An Examination of the Concept of Need and its Operational Uses in Applied Social Research

Thesis

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Abstract

The concept of need is a central one in the development of social services and other aspects of social policy. Despite its significance, there is a lack of clarity about, and common understanding of, the concept. Concepts are abstractions from reality, and their use requires some shared understanding. A study of the literature shows that there are diverse elements to the meaning and use of the concept: needs may relate to individuals, groups, societies; they may be identified 'objectively' as universals, yet experienced subjectively in cultural contexts which vary in time and space. Social policy is, among other things, concerned with the way in which society acknowledges and responds to identified individual and social needs. It is developed and implemented through the political processes of government, at various levels. In this context the diverse meanings of the concept of need may be used; the extent to which understanding is shared is debatable. This poses problems for the researcher working to identify, survey or measure need in the social policy context. Operational definitions of need will have to be developed; they will be influenced by the political context in which the research is being undertaken. All such definitions will have political implications. Yet many research studies are carried out without acknowledging the nature or implications of the political context on their approach to their research, on their operational use of the concept need, or consequently on their results. Such results often carry a spurious validity and credibility. Researchers working in the social policy context should acknowledge its political nature, at the least try to present and explicate their methodology, including in particular the conceptualization process, to provide readers and users with the basis for evaluating their results.

Contents

Introduction

"The concept of social need is inherent in the idea of social service. The history of the social services is the story of the recognition of social needs and the organisation of society to meet them".(1)

"Social services are designed to meet needs which require outside assistance."(2)

Debate as to the nature of needs, and research attempting to ascertain the nature and extent of needs, have increased along with the growth in the Welfare State's acceptance of responsibility for meeting such needs. Social service provision is often evaluated according to its relevance in meeting current social needs e.g. the Seebohm report found such provision wanting in this respect (3). Legislation is often seen as developing policy in order to meet new needs, or newly acknowledged needs: "The Children Act has put the concept of 'neediness' as a qualification for service provision back on the agenda."(4). Arguments concerning the future shape of social policy often stem from disagreement over what needs are, which should be given priority, and whether or not the state should accept responsibility for meeting them. More than 20 years after Seebohm the implementation of the Community Care legislation led to considerable disagreement about needs and how (and whether) they should be measured: "Mr Yeo confirms the DoH will not be monitoring needs for which no services is available. His apparent reluctance...to refer to the concept of 'unmet need' betrays the sort of double-speak which has characterised much of the government's community care rhetoric." (5)

Despite some current reluctance to collect information about the extent and nature of needs, attempts in the past to base policy decisions on a better knowledge and understanding of the nature of needs has led to both national and local government

sponsoring research aimed at discovering what needs exist among different sections of the population.(6). It is not only in the field of social services that there is interest in the nature of needs. The education system has frequently been criticised because it is inappropriate to the educational needs of the developing child. In the socio-legal field at one time the debate concerning the "unmet need for legal services" was seen as the "area where there is more activity, most interest, most controversy, and most research money".(7) Planners, architects, and even accountants, sometimes try to justify certain of their activities, or show some evidence of social responsibility, by pointing to the way in which their aim is to satisfy the needs of a client, or some part of the population.(8,9) While reference may be made to these other fields of study during this thesis, the main focus of its concern will be policy and research in relation to social services.

Despite the fact that the concept of need occurs frequently in debates and research related to the varied areas of concern mentioned above, there is a considerable lack of consistency and clarity in the way in which the concept is used. Although one of the fundamental points in the Seebohm report was its criticism of existing social services provision based on its failure to meet current social need, the report itself was criticised because "one of the major drawbacks of the report lies in the failure adequately to define social need".(10) While the report's evaluation of social service provision may be correct, it is necessary to be sceptical of such an evaluation when it is based on a concept which is "ambiguous and ill-defined".(11) Gilbert Smith has listed some of the very different ways in which the concept of need was used in the Seebohm report - sometimes meaning administrative categories, sometimes conceptions implicit in current social work thinking, sometimes clients' perceptions of their own needs, sometimes referring to an assumed consensus of what counts as social need, and sometimes, it also refers to 'true need'. Occasionally, also, the report equates social need with social problems.(12) Subsequent reports and related legislation have been similarly problematic, as Chapter 6 will show..

The inconsistent and ambiguous ways in which the concept of need is used necessarily creates problems for any attempt to research into the nature and/or extent of needs. Some research simply ignores the problems of meaning and definition; while others make more or less satisfactory attempts to tackle these problems. The adequacy and implications of some of these attempts (or the lack of them) in social policy research will be discussed in later chapters of this thesis. The essential nature of the problem is stated simply but clearly by Richard White in relation to legal services when he says that the research question "What is the nature and extent of the unmet need for legal services?" involves two problematic assumptions:

a) "that it is possible to define typical situations in which legal

services are needed" and

b) "that the incidence of these circumstances can be quantified".(13)

Similar assumptions lie behind other kinds of service-related research. In more general terms, research into needs involves being able to:

a) define what is meant by saying that needs exist (not necessarily in relation to the individual, as will be discussed later);

b) develop practicable operational definitions which enable the researcher to ascertain not only the nature, but also the extent, or quantity, of such needs.

The problems involved in attempting to undertake these two activities are the concern of this thesis. Before outlining the content of the remaining chapters, it will be useful to consider briefly the nature of concepts, how they obtain their meaning, why their operationalisation is problematic, and hence why this was considered an important area of study.

The language a society uses reflects the way in which that society shapes and limits its perception and understanding of the world. Communication between members of that society requires that certain, limited, elements are abstracted out of the totality of

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experience or sense data. These elements are transformed into symbols, which make up much of language. A symbol is anything (such as a word) which stands for something else. The entity to which the symbol refers can be removed from the situation in which the symbol is communicated without hindering understanding to any great extent. Concepts, in a sense, are the next stage of abstraction. They are not the individual conceptions, evoked by a symbol, but the elements of those various conceptions which are shareable, and mean approximately the same to all who speak the language. "The concept results from the (usually unconscious) selection in discourse of those aspects of conceptions held in common. They are simpler than all that is evoked by the symbol in any given individual; they hold their form through their definition (delimitation) by the group ..... Much is left out, but the result is an increase in ease and clarity of communication".(14)

However, the process by which symbols and concepts are developed is problematic. They are abstractions from experience but "There is absolutely no rule for abstraction".(15) The meaning of a concept, that to which it refers, can vary over time, between groups, as well as between individuals in a group. Although the inter subjective reliability of concepts (i.e. the adequacy with which they evoke conceptions having a basic, formal similarity among individuals) may vary, some such reliability is necessary if effective communication is to occur. Yet the existence of such reliability cannot be assumed, nor its extent. In casual, inconsequential encounters, the extent to which meaning is shared may be of little importance, except, perhaps, to the people involved. Where discourse is related to decision-making which can have a significant effect on the lives of many people, and on the use of vast resources, it is more essential that effective communication should take place, that people understand each other, that they share much of the meanings of the concepts they use. "Need is a concept at the very heart of social policy, a touchstone for academics, politicians, administrators and professionals". (16). Yet frequently concepts, (such as patriotism, socialism, handicap, community, need), with many meanings, are used as the basis for the justification for actions or

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decisions with the apparent assumption that the meaning is understood i.e. that the various meanings, or many of them, are shared. This assumption is, however, questionable; there is frequently little or no evidence that effective communication has taken place because definitions, statements of meaning in the specific context, are rarely given or asked for. That a given concept can have many meanings; that people within specific groups can use a concept in different ways; that this can have important implications for intra- and inter- group communication; that it is necessary for those who use a concept as a basis of their work, as a justification of their action, to clearly specify the meanings they are using: all then will be evidenced and illustrated by this thesis.

"The language of any society of men, including the society of social scientists, develops a power and reality of its own which can easily move out of the control of its creators. Language, if left unstudied and unsupervised, may even come to control its creators. The social scientist may well become like the sorcerer's apprentice; he can weave a magic and a spell with his words about society which can take the shape of myths having a force on the minds of men not unlike the myths of ancient times. Scientific language, then, must be studied not only for its own sake, as in linguistics, but also for other reasons, including the necessity of reducing the magical power that comes with use and misuse of language in social and political life".(17)

A major problem for the social scientist undertaking research is that the language he uses, in particular the concepts he uses, are frequently in widespread use, in a variety of contexts, by a variety of groups, and the meanings involved may be very diverse. Yet, especially if he is undertaking applied research, perhaps on behalf of one of these groups, it is essential that he should be able to come to some agreement over the meanings of concepts with which they are jointly concerned. It is not sufficient for the sociologist to define his concepts as he wants, even if he states his definitions explicitly. "It would be grossly neglectful of his client's interests to disregard what he had in mind simply because he does not command the use of appropriate sociological jargon".(18) The sociologist

should neither assume that the meaning of a concept is shared and unproblematic, nor use it in his own idiosyncratic way, with no concern about the relevance of this use to those whose interest in his work is of a different, perhaps more practical nature, and who may have a different understanding of the concept. Rather, he should discuss the various meanings implied by the use of a given concept, and indicate (and justify) the meanings which he is making most use of in his particular piece of research; the implications of his chosen approach should then be delineated for those likely to make use of his findings.

