Chapter 19

Poland: Missing Link to Policy

Ludmila Dziewięcka-Bokun, Ewa Toczyska, and Witold Toczyski

Poverty research in Poland has a long and politically determined history. The first surveys were undertaken in the 1920s and focused on various aspects of the living conditions of the Polish population. They concentrated mainly on groups of households threatened with unemployment, insufficient food intake, and poor housing conditions. At that time, models of income distribution were worked out and data from various sources were used. The surveys were conducted by the Central Statistical Office (CSO), by the Institute of Social Economy (ISE), created in 1920 as an autonomous section of the Society of Polish Economists and Statisticians, and also by researchers and scientists from various scientific and research centres.

After the Second World War the term "poverty" was not officially used, nor was it a subject of scientific investigation. However, the Central Statistical Office did start to organize surveys of the living conditions of the population again and step by step developed them in cooperation with other institutions. In 1951 the household budget surveys were stopped and the break lasted until 1957.

In the years 1957–81 household budget surveys (HBS) gradually developed, the methodology improved, the scope was extended, and new research methods were utilized. Experimental household budget surveys attempted to use the methodology of West European countries. In 1960 the surveys of living conditions were started on a larger scale, and they are repeated every few years. These surveys also include poverty-related problems (CSO 1984, 1991; Kordos 1973, 1990).

In the 1970s social scientists and the CSO staff attempted to introduce new sociological and statistical surveys in order to carry out comprehensive analyses of living conditions and the quality of life. For ideological reasons this concept was not implemented in practice, but in the 1980s it became possible to launch large-scale surveys of this type (Kordos 1982; Luszniewicz 1972).

Regardless of the fact that the term "poverty" was not officially used, a number of studies were conducted to determine the "spheres of indigence" (the term used instead of poverty) and social differentiation.

In 1983 Frąckiewicz published a book on the spheres of indigence. Activities in this field were conducted under the supervision of Beskid (1984 and 1989). In 1984 and 1988 conferences were held in Poland on poverty at which a number of interesting papers analysed the surveys and analyses of poverty on the basis of surveys conducted by the Central Statistical Office (CSO 1990b, 1991a; Kordos 1990). Such surveys were also conducted by research institutes (e.g. Budzyński and Lisowski 1991).

In 1982, after the 1980–81 crisis, another attempt was made to establish an integrated system of household surveys. In the same year a continuous method of household budget surveys was replaced with the rotation method. A master sample was designed that made it possible to carry out various social surveys using sub-samples. Uniform concepts, definitions, and classifications were used and training was provided for all the staff involved in the surveys. The quality of training of field personnel was regarded as an important element of this integrated system. In the period 1982–91 some thirty-three surveys of this type were conducted. In 1991 the process of gradual adjustment of the Polish system of surveys extended to all groups of the population, such as employees, workers–farmers, farmers, pensioners, people living exclusively on benefits, those employed in the non-state sector outside agriculture, and the self-employed, who in the past, for various reasons, had not been covered. Attempts were made to undertake surveys as carried out by Eurostat. The surveys of the labour force were carried out on a much larger scale than previously. Preparations were made to conduct surveys on incomes to supplement the existing surveys of living conditions (Kordos 1982).

In 1991 the poverty line was set on the basis of the social minimum for one-person households in which the OECD scale of equivalences was used: first adult in household = 1.0, each addition adult = 0.7, each child = 0.5. The social minimum was calculated on the basis of a specific consumers' basket. The items in the basket were priced at prices quoted by the Central Statistical Office.

The ISE did studies on several aspects of poverty, but the term "poverty" did not appear in any report titles until autumn 1989 when a study entitled "The problems of poverty" appeared. From that time, poverty became the core of the Institute's research activities (Budzyński and Lisowski 1982).

In general, the ISE studies tended to confirm the findings in other countries of similar culture – the people most likely to suffer poverty were: the aged, women, families with many children, single mothers, households with handicapped persons, households with poorly qualified persons, and those affected by illness. General economic progress over the years brought changes in the perception of whether the situation was unsatisfactory. Admittedly this progress was somewhat slower than in democratic countries with different economies. The main feature was that progress was greater in access to knowledge and improvements in education, health, social security, cultural activities and public transport than in individual access to material wealth. Research in the 1980s and subsequently showed that the main factors of poverty were commonly perceived to be: low pensions, a lot of children, isolation, disability, and alcoholism.

Researchers focusing on social dysfunctions in Poland can be divided into two main groups: those who wanted to improve the existing socialist socioeconomic system, and those who felt that a new order would in itself do nothing to rectify these problems and would, indeed, be more affected than the old order because of shortages of the means to correct the dysfunctions. Nonetheless, both groups were obliged to comply with the exigencies of state censorship, which led in turn to self-censorship and avoidance of definitions that conflicted with the official doctrine. It was the practice not to write about a negative situation, but rather to stress the positive steps undertaken by the state to make things better.

