

Child poverty and social exclusion

Gill Main¹ and Jonathan Bradshaw²

Introduction

This chapter details findings on child poverty and social exclusion from the 2012 UK Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey (PSE2012). The 1999 Poverty and Social Exclusion Study of Great Britain (PSE1999), which at the time offered the most comprehensive data on child poverty and social exclusion gathered in Britain, was completed amidst an atmosphere of hope in relation to the outlook for poor children and families. New Labour's landslide victory in the 1997 General Election was followed by then Prime Minister Tony Blair's commitment in 1999 to end child poverty within a generation. This commitment was made in the aftermath of 18 years of Conservative governments, under Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) and John Major (1990-1997), who had overseen drastic increases in the child poverty rate³. Lloyd (2006), in her analysis of child poverty in the PSE1999, details many of the policy changes and interventions designed to combat child poverty. These changes culminated in the 2010 Child Poverty Act, which committed the government to monitoring and reporting on progress in relation to four targets to be achieved by 2020:

- Fewer than 10% of children in *relative poverty* (equivalised household income <60% national median, before housing costs);
- Fewer than 5% of children in *combined low income and material deprivation* (equivalised household income <70% national median before housing costs, and material deprivation (having a score of 25 or less on the Households Below Average Income child material deprivation measure – see Carr et al, 2014 for more details.);
- Fewer than 5% of children in *absolute poverty* (equivalised household income <60% national median of the base year (2010/11), fixed in real terms).
- Fewer than 7% children in *persistent poverty* (equivalised household income <60% national median for three out of the previous 4 years; target set October 2014).

Child poverty declined steadily over the course of the Labour government⁴, The 2010 Child Poverty Act passed through parliament with cross-party support. However, long before that milestone, analyses of the progress being made towards policy goals demonstrated that greater efforts would be needed to achieve the targets. Brewer et al's (2002) report highlighted the need for significant increase in investment if policy targets were to be met; Harker's (2006:7) report for the Department for Work and Pensions reaffirmed these concerns despite policy developments in the second Blair ministry of 2001-2005, stating that "current policies [are] unlikely to meet the 2010 target to halve child poverty". Concerns were exacerbated by the global financial crisis which hit the UK in 2007/8. Labour's initial response of anti-cyclical spending including the early uprating of benefits and increasing taxation on higher incomes offered some protection to poor families, but declining real wages, growing unemployment, and the increasing cost of necessities such as food, fuel and private rents resulted in child poverty rates flat lining post-2010. The 2010 General Election delivered no clear winner and the resulting Conservative-led Coalition government, in partnership with the Liberal Democrats, oversaw a reversal of Labour economic policy. An austerity agenda was pursued, with substantial cuts impacting families through direct reductions in social security spending, and indirectly through cuts to funding for services. The 2015 General Election returned a slight Conservative majority, cementing austerity as the dominant economic policy.

Elsewhere we make a detailed examination of the emerging impact of the crisis and subsequent policy changes on child poverty (Bradshaw et al, forthcoming), arguing that while the Coalition and Conservative governments have positioned austerity as economic necessity, a closer

examination of their response reveals an ideological basis to their reforms which has disproportionately impacted children and families. Here, we examine findings from the PSE2012, relating our results to government policy and rhetoric about poor children and families, and developing practice in child poverty measurement. We examine perceptions of the necessities of life for children, and how these have changed over time; rates of child poverty and the characteristics of poor children; children's experiences of social exclusion; and how resources are shared within children's households.

The Child Poverty Act's receipt of Royal Assent in 2010 was preceded by over a decade of policy effort. While, as noted above, these efforts were not unequivocally successful, substantial progress was made over these years. Bradshaw (2011), Piachaud (2012) and Lupton et al (2013) concluded that substantial progress had been made in tackling child poverty and improving children's outcomes. Furthermore, Lewis (2011) noted a broad political consensus on the 'pillars' forming the basis on which eradicating child poverty would be achieved, including redistribution, activation/work intensification, and upskilling workers. Changes introduced under the Conservative-led Coalition and subsequent Conservative governments, whilst broadly based around these same pillars, reflect a different emphasis which mirrors a different underlying explanation of poverty. That is, while individual explanations of poverty (which, in contrast to structural explanations, focus on individual shortcomings rather than social structures as the cause of poverty) were evident in some Labour policies, these are much more dominant in Conservative policy and rhetoric. While the Labour goals of increasing work intensity may be seen as rooted in a desire to 'make work pay', Conservative policies have increasingly been framed along the slightly different approach of 'ensure social security does not pay'. This emphasis is evident in the combined impact of their reform of working-age social security which has included variously the abolition, freezing, and cutting of different benefits (see Main and Bradshaw, 2014 and 2016); and the rhetoric around child and working-age poverty which has been framed in terms of 'overly generous' benefits 'trapping' poor families into dependence (Joint Public Issues Team, 2013; see also Main and Bradshaw, 2016). As a result, the role of redistribution has significantly declined since 2010, and several analyses of the distributional consequences of austerity have concluded that families with children are among the main losers (Cribb et al, 2013; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013; Lupton et al, 2015; Reed and Portes, 2014).