The problem of the meaning and use of concepts in sociological or social research is not just one of communication between the sociologist and those who may use or read his research. A major problem is involved in the research act itself: in the development of operational definitions i.e. definitions in terms of the empirical data which is to be collected. When we operationalise a conceptual abstraction, we specify the perceivable and measurable counterparts of the phenomena or variable which the abstraction represents. Operationalisation cannot be viewed as independent of conceptualising: it is part of the conceptualisation process. It involves, to a greater or lesser extent, changes or losses in meaning. If there is more to a concept than its operational definition, then it is necessary for the sociologist to indicate clearly the links between the concept as used with its general meaning, and its operational form. "Unless we can reconstruct the processes through which the observer moves from his observations of the social world to his conceptual description of it, we are in no position to evaluate this description".(19)

The sociologist undertaking some form of applied social research particularly needs to specify the relationship between the general and operational form of the concept he uses because of the variety of factors which can influence this process of operationalising - not least the pressure to carry out research in a form of direct use to his client, or to those to whom he may wish his work to be acceptable. (The problems involved in, and the factors influencing, the process of operationalising concepts are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4).

Pauline Morris has illustrated this in identifying some of the issues for sociologists in relation to defining and using the concept of need in the context of the Sociology of Law: "An essential contribution of the sociologist working in the field of the Sociology of Law will be to examine the differing ways in which need is perceived by the various participants in the situation: the legal profession, the government, - bureaucracies ..... and clients ..... If, as seems likely, there are marked differences in the definitions of need as understood by these various groups, it will not be relevant to argue about the rightness or wrongness of particular definitions, nor will it be possible to measure need as a scientific absolute. Need will be seen as relative, and it may then be useful to point out how, and why, in specific situations, one set of definitions (or combination of definitions) prevails over others, and to illustrate the way in which this relates to the authority structure in society, since the definition of need likely to be adopted in terms of the service provided will reflect the power and status of those providing the service rather than definitions of those receiving it".(20) Morris here places the concept of need and its use firmly in the political arena; the implications of this for the ways in which the concept is used and operationalised will be discussed in later chapters.

The main concerns of this thesis, then, are to explore the meaning(s) of the concept of need, with a particular focus on its use in the broad fields of social theory and policy: to identify the problems involved in operationalising the concept in applied social research; and to examine the ways in which the concept of need has been used and operationalised in a range of examples of such research (including some undertaken by the author of this thesis) and related activities, to illustrate the problems and implications of its use.

Chapter 2

The Concept of 'Need' in Sociological Writings

Introduction

"If we are to begin to understand what goes on when people come together, we should give some consideration to the needs which people have and which they try to have realised in their everyday interactions with other persons" (1). Such a consideration of human needs, Phillips argues, has been very much neglected in sociology, despite the fact that the acceptance of the existence of certain needs, such as that for social approval, is fundamental to large areas of sociological theory. Phillips goes on to mention that this latter point has been emphasised in more recent works, by writers such as Lenski and Etzioni, and that these have recognised the necessity for considering needs in many explanations of social phenomena, and some of these writings will be discussed later. But while needs may have been neglected by sociologists, they have by no means been ignored, and the bulk of this chapter will be concerned with an analysis of the place given to needs first in Marx's work, and then in the work of the functionalists, primarily as represented by Parsons and Malinowski. These, together with the works of the writers mentioned above, provide a useful representation of what sociologists have written about the nature of human needs, the factors which determine these needs, how needs are manifested in social behaviour, and the part they play in the determination of social life.

'Need' in Marx

"We must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to 'make history'. But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life ... Therefore

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in any interpretation of history one has first of all to observe this fundamental fact in all its significance and all its implications and to accord it its due importance". (2)

Here can be clearly seen the emphasis which Marx places on the determining part played by man's material needs - though vaguely defined - in social life (history), because a fundamental pre-requisite of social life is that man first maintains his physical self - i.e. 'must be in a position to live'. However, Marx was not concerned only with the needs of man as a physiological organism, but also with his needs as a human being as such, though he does not appear to have made any definitive statement about what these needs might be, referring only to specific needs in certain contexts. He was concerned not only with the part played by the satisfaction of needs (material and human) in general social, economic and political life, but also with the importance for the individual of the satisfaction of his material and 'human' needs.

For Marx, satisfying man's need for food, shelter and clothing was not just a pre-requisite of social life, not just a question of survival enabling social life to take place; it was one of the fundamental factors determining the existence and nature of social life. "The production of life, both of one's own in labour, and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social, relationship.... it is quite obvious from the start that there exists a materialistic connection of men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their mode of production ..."(3). This emphasis on the satisfaction of needs for the survival of the individual and species, as the basis of man's social existence is returned to in a later part of the German Ideology: "Individuals have always and in all circumstances 'started out from themselves', but since they were not unique in the sense of not needing any connections with one another, and since their needs, consequently their nature and the method of satisfying their needs, connected them with one another (relations between the sexes, exchange, division of labour), they had to enter into relations with one another".(4)

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Thus, for Marx, man is a social being purely because of material necessity - he has to co-operate in order to produce the means to live, and also life itself in procreation. All other aspects of social life are dependent upon, or even determined by, man's mode of co-operation, or 'productive forces': "The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general" (5).

Despite the importance attached to the satisfaction of needs as the basis of all social life, it is difficult to discover, in Marx's writings, firstly a justification for this position, and secondly, any explicit statement with regard to the nature of needs. On this first point, Jordan has suggested that whereas it might be reasonable to accept Marx's argument that social relations are determined by productive forces if one limits the definition of 'social relations of production' solely to the organisation of productive processes and labour co-operation within the factory, Marx appears to have meant by this phrase, all social relations (6). And, as he goes on to point out, there is a logical gap here in Marx's argument, for he provides no evidence, as distinct from suggestive hints, to justify the statement that the productive forces determine all social relations.

Not only is Marx vague about the process whereby the satisfaction of needs determines the nature of social life, but also, as mentioned above, he avoids any explicit definition or discussion of the nature of the needs to which he attaches so much importance. So far, we have seen him refer to material needs which have to be satisfied for the individual to survive, and also the need for procreation, though he does not appear to specify whether this is the sexual need of the individual, or a postulated need of the species. However, he does not confine his discussion of needs to purely material ones, nor does he see the latter as unchanging.

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Again Marx is rather vague about the way in which needs alter and increase, despite the fact that he mentions the changing nature of needs on a number of occasions. Sometimes he seems to suggest that some kind of inevitable multiplier process is at work: "the satisfaction of the first need (the action of satisfying, and the instruments of satisfaction which has been acquired) leads to new needs"(7); but, apart from one or two suggestions implicit in other parts of his work, he does not say what these new needs might be. One such 'derived' need is clearly the need for social life itself, which, as we have seen, derives from the satisfaction of material needs, because the latter, at least according to Marx, demanded human co-operation. Thus, he does refer to the 'need' for social life, for example: "... language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men ..."(8). (It may also be that the need to work fits into this category of 'derived' needs - because work was necessary in order to satisfy material needs; but at times Marx also seemed to imply that this was a more fundamental need - a point which will be returned to later).

The development of social life and consciousness seems to be dependent upon the apparently inevitable multiplication of production, needs, and population: "... man's consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him is the beginning of the consciousness that he is living in society at all ... this ... consciousness receives its further development and extension through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and, what is fundamental to both these, the increase of population"(9). But in a later part of the German Ideology, Marx brings this causation back into almost complete circularity, in saying "... since they entered into association with one another not as pure Egos, but as individuals at a definite stage of development of their productive forces and requirements, and since this association, in its turn, determined production and needs ..."(10).