The problem of poverty assumed stark reality in research dealing with the satisfaction of societal needs. Investigations by the ISE of problems connected with the non-satisfaction of needs were always conducted with due consideration to the prevailing limitations of social factors – in order of ascending magnitude: the family, the workplace, the nation-wide social security system, the socio-political alignment of the state. The accepted methodology for research into social policies allowed the following conclusion to be reached: needs could be satisfied either by perfecting the existing system, or, if possible, by eliminating the system, if in itself it led to the creation of needs that were impossible to satisfy. In view of this, it was necessary to present research findings in such a way as to link them with poverty in Poland, but to do so in an oblique manner (Lisowski 1985; Budzyński and Lisowski 1992).

Current research on poverty

The Polish "soft" revolution in 1989 allowed the CSO and the ISE to start new investigations into poverty, its social conditions, and its consequences without the need to disguise the topic.

In the ISE the investigations began in late 1989 with attempts to identify areas of concern threatened by encroaching poverty. At first, the ISE staff appraised selected social aid institutions and formulated issues requiring further analysis:

- the establishment of criteria for identifying geographical areas of poverty in Poland;
- the risks in groups affected by non-satisfaction of needs or threatened by the inability to meet basic needs, such as benefit recipients and families affected by unemployment – former ISE research enabled these groups to be identified;
- the risks associated with the socioeconomic changes arising from unemployment and other phenomena;
- the symptoms and causes of poverty in the youngest generation (Lisowski 1986).

Three studies were conducted in 1990 on the following topics: the risks of poverty within employed families with a lot of children (Lisowska 1991); living conditions in female single-parent families (Wolska 1991); and the symptoms of poverty in Warsaw primary schools (Lisowski 1991).

The survey report on employed families with a lot of children contained the following statement: "The current economic changes in Poland and their undesirable effects are affecting (such) families considerably" (Lisowska 1991).

Single mothers and their children are the victims of a whole range of ills, such as difficult housing conditions, low incomes, and heavy parental responsibilities. The single mothers described their material situation as bad or very bad; one-third of them admitted that their families were on the verge of poverty (Wolska 1991).

In April 1990 pupils of Warsaw primary schools were already beginning to betray signs of poverty behaviour stemming from unemployment within their families, even though Warsaw has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. Poverty manifests itself in various ways: thefts in school, alcoholism among both parents and pupils, inadequate child care. Although it is usual to attribute these symptoms to the effects of the political and social changes taking place in Poland, the causes were seen to lie in the more traditional areas of social pathology. The extent to which schools can accommodate the needs of underprivileged children is limited by a shortage of resources (Lisowski 1991).

As part of the poverty research programme, the ISE published a special issue of the *ISE Bulletin* containing the above-mentioned articles and also:

- a theoretical examination of the possibility of harnessing the results of the CSO household budget surveys to the analysis of poverty (Kordos 1991);
- a report on threats of poverty appearing in the work of social aid centres in Warsaw in late 1989 (Wiśniewska 1991);
- an analysis identifying the causes of poverty in families with small children, based on an ISE investigation in 1983–6 and CSO family budget investigations (Kostrubiec 1991);
- an article dealing with problems of socialization in families with a lot of children threatened with poverty (Rodziewicz 1991);
- an article on the correlation between geographical areas and living conditions in Poland (Rakowski 1991).

In May 1991 social assistance beneficiaries and unemployed persons in five small Polish towns were studied (Kurzynowski 1991). The results revealed that, among the sample populations, families affected by unemployment are relatively young – the median age being 28. Benefit recipients are markedly older, but with a greater age range, which means that there are some very young persons among them (Budzyński and Lisowski 1992). Large differences between the levels of social assistance in different towns indicated a correspondingly large difference in the consequent burden on different local authorities.

A bibliography with over 1,000 items has been prepared on the topic "Requirements for studies of endangered communities during the economic restructuring in Poland", aimed at helping in further investigations of poverty.

A repetition of the territory-based studies of benefit recipients and the unemployed was made in 1991 as part of the series "Restructuring of the Polish economy and changes in living conditions of various groups with particular focus on those threatened with poverty".

Recent and current Central Statistical Office research on poverty and its larger context includes household budget surveys

(CSO 1990a) and surveys on the living conditions of the population (CSO 1984, 1990b, 1991a). During that period the integrated system of household surveys was supplemented with thirty special surveys of various groups in the population (families with a lot of children, one-parent families, elderly people, young people, and women). The surveys covered housing and living conditions, participation in culture, tourism, quality of life, and health status and some of them also covered selected aspects of poverty (Kordos 1985).

