considered parental resources. These five factors contribute to the human and social capital available to families and their children. The structure of a family in terms of single versus two-parent families has direct consequences for the monitoring of child behavior. Mother-headed families often experience a reduction in the time a mother has to spend with her children due to time spent in paid employment and increased responsibilities for sole maintenance of the household (Hill & Stafford, 1980; Nock & Kingston, 1988; Brooks-Gunn, in press c; Thomson et al., 1992). The presence of a co-residing grandmother or other extended family member may provide some support. Maternal employment may provide material benefits that offset the reduction in time spent with children. Additionally, working mothers may experience an increase in their sense of self-worth which may enhance their parenting skills (Hoffman, 1989).

Differential Effects of Resources in Poor and Not Poor Families

Such factors may have different effects in poor than in not poor families. Take, for example, maternal employment and child care (Baydar & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Desai, Chase-Lansdale, & Michael, 1989). Using the Children of the NLSY, grandmother care in the first year of life offsets the slightly negative impact of maternal employment in poor white families upon three- and four-year-olds' cognitive and behavior scores. In contrast, non-relative baby-sitter care has negative effects, perhaps because of the inability to purchase high quality care when income is low and the cost of child care is proportionately much higher. Non-relative baby-sitter care did not have negative effects in not poor white young children.

Not only are single parent households and the transition from father presence to father absence the focus of much work, but so are the effects of multigenerational households as a response to single parenthood and the cost of rearing children alone, issues of direct relevance to those studying poverty. Studies in the past have focused on the normative role of the grandmother in providing emotional support, help during times of crisis, and nondisciplinary interactions with grandchildren (Cherlin, in press; Tinsley & Parke, 1984); while newer studies are beginning to examine the quality of grandmother parenting (Chase-Lansdale, Brooks-Gunn, & Zamsky, in press). A second adult in the household may provide additional resources, and may be particularly important when more than one child resides in a household, given that parental time must be allocated among children. While fathers and grandmothers have been studied vis-a-vis their effects on children, it is possible that the more important dimension is density of children to adults, rather than the specific adult figure (Baydar, Brooks-Gunn & Senior, in press; Furstenberg, 1976; Furstenberg et al., 1987; Lee et al., 1990). This model is typically not tested specifically (either the focus is on father-absent households, or grandmother-present households; Brooks-Gunn & Chase-Lansdale, 1991). In one study where it was tested, father and grandmother presence had