Although Marx does not go into any clear explanation of this process which appears to alter both the quantity and quality of man's needs (or to explicitly discuss the nature of

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these alterations) he does incidentally mention, in different works, factors which must be relevant to this process. The first of these is mentioned above -i.e. the increase in population - which, he says, is fundamental to increased productivity and increased need. The importance for increased productivity of an increase in population is implied by Jordan in his attempt to explain why the latter results in the development of the division of labour (and thus, in effect, increased productivity). He claims that, by increased population, Marx means both its absolute number and density (the latter being relative to the technical state of society). This, he says, introduces the concept of moral density in the Durkheimean sense, that is, the frequency of interaction among individuals which is inseparable from the increase in population or material density. Jordan apparently considers this a sufficient explanation of an increasing division of labour - or at least considers this to be the basis of Marx's explanation. If this is the case, then one can see why an increase in population is fundamental for increased productivity, if one accepts that the latter always results from developments in the division of labour.

It is necessary to look elsewhere in Marx's writings for a discussion of the relationship between increasing productivity and increased needs - and here Marx seems to be concerned more explicitly with the subjective experience of need - if this was implicit in the references to 'need' mentioned above, he did not make this clear. In the first of the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts he quotes Wilhelm Schulz: "For it is because total production increases, and in the same measure, that needs and wants also increase, and relative poverty may grow while absolute poverty diminishes. ... in a developing society, which in the course of a decade increases its total production in relation to the population by one third, the worker who earns the same amount at the end of ten years has not remained as well off as he was, but has become more needy by a third"(11). Marx himself mentions the relativity of need, and the importance of its subjective perception, in 'Wage Labour and Capital': "An appreciable rise in wages presupposes a rapid growth of productive capital. Rapid growth of productive capital calls forth just as rapid a growth of wealth, of luxury, of social needs and social pleasures. Therefore,

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although the pleasures of the labourer have increased, the social gratification which they afford has fallen in comparison with the increased pleasures of the capitalist, which are accessible to the worker, in comparison with the stage of development of society in general. Our wants and pleasures have their origin in society; we therefore measure them in relation to society; we do not measure them in relation to the objects which serve for their gratification. Since they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature"(12).

Taking this relativistic view of the nature of 'need' - and seeing it as similar to wants - it is not difficult to see not only why increased productivity might increase needs (where there was inequality in the distribution of benefits), but also another reason why an increased 'moral density' of population would increase needs - because increased social interaction would provide more opportunity for individuals to compare their situation with that of others, and feel deprived. Thus one can see certain aspects of the complex relationships between needs, production and social relations with which Marx was concerned, despite the lack of a systematic exposition of these relationships.

Also, it is possible to elicit from Marx's writings certain aspects of his beliefs about the nature of men's needs, although again there is no explicit discussion of these. As outlined above, Marx said that needs changed with changes in production and social relations; but he did not appear to believe that men's needs were completely flexible, nor, as mentioned earlier, did he limit the application of the concept 'need' to material objects. He distinguishes between those needs which are characteristic of man as a human being, and which are satisfied in a socialist productive system, and those needs which are created within the system of private property - which deny man his humanity; also, under the latter system, 'human' needs are ignored or suppressed:

"We have seen the importance which must be attributed, in a socialist perspective, to the wealth of human needs; and consequently also to a new mode of production and to a new object of production. A new manifestation of human powers and a new enrichment of

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the human being. Within the system of private property it has the opposite meaning. Every man speculates upon creating a new need in another in order to force him to a new sacrifice, to place him in a new dependence, and to entice him into a new kind of pleasure and thereby into economic ruin ...Every new product is a new potentiality of mutual deceit and robbery. Man becomes increasingly poor <u>as a man</u>; he has increasing need of money in order to take possession of the hostile being ...The need for money is, therefore, the real need created by the modern economic system, and the only need which it creates ... the expansion of production and of need becomes an ingenious and always calculating subservience to inhuman, depraved, unnatural and imaginary appetites. Private property does not know how to change crude need into human need; its idealism is fantasy, caprice and fancy (13)"

"The fact that the growth of needs and of the means to satisfy them results in a lack of needs and of means is demonstrated in several ways by the economist ... First by reducing the needs of the worker to the miserable necessities required for the maintenance of his physical existence, and by reducing his activity to the most abstract mechanical movements, the economist asserts that man has no needs, for activity or enjoyment, beyond that; and yet he declares that this kind of life is a human way of life ...(14)"

"Just as industry speculates upon the refinements of needs so also it speculates upon their crudeness, and upon their artificially produced crudeness whose spirit, therefore, is self-stupefaction, the illusory satisfaction of needs, a civilisation within the crude barbarism of need"(15).

Here Marx makes a strong distinction between those needs (though specifying only 'activity' and 'enjoyment' as examples) which he feels reflect man's 'human' nature, and for which there is greater opportunity for satisfaction under socialism, and the kinds of needs created by a capitalised system, such as the need for money - needs described as 'inhuman, depraved, unnatural and imaginary appetites'; needs with an 'artificially

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produced crudeness'. Here, as will be seen on other occasions, implicit in any account of the 'real' or 'true' needs of man, as a human being, is a vision of some essential 'human' nature. Marx's 'humanism', as Bottomore has pointed out(16), formulates the ideal of a community of men who are able to develop freely, and in harmony with each other, all their personal qualities. And Marx's ideal is the 'productive man' (contrasted with the acquisitive man). One of the essential elements of this man is his need to work, and work in such a way that he can fulfil all his personal, creative qualities. This need to work is the only need which Marx discusses at any length, though he appears to take the existence of the need for granted. His vision of 'productive man' is a starting point which does not itself have to be justified (this will be seen to be true of most statements concerning man's nature and needs) - though, as pointed out earlier, it could be seen to derive from the need to satisfy the basic material needs. But the latter derivation does not justify the need to work in a particular manner, which Marx postulates, and upon which part of his theory of alienation depends. Thus, although at times it is work, without qualification, which Marx sees as the essence of the human being, at other times he distinguishes between work which satisfies the basic human need, and work which does not do this.

For example, in the Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts, he says: "It is just in his work upon the objective world that man really proves himself as a species-being. This production is his active species-life. By means of it nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the objectification of man's species-life; for he no longer reproduces himself merely intellectually, as in consciousness, but actively and in a real sense, and he sees his own reflection in a world which he has constructed"(17). However, not all work led to the fulfilment of the human being; certain types of work, particularly the specialisation and repetition characteristic of production under more extreme division of labour, prevented man from fulfilling himself, and was thus alienating: "What constitutes the alienation of labour? First that the work is external to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that, consequently, he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being,

does not develop freely his mental and physical energies, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased ... His work ... is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs"(18). This type of work thus results in the alienation of labour from the act of production- i.e. from its active species-life, as distinct from alienation of labour from the product of its labour.

Jordan suggests that, having accepted the inevitability of the division of labour, Marx explicitly abandons his idea of the complete man being fulfilled through his work, and a number of passages in the third volume of Capital would seem to support this suggestion: "In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production"(19). But even here Marx is somewhat ambivalent about the relation between work, necessity and freedom. It then appears that man does have some freedom within the kind of work which satisfies his needs: "Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature"(20). But 'the least expenditure of energy' is a clue to his prevailing attitude to work in Capital, because he then continues - "But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basic. The shortening of the working day is its basic prerequisite"(21).

Here Marx seems to have lost confidence in the possibility of industrial work being inherently interesting and satisfying, and thus modifies his view of the complete man satisfying his fundamental need to work - by distinguishing the kind of work which he feels will satisfy this need - i.e. it is satisfied by work or activity beyond that dictated by

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the necessity of producing the material goods which satisfy man's material needs. However, he does not seem to have completely rejected the possibility that man could still fulfil himself in his work; he still felt that this ideal could be reached in communist society - "In the higher phase of communist society, when labour is no longer merely a means of life but has become life's principal need"(22).

A number of important ideas with regard to the concept 'need' arise from a consideration of Marx These include, firstly, the suggestion that the satisfaction of human needs must be seen as a major factor determining patterns of social and economic organisation, and in turn being influenced by them. His vision of man's needs derives from two sources - firstly his ideas as to what is required for man's survival, and secondly as to what is required for man to fulfil himself. That is, he measures need according to certain goals, survival and fulfilment, and, not unconnected, also according to a vision of 'human nature', which influences how he perceives man fulfilling himself.

This results, secondly, in an acknowledgement of the potential difference between an external or 'outsider's' view of man's needs, and the subjective experience of those needs by the individual. He makes a distinction between 'true needs', such as the need to work, which the individual may not recognise, and artificially created 'appetites', which may or may not derive from such needs.

Thirdly, he indicates the relativity of needs, that they change with such things as an increase in population, changes in social organisation, and increased productivity. The relativity of need is partly or wholly dependent on a concern with the subjective element in the concept 'need' - that the individual's experience of need is based on his own comparison of his own situation with that of others. Social, demographic and economic changes create more opportunity for such comparisons, and create the wealth which engender the increasing differences visible in such comparisons.