Alongside the shift in focus of economic policy noted above, discussions of child poverty have simultaneously shifted from a focus on increasing incomes as the best route to poverty reduction, to upskilling poor parents and altering parental behaviours, which have been positioned as among the root causes of child poverty (see Main and Bradshaw, 2014 and 2016). An advantage of the PSE2012 approach is that it allows for an examination not only of overall poverty rates, which enable an examination of the relative position of children compared to other population groups; but also of specifically what children are going without and how child deprivation compares to deprivation among the adults children live with. This is vitally important given the increased emphasis of the Conservative government on parental behaviours and skills, rather than low income, as the main sources of concern in relation to child poverty.

In the remainder of this chapter we go on to examine perceptions of the necessities of life for children in 2012, and some trends over time in these perceptions where data are available from earlier, similar surveys. The consensual approach to poverty measurement as applied to children is discussed, and an argument is made for the inclusion of children as respondents in similar future studies. We then examine child poverty and social exclusion using several of the measures available in the PSE2012 survey. Finally we discuss the sharing of resources within children's households.

The necessities of life for children

In the PSE2012, necessities of life for children were established in the omnibus survey, using adult (aged 16+) reports on items and activities seen as necessary for children. Table 1 shows the proportion of the population viewing a range of items and activities as necessities for children, comparing PSE2012 and PSE1999. There is a fairly high level of stability for most items. Based on confidence intervals⁵, there are significant differences for 11 of the 20 comparable items and activities (shaded in grey). However, no pattern is evident in the direction of these differences. For four items, a higher proportion saw them as a necessity in 2012; for the remaining seven a higher proportion saw them as a necessity in 1999. Additionally, four of the items were included in the 1990 Breadline Britain survey and the 1983 Poor Britain survey. These included:

- Eating three meals a day – the proportion viewing this as a necessity has steadily increased, most notably from 82%-90% between 1983-1990, but up to 93% in 2012
- Separate bedrooms for children of different sexes over the age of ten – the proportion viewing this as a necessity increased from 77%-82% between 1983-1990, but has since decreased to a low of 74% in 2012
- Outdoor leisure equipment – the proportion viewing this as a necessity has remained relatively stable over time, ranging between 57-61% across the four surveys with no clear trend
- Friends round for tea or a snack once a fortnight – the proportion viewing this as a necessity was below the cut-off of 50% in 1983, with only 37% viewing it as necessary for children. This proportion increased to 52% in 1990, bringing it just above the threshold. However, this proportion dropped to 49%, just below the threshold, in 2012.

Table 1: Proportion of the adult population viewing items and activities as necessities, and comparisons between 2012 and 1999

	Proportion viewing item/ activity as a necessity (2012)	Proportion viewing item/ activity as a necessity (1999)
A warm winter coat (coat)	97	95
Fresh fruit or vegetables at least once a day (veg)	96	93
Three meals a day (3 meals)	93	90
New, properly fitting, shoes (shoes)	93	94
A garden or outdoor space nearby where they can play safely (garden)	92	(68)
Books at home suitable for their ages (books)	91	89
Meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least once a day (meat)	90	77
A suitable place to study or do homework (study)	89	-
Indoor games suitable for their ages (games)	80	(83)
Enough bedrooms for every child of 10 or over of a different sex to have their own bedroom (bedroom)	74	78

