

*What a man is depends on his character; but what he does, and what we think of what he does, depends on his circumstances. The characteristics that ruin a man in one class made him eminent in another.*

Introductory Essay, *Major Barbara*  
George Bernard Shaw



# Defining Poverty

- What is poverty?



## Poverty Yesterday & Today

- How does the definition of “poverty” affects us in school. Head start? Title I?
- How do we decide who is living in poverty?



- Is poverty a relative or absolute term? If you own a television, does that mean you are not poor? What if you own a car?
- What is poverty? (Does it mean a deficit of anything other than money?)
- What do you think the poverty threshold for a family with two adults and two kids should be in Ashe County? In NYC?

Test your social class IQ.....



From a NYTimes article, May 26, 2001  
By LOUIS UCHITELLE

A common definition of living above the poverty threshold: "That is self-sufficiency," said David Weinschrott, a United Way director. "Poverty is all about stereotypes. Families with less than \$25,000 fall below self-sufficiency."

Adam Smith would have agreed. There's more to poverty than lacking the bare necessities, he argued. "A linen shirt, for example, is, strictly speaking, not a necessary of life," Smith wrote in 1776. "The Greeks and Romans lived, I suppose, very comfortably though they had no linen. But in the present times, through the greater part of Europe, a creditable day laborer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt, the want of which would be supposed to denote that disgraceful degree of poverty which, it is presumed, nobody can well fall into without extreme bad conduct."

The importance of how we measure poverty, and assess children:

Second international Mathematics Study (SIMS):

1. Scores from children in districts that are well funded, with little poverty --> rate second only to Japan
2. Poorly funded schools with high poverty --> "our aggregate achievement score would have been below those of all other industrialized nations studied and nearly on a par with those of Nigeria and Swaziland" (Payne and Biddle, 1999)

Twenty-seven federal or federal-state programs that provide cash or in-kind benefits link eligibility to the federal poverty line.

(Examples: Head Start, Title I, National School Lunch and Breakfast)

Wall Street Journal attempt to discredit US Census Bureau 1998 report that concluded there are 30 million people living in poverty. WSJ:

Poor are rich compared to the past, therefore,  
Poverty is an issue that has been "solved"

So, can poverty be considered an absolute measure, or is it relative to the times in which one lives?

## History of the poverty measure

1775 English magistrates calculated:

minimum income = the cost of a gallon loaf of bread, multiplied by three, + allowance for each dependent

1963, Molly Orshansky of the Social Security Administration calculated:

Minimal Diet (see following slides)  
(source: US Department of Agriculture, 1955)

1/3 of income = food. Therefore, Orshansky took the cost of the low cost food budget  $\times 3$  = poverty line (1964 = \$3000 for a family of four)

1974: a different basic food budget has been used, but not one the Department of Agriculture considers "nutritionally adequate for long-term use" (Sidel, 1986. pp 3-4)

**Changes in consumption patterns:**

Food accounts for less than 1/6 of current consumption, while it was approximately 1/3 of income in 1955.

Today:

Housing = 42% of total expenditure, while it was 34% in 1955

Single parent expenses: Example, childcare costs

What is the minimum wage?

<http://www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/america.htm>

Minimum wage worksheet:

$$\$7.25 \times 8 \text{ hours} = \$58.00 \text{ per day}$$

$$\$58.00 \text{ per day for 5 days} = \$290 \text{ per week}$$

$$\$290 \times 52 \text{ weeks of work} = \$15,800 \text{ per year}$$

What is the income that defines a family of four as living in poverty in the United States?