According to Kordos, some of the surveys pertained directly to the poverty problem. In 1985, when large-scale surveys of living conditions were conducted, the respondents were asked directly whether they regarded themselves as living below the poverty line, although a definition of poverty was not provided. Only 3.2 per cent of the households stated that they were living in poverty. The question was repeated in 1990, when 7.6 per cent of households admitted that they were living in poverty. If the size of household is taken into account, one-person households constituted the highest percentage (7.7 per cent in 1985 and 12.0 in 1990) and four-person households the lowest percentage (1.9 per cent and 5.4 per cent, respectively). Overall, the highest percentage of households living in poverty were those living exclusively on social benefits (29.6 per cent in 1985 and 42.3 per cent in 1990), while the lowest percentage was of households of self-employed persons (0.5 per cent and 5.4 per cent respectively). Because many people in Poland are unwilling to admit that they live in poverty, the above indices represent not the actual poverty level of the surveyed population, but only the perception of material status in relation to other households. A question about subjective assessment of the material status of the household was asked in 1985, and it turned out that 17.5 per cent of households stated that their material status was bad or very bad; in 1990, that figure increased to 28.8 per cent.

Research work on poverty carried out by research institutes (Beskid 1988, 1989; Budzyński and Lisowski 1991; Frąckiewicz 1993) should also be mentioned here.

Household budget surveys carried out by the rotation method cover about 7,500 households quarterly, which amounts to about 30,000 households covered by the survey within a year. The incomes from work of employees covered by the surveys are verified by employers with full data confidentiality. Every year an annual interview is conducted on selected income and expenditure items in every household that took part in the survey. Annual incomes from work are also verified. In addition, subjective opinions on the material status of the household and household budgeting, as well as on possession of durable goods and on housing conditions, are taken into consideration. The results are published every year in a special publication (e.g. CSO 1990a).

Apart from gathering information on the living conditions of the population, the main objective of large-scale living-conditions surveys is the preparation of a sampling frame for household budget surveys. The sample is replaced every four years (i.e. first-stage units, with only half of the sample being replaced in one year and the other half in the next year), so between 1982 and 1990 two such sample surveys were conducted every four years. The size of the sample in each survey was about 120,000 households (CSO 1984, 1991a). The household budget surveys are potentially a rich source of information on living conditions and on poverty. Before 1988, ideological pressures blocked the full use of these surveys for poverty measurement, although some attempts were made.

Some income data from the Polish household budget surveys (HBS) have been used for poverty measurement. Although such data are a relevant and frequently used indicator of poverty, they suffer from many limitations. An important factor in satisfying the needs of the family are incomes in kind. These are covered by the HBS as goods and services received free of charge. Although the data on incomes derived from HBS are underestimated to some extent, incomes from work, owing to the verification by employers, are quite accurate. Up to the present moment, incomes from property and from self-employment (outside agriculture) have not been covered owing to their negligible relevance (they were specified under "other incomes"). Up to 1990 the surveys covered about 90 per cent of households, excluding the households of policemen, soldiers, the self-employed, and collective households (Kordos 1992).

Expenditure data constitute the core of HBS and are an important source of information on poverty. Sometimes general expenditure data are used instead of income data, but they are treated as less reliable. The composition of expenditures is important for poverty analysis. In poverty analysis one of the relevant components of low-income households is dietary habits. Data on food consumption may be used to calculate caloric and protein intakes and to compare them with nutritional norms. Such comparisons were done in Poland (CSO 1990b) for particular groups of the population, by both age and sex. The nutritional needs of a man over 18 years old was taken as a basic unit and the need of other groups were expressed as a ratio of this. This unit was based only on nutrition norms and, although imprecise, it was applied in household budget surveys till the 1970s.

Data on the socioeconomic characteristics of household members are especially relevant for the classification of households by socioeconomic group and for the analysis of characteristic features of households living in poverty. Parallel to HBS, information on housing conditions and the possession of durable goods is collected. The information makes it possible to work out a multidimensional approach to the concept of poverty.

Large-scale living-conditions surveys allow a focus on different aspects of poverty measurement. Everything points to a strong likelihood that research into poverty will grow in the near future. But then a rapid growth in poverty itself also seems likely.

Main concepts of poverty

Poverty lines and social minima

In Polish statistical practice, examples of subjective evaluations of the material status of households can be found. The problems were dealt with initially by Beskid (1984) and then by the Central Statistical Office, which introduced subjective evaluation surveys as a supplement to HBS and other surveys on the living conditions of the population. Beskid analysed such problems as the income patterns desired by respondents and incomes regarded by them as indispensable. However, no formal method of determining poverty lines was applied in that analysis.

After 1956, the problem of introducing a social minimum in Poland became an issue in several political and social programmes, in the speeches of politicians, and in the mass media. The problem usually caught public attention after each social crisis. The first publication containing the results of calculations of a social minimum was issued in Poland in 1957 (Akoliński 1957). The first book on the social minimum was published in 1973 (Tymowski). An especially large number of articles on the social minimum were published in 1981. In that year also the first official calculations of the social minimum, done by the Institute of Labour and Social Welfare, were published.