Computer and internet for homework (computer)	66	(41)
Some new, not second hand, clothes (clothes)	65	70
Outdoor leisure equipment (leisure)	58	60
At least four pairs of trousers, leggings, jeans or jogging bottoms (trousers)	56	69
Money to save (save)	54	-
Pocket money (money)	54	-
Construction toys (toys)	53	62
A bicycle (bike)	45	54
Clothes to fit in with friends (style)	31	-
A mobile phone for children aged 11 or over (mobile)	26	-
An MP3 player (mp3)	8	-
Designer/brand name trainers (pumps)	6	-
Celebrations on special occasions (celebrations)	91	92
A hobby or leisure activity (hobby)	88	89
Toddler group or nursery or play group at least once a week for pre-school aged children (nursery)	87	88
Children's clubs or activities such as drama or football training (clubs)	74	-
Day trips with family once a month (family trip)	60	-
Going on a school trip at least once a term (school trip)	55	74
A holiday away from home for at least one week a year (holiday)	52	70
Friends round for tea or a snack once a fortnight (snack)	49	59

2012 figures based on own analysis of the PSE2012 data; 1999 figures taken from Lloyd, 2006; shaded cells indicate a statistically significant difference; figures in brackets denote a change in question wording between the two surveys.

Child deprivation and children's perspectives

The enforced lack approach used in PSE2012 - based on the position that lacking a socially perceived necessity is only considered a deprivation if the reason for lacking is inability to afford the item/activity – was instigated by Mack and Lansley (1985) in response to criticisms of Townsend's (1979) approach from Piachaud (1981) that counting all items lacking irrespective of the reason for the lack may miscount as poor those who lack items/activities through personal preference. However, complications arise with this approach when child, rather than adult,

poverty is the issue of concern. Such complications (not all of which are relevant to the PSE2012 survey, but which are relevant to deciding on an approach) comprise:

- Where adults are respondents, how suitable and accurate is it to rely on them as proxies for reporting children's preferences?
- Where children are respondents, can an adequate knowledge of household finances be assumed to enable trust in 'can't afford' responses?
- Further to the above, if child reports are used and indicate the child lacks and wants an item/activity, is the ability of adults to afford this item a relevant factor in whether the child is deprived or not, given that the child's preferences are not being met whether or not adults can afford it?
- Where children's preferences (or adults' reports of children's preferences) indicate that a child does not want items/activities widely believed to be instrumental in healthy development towards successful adulthood (e.g. nutritional, educational and developmental resources), what does a non-enforced lack indicate?

Such questions are important considerations in deciding on how to conceptualise, define and measure poverty. For example, Gordon et al (2003) base their decisions around cut-off points in the diagnosis of poverty on a consideration of whether factors such as sexism or illness, rather than limited household resources, may be the reason some children lack necessities. They cite the example of girls going without educational necessities in some developing countries as a result of gender-based discrimination. Their decision to omit deprivations resulting from discrimination is based on a desire to avoid misclassifying a household as poor if the children within the household are deprived for other reasons; an alternative approach focused on individual rather than household resources would be to class children as deprived irrespective of whether the cause of their deprivation is discrimination or lack of household resources, on the basis that in either scenario the child lacks access to the resource. In line with this latter approach, UNICEF6 have taken the view that if a child lacks a socially perceived necessity regardless of whether an adult says they lack it because they cannot afford it then it is an abrogation of child rights and should be treated as a deprivation. These issues require careful theoretical consideration, and the approach taken must be driven by the particular theoretical basis, definition of poverty, and needs of the specific research. Elsewhere we have explored the potential to use the consensual method of poverty measurement with children (aged 8-16) themselves, with promising results suggesting that comparing children's and adults' reports on children's can offer a broader insight into their living conditions (Main and Bradshaw, 2012; Main, 2013).

Theoretically, then, there are viable rationales for opposite approaches to enforced and non-enforced lacks for children in the adult-reported PSE2012 data. Practical implications of analytical decisions are also important. These can be tested through comparing the rates of deprivation based on parentally-reported enforced versus non-enforced lacks, and the kinds of children determined to be in poverty when alternative deprivation criteria are used – i.e. when all lacks, rather than just enforced lacks, are counted as deprivations. In order to assess the potential impact of adult misclassification of items as lacked and not wanted when children do in fact want them, we explored differences between deprivation rates on each item or activity and among children lacking multiple items and activities based on consideration of enforced lack (want but cannot afford) and other lack (lack for other reasons). For most items, differences were found to be very small (<5%), indicating that few adults report children as lacking these for any reason other than being unable to afford them. Exceptions include:

- Outdoor leisure equipment (10%)
- Construction toys (23%)
- Pocket money (14%)
- Money to save (6%)

Among the activities, we found comparatively high levels of discrepancy between enforced and non-enforced lack: all but celebrations on special occasions had differences over 5%:

- Hobby (7%)
- School trip (13%)
- Toddler group (23%)
- Clubs (19%)
- Day trips (13%)
- Holidays (9%)

For some of these items and activities (for example toddler group) it would be very difficult to ascertain whether parental reports truly reflect children's preferences, due to both the young age of child to which the activity is applicable, and the purpose of the activity which may meet both parental and children's needs. Others, however, such as pocket money and school trips, would lend themselves to testing through comparing parental and children's reports, since these items are particularly relevant to older children who have been demonstrated to have the capacity to respond to such questions (see Main and Bradshaw, 2012).

We next examined differences between indices of deprivation based on the two different methods of classification. These were created in the first instance by summing enforced lacks and in the second instance by other summing all lacks. We established thresholds based on classifying similar proportions of children as deprived, and compared the characteristics of children experiencing deprivation based on these alternative approaches. We examined the odds of being in poverty based on household employment status, family type, child age, ethnicity, and housing tenure type. Using logistic regression models to examine the odds of children being deprived, we found that:

- Household employment status and the child's age retained significant links to deprivation when enforced lack definitions were used, but not when all kinds of lack were counted.
- No clear pattern of difference between the two approaches was evident based on family type.
- Differences based on ethnicity were also unclear, but Pakistani/Bangladeshi children were more likely to be deprived when all lacks were counted, an association which was not statistically significant when only enforced lacks were included.
- Children in socially or privately rented accommodation were more likely to be deprived than children in owner-occupied accommodation irrespective of the method for calculating deprivation.

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On the whole, based on minimal differences between the logistic regression models, we found little evidence that there would be substantial differences in our findings based on using the enforced lack approach as opposed to counting all lacks as deprivations. However, the rather substantial differences between rates of enforced compared to all lacks for some items and activities highlights the importance of considering this issue, since children and parents may differ in their assessments of whether children are deprived or not. Our finding that household employment status was significantly associated with enforced lack but not with all lacks is not surprising, given that more employment in children's households is likely to be associated with higher income, meaning that lacks may be more likely to be a result of choice rather than necessity. However, it does not necessarily follow that the choices are those which children themselves, rather than parents, would make. Given that children are exposed to environments outside of their homes, and may encounter peers with access to resources which they themselves lack, it is entirely possible that children may be sensitive to lacking items and activities whether

or not the reason for this lack is low income. Therefore, we fully acknowledge the value of the UNICEF approach and, furthermore, would strongly advocate for the inclusion, as far as practicably possible, of children in future PSE-style studies. This inclusion should be in defining what items and activities are considered necessities and in reporting on whether they have or lack socially perceived necessities. Based on our own concurrent research noted above (Main and Bradshaw, 2012), we believe there is a strong case for considering children aged eight and over to have the capacity to respond to these types of question in survey settings.

Child poverty and social exclusion

One important advantage of the PSE surveys is the production of data in relation to various resources, which enables the examination of different approaches to assessing poverty and deprivation. While many studies of poverty rely on household-based measures of income, the PSE2012 can be used to provide measures of deprivation (based on access to resources and activities), income poverty (based on household income), and a combined measure of the two which enables the creation of an individualised poverty measure which combines a focus on individually-experienced deprivations and household-level resources (i.e. income and other material resources which relate to the household rather than the individual, such as those relating to living conditions). Gordon and Nandy (2012) provide details of how such a measure is constructed. Thus three measures of child poverty are reported on below:

- Deprivation, based on children's access to child-specific personal and household non-income resources: overall, 21% of children are deprived.
- Income poverty, based on the after-housing-costs equivalised income of the household in which children live: overall, 33% of children are in income poverty.
- PSE poverty, based on a combination of income and deprivation: overall, 27% of children are in PSE poverty.

Table 2 presents details of poverty rates and composition according to various sociodemographic characteristics. Significant differences between different social groups in their risk of exposure to poverty are detailed in the text below.

Household employment status

Deprivation rates were significantly higher among children in households where all adults work part-time (37%), and those where no adults work and the majority are either unemployed (42%) or inactive (42%). All household employment statuses other than all adults working full time represent a greater risk of low income, with the highest rates amongst children in households where no adults work and the majority are unemployed (77%) or inactive (57%). Similar household employment statuses predict an increased risk of PSE poverty as of deprivation, with those in households where all adults work part-time (43%), where no adults work and most are unemployed (47%), and where no adults work and most are inactive (60%) experiencing a significantly greater risk.

In terms of poverty rates, then, statistically significant associations exist between household worklessness and the chances of experiencing poverty, and between part-time working and poverty. Looking at the composition of poor children, however, on all measures the majority of children in poverty live in households with at least some paid work (63% of deprived children, 65% of children in households on a low income, and 60% of children in PSE poverty). Between two fifths and a half of children living in poverty live in households with at least one adult in full time work – 45% of deprived children, 47% of children in low income households, and 43% of PSE poor children.

Family type

Household employment status	All FT	15	18	11	8	13	12	23
Some FT, some PT	11	8	25	12	21	12	15	
Some FT, no PT	12	19	27	27	16	19	30	
All PT, no FT	37	11	43	9	43	11	6	
Some PT, no FT	17	7	35	9	18	6	8	
No work, unemployed	42	7	77	8	47	6	3	
No work, inactive	42	30	57	27	60	34	14	
Family type	One adult, one child	36	9	51	9	44	9	6
One adult, two children	32	12	45	10	39	11	7	
One adult, 3+ children	49	17	67	14	80	20	7	
Two adults, one child	8	6	24	12	18	10	16	
Two adults, two children	18	28	24	23	18	22	32	
Two adults, 3+ children	24	24	40	25	30	22	21	
Other	8	4	21	7	15	6	11	
Age of child	0-1	10	5	31	10	22	9	11
2-4	15	13	36	20	28	18	18	
5-10	25	39	36	35	30	36	32	
11-15	26	34	32	27	29	29	28	
16-17	19	9	23	8	19	7	11	
Ethnicity	White British	19	77	31	75	27	78	80
White other	19	4	27	3	30	5	4	

Black Caribbean/mixed	45	4	45	3	44	3	2	
Black African/mixed	51	6	52	4	44	5	3	
Asian Indian	4	0	38	3	9	1	3	
Pakistani / Bangladeshi	37	5	54	6	43	5	3	
Asian other	16	2	34	3	16	2	3	
Other	26	2	48	2	28	2	2	
Tenure	Owner	10	26	17	30	10	22	58
Social renter	43	55	59	47	57	55	26	
Private renter	25	18	49	23	42	23	15	
Other	11	0	4	0	10	0	1	
Total rate	21		33		27			

Own analysis of PSE2012 data; shaded cells indicate <20 unweighted cases.

In addition to overall deprivation, it is possible to use the material deprivation items to form indices representing domains within which children may experience deprivation⁷. These include food⁸, clothes⁹, participation¹⁰; development¹¹; environment¹²; finance¹³; family¹⁴; and individual¹⁵. Children lacking one or more of the items included in each domain are treated as deprived within that domain. The proportions of children deprived in each domain are detailed in chart 1. Fewest children – 4% - are deprived on the food domain; in the family and participation domains, more than 30% of children are deprived. The use of these domains may offer insight into how parents prioritise children’s needs when resources are tight – it appears that parents are likely to prioritise basic survival needs such as food and clothing, over more social and developmental needs relating to family and children’s participation in wider society.

Chart 1: Proportion of children deprived on each domain

Own analysis of PSE2012 data.

Child poverty, social exclusion, and outcomes

In this section we examine the associations between poverty and child-specific indicators of social exclusion and outcomes. Child-specific social exclusion indicators in the PSE covered access to services for children and parents. Four possible negative outcomes for children were included - having had an injury or accident at home requiring A&E treatment; having been bullied; having special educational needs; and having been excluded from school. These questions were asked about all children within the household rather than about each child, so associations were explored between child poverty and living in a household where at least one child had experienced these outcomes. Here and in the next section, we use logistic regression to determine the odds of poor children/parents experiencing a particular issue, compared to non-poor children/parents. Odds ratios are provided, and can be interpreted as follows: an odds ratio

of 1 indicates equal odds, below 1 indicates lower odds, and above 1 indicates higher odds.