These ideas will be seen to recur in the following analysis of the concept of 'need', both in sociological and in other writings.

'Need' in Functionalist Theory

The functionalists are probably the main group of theorists in sociology to make significant use of the concept of 'need' in their theories. But there are important differences within this 'school' with regard to the way in which the concept is used. The fundamental distinction here is that between the needs of the individual, (and, sometimes, species), and the needs of the society or social system. In order to exemplify the use of the concept in functionalism, I shall consider primarily the work of Malinowski and Parsons, between whom this distinction is a major differentiating factor: Malinowski focussing on the needs of individuals as a basis to his theory of society, in a way similar to that of Marx, though more explicitly developed, while Parsons' main concern is with the needs, or functional pre-requisites, of social systems, to which the needs of individuals are merely a subordinate factor.(23,24)

However, the distinction between the two is not as straightforward as this; and at the same time there are many similarities. In considering needs and motivations, and the place of these in the social system, both take as given the "drive" of the organism, i.e. the ultimate source of energy deriving from the physiological state of the organism. Neither really attempts to analyse this any further, Parsons saying that it is not important to the sociologist(25); Malinowski, however, insists on emphasising the ineluctable force of these physiological drives, because of their relationship to the satisfaction of the basic needs(26).

Moving on to consider the nature and importance of 'needs' it is important to distinguish between categories of need applying to different 'units'. For Parsons, the concept is used to apply mainly to the individual, the 'minimum needs' being those things necessary for the physical survival and personality development (including basic socialisation) of the

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individual(27). He says that it is not possible to define precisely what are the needs of individuals, but he does admit that a general theory of action will have to come to some decisions about the unity or the qualitative plurality of the ultimate genetically given needs. One important element which he does include among the minimum needs of individuals, however, is the need for primary socialisation, to ensure the development of the basic personality structure of the individual. That is, the physical survival of the organism is not enough - Parsons' starting point is the socialised 'human being'.

The almost parallel concern in Malinowski's theory are what he calls the 'basic' or 'organic' needs: that is, those things necessary for the survival of the individual, but also, and here he deviates somewhat from Parsons, for the survival of the group. But he is not consistent here, sometimes substituting 'race' or 'society' or 'species' for 'group'(28). Clearly, going as far as to include here 'group' or 'society' implies more than if merely using 'race' or 'species', and much more than mere 'individual'. It will be seen that this is a source of some confusion and ambiguity in other parts of his theory. Malinowski provides what he apparently feels is a comprehensive list of basic needs - metabolism, reproduction, bodily comforts, safety, movement, growth and health(29). While it is possible to accept that these may be necessary for the survival of individual and species, it is difficult to see how they ensure the survival of the 'group'. The reverse is more appropriate - that the 'group' would be necessary to ensure reproduction and growth (in its widest sense) in the same way that it would be necessary to ensure the basic socialisation of individuals in Parsons' scheme. Even with regard to individuals (and a continual supply of them via reproduction), the list seems an arbitrary one. It seems doubtful that it would be an acceptable test in biological theory - the category of 'movement' seeming to be a residual category, to explain anything which will not fit into the others.

For Malinowski, the basic or organic needs are the system of conditions in the human organism, culture and environment which are sufficient and necessary for the survival of

the individual and group. Similarly with Parsons, the term 'need' is applied to a set of conditions necessary to achieve a certain goal. That is, in both cases, the concept 'need' is not applied to the subjective experience of individuals, but to an 'objectively' defined set of necessary conditions. Both use a distinct term to apply to the individuals own concern with the satisfaction of his needs - Parsons speaks of 'motivations' or 'need-dispositions', which refer to the individual's orientation towards improving his gratification/deprivation balance(30) - of which the satisfaction of 'needs' would be a part. Malinowski uses 'motive' to refer to the urge or drive to satisfy needs as it is found in operation within any given culture - all such drives being transformed by culture(31). Both allow for the fact that the specific methods of satisfying needs will be culturally varied (though Malinowski, it will be seen, postulated a limiting framework for this variation). Within the concept of need-disposition Parsons' includes both 'gratificational' and 'orientational' aspects - the latter allowing variation, because of varying culture, in the way in which the former is satisfied.

Before considering further certain questions with regard to the individual's culturally-influenced methods of satisfying needs, it would help to clarify matters if the part played by the satisfaction of needs in the theories of society developed by Malinowski and Parsons was outlined. For Malinowski, the starting point of all culture is the problem of satisfying man's organic needs, listed above. The satisfaction of these needs has to be incorporated into every culture, being a minimum set of conditions for any culture. Each need is satisfied by what Malinowski calls a "cultural response"(32):

Basic Needs	Cultural Responses
1. Metabolism	1. Commissariat
2. Reproduction	2. Kinship
3. Bodily Comforts	3. Shelter
4. Safety	4. Protection
5. Movement	5. Activities
6. Growth	6. Training
7. Health	7. Hygiene

He claims that his relating of needs and responses is merely a summing-up of two set of empirical facts; it is not a hypothesis. The cultural responses can always be classified as above, although their particular manifestation in different cultures can be very diverse; also, each response is not an exclusive set of cultural institutions, but a 'chained series' of institutions, related to each other within each chain, but also appearing virtually under every single heading.

Implied in all cultural responses are new types of behaviour, which are as necessary as the satisfaction of the basic needs, because they are always <u>instrumentally</u> related to the needs of the organism. These are the 'derived needs' or 'cultural imperatives'(33):

Imperative (Derived Need)	Response
1. Production, maintenance of implements, consumption.	1. Economics
2. Regulation of behaviour.	2. Social Control
3. Renewal of 'human material' to some standard.	3. Education
4. Enforcement of authority.	4. Political organisation.

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That is, even the most elaborate co-ordinative institutions exist because, indirectly, they serve the satisfaction of the basic organic needs. (Although this can be said to be circular if, as on occasion, the basic needs are defined as those necessary for the survival of the group or society). Malinowski insists that every cultural item has a function - and he uses the term as meaning the relation between a cultural performance and a human need, basic or derived (34). The function of a social institution lies in its contribution to the satisfaction of needs. Each social institution satisfies a set of needs of the individual and of society at large and thus fulfils a function (which is defined by the investigating sociologist; the "charter" is the idea of the institution as defined by the community). Parsons criticises Malinowski for his loose use of the concept of "function", but within Malinowski's scheme it can be appropriately applied to both individual and societal "needs" because of the instrumental relationship between these.

For Parsons himself, the function of a social institution is the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the social system. "..in terms of functional significance relative to the social system, the significance of an action or class of them is to be understood not directly and primarily in terms of its motivation but of its actual or probable consequences for the system."(35) The satisfaction of the needs of individuals plays a much less important part in his theory of society, and this is reflected in his use of 'functional': satisfying the needs of individuals is functional only insofar as this can be demonstrated to benefit the social system; unlike Malinowski, he does not insist that the two will always go together. He recognises that the social system cannot be so structured as to be radically incompatible with the conditions of functioning of its component individual actors (as organisms and personalities). Thus the maintenance of the social system requires that it is adjusted to allow the minimum needs of sufficient actors to be met - these needs including physiological ones, as well as the need for sufficient basic socialisation to ensure the development of the personality, although, as we saw earlier, Parsons did not attempt a comprehensive list of human needs. But he does not see the social system as deriving from the processes involved in satisfying basic needs (i.e. of the individual/species). The

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needs, or functional pre-requisites, of the social system can be considered independently of the needs of individuals, and may even be in conflict with these: "From the point of view of functioning of the social system, it is not all the needs of the participant actors which must be met, nor all the needs of any one, but only a sufficient proportion for a sufficient fraction of the population" (36).

This would seem to be a more sound position then that of Malinowski, for even if men do have certain needs, it does not follow that these will all be satisfied; there is no reason why some needs may not remain unsatisfied, to the benefit of the social system as a whole - but Malinowski's attempt to establish a firm, instrumental link between the cultural and basic needs is not adequately supported. As Cohen has argued, to say that certain specific items of culture are created to fulfil certain needs is almost tautological; the argument could be applied to any item and any need. "Malinowski's insistence that every cultural item must have a function - that is, it exists because it meets some present need, and would otherwise not be there - is an overstatement of the case; the existence of such a function is a matter for inquiry rather than definition"(37). The main difference here between Malinowski and Parsons, as the latter has pointed out (38), is that Malinowski thought in terms of a low level of differentiation -between the organism and the culture - and tried to establish an integration between them, whereas Parsons himself feels that it is impossible to consider problem areas in human behaviour without differentiating four levels or system types: the organism as physiological system; the behaving system or personality; the social system; the system of cultural patterns which survive individual organisms and can be transmitted between social systems. And he does not seek to establish a scheme postulating a perfect integration of these four systems types, but sees such integration as problematic and usually imperfect.