The overall concept of the method of calculating a social minimum was worked out in the early 1970s (Deniszczuk 1972; Tymowski 1973), although the issue was dealt with even earlier. In the period 1970–6, the Central Statistical Office calculated the so-called "minimum of cost of living", but these calculations were confidential, meant only for the state authorities. At present, the social minimum is calculated by the Institute of Labour and Social Welfare and is published on a quarterly basis.

In August 1981 the Polish Council of Ministers passed a special resolution on the definition of a social minimum and the research needed. This is the only document in which the social minimum is defined, although the definition was not very precise. It stated that the social minimum is a basic set of goods and services, purchased by particular families and expressed in terms of cash and goods in kind, taking into account actual price levels. Later, when the objectives of relevant research work were described, it was indicated that one of the objectives should be the determination of the "number and structure of families whose incomes are below the social minimum". Another objective should be to determine "changes in the level of the social minimum due to the living conditions and costs of living of the population".

The social minimum is calculated on the basis of a specific consumers' basket (a set of goods and services the consumption of which is regarded as indispensable from the social point of view and corresponds to the economic situation of the country), and on the basis of the actual price level quoted by the CSO. The social minimum is calculated for families of employees (one- and four-person households) and families of pensioners (one- and two-person) (Góralska 1986). The minimum basket includes goods and services such as foodstuffs, clothes, shoes, hygiene and health care, dwelling houses, appliances and furniture, cultural services and recreation, transport and communications. In addition, it is estimated that about 10 per cent of resources should constitute so-called personal funds (to satisfy specific personal needs such as medicines, cigarettes, etc.). The foodstuffs basket was based on nutritional norms in Poland (with foodstuffs bought at moderate prices). The items in the basket are priced at prices quoted by the Central Statistical Office, the prices being those actually paid by consumers (according to household budget surveys). One of the assumptions when setting up the minimum basket was that families live in community blocks of flats fully equipped with facilities, and that the size of a flat is adequate for the size of the family. However, this assumption is far from reality: many families share a flat, and almost one-fifth of the urban population lives in dwellings not equipped with all sanitary facilities.

The social minimum always aroused strong feelings on the part of the general public, government, and trade unions, and in scientific circles. It became an issue in political debates and negotiations. The reliability of its calculation and interpretation was questioned. After the introduction of martial law in Poland in 1981, the calculations of the social minimum ceased to be published, although they were still carried out. Official publication of the results did not start again until 1988, although the category was used in official programmes, declarations, and decisions as well as in political struggles (Kordos 1992).

Many authors point to the limited usefulness of the social minimum for defining the sphere of poverty. Poverty is expressed through several features of the social position of the poor and not just through insuffient income. Further aspects of the social minimum to which they refer include:

- the contents of the basket are not constant, but are adjusted to the economic situation of the country; therefore, there are two minima: basic and critical ones – the minimum for the 1980s was 11 per cent lower than that for the 1970s;
- a fundamental assumption of the basket is that a family lives in a state flat that is adequate for the size of the family and is fully equipped;
- the social minimum relates to the conditions of a market that is relatively stable;
- the basket is intended to fulfil typical needs, with no regard to specific situations such as illness, the characteristics of a particular job, etc.
- the divergence between the level of earnings and actual consumption is not taken into consideration (although it should be remembered that there are previous savings, family help, etc.).
- the standard of living also depends on such factors as the functioning of the social infrastructure, the quality of public goods and services, etc.

The results of the research on the social minimum were not published regularly. It was only in the 1990s that the data were presented regularly in the periodical *Social Policy*.

In 1993 some of the variables were modified. In adddition to "traditional" estimates, comparable with the previous ones, a variant of the social minimum was prepared by using the scale of so-called equivalent earnings. The accepted scale was convergent with the one proposed by the OECD, i.e.:

1.0 for the earnings of the first person of a family household,
0.7 for the earnings of each additional person over 15 years old,
0.5 for the earnings of each member of the family under 15.

By introducing a correction into the estimates of the social minimum, the so called *scale of equivalency* had a crucial significance in the judgement of the extent of the phenomenon of material poverty within households.

As stressed before, the financial situation was not the only criterion for deciding whether a particular family should be considered as "poor". Therefore, for households with low incomes, other living standard factors were also included. These factors were household facilities, density of occupation in one flat, and expenses on cultural and leisure activities. These factors define the stage of "household needs deprivation", and, when combined with the income of a family, may reflect the phenomenon of poverty. The objective of estimating such a social minimum was debated. Most authors claim that the social minimum should not be the determinant of poverty, but rather should be used in social policy (e.g. setting the minimum wage, pension benefits, unemployment benefit, etc.).

Low incomes

Attempts were also made to create measures of poverty based on the criterion of low incomes. In 1981 the Central Statistical Office introduced a category of "low incomes", and prepared a relative method of defining the boundaries of poverty. It stated that an income is low when it corresponds with the lowest fifteenth percentile in the distribution of household incomes. (This approach limits *a priori* the size of the sphere of poverty to 15 per cent of all households.) Later, it was decided that low income should reflect real value, thus it was adjusted in line with the increase in the prices of goods and consumption services.

Rutkowski (1988) argued that low income does not correlate (or correlates only minimally) with the material assets of a given household, and therefore is not a sufficient criterion of poverty. Households with luxury equipment cannot be regarded as poor, even if their recent income is lower than the social minimum. High-quality household equipment suggests that the family has other income sources (work abroad, help from family, or an extra job). Therefore, Rutkowski proposed a joint factor embracing low present incomes and low-quality household equipment.

If we take as a starting point the size of the sphere of financial poverty and add the material equipment in a household, this leads to a reduction in the number of households regarded as poor, mainly among families of non-workers, and to a lesser degree among families of workers, young families, and multi-person families (especially those bringing up one or two children). The joint criterion points to the same social groups as being important in the poverty population as does the criterion of low incomes. However, it gives a different picture of the relative importance of age groups. Older families are more numerous, while fewer young families and middle-aged families are included.

The consequence of using the joint criterion is that it narrows the sphere of economic poverty, while at the same time widening the sphere of social and cultural poverty. To the latter group belong those households that have incomes over the social minimum, but that still have very poor material equipment. Therefore poverty should be considered as two-dimensional, taking into account both current income and material equipment. It is also important to note that the joint criterion leads to changes in the poverty picture.

Other authors also point to the fact that poverty research cannot be limited to the analysis of incomes. A good example of the multidimensional approach is Jarosz and Kozak's work "Experts' report. Spheres of indigency" (1987). As an indicator of poverty they combined a permanent situation of low income (estimated according to the social minimum of the time) with other specific situations. The specific situations that could add to poverty are:

- the family budget (net expenses in relation to net incomes);
- expenditure on food (in all households there is an important correlation between food expenses and the cumulative effect of low incomes and the size of a household);
- the housing situation (owning a flat, its size, density of occupation, having one's own bed);
- basic facilities (cold and hot water, bathroom, shower, WC, gas, etc.);
- permanent household equipment, including luxury goods.

The structure of expenses for typical households is published by the Central Statistical Office. High relative expenditure on food turns out to be a characteristic of poor households.

Jarosz and Kozak concluded that in families suffering from poverty there is an accumulation of negative situational factors in addition to low incomes, such as high density of inhabitants in one flat and a low level of education and culture. Low income is strongly correlated with other poverty indicators.

Gòvalska proposed that instead of examining current incomes, which influence the material situation only to some extent, the level of current consumption should be accepted as a criterion of poverty. Examining actual consumption leads to a consideration of all its sources: current incomes, past savings, future incomes (credits), as well as other sources of consumption, such as natural consumption (e.g. food and home-made clothes) and consumption arising from transfers. Defining the sources of consumption is particularly important because current consumption is often financed with incomes that are not current or with future incomes. In such situations poverty increases.

The subjective boundary of poverty

In recent years other methods of defining the boundaries of poverty have become popular. These methods are based on obtaining opinions from the members of a family on how high their income should be in order to maintain their household at a minimum level.

The Leyden Poverty Line (LPL) was used by Podgórski (1990) in his analysis of the results of living standards research performed by the Chief Census Bureau in 1989 and 1990. Since 1992 this method has also been used in quarterly analyses of research on family budgets, conducted by the monthly rotation method.

Households are asked to state the level of income they would think of as "very good", "good", "merely satisfactory", "unsatisfactory", and "very bad". The subjective boundary of poverty for certain types of households approximately corresponds to the level of incomes stated to be "merely satisfactory". The value of the social minimum income is not high. For one-person and four-person working families, and for two-person pensioners' households, it is possible to equate the subjective boundary of poverty with the social minimum, as calculated by the Institute of Statistics. The analyses make it clear that for small (two-person) households, the subjective boundaries of poverty are slightly higher than the social minimum. In the case of large families (four people) the relation is almost the reverse: the value of the social minimum is higher than the incomes defined as a subjective boundary of poverty.

The application of the LPL method allows the researcher to define both the extent and the intensity of subjective poverty. The subjective boundary of financial poverty is compared with the distribution of real incomes of the respondents. The extent of poverty is then defined on the basis of families earning incomes below the boundary of subjective poverty as a percentage of the total number of households. The intensity of subjective poverty is measured with the indicator of the average poverty gap. The indicator shows how much the average income of a household below the poverty line differs from the level of income subjectively regarded as the poverty line. Both the extent and the size of the income gap are obtained on the basis of comparable incomes of various households.