Overall, child poverty was found to have significant links with missing out on a range of services and vulnerability to certain negative outcomes. This confirms that growing up in poverty impacts children beyond a simple lack of material resources, as social resources are less likely to be provided for these children and they are more likely to be exposed to social harms. Children experiencing poverty according to the PSE definition (i.e. low income and deprivation) were significantly more likely to be excluded from all services other than public transport to school. The strongest association was with lack of access to nurseries, playgroups or mother and toddler groups. Regarding harms which children were vulnerable to, poor children were no more likely to have had an injury requiring emergency medical attention, or to have special educational needs. However, they were more likely to have been bullied, and to have been excluded from school – which may relate to the social stigma associated with poor children and poor families. Results are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Children’s experiences of exclusion and negative outcomes

Service exclusion				
	% excluded overall	% excluded if poor	Odds of exclusion poor	
Facilities to safely play/ spend time nearby	27%	41%	2.6	*
School meals	12%	17%	1.9	*
Youth clubs	26%	34%	1.8	*
After school clubs	12%	20%	2.4	*
Public transport to school	13%	15%	1.3	NS
Nurseries/ playgroups/ mother and toddler groups	6%	17%	11.4	*
Negative outcomes				
	% overall	% if poor	Odds if poor	
Injury or accident at home requiring A&E	20%	23%	1.2	NS
Child has ever been bullied	34%	44%	1.8	*
Child has special educational needs	16%	17%	1.2	NS
Child has ever been excluded from school	8%	13%	2.6	*

Own analysis of PSE2012 data; NS – not statistically significant; * - significant at the p<0.05 level; ** - significant at the p<0.01 level.

Poor children, poor families?

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, policy rhetoric under the previous Conservative-led Coalition (2010-2015) and now the Conservative (2015-) governments have positioned child poverty as a problem stemming from parental (in)action and behaviours, rather than a structural problem requiring a redistributive response. A strong advantage the PSE poverty measure has over income-based poverty measures is that it allows for an examination of intra-household distributions of resources. Comparing poverty rates between adults and children, and among adults between those who live in households with children and those who do not, we begin to develop a more nuanced understanding of how different social groups allocate their resources, and especially how resources are shared within children's households. Such an understanding can provide evidence to test claims that parental behaviours, rather than low income, is the cause of child poverty. Poverty rates for these groups, compared to a baseline population rate of 22%, were:

- 21% among all adults
- 27% among children
- 15% among adults living in households which did not contain children
- 32% among adults living in households which did contain children

Thus, while poverty rates are higher for children than for adults as a whole, adults who live with children face the highest risk of poverty among these groups. That is, based on a combination of both income and the resources they have access to, adults living with children are more likely to be going without than the children they live with. Breaking this down again so that we can compare adults and children within households, based on classing adults as poor if any adult in the household was poor, and children as poor if any child in the household was poor, we found that:

- 56% of children lived in households where neither children nor adults are poor
- 27% of children lived in households where both children and adults are poor
- 16% of children lived in households where children are not poor but adults are poor
- 1% of children lived in households where children are poor but adults are not poor

This reinforces the above point that adults are more likely to be going without than children. Whilst most children have a poverty status that is congruent with that of the adults they live with, among those who do not a much higher proportion live in what we might term 'incongruent protected' situations – where there is poverty in their household but they are not exposed to it – than in 'incongruent exposed' situations – where there is poverty in their household which they are exposed to but which the adults they live with are not. A reasonable interpretation of this may be that adults are attempting to protect the children in their households from exposure to poverty, often at the expense of their own living standards.

To test this hypothesis further we examined economising behaviours amongst adults living in households containing children (i.e. only adults living in households with children were included in the analysis), comparing those adults who lived in households containing poor children, to those living in households where children were not poor. Adults in households with poor children were significantly more likely to engage in the whole range of economising behaviours¹⁶, compared to adults in households with non-poor children. Examining the proportion of adults engaging in economising behaviours, and the odds of adults in households with poor children economising compared to adults in households with children who were not poor, we found:

- 69% skimped on their own food so that someone else could have enough, odds of 5.0:1 compared to adults in households with children who were not poor
- 56% bought second hand instead of new clothes for themselves, odds of 2.8:1

- 82% continued to wear worn-out clothes, odds of 3.3:1
- 66% cut back on visits to the hairdresser or barber, odds of 4.3:1
- 59% postponed visits to the dentist, odds of 2.3:1
- 87% spent less on their hobbies, odds of 2.9:1
- 92% cut back on social visits, odds of 3.6:1