Malinowski's explanation of the way in which the organism's drives become modified into the appropriate cultural responses reflects this dichotomous organism/culture framework. He accepts that drives will not be seen in any kind of pure form, but will always be

modified by the tradition (culture) in which the individual exists. Drives are as "plastic and determined by tradition" as they are "inevitable"(39). He tends to talk in terms of the conditioning of the organism - a conditioning which transfers the goal of the drive to the appropriate cultural instruments. The organism adjusts, and appropriate habits develop. That is, the individual learns the symbolism of his own social group. The cultural response (or instrumental performance) becomes of value because of its link with the satisfaction of the basic needs. The individual will react to all aspects of the instrumental performance (including the need to co-operate with other individuals) with the same 'appetitive force' as he does to the objects which provide physiological pleasure. 'Drive' thus operates in a two-fold way - via conditioning and reinforcement it establishes value for appropriate behaviour, then leads to the carrying out of this behaviour (40).

The same kind of process applies to both basic and derived needs. What is significant about the explanation of behaviour in this organism/culture framework is the lack of importance attached to the independent influence of social life itself. The need for co-operation and social organisation and control arises from the attempt to satisfy the basic needs; they are instrumental, derived needs. In contrast, for Parsons, although motivation i.e. the cultural re-interpretation of drive, is a fundamental aspect of action theory, the understanding of the individual's behaviour is found in the relation of the actor to his situation among other individuals. That is, in addition to the need-dispositions, and usually more crucial in explaining action (or the individual's expectations which govern his behaviour), is the expected reaction of others (41). This reaction comes to be anticipated in advance, and thus to affect the individual's choices. Here, again, Parsons is concerned with the individual as a social being, as distinct from a physiological organism (as he was postulating the 'need' for basic socialisation for personality development). It is the 'sensitivity' of human nature which makes the individual accessible to the influence of the attitudes of others. Acting in accordance with the expectations of others becomes a need-disposition in itself. Although Parsons admits that emotional dependence may derive originally from the early physiological dependence of the child, he does not suggest

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that the individual's continued need for a social existence is purely instrumental to the satisfaction of basic needs. The optimisation of gratification includes the gratification deriving from the receipt of the social approval of others, which is valued for itself.

The fact that Parsons identifies the social element as of independent causal significance reflects the fact, mentioned earlier, that he saw the organism, personality, social and cultural systems as interdependent but analytically distinct systems with attributes, such as needs, which did not derive from one system to another (42). As we have seen, he was vague concerning the needs of the organism: and with regard to the personality emphasised only the need for sufficient basic socialisation for the development of the personality. He was more explicit with regard to the needs, or what he called the functional pre-requisites, of the social system.

It has already been noted that Parsons, unlike Malinowski, did not develop his theory of the social system on the satisfaction of the needs of individuals; as he says "From the point of view of the functioning of the social system, it is not the needs of all the participant actors which must be met, nor all the needs of any one, but only a sufficient proportion for a sufficient fraction of the population ... (the) minimum needs of individual actors constitute a set of conditions to which the social system must be adapted"(43) . He goes on "The obverse of the functional prerequisite of meeting a minimum proportion of the needs of the individual actors, is the need to secure adequate participation of a sufficient proportion of these actors in the social system, that is to motivate them adequately to the performances which may be necessary if the social system in question is to persist or develop". ... "The prerequisite of adequate motivation in turn subdivides into two main aspects, a negative and a positive. The negative is that of a minimum of control over potentially disruptive behaviour"(44). (The positive being the means by which appropriate motivation is developed in the first place).

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The problem of adequate motivation is concerned with the mechanisms of socialisation and social control, and these, together with the mechanisms for the satisfaction of the needs of sufficient individuals, closely parallel the institutional responses to the derived needs or cultural imperatives of Malinowski. As Parsons has pointed out, Malinowski here missed an opportunity to develop a theory of social systems as such, independent of the central focus on individuals. His attempts to bridge the gap between needs and the institutional integrates of collective behaviour was carried out by his insertion of the category of 'derived needs', "clearly the outcome of applying the concept of 'secondary drive' as utilised in Hullian learning theory" (45).

In this way he effectively avoided a difficulty which Parsons accepts as problematic, i.e. how the behaviour of each individual relates to the functioning of the social system. Malinowski is, in any case, rather confusing about this, because of his varied application of the term 'basic need' to the individual, group, community etc. Thus when he argues that human beings have to organise to satisfy the basic needs, his logic becomes dangerously circular. Ignoring this, however, he derives the need for social organisation, as we have seen, from the needs of individuals: integration into the group/society is necessary for survival. All drives are conducive to this integration because they are conditioned to conformity through a shared symbolism. The 'charter' of the group, the traditionally established values, programs, and principles of organised behaviour corresponds directly to the concept of drive, insofar as this is culturally reinterpreted. Thus all culture and social organisation are merely instrumental to the satisfaction of the basic needs; they are the means by which individuals improve the level of satisfaction of their needs (46).

For Parsons, such individual/societal integration was merely an ideal type - the problem for the social system was to motivate sufficient people in the appropriate way i.e. in the way which will ensure that the functional pre-requisites are met. Such motivation may require that an individual ignore certain of his own need-dispositions - there is not the

simple coincidence of individual/socictal needs suggested by Malinowski - although one reason that there need not be conflict in this area is the fact that part of the social system is integrated in the individual's personality structure, during socialisation. Also, conformity to the expectations of others is part of the need-disposition of individual personalities; in particular the individual is sensitive to the values of others, so that value-attitudes become need dispositions. The result is a transformation of the more basic drives to culturally acceptable goals - similar to Malinowski's model. (47) But here the goal, the maintenance of the social system, is not seen as of instrumental significance to the individual.

Parsons includes shared symbolism in those cultural prerequisites necessary for the maintenance of the social system - accepting its problematic nature, and the unlikelihood of a perfect situation, as with the integration of personalities. "Thus a social system.....is not possible without language, and without certain other minimum patterns of culture, such as empirical knowledge necessary to cope with situational exigencies, and sufficiently integrated patterns of expressive symbolism and of value orientation."(48) These minimum cultural prerequisites of a social system may be said to operate at least in part through the functions of culture for personality. Without the requisite cultural resources to be assimilated through internalisation it is not possible for a human level of personality to emerge and hence for a human type of social system to develop.

Again, as mentioned, Parsons does not see as necessary a perfect fit between culture and society, and allows for a certain amount of free play between the two. Malinowski, however, (uncharacteristically) attaches a powerful determining influence to culture. He sees the development of culture as a process of improving the adaptation to the environment, and thus improving the level of satisfaction of the basic needs. But once included in the culture, all adaptations become necessary i.e. all culture has to be permanently reproduced, maintained and managed. (Parsons merely says that a social system cannot afford too drastic a disruption of its culture, because of the repercussions

on the system). Malinowski has left the 'passive' conception of the role of the cultural environment. Man not only has the cultural environment to take advantage of, but he must do so in order to survive. He must learn about his culture and he must conform to its norms and rules. To this extent, the cultural level has acquired theoretically independent significance.(49) This would seem to contradict the controlling importance of biological determinism proposed by Malinowski, and is a move towards a Parsons-type theory of social systems, but one which is not followed up.

How does this comparison of Malinowski and Parsons develop our understanding of the concept of need, and the way in which it is used? Again, it emphasises the importance attached to the concept in understanding society and how it is organised and functions. But linked to this is an appreciation of how confusing this can be if we are not clear about the 'subject' of the needs under discussion - are we concerned with the needs of individuals, groups, societies? The kinds of needs postulated will vary with the subject to whom or which the need is attributed, and it is not always possible to argue that there will be some coincidence or close relationship between the needs of these different elements (though some, such as Malinowski, feel there will).

Secondly, that it is necessary to distinguish between the needs which are attributed externally to various subjects, whether individuals, societies, or whatever, and the subjective experience of those needs in individuals (i.e. their motivations or need-dispositions). Cultural and social factors will influence the latter, so that the manifestation of needs is always culturally determined, and hence relative. This may produce a relationship between society and individual needs within the manifestation of these in the need-dispositions of individuals, but this is not necessarily the case.