The concept of "individual income functions of welfare" was introduced in Poland by Podgorski and Dobrowolska (1991). Their research revealed that the boundaries of poverty based on subjective assessment of the income necessary to meet the fundamental needs of the members of a given family do not have the necessity to be higher than the boundaries established objectively. The most interesting conclusion was that "minimum" and "satisfactory" incomes do not differ much according to age, education, or place of residence. This points to a levelling of consumption aspirations in society as a result of the long-term economic crisis. However, there are clear differences in the extent of poverty according to household size, number of employed family members, level of education, and place of residence. The small difference between declared incomes and subjective assessments of poverty undoubtedly reflects the fact that a large part of the social minimum basket goes to meet the most basic needs, which cannot be substituted with other elements of consumption.

Absolute and relative deprivation

"Absolute deprivation, as far as material conditions of living are concerned, assumes that the boundaries of poverty should be defined by the norms that characterize necessary standards of living in certain social and economic conditions" (Beskid et al. 1990). The following elements were used in order to define absolute deprivation:

- per capita income below 50 per cent of the average income;
- the lack of at least two of the following: a washing machine, a refrigerator, a radio, a black-and-white TV-set (in households without a colour TV);
- the lack of at least one of the standard facilities of a flat: i.e. electricity, water supply, WC, bathroom;
- a living space of less than 10 m^2 per person;
- meat consumption below 300 dag a month (the norm in 1982 was lower).

If we analyse the distribution of various levels of particular material elements of living conditions, we observe a low level of cumulation at the 10 per cent extremes of the distribution. However, as the boundary of poverty shifts towards the centre of the distribution, broadly understood deprivation increases.

The range of deprivation can thus be presented as two types of distribution: one according to deciles, and the other as the distribution below or above the average of a given element. The following scale of poverty has been created by combining the elements in these distributions:

1. *Extreme deprivation*: all elements are found in the two lowest deciles.
2. *Moderate deprivation*: two elements lie within the two lowest deciles and the third lies below the average, or one element is within the two lowest deciles yet all three can be found below the average.
3. *Poor living conditions*: three elements lie below the average, but not in the lowest two deciles, or two elements, one of which lies in the lowest two deciles, are below the average and one element is above the average.

Subjective estimation of material living conditions

One of the consequences of the unbalanced distribution of goods is subjective deprivation, in other words, a feeling of being discriminated against in the sphere of living conditions. The following three types of subjective estimation of discrimination can be identified:

- *escalating aspirations*, i.e. when aspirations grow faster than the possibilities of achieving them;
- *diminishing aspirations*, i.e. when there is no chance of achieving aspirations and meeting needs, and earlier opportunities vanish;
- *progressive aspirations*, i.e. when, after a period of feeling deep discrimination, a period of diminishing discrimination emerges.

Measures of the subjective estimation of deprivation require special attention to the correspondence between public opinion and real deprivation. A characteristic feature is that the *per capita* in the family does not seem to influence people's opinions on deprivation. In order to understand the social structure of poverty, it is, however, important to consider the range of subjective feelings of deprivation as presented by the respondents.

Research on the subjective estimations of living standards leads to the following methodological remarks:

1. There exists a logical link between a subjective estimation and the real situation. This is particularly visible when a person's situation is subjectively estimated as low or mediocre.
2. The relationship between subjective and objective estimations is not homogeneous.
3. Correlations between objective and subjective indicators depend on the objective situation. In most cases the middle-range estimations are similar. An objectively low level of material living conditions is often estimated as mediocre in subjective answers, whereas an objectively high level of living conditions is estimated below its actual position. In the case of extreme values the correlation increases again.
4. A feeling of deprivation is not synonymous with objective poverty. In subjective estimations there is a tendency to omit extreme estimations:
   - needs and aspirations are understated, therefore objective poverty is estimated as a mediocre level;
   - among those in a mediocre position, almost 20 per cent think of themselves as poor, and about 30 per cent vary in their opinions (they also include themselves in the group of the poor).
5. Because full correlation between subjective estimations and the objective situation does not exist, it is not possible to substitute one for the other.

The importance of subjective estimations is found in the observed discrepancy between social expectations of material and social needs and the possibilities of fulfilling those needs.

Conclusions

First, research on poverty in Poland has been strongly connected with the state's policy towards poverty itself. Before the upheaval of 1989, neither poverty research nor anti-poverty policy had been attempted on a large or systematic scale. Poverty was considered as temporary and exceptional. Though public discussions on poverty were banned for decades, poverty nevertheless existed and became more evident during the 1980s.

Second, in Poland the predominant influence of the methods of measuring poverty has resulted in a system of state statistics, with particularly well-developed research on family budgets. However, these statistical measurements are directed not towards the nature and structure of poverty, but mainly towards reporting the conditions of living, consumption, and income. Furthermore, poor families, for example alcoholic families, might be insufficiently represented.

Generally, three approaches are used in the statistical measurement of poverty in Poland:

- objective poverty – on the basis of earnings and expenditures;
- subjective poverty – on the basis of household members' opinion on the level of earnings necessary to maintain the household on a proper level;
- non-financial indicators of poverty, such as low level of consumption, living conditions, household facilities, as well as ways of spending spare time, etc.

Third, there is a growing need to develop and improve poverty measurement techniques and the tools for identifying poverty in the current process of political, economic, and social changes. Politically, however, the prevalent tendency is to define poverty in absolute terms.

Recent poverty measurements focus on household budgets using surveys embedded in the official statistics. It is difficult to use these data to make international comparisons. These surveys concentrate on absolute poverty, relative poverty, non-financial poverty factors, and household incomes.

Poverty research in Poland only accidentally focuses on the causes of poverty. As a consequence, limited explanations or subjective value judgements are offered.

Fourth, numerous signs indicate that poverty is still increasing. Some of the main reasons for the growing number of people falling into poverty seems to be the result of political and economic transformation, the financial crisis of the state, high unemployment rates, shrinking of the safety-net and its inefficient administration, the lack of a social welfare infrastructure and inadequate attention to social pathologies, demographic and structural factors, and weak political interest in social policy issues and poverty.

References

Akoliński, S. (1957) "Próba ustalenia minimum kosztów utrzymania" [Test to determine the cost of living minimum]. *Przegląd zagadnień socjalnych*, No. 2.

Beskid, L. (1984a) "Wizja społeczna poziomu i proporcji w podziale dochodu [Social vision of level and proportion in income distribution]. *Gospodarka Planowa*, 1988 No. 4.

——— (1984b) "Społeczna koncepcja sytuacji dochodowej" [(Social conception of income situation], in *Warunki życia i potrzeby społeczeństwa polskiego 1982*, Warsaw.

——— (1988) "Niedostatek w opiniach społecznych" [Scarcity in public opinion], *Praca i zabezpieczenie społeczne*, No. 9.

——— (1989) "Subiektywny obraz sytuacji materialnej, potrzeb i aspiracji Polaków w latach 1982–1986" [Subjective picture of the material situation, needs and aspirations of Poles in 1982–1986]), in L. Bestid (ed.), *Potrzeby i aspiracje społeczenstwa polskiego*, Warsaw:

Beskid, L. et al. (1990) *Społeczne bariery zagrożenia i skutki realizowanej polityki ekonomicznej. Ekspertyza zbiorowa* [Social barriers, means and consequences of current economic policy. Group's Expertise]. Warsaw:

——— (1992) "Poczucie zagrożenia bied." *[Feeling of a poverty threatening]. Polityka Społeczna*, No. 1.

Budzyński, A. and A. Lisowski (1991) *Aspects of Poverty Measurment in Researches of the Institute of Social Economy in Poland*. Warsaw: Polish Statistical Association and Central Statistical Office. Warsaw.

CSO (1984) "Sytuacja materialna gospodarstw domowych w 1982 r" [Living conditions of households in 1982]. *Opracowania Analityczne* (Warsaw).

——— (1990a) "Budżety gospodarstw domowycz w 1989 r" [Household budget survey results in 1989]. *Materiały i opracowania Statystyczne* (Warsaw).

——— (1990b) "Warunki życia ludności 1989 r" [Living conditions of the population in 1989]. *Studia i analizy statystyczne* (Warsaw).

——— (1991a) "Warunki bytowe gospodarstw domowych w 1985 i 1990" [Living conditions of households in 1985 and 1990]. *Materiały i Opracowania Statystyczne* (Warsaw).

——— (1991b) "Subiektywne granice ubóstwa a dochody gospdarstw domowych" [Subjective poverty lines and household incomes]. *Studia i Analizy Statystyczne* (Warsaw).

——— (1991c) "Jakośí życia i warunki bytu" [Quality of life and living conditions]. *Biblioteka Wiadomości Statystycznych*, Vol 40.

Deniszczuk, L. (1972) "Wzorzec konsumpcji społecznie niezbędnej (minimum socjalne)" [A socially necessary consumption standard – a social minimum]. *Studia i Materiały IPiSS* (Warsaw).

Frackiewicz, L. [1983] *Sfery niedostatku* [Spheres of indigence]. Warsaw: IWZZ.

——— (1988) "Ubóstwo jako kwestia społeczna" [Poverty as a social issue]. *Praca i zabezpieczenie społeczne*, No. 9.

——— (1988) *Warunki życia i bytu mieszkańców aglomeracji Górnośląskiej* [Living conditions of the Upper Silesia inhabitants]. Katowice: Instytut śląski.

——— (1991) *Jakośí życia mieszkańców Górnego śląska [Quality of life of the Upper Silesia inhabitants]*. Katowice: Instytut śląski.

——— (1992) "The syndrome of poverty in the richest region in Poland (Silesia)", in *Poverty Measurement for Economies in Transition in Eastern European Countries*. Warsaw: Polish Statistical Association and Central Statistical Office.