Poverty Thresholds for 2010 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years

Size of family unit	Related children under 18 years								
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight or more
One person (unrelated individual).....									
Under 65 years.....	11,369								
65 years and over.....	10,481								
Two people.....									
Householder under 65 years.....	14,634	15,063							
Householder 65 years and over.....	13,209	15,006							
Three people.....	17,094	17,590	17,607						
Four people.....	22,541	22,910	22,162	22,239					
Five people.....	27,183	27,579	26,734	26,080	25,681				
Six people.....	31,266	31,390	30,743	30,123	29,201	28,654			
Seven people.....	35,975	36,199	35,425	34,885	33,880	32,707	31,420		
Eight people.....	40,235	40,590	39,860	39,219	38,311	37,158	35,958	35,653	
Nine people or more.....	48,400	48,635	47,988	47,445	46,553	45,326	44,217	43,942	42,249

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

## 2011 HHS Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Family or Household	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$10,890	\$13,600	\$12,540
2	14,710	18,380	16,930
3	18,530	23,160	21,320
4	22,350	27,940	25,710
5	26,170	27,940	30,100
6	29,990	37,500	34,490
7	33,810	42,280	38,880
8	37,630	47,060	43,270
For each additional person, add	3,820	4,780	4,390

SOURCE: Federal Register, Vol. 76, No. 13, January 20, 2011, pp. 3637-3638

Table B. Number of Poor and Poverty Rate by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1998, 1999, and 2000

(Number in thousands. For an explanation of confidence intervals (C.I.), see [www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/poverty00/pov00src.pdf](http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/poverty00/pov00src.pdf))

Characteristic	3-year average 1998-2000		Average 1999-2000		Average 1998-99		Difference in 2-year moving averages <sup>1</sup>	
	Value	90-percent C.I. (±)	Value	90-percent C.I. (±)	Value	90-percent C.I. (±)	Value	90-percent C.I. (±)
<b>PERCENT</b>								
All races .....	11.9	0.2	11.5	0.3	12.3	0.3	*-0.7	0.4
White .....	9.9	0.2	9.6	0.3	10.1	0.3	*-0.6	0.4
Non-Hispanic .....	7.8	0.2	7.6	0.3	7.9	0.3	-0.3	0.3
Black .....	23.9	0.9	22.9	1.0	24.8	1.0	*-2.0	1.3
American Indian and Alaska Native .....	23.9	3.3	27.1	3.8	23.1	3.8	1.0	4.9
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	11.3	1.2	10.7	1.3	11.6	1.4	-0.9	1.8
Hispanic <sup>2</sup> .....	23.1	1.0	22.0	1.1	24.2	1.2	*-2.2	1.4
<b>NUMBER</b>								
All races .....	32,624	656	31,698	755	33,967	772	*-1,669	688
White .....	22,222	529	21,607	614	22,688	628	*-1,081	807
Non-Hispanic .....	15,982	442	14,723	514	15,337	524	-614	674
Black .....	8,451	311	8,131	357	8,726	366	*-595	468
American Indian and Alaska Native .....	701	103	786	121	692	115	75	152
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	1,250	130	1,194	149	1,281	153	-67	195
Hispanic <sup>2</sup> .....	7,555	320	7,297	302	7,754	370	-457	471

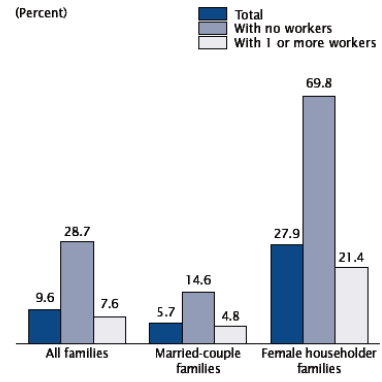
\*Statistically significant at the 90-percent confidence level.

<sup>1</sup>As a result of rounding, some differences may appear to be slightly higher or lower than the difference of the reported rates.

<sup>2</sup>Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999, 2000, and 2001.

Figure 6.  
**Poverty Rates of People in Families  
by Family Type and Presence of  
Workers: 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2001.

## Do you know the hidden rules?

Can we really teach without knowing the rules we live by, and without also knowing the rules by which our students live?

## Hidden Rules

### GENERATIONAL POVERTY

◆ The driving forces for decision making are survival, relationships and entertainment.

◆ People are possessions. It is worse to steal someone's girlfriend than a thing. A relationship is valued over achievement. That is why you must defend your child no matter what he or she has done. Too much education is feared because the individual might leave.

◆ The "world" is defined in local terms.

◆ Physical fighting is how conflict is resolved. If you only know casual register, you do not have the words to negotiate a resolution. Respect is accorded to those who can physically defend themselves.

◆ Food is valued for its quantity.

### MIDDLE CLASS

◆ The driving forces for decision making are work and achievement.

◆ Things are possessions. If material security is threatened, often the relationship is broken.

◆ The "world" is defined in national terms. The national news is watched; travel tends to be in the nation.

◆ Fighting is done verbally. Physical fighting is viewed with distaste.

◆ Food is valued for its quality.

### WEALTH

◆ The driving forces for decision making are social, financial and political connections.

◆ Legacies, one-of-a-kind objects, and pedigrees are possessions.

◆ The "world" is defined in international terms.

◆ Fighting is done through social inclusion/exclusion and through lawyers.

◆ Food is valued for its presentation.

### Other Rules

◆ You laugh when you are disciplined; it is a way to save face. Your mother is the most important person in your life. Many times, the mother is the keeper of the soul. An insult against your mother is unforgivable.

◆ The noise level is higher, non-verbal information is more important than the verbal, emotions are openly displayed, and the value of your personality to the group is your ability to entertain.

◆ Destiny and fate govern. The notion of having choices is foreign. Discipline is about penance and forgiveness, not change.

◆ Tools are often not available. Therefore, the concept of repair and fixing may not be present.

◆ Formal register is always used in an interview and is often an expected part of social interaction.

◆ Work is a daily part of life.

◆ Discipline is about changing behavior. To stay in middle class, one must be self-governing and self-supporting.

◆ A reprimand is taken seriously (at least the pretense is there), without smiling and with some deference to authority.

◆ Choice is a key concept in the lifestyle. The future is very important. Formal education is seen as crucial for future success.

◆ The artistic and aesthetic are key to the lifestyle and include clothing, art, interior design, seasonal decorating, food, music, social activities, etc.

◆ For reasons of security and safety, virtually all contacts are dependent upon introductions (connections).

◆ Education is for the purpose of social, financial and political connections, as well as to enhance the artistic and aesthetic.

◆ One of the key differences between the well-to-do and the wealthy is that the wealthy almost always are patrons to the arts and often have an individual artist(s) to whom they are patrons as well.



# Capitalism

We will all act in our own  
best interests, according to  
the principal of utility

- (Laissez-faire industrial capitalism)



# Utilitarianism: Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)

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- The importance of reason over custom and tradition
- Just as nature is explained through reference to the laws of physics, so human behavior can be explained by reference to the two primary motives of pleasure and pain; this is the theory of psychological hedonism.



- At the beginning of the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Bentham writes that "[n]ature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it."
- Bentham believed that the nature of the human person can be adequately described without mention of social relationships.
- Bentham's moral philosophy reflects what he calls at different times "the greatest happiness principle" or "the principle of utility"--a term which he borrows from Hume.



## Connection to Malthus

- Malthusian theory also influenced British policies in Ireland during the 1840s: The government neglected relief-measures during the Irish Potato Famine (1845-1849), seeing mass starvation as a natural and inevitable consequence of the island's supposed over-population.



Can the accumulation of fact  
create meaning? Or must  
meaning precede fact?

- How do children make their experiences meaningful?

*Video: The American Dream at Groton*

1. Why does the minister say “We bring them here to break their hearts”?
2. Why does one of the teachers say, “Class is the dirty little secret of American life”?
3. Why does Jo call her first visit to Groton a “seduction”?
4. What difference does it make if ‘success is assumed’?  
Have you experienced this?
5. Why does Groton need to “reflect America”?
6. Jo thinks it’s a very tough society. Do you agree?
7. Is Jo, as she herself says, a “mutant”? Why does she say this?
8. Why should an educator in NC study the history of mass testing in the US? (Or should they?)
9. How does our society in general define human worth? How do you, personally?