Thirdly, that it is extremely difficult to develop complete lists of the needs of any system (individual, society, etc.). All attempts to do so necessarily imply goals, e.g. survival of

the individual, maintenance of the social system. Different systems may at times conflict in their goals e.g. the social system may need the sacrifice of individuals for its survival. Moreover, any lists of the needs of humans requires not only the specification of goals, but also a view of 'human nature', e.g Malinowski specified the needs of the individual as an organism, not a social being (the latter being merely instrumental to the organism), whereas Parsons' list allows for the development of the social human being - hence the place of socialisation amongst his needs (for the development of the personality).

Each of these points echoes some made earlier in the discussion of Marx; before making the connections, further illumination from some more recent writers will be sought.

More recent analyses of the concept

A number of more recent attempts have been made to analyse the nature of human needs, and the importance of taking these into account when explaining the nature of society and social behaviour. A discussion of two of these (50,51) will serve more to emphasise and elaborate some of the points derived from the above consideration of Marx and the functionalists than to say much that is new concerning the concept of need.

Etzioni believes that the restoration of the concept of 'basic human needs' to full membership in sociological theory will serve three purposes:
"a) to correct an 'over-socialised' conception of man which prevails in the mainstream of modern sociology;
b) to conceptualise a central distinction between the modern industrial society and the post-modern one, which seems to be emerging now;
3. to bridge two main sociological traditions which have been growing apart: that of structural-functional analysis, and that of alienation, although both rejected the concept (52).

By 'need' Etzioni means that a person can be denied a specified kind of experience only at the cost of intra-personal tension. That is, the concept is applied directly to the individual. He suggests that it is fruitful to assume that there is a universal set of basic human needs which have attributes of their own which are not determined by the social structure, cultural patterns, or socialisation process. He does not accept that such needs can be satisfied in any number of ways, or that their malleability or cultural variability is such that they cannot be used to explain the existence of specific social institutions. These arguments provide him with a justification for saying that the existence of such needs is verifiable - because they suggest a method for their discovery. (His paper does not attempt to say what these needs are, but outlines how they might be discovered).(53)

He suggests that if these needs are universal, but cultures differ in their cultural patterns, stratification, structure, polity, and role specifications, then societies will also "differ in the extent to which their membership is able to satisfy their needs"(54). The fact that human being (including their needs) can adapt and are adapting to a very large variety of societal structures and cultural patterns is not sufficient evidence that their needs are highly malleable as long as the frustrations they suffer or satisfactions they gain also co-vary. Adaptations may have different costs in different societies.

He goes on to suggest that instead of analysing societies in terms of survival, one can, as with organisations, study their effectiveness in meeting the goals set. In the language of functional analysis, that is, it is important to distinguish between functional alternatives and functional equivalents. Alternatives which allow the system to survive are numerous, but rarely are they equivalent in terms of the effectiveness of the system. Societies' effectiveness in satisfying their members may be used as a basis for comparison - they may differ in terms of the relative levels of disaffection or happiness they generate. Etzioni insists that such differences must be explained largely by differences in the societies' respective responsiveness to members' needs.(55) He dismisses the counter argument that frustration is disaffection generated by intra-societal conflict, such as

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socialisation to conflicting norms, by indicating that this in itself implies the existence of the need for consistency. That is, the analysis of needs lies behind the more immediate influences on behaviour (in the same way, perhaps, as the need to conform is an essential basis for the analysis of interaction). One has to assume the need for consistency before one can say that inconsistency causes tension or conflict.

Etzioni exemplifies his method for ascertaining the existence of basic human needs by considering the cases of the needs for affection and recognition. He proposes that one attribute of these needs will be a built-in, universal preference for frequent satisfaction over an infrequent one. This, he says, can be tested "if both socialisation costs and those of social control are higher for persons who have been socialised into roles in which their needs for affection and recognition are infrequently satisfied than for roles which offer more frequent satisfaction of these needs" (56). He considers it possible to measure the extent of time, resources, attention, and manpower required for socialisation into, and social control of those in, more 'unresponsive' roles, and also the extent of pressure within society for change towards a more 'responsive' society.

He also expects to find measurable differences in the extent and intensity of 'personal' costs (e.g. mental illness) charged against persons who carry out roles less suited to the satisfaction of basic needs. That is, in distinguishing between the individual's needs and his own subjective motivation, it is quite possible for him to be motivated against the satisfaction of his own needs, but at greater personal cost than if the patterns of motivation into which he was socialised reflected, or were responsive to, his basic needs. This questions the position that man can be shaped into finding satisfaction in any role, and that the better socialised a man is, the less is his 'personal cost'. In Etzioni's scheme, this is true only in societies responsive to human nature or needs.

Etzioni then tries to link his ideas with the concept of alienation, defining alienation as a "social situation which is beyond the control of the actor, and hence unresponsive to his

basic needs"(57) - presumably because control is either itself a basic need, or is a means to enabling satisfaction of basic needs. Alienation is reducible, then, when it derives from socio-cultural patterns which can be made more responsive to basic needs than they are (there are parallels here with Marx's view of the way in which work may be more or less alienating); but it is irreducible when it derives from a tension between ultimately incompatible needs, such as those for security and variety or creativity.

Despite his elaborate scheme, Etzioni admits to not having attempted any empirical testing of the idea, and the 'basic human needs' he mentions are merely hypothesised, or based on informal evidence. He emphasises, however, that he is concerned with fundamentally human, rather than biological needs - i.e. those which are universal, but not socially shaped. They are the functional pre-requisites of human beings; if they are not satisfied, the animal-like newborn infant will not become a human being. The needs are answered socially, but they are not socially determined in the sense that no society can opt to do without them. Their at least partial satisfaction is a pre-requisite for the human phenomenon - hence their universality.

Lenski, in Power and Privilege, sees a similar link between the existence of social life and the satisfaction of human needs (partly, it will be seen, because of the kinds of human needs he recognises). He sees social life as essential not only for the survival of the species but also for the maximum satisfaction of human needs and desires - which are largely social in character. He seems to partly follow Malinowski, by saying that through co-operative activity men can satisfy many needs and desires which could never be met otherwise, and can satisfy most other needs much more efficiently, but is less 'materialistic' in the sense that among his 'human needs' are psycho-social as well as biological needs. He provides a list of what he considers to be the main human needs, or 'the goals towards which men strive'. He does not attempt really to justify his choice, or indicate how it could be verified, but says that they can be derived by inductive reasoning

based on inferences from the actions of the individual or the group. They are, in order of priority (which may vary somewhat):

1. Survival

2. Health

3. Status or self-respect (the latter deriving from status among others)

4. Creature comforts (though it may be difficult to distinguish between the concern for comfort and that for status)

5. Salvation in the next world

6. Affection in this world

These, he says, are the goals valued in their own right. Others are sought for their instrumental value. The value of each goal may vary inversely with the quantity already in hand (58).

Unlike Malinowski, but similar to Etzioni and Parsons, he envisions that the needs or goals of society may conflict with those of individuals. The goal of a given society, he says, are those ends towards which the more or less co-ordinated efforts of the whole are directed, without regard to the harm they may do to individual members. Where a dominant class determines the direction of co-ordinated efforts, the goals of society are the goals of this class. Society will be directed towards one of two basic goals:

1. The maintenance of the political status quo, or the minimisation of the rate of internal political change.

2. The maximisation of production.

The former goal is likely to have priority in stratified societies where power is monopolised by the few (59).

On the basis of his ideas about societal and individual needs, Lenski develops a classification of the distributive system of societies, involving two basic principles: firstly, that men will share the product of their labours to the extent required to ensure the survival and continued productivity of those others whose actions are necessary or

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beneficial to themselves; secondly, power will determine the distribution of nearly all of the surplus possessed by society. That is, those with control over distribution will satisfy need to a defined limit - defined by the needs or requirements of the society, or the ruling class of that society. Beyond that, power prevails. But Lenski does not see that distribution according to need is problematic: "Of the two principles which govern the distributive process, need and power, the first is relatively simple and poses few problems of great importance or difficulty."(60)

Although he does not discuss the possible cultural variability in levels of need (even though his identified needs include such things as 'creature comforts'), Lenski seems to imply that there is not necessarily a definite point at which needs can be said to satisfied, and power take over automatically as the distributive principle, because he discussed the way in which there have been attempts to re-establish the ascendancy of need over power as the dominant principle of distribution, in industrial societies. He sees fights for the enhancement of the value of citizenship at the expense of those resources which generate inequality (e.g. human rights v. property rights) as an example of this. Similarly, the struggles to obtain equal, uniform legal rights.

It is interesting to note here the link between the concepts of 'needs', 'goals' and 'rights'. Lenski uses the first two interchangeably; implying that an analysis of human needs is an analysis of what a human being is, and what he strives to accomplish. Then, by saying that the fight for rights is based on a view of society where emphasis on need is the dominant principle, he implies that use of the concept tends to be normative - this is what men need; this is what, by right as human beings they ought to have; and this is the kind of society necessary to satisfy human needs. He explicitly recognises the ideological implications of any concern with human needs, by saying that those who fight for the ascendancy of need over power are those who believe in social equality (or who lack resources themselves).