Góralska, H. (1984) "Dochody i konsumpcja ludności żyjącej w niedostatku" [Incomes and consumption of the deprived population]. *Studia i materiały*, Nos 2 and 3, ed. by IPiSS, Warsaw.

——— (1985) "Sfera ubóstwa przez pryzmat dochodów" [The sphere of poverty through the prism of income]. *Polityka Spoeczna*, No. 4.

——— (1986) "Minimum socjalne. Metody obliczeń i interpretacja" [The social minimum. Methods of calculation and interpretation]. *Studia i Materiały IPiSS*, z. 4, (Warsaw).

Jarosz, M. and M. Kozak (1987) *Ekspertyza. Sfery niedostatku* [An expertise. Spheres of indigency]. Warsaw.

——— (1989) "Sfery niedostatku" [Spheres of indigence]. *Studia Socjolgiczne*, No. 2.

Kordos, J. (1973) *Metody analizy i prognozowania rozkładów płac idochodów, ludności* [Methods of analysing and forecasting the distribution of the population]. Warsaw: PWE.

——— (1982) "Metoda rotacyjna w badaniu budżetów rodzinnych w Polsce" [Rotation method in the family budget survey in Poland]. *Wiadomości statystyczne*, No. 9.

——— (1985) "Towards an integrated system of household surveys in Poland", in *Proceedings of 45th Session, Bulletin of the International Statistical Institute*, vol. LI. Amsterdam.

——— (1988) "Niektóre metody określania granic ubóstwa" [Some methods of determining the poverty line]. *Polityka Społeczna*, Nos 11/12.

——— (1990) "Research on income distribution by size in Poland", in C. Dagun and M. Zenga (eds), *Income and Wealth Distribution, Inequality and Poverty*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, Studies in Contemporary Economics.

——— (1991) "Możlowości wykorzystania wyników badań budżetów gospodarstw domowych w analizach ubóstwa" [Possibilities of using the results of the household budgets research in poverty analysis]. *Biuletyn IGS*, No. 1.

——— (1992) "Poverty measurement in Poland", in *Poverty Measurement for Economies in Transition in Eastern European Countries*. Warsaw: Polish Statistical Association and Central Statistical Office.

Kostrubiec, S. (1991) "Zagrożenie ubóstwem w pracowniczych rodzinach wielodzietnych" [The threat of poverty in employed families with many children]. *Biuletyn IGS*, No. 1.

Lisowska, E. (1991) "Zagrożenie ubóstwem w pracowniczych rodzinach wielodzietnych" [The threat of poverty in employed families with many children]. *Biuletyn IGS*, No. 1.

Lisowski, A. (1989) "Program badań IGS z zakresu problematyki ubóstwa". *Biuletyn IGS*, No. 1.

——— (1991) "Objawy ubóstwa w podstawowych szkołach Warszawy" [The symptoms of poverty in Warsaw primary schools]. *Biuletyn IGS*, No. 1.

Podgórski, J. and B. Dobrowolska (1991) *Subiektywne granice ubóstwa a dochody gospodarstw domowych* [Subjective boundary of poverty and household incomes]. Warsaw: CSO.

Podgórski, J. (1990) "Subiektywne linie ubóstwa. Zastosowanie metody 'Leyden Poverty Lines' w warunkach Polski" [Subjective poverty

lines. The application of Leyden Poverty Lines in Polish conditions]. *Wiadomości statystyczne*, No. 11.
——— (1991) "Subjective poverty lines – some results for Poland". Paper at conference on Poverty Measurement for Economies in Transition in Eastern European Countries, Warsaw.
——— (1992) "Subjective poverty lines – some results for Poland", in *Poverty Measurement for Economies in Transition in East European Countries.* Warsaw: Polish Statistical Association and Central Statistical Office.
Rutkowski, J. (1988) "W poszukiwaniu kryterium ubóstwa" [In search of a poverty criterion]. *Polityka Społeczna*, No. 9.
Tymowski, A. (1973) *Minnimum Socjalne. Metodyka i próba określenia* [The social minimum. Method and determination trial]. Warsaw: PWN.
Wiśniewska, H. (1991) "Rozszerzające się sfery ubóstwa" [Widening poverty spheres]. *Biuletyn IGS*, No. 1.
Winiewski, M. (1984) "Zróżnicowanie dochodów w okresie radykalnych zmian warunków bytu – metodologiczne problemy badań epirycznych" [Income differentiation in the period of radical changes in living conditions – Methodical problems of empirical surveys]. *Ekonomia*, 46 (Warsaw).
Wolska, B. (1991) "Wybrane aspekty sytuacji bytowej rodzin matek samotnie wychowujących dzieci w 1990 r" [Some aspects of the material situation of female single-parent families in 1990]. *Biuletyn IGS*, No. 2.