

Rethinking Poverty and Social Exclusion

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Our paper

- Paper seeks to contribute to understanding child poverty in Ireland by:
 - Interrogating how we understand and measure child poverty in Ireland using existing national and international research
 - undertaking exploratory interviews with children and young people on their understandings of poverty (n=10)
 - seeking feedback through this seminar
- Paper is part 1 of a 3 stage process. Stage 2= research with children and families; stage 3=policy analysis

This presentation

- Understanding and measuring child poverty and social exclusion is a complex area. Will focus today on:
 - Measuring child poverty and deprivation
 - Understanding some of the effects of poverty for children's lives
 - Providing some data from our exploratory interviews

Understanding, defining and measuring child poverty in Ireland

- *Concept*
Relative; materially-based - 'going without'
- *Definition*
People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society (NAPS, 1997)
- *Measurement*
 - Relative (income threshold)
 - Consistent (income + 2 of 11 deprivation indicators)

Irish Household Deprivation Indicators

- two pairs of strong shoes
- a warm waterproof overcoat
- buy new not second-hand clothes
- eat meals with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day
- have a roast joint or its equivalent once a week
- go without heating during last year through lack of money
- keep the home adequately warm
- buy presents for family/friends at least once a year
- replace any worn out furniture
- family or friends for a drink or meal once a month
- morning, afternoon or evening out in the last fortnight for entertainment

Are current understandings and measurement sufficient in understanding child poverty?(1)

- It is true that children are an active part of their household economy
- Current measurement provides valuable household-level data on income and poverty, but it.....
- Is imprecise and provide only a partial picture of child poverty as it:
 - Tells us about the proportion of households with children falling below a poverty line and experiencing household deprivation, not about child poverty
 - Does not include child-specific material deprivation indicators, children not surveyed

Are current understandings and measurement sufficient in understanding child poverty? (2)

- Only persons over 16-years in households asked about their personal deprivation status, not asked about children's
- Is household-based – presumes that adults and children share the same conditions
- Does not account for non-material deprivation
- Does not tell us about what children's daily lives in such conditions are actually like
- Does not tell us how children experience poverty and deprivation

Previous work on child deprivation indicators

Cantillon et al, Sharing Household Resources, 2004, Ireland

- A party on their birthday with friends
- School trips
- Having friends home to play
- Lessons, e.g., music or dancing, or playing sports
- Three meals a day
- Pocket money
- Toys
- Bicycle or sports equipment

Previous work on child deprivation indicators

Children's Level of Living – The Impact of Family Economy for Children's Lives (Skevik, 2008), Norway

- Housing (having own room, extent to child brings friends home)
- Consumer items (TV, skis, mobile phone, bike, TV, pet)
- Financial hardship (experiences not expectations money from parents for events at school, activities with friends, buying birthday gifts, leisure activities, and trips with a sport team)

Previous work on child deprivation indicators

Middleton et al, Small Fortunes, 1997, UK
Food

- 3 meals a day
- Fresh fruit once a day
- Meat, fish, cheese twice a day

Clothes

- Warm coat
- New, properly fitted shoes
- Waterproof coat
- All required school uniform

Middleton et al, 1997 (con't)

- 4 jumpers, cardigans, sweatshirts
- New, not second-hand, clothes
- 7 pairs of new underpants
- 4 pairs trousers/jeans etc
- 'best outfit for special occasions'

Participation

- Celebration on special occasions
- Hobby leisure activity

Middleton et al, 1997 (con't)

- School trip once a term
- Holiday once a year
- Swimming once a month
- Leisure equipment
- Any social participation

Developmental

- Own books
- Playgroup/preschool
- Educational games
- Toys

Middleton et al, 1997 (con't)

- Construction Toys
- Bicycle
- 50 p per week for sweets
- Computer suitable for school work
- Computer games

Environmental

- Own bed/mattress
- Garden to play in
- Separate sex bedrooms
- Carpet in bedroom
- Television

Previous work on child deprivation indicators

Swedish Survey of Level of Living, 2000

Focused on material deprivation and financial constraint

- Lacking a cash margin of SEK 100
- Not receiving a weekly/monthly allowance
- Not working during the summer holidays
- Lacking material resources (TV, video, games, CD, mobile phone, pet, PC)
- Money available per month

What is the relationship between household and child poverty and deprivation?

- There is an association between household and child poverty and deprivation
- But research (e.g., Skevik, 2008; Middleton, 1997) shows that this is not always the case
- Why don't household and child poverty always map onto each other?
 - Parent's protection
 - Parent's overcompensation
 - Family and friends spending
 - Young people's income

What does poverty and deprivation mean for a child's life?

Direct material effects of poverty:

- Access to quality services (cost, location, access)
- Housing quality (overcrowding, heating, damp, neighbourhood)
- School-based deprivation (uniforms, books, pens, outings)
- Neighbourhood conditions (physical & safety)
- Consumer goods (although differing evidence in this regard)
- Leisure

What does poverty and deprivation mean for a child's life?

Other direct effects of poverty:

- Cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes
- Physical health
- Status/comparing yourselves to others – particularly related to issues of relative poverty: beyond deprivation
 - Being and feeling different a common theme in research with children from low-income families
- Children's orientation towards the world – feelings of hope, having a future

What does poverty and deprivation mean for a child's life?

- Direct effect of income only explains part of the relationship between low income and child outcomes, but lack of household income is a key driver behind poor outcomes for low-income children (Gregg et al, 2007).
- **Indirect effects:**
Mediated by other factors that tend to be closer to the lived experience of children than household income or resources, such as:
 - Parental stress and parenting challenges can result in parent/child conflict or poor parenting practices
 - Wider neighbourhood characteristics, e.g. UE rates

What factors can mediate the effects of poverty on children's lives?

- Risk factors do not always predict the effects of poverty and deprivation on children: experiencing low income and/or material deprivation may not translate into experiencing social exclusion and poor child well-being
- A child-centred perspective on poverty might understand that children's fate is not entirely dictated by parents' financial circumstances
- We need to identify and understand the mechanisms by which children can be protected against the ill-effects of poverty and the mechanisms by which poverty takes a toll

Risk and Protective Factors (1)

Risk and protective factors can either increase or decrease the probability of negative child outcomes and negative experiences:

- **Poverty persistence**
- **Child characteristics**
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Children's own interpretation (psychological and individual)

Risk and Protective Factors (2)

- **Home environment**
 - Parents (love, 'doing things' with them)
 - Family members and extra-familial adults
- **Wider social environment**
 - Friends - support of trusted peers
- **External environment**
 - Services
 - Social support/networks for parents - children may be indirectly impacted on as support eases parents' psychological distress

Children and Social Exclusion

- Desire to move beyond the material has led to social exclusion focus
- Defined as 'being unable to participate in society because of a lack of resources that are normally available to the general population' (OSI)
- Term loosely used, concept heavily debated
- Not as easily quantified as income poverty and deprivation
- But non-participation can arise due to discrimination, ill-health, geography, or culture (Burchardt et al, 2002).

Children and Social Exclusion

- Also valuable concept for focusing on agency and process (Burchardt et al, 2002): who, how, why, what
- Poverty can lead to SE effects, but mediated
- For children, questions might include:
 - what is it that children are excluded from?
 - who is excluded?
 - who is excluding them?
 - how are they being excluded?
 - why can they not be included?