However, if we say 'This is what men need' implies 'this is what men ought to have by right', we have to add, 'if the goal to be achieved is the satisfaction of the needs of the individual' - which may seem tautological, but is necessary to state, as Lenski and Parsons indicate, if one accepts that societal goals may conflict with individual goals. If the societal goal is maintenance of the political status quo, it does not necessarily follow from 'this is what men need' that one can say 'this is what men ought to have' or perhaps 'what all men ought to have'. Lenski commented that "While it is true that the destinies of an individual and his society are linked, there is no simple 1 to 1 relationship between them............the most that is possible is that the interests of society are consistent with the interests of _some of its members."(61)   On the other hand, where it is assumed that individual and societal goals both aim for the satisfaction of individual needs (as with Malinowski) then 'ought' would follow 'need'.

Thus listing the needs of men may involve a vision of man, what he is or could be, but to say that the concept is normative requires that goals be specified: or at least that distinctions be made between individual and societal goals. This was noted earlier in the discussion of Marx and the functionalists. A number of points arise from the above discussion, some of which have also been raised earlier:

1. Both Etzioni and Lenski relate the concept of need mainly to individuals, but as social, human beings with social needs; biological needs are largely taken for granted.

2. It suggests that any discussion of the needs of man imply a vision of human nature, and a concern with the relationship between the goals of man and society. This raises the issue of the extent to which society will be interested in satisfying the needs of individuals, and at what level. The existence of needs, which can be more or less satisfactorily met, defines the limits to the variability of effective socialisation. Etzioni, like Marx, sees the non-satisfaction of needs as a source of alienation - there are individual and social costs if needs are not satisfied. Related to this is an introduction, in Lenski, to the consideration of 'needs' as 'rights'.

3. Etzioni distinguishes the concepts of 'need' and 'motivation', which may be contradictory. Lenski acknowledges, that "man has an insatiable appetite for goods and services"(62), because they help to satisfy his status needs as well as the more utilitarian ones. This, in effect, distinguishes needs and their presentation as wants. They may not be in conflict; where they are it is as likely because different needs may be in conflict with each other.

Conclusions

This review of several writers analysis or use of the concept of need has provided an important basis for considering how the concept is used or operationalised in research, which primarily occurs in the social policy context. Before moving on to some discussion of its use in that context, it will be useful to extract the key themes which have emerged from this chapter.

Firstly, the concept of need is a central concept in many theoreticians' understanding of society and the individual within it, and the relationship between the two. However, the use of the concept is complicated by its application to a variable range of units - such as individuals, groups, societies. Further, there are differences of view as to whether, or how, the needs of the individual relate to those of society. While some see them deriving from each other, others see the relationship as more complex, with society requiring only that some needs of some individuals be met; there is also the possibility that they may be in conflict, with consequences for individual and society. .

Secondly, any concern with the needs of individuals implies a model of man, or a view of human nature. These models or views may vary; Lenski's listing of man's needs is typical in this respect; psychologists have similarly produced lists of needs which derive from their view of human nature - perhaps Maslow is the best known of these(63). No training course on personnel management, motivation or team building is complete without an exposition of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Such lists of needs, however, can only be

specified in the context of identified goals, whether for man or society, and consequently are inevitably entwined with values.

The concern with values brings us to the third point - the relationship between the individual and society, and the extent to which society needs to meet individual needs. Social policy, as has already been noted, is concerned with society's sense of responsibility for meeting (at least some) of the needs, of both individual and society; in addressing such matters the researcher working in the field cannot avoid the value-laden nature of his or her activity. The area of study is effectively embedded in the political arena, where those with power in society decide such things as to what extent, in Lenski's terms, distribution shall relate to need, whose needs take priority, what kinds of needs, and at what levels, are the responsibility of the state, and so on. This context is likely to have a significant influence on the kind of research work undertaken, and the way in which it is done, as later chapters will show.

Fourthly, there is a difference between an essentially theoretical statement of needs, whether individual or societal, embodying a model of human nature, and an understanding of the culturally influenced manifestation of those needs as expressed in individuals' expression or experience of those needs. The latter will be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish from 'wants', but not all wants are necessarily derived from needs; Marx refers, for example, to 'artificially created appetites'. The language of needs - including wants, drives, motivations - is confused and potentially confusing, not least because different writers use the terms in different ways. As we shall see, this poses particular problems for the researcher, who cannot simply impose a particular usage on those being studied. Allowing for the differences, however, it will be useful here to try and disentangle some of the main elements in the language of need which will enable us to proceed with analysing its use in policy and research. The term 'drive' appears to refer to the continual pressure in the individual to act, in some way; perhaps a biological 'given' which is universal. It has no particular direction, until this is provided by the expression of

a particular want, which is the individual's subjective affirmation of a desired course of action. It may be argued that all such wants are the particular cultural expression of needs, whether of the individual or of the society. Others argue that wants as expressed by the individual may be in conflict with his needs, and are not directly derived from them - but in such cases it may be that they are derived from the society's needs. In either case, needs are seen as existing independently of the subjective views of the individual. They derive from an external view of the nature of man or society; a standard or goal which is pre-existing and universal; what varies is its culturally determined expression. Yet discussions and explorations of the nature and extent of needs are usually, and perhaps have to be, addressed in policy development and related research through this culturally determined expression and, at least in part, through the subjective views of individuals. As we shall see in the next chapter, this results in a diversity of ways in which the concept of need in used and understood in that context.

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Chapter 3

The Concept of 'Need' in Social Policy

Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis reviewed some of the ways in which the concept, or idea, of need has been seen as the basis and/or justification for the growth and development of social policy and provision. To quote Bradshaw again: "The concept of social need in inherent in the idea of social service. The history of the social services is the story of the recognition of social needs and the organisation of society to meet them"(1). This might seem a naive or simplistic position; but only if one accepts a narrow interpretation of the concept of 'need' or 'social need'. If one accepts that the concept, as used in the area of social policy making and implementation, is more complex and ambiguous, then Bradshaw's position is more tenable. The nature and sources of this complexity and ambiguity in this context will be discussed in this chapter.

It is not intended here to enter into a lengthy debate about the meaning and nature of social policy. Hill and Bramley, Warham, among others, provide considerable discussion of the concept, which is as problematic to define satisfactorily as any other (2,3). Some comments from each will suffice here. Hill and Bramley, (4) in discussing the nature of policy in general, identify several features they consider important in delineating the concept; these include the concern with a series of related decisions, taken by political actors, involving ends or goals and the means of achieving them, in relation to matters over which the state has authority, and producing actions which are practically feasible. Warham offers some indication of what makes policy specifically social: "Such action (i.e. collective action needed to resolve problems of social origin and significance) concerned as it is with the ordering of society and the problems which this presents, is commonly described as constituting *social policy*"(5). Within this framework of social policy she includes a concern with social welfare, social services and social problems. It is

within this broad context of state (thus political) decision-making and action in relation to the means of achieving (socially) desired goals, that the ways in which need is defined, understood and used will be considered.

In the last chapter it was indicated how the concept of need was used in a number of ways, applying to individuals, groups or societies; that it could be seen as deriving from views of the objective nature of man or society, relating to the goals of these and thus essentially normative; and that the manifestation of needs in the individual subjective expression of wants or needs (which it is difficult to distinguish) will be influenced by the cultural context. Such subjective expression may be seen as the individual manifestations of the needs of society; alternatively they may be seen as relating to man's essentially 'human' nature, against which it is possible for an alienating society to instil 'false needs' or motivations. In either case, statements concerning needs derive from some external, objective criteria rather than from subjective motivations; but these will still be difficult to separate in practice from the subjective expression of wants which are not related to need.