Thus it appears that evidence points to almost all adults acting in protective ways towards their children, with children exposed to poverty as a result of a lack of household resources, rather than irresponsible or unskilled parenting. Finally, we examined the parenting behaviours of parents in poverty compared to those who were not using a range of measures. Very few significant differences were found in the behaviours of poor and non-poor parents, with similar proportions reporting that their activities with their children included reading, playing games, eating meals, and helping children with homework. A somewhat higher proportion of poor parents reported not attending parents' evenings once a term and not doing sporting activities with their children, while a lower proportion reported not watching TV with their children. These differences may relate to the costs associated with the respective activities – childcare and transport costs may be prohibitive for poor parents wishing to attend parents' evenings, and equipment costs or club fees may prevent engagement with sporting activities. Conversely, watching television together is a relatively cheap family activity. On the whole, the patterns of parenting activities among poor and non-poor parents appears very similar, further challenging the notion that the behaviours of poor parents, rather than the low incomes available to them, are problematic.

Table 5: Parenting behaviours comparing parents of poor and non-poor children

	% excluded overall	% excluded if PSE poor	Odds of exclusion if PSE poor	
Attending parents' evening once a term	4%	8%	3.6	*
Reading with children	15%	17%	.8	NS
Playing games with children	21%	19%	.8	NS
Doing sporting activities with children	31%	39%	1.6	*
Watching TV with children	6%	3%	.3	*
Eating a meal with children	5%	2%	.4	NS
Helping children with homework	10%	9%	1.0	NS

Own analysis of PSE2012 data; NS – not statistically significant; * - significant at the p<0.05 level; ** - significant at the p<0.01 level.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have detailed the main findings relating to child poverty from the PSE2012 survey. The importance of child poverty to children's lives in the present, and to the adults they will become, is well documented; similarly, that child poverty is a serious problem in the UK has been established in a range of cross-national studies (Adamson, 2013). A range of policy interventions under the 1997-2010 Labour administrations, focusing both on redistribution towards families with children and activation of parents, resulted in declining poverty rates

among children. More recently, though, the Conservative-led Coalition and subsequent Conservative governments have implemented austerity measures justified by arguments of economic necessity and by a reconceptualisation of the nature and causes of poverty. Families with children have been among those who have lost out most, through reductions to both incomes and services (Reed and Portes, 2014). While we have yet to see substantial increases in the child poverty rates in the UK, progress has stilled and the vulnerability of families with children to future economic shocks has increased.

While the PSE2012 as a cross-sectional study cannot offer insight into trends in child poverty rates, it contributes to our understanding of the nature and extent of child poverty in the early days of the 2010-2015 Coalition, and some comparisons can be drawn with earlier studies. Comparing perceptions of necessities for children in 2012 and 1999, we find that in most cases there is a high level of stability in terms of what adults deem to be children's necessities. However, it is also clear that in some aspects of children's lives – for example their access to technologies such as the internet – new necessities are emerging which reflect broader social trends. The capacity to examine poverty in a manner which takes into account shared household resources such as income, but also considers children's differing needs compared to adults based on their unique status as both beings with needs in the present and becoming who require resources to develop towards adulthood, is a notable strength of the PSE approach. The resulting characteristics of the PSE poverty measure allow for the comparison of poverty experiences within households, allowing for the development of a strong challenge to current policy approaches detailed above. Simultaneously, we argue that this approach could be further developed through the inclusion of children themselves in future similar studies, addressing some of the possible limitations highlighted for example by UNICEF.

Many of the findings presented here are familiar. The characteristics of poor children reaffirm many previous findings, for example about the associations between child poverty and ethnicity. Regarding household work status, our findings echo official statistics (Shale et al, 2015) which show that most poor children live in households containing at least one adult in paid work. In contrast, our analysis of intra-household sharing represents a development, confirming with quantitative data the findings of qualitative studies which show parents to be sacrificing their own needs to provide for their children (e.g. Ridge, 2002). Child deprivation rates would be much higher, and the depth of deprivation experienced by children more severe, if parents were not sacrificing their own living standards for the sake of their children. Our findings point to the need for a refocusing of policy on poverty reduction through redistribution, considering the needs both of children and parents.

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