Exploratory study with children and young people

- Aged between 9 and 18 years
- Varying SES but more low-income
- Understanding of poverty rather than personal experiences
- Aimed to understand how children 'talk about' poverty and also to test issues arising in the literature review
- 'Poverty' not a child word - 'being poor' is understood. 'Being poor' is about not having enough money
- Inclination amongst younger children to understand poverty as occurring in other countries, or homeless children or children begging in Ireland

Children's perspectives on poverty

- I: What do you think are the most important things for a children to have?
R: Water and a bath they can wash in, and food.
I: Is that the same for children in Ireland do you think?
R: No, Africa.
I: Is there something else children in Ireland need?
R: No.
I: So just the basics.. And what to you think about having the right clothes. Do you think children need labels?
R: No.
I: What about things like affording to have a birthday party?
R: Yeah, so that they can enjoy themselves on their birthday.

Children's perspectives on poverty (con't)

- I: What do you think about having money to buy a present?
R: Yeah, they can buy them presents and have a nice birthday.
I: So that's important. What about things like days out?
R: Well, in their summer holidays they can go out to a beach with their friends...
I: So those type of things do you need money for?
R: Yeah.
I: Do you think that all children here in Ireland have those things?
R: No, not a lot of children have those things.
I: Why wouldn't they have those things?
R: They wouldn't have the money.

(Girl, age 9, experiencing poverty)

Children's perspectives on 'what helps' children in poverty

- I: Do you think that children can be happy even though their parents don't have a lot of money?
R: They can still be happy, as long as they are with their parents' (boy, age 9, experiencing poverty)

I: And why is family so essential?
R: I just personally think that it's just a fundamental thing that you need for life. It's kinda stability and role model all rolled into one...it's kinda hard to say why
(young man, age 15, not experiencing poverty)

Children's perspectives on the effects of poverty on children's lives

- I: Can children and young people still be happy and healthy even if their family don't have enough money?
R: Yeah they can, yeah, no bother. It's just that, it just depends how it's dealt with... you can be less fortunate than other people but it doesn't mean that you won't have a full life. I mean, it's just the way how its managed, that's all.

(young man, age 16, experiencing poverty)

Children's perspectives the effects of poverty on children's lives

- I: Do you think that living in poverty has an effect on young people's hopes and dreams for the future?
R: I think that its kind of like a drive for a lot of people, because they want better, they want to keep improving their lives, and they try to do new things.
(young man, age 15, not experiencing poverty)

I: How do you think being poor makes children feel?
R: They would get used to it'
(boy, age 9, experiencing poverty)

Children's perspectives the effects of poverty on children's lives

- I: Do you think living in poverty has an effect on young people hopes and dreams for the future?
R: Yeah, you could be kind of limited to what you think you can do. But I suppose if you get out of the, if you can go off by yourself and get a job and raise the money to do what you want. I suppose then there's nothing stopping you but I suppose getting into college... without the grant then that can stop you but...
I: So what's limiting them? Is the cost of going to third level?
R: Yes

Children's perspectives the effects of poverty on children's lives (con't)

I: How does being poor and living in poverty make young people feel, do you think?

R: Suppose it can be... no I'm kind of ignorant to that kind of thing coz I just know myself what I think; can I give you my opinion?

I: Yes

R: Well, I know that I don't really care, it's just I know it's there, like. I know it kind of hinders me to what I can do and kind of, it kind of makes you feel inadequate.

(young man, age 16, experiencing poverty)

Policy issues

- Understanding and measurement is related to action – a partial understanding of what child poverty means to children's lives may result in inadequate or poorly designed responses
- What are the basic requirements for children in order to thrive) - difficult to gauge this on income and poverty if we concentrate on household level
- While understanding child-specific deprivation is very important, we need to reintroduce the relative poverty concept into the debate if we truly want to understand child poverty

Moving forward....

- Your thoughts on moving forward with phase 2
- We have many questions:
 - How best can we add to debate on children's lives in the context of NAPincl, T2016, National Outcomes Framework, next Nat. Children's Strategy?
 - Should we develop a child-centred deprivation index using existing and new research – objective and subjective dimensions + material and non-material
 - In developing such indicators –who should we ask?
 - Methodology: a sample comprising families from a broad, socio-economic background v families on low incomes? Broaching the 'P' word?