One cannot go far in the literature of social policy without coming across the subjective/objective distinction, though it may not always be clearly recognised or expressed; possibly because both elements are closely intertwined in the development of social policy. There are diverse perspectives on the motivation of the state in concerning itself with meeting needs. Bradshaw's statement above would appear, at face value, to represent the idea of the (benevolent) democratic state, which increasingly acknowledges the problems generated by the market economy, and "sees the growth of the welfare state as providing satisfactory solutions to these problems" (6) It may be argued that the growth of the welfare state is not concerned so much with the needs of the individual or society, but is aimed at shoring-up and maintaining the social economic and political status quo, at the same time being justified politically as supporting individuals by meeting their subjectively experienced needs: "..What the state also does is to help to legitimate the capitalist system by reducing the impact of some of its most unpopular consequences

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(unemployment) and by meeting needs that would otherwise cause dramatic discontent (pensions, housing)."(7) Whatever the political perspective, the extent of recognition of, and acknowledgement of responsibility for meeting, the subjective and objective dimensions of 'need', and the relationship between them, is a fundamental issue in social policy. An analysis of two papers concerned with the concept of need in social policy provides a useful starting point:

Ronald Walton suggests that the statement 'X', a person or group of people 'is in need' or 'has a need' can usually be divided into three separate statements:

"(i) X is in state Y

(ii) State Y is incompatible with the values held in society Z,

(iii) therefore state Y should be changed" (8)

This, with no reference to the motivations of X with regard to his (or their) state Y, is a classic example of the 'objective' view of need. Most of his ensuing discussion concerns the place of fact and value in this use of the concept. He does not totally ignore the subjective element in the concept, though. He considers it necessary to introduce this on democratic grounds: "If it is a tenet of democracy that people take as much responsibility for their own lives and community aspects of living as possible, it follows that the concept of 'felt need' must be introduced".(9) Nevertheless, in the context of social policy, it must be a subordinate element: "In addition, one must also admit that the existence of a "felt need" in no way should be a basis for action unless it has gone through the political process, because government has to look at the total community and not only segments of it". (10) This immediately introduces many of the issues to be discussed in this chapter, concerning the role of values and the political process in the creation of social policy around the idea of 'need'.

Jonathan Bradshaw further sub-divides the objective/subjective approaches to the definition of need, but the essential distinction remains. With reference to the social

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services, he says that there are four separate definitions used by administrators and research workers. Two of these are "objective" in character i.e. not related to the motivations of those said the be in "need". They are:

a) "Normative need", which is defined as "what the expert or professional, administrator or social scientist defines as need in any given situation. A 'desirable' standard is laid down and is compared with the standard that actually exists - if an individual or group falls short of the desirable standard then they are identified as being in need"(11).

b) "Comparative need: By this definition a measure of need is obtained by studying the characteristics of the population in receipt of a service. If there are people with similar characteristics not in receipt of a service, then they are in need."(12)

The first of these may be wider and more general a definition than the second, in that it speaks of 'desirable standards' without being specific about the aspects of life it refers to, whereas the latter relates need to services at existing levels of provision. Nevertheless, the approach is the same; people are defined as being in need if their situation does not meet some given criteria, whether derived from 'experts' or from existing standards of provision. This is, in principle, quite distinct from any concern with the subjective state of the person said to be 'in need'. Bradshaw introduces the subjective dimension in his other two definitions of need:

a) "Felt need: Here need is equated with want. When assessing need for a service, the population is asked whether they feel need it".

And, very similarly,

b) "Expressed need or demand is felt need turned into action. Under this definition total need is defined as these people who demand a service."(13)

Like Walton, Bradshaw considers that the subjective dimension should be taken into account in a democratic society, though admitting that this is not always the case. "In a democracy it could be imagined that felt need would be an important component of any

definition of need, but a felt need measure seems to only be used regularly in studies of the elderly and in community development."(14)

There is no doubt that the subjective dimension of need is taken into account, explicitly or implicitly, in discussion and development of social policy. The next section of this chapter will look at the various ways in which this dimension occurs, and some of the problems arising from its use; this will be followed by a similar discussion of the forms and problems of the 'objective' dimension.

The 'Subjective' Dimension in the Definition of Need in Social Policy

To re-cap, by the "subjective dimension" in the definition of need is meant a concern with the felt, or subjectively experienced, motivations, drives or wants of those described as being in need. It is difficult, if not impossible, here to distinguish between 'need' and 'want'; what is of interest in the context of social policy is the question of which 'felt wants' are the accepted as the concern of policy-makers, and which are left as people's private concern. It might be said that wants are re-defined as needs when society/or some part of it (e.g. policy-makers) believes that it has some formal responsibility for satisfying those particular wants, or 'meeting the needs of the community/individual'. This problem of how and where society draws the boundaries of its responsibilities for meeting needs (or wants) is similarly applicable to a consideration of the 'objective' dimension of need in social policy, and will be discussed in that context.

Joyce Warham appears to think that the subjective dimension is of great significance as a basis of social policy: "in respect of the role of social services in meeting need, it is relevant to stress the subjective element in this definition" (15). She suggests that the development of social services reflects a society's identification of and response to, subjective needs of three distinct, if interconnected kinds: material needs (housing, food, income); emotional needs (security, affection); and status needs (respect, rights of citizenship). Yet Fruin argues that "In the area of welfare needs ... the assessment of

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needs has been made for the most part by the service providers ... Thus, little attention has been focused on the <u>preferences</u> of the recipients" (16 p 31) He suggests that the welfare model follows the medical one, where the doctor can supposedly speak with greater authority on what will satisfy the health needs. He contrasts this with the growth in architecture (particularly house design) of user studies and the increasing emphasis on user needs and preferences as a crucial factor in design.

There is considerable disagreement about the weight which is, or is thought ought to be, given to the subjective needs/wants of individuals as a basis of social policy, and there is little doubt that the emphasis varies between different areas of policy, such as health-care and the provision of housing, as well as within individual areas of policy (e.g. the extreme disciplinarian/permissive positions in education). Yet most writers recognise that, whatever the emphasis on subjective needs, a variety of factors intervene between these needs and the social policy development to meet these needs. Some of these factors are:

a) Different views of the nature of need held by those experiencing it and those aiming to alleviate it. "Want may be felt in one way by the individuals themselves, and in another by the society which evolves institutions intended to meet the want. In assessing the effectiveness of any social service in meeting need, therefore, consideration must be given to the degree of congruity between individuals' perceptions of their own needs, and the culturally determined concept of need on which the service in question is based." (17) It seems almost inevitable that once a second party is involved, in interpreting the nature of, and providing means of alleviating, subjective wants, then there will be some disjunction between their external 'objective' view of the situation and that of the individuals experiencing the needs, if only because the policy makers cannot have sufficient contact with all individuals to fully understand their needs. Professionals may feel that they have a better understanding of the true nature of an individual's needs than he does himself. For whatever reason, the individual's subjective wants are re-interpreted by professionals

and policy-makers; the external objective view takes over; the nature of this view and the factors influencing it are discussed later in this chapter.

b) Individual need may be so varied that policy-makers have to take a generalised view of it. Policies will be related to categories of people: the elderly, one-parent families, etc. The needs of these categories will be generalised, such as the need of all old people for an income of a given size. As Warham has indicated, some social provision is more oriented towards meeting need on an individual basis than are other such provisions. Variations may exist partly because some needs are more personal than others, and partly because in some cases society may have recognised this and acknowledged it in the legislation itself. She indicates how "British Social Insurance legislation...makes no allowance whatsoever for meeting the needs of an individual as such... The Children Act (1948) ... repeatedly emphasises the duty of Local Authorities to care for them (children) as individuals" (18).

One reason for this general approach to individual need is that while 'meeting people's needs' may be an important value in society, other values may influence the development of social provision e.g. equality. Dominant ideas as to the extent to which equality is desirable, or as to the level of need which the state ought to provide for, conflict with the individuality of subjective need arising from relative deprivation. As Walton rightly points out, the idea of 'felt need' is closely related to relative deprivation, and this is a major reason why it is a difficult basis for social policy (19). Feelings of relative deprivation can vary enormously with the experience, perceptions and values of individuals, and will bear little relation to an overall concern with equality.

c) Another factor influencing the extent to which policy makers can respond to individual needs is the problem of conflicting needs, or the needs of conflicting individuals or groups. Thus the needs of someone caring for a confused spouse to have some respite may conflict with the needs of the confused person to remain in a familiar environment. "Services exist to meet the needs of their users; but, within this framework, the needs of

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carers should also be considered to be very important, both because services cannot succeed without the contribution made by carers and because as a matter of principle one group of people's needs should not be met at the expense of another. Of course there will be important conflicts of interest between service users and their carers which will need to be faced up to at individual level. (20). The felt need of some, say the mentally ill, or ex-offender, for integration and rehabilitation may conflict with the felt need of others for protection from what they perceive as the strange or the criminal. Which needs are given priority will depend on the relative power, or the ability to bring pressure on policy-makers, of each group.

d) Statutory provision for meeting needs has to be legislated for; thus those felt needs which will be met are likely to be those for which there is considerable support from those with political power, who can make legislation possible and ensure widespread public acceptance. "To this extent we may expect social legislation to provide for needs the meeting of which is functional to the values which society at any given time wishes to protect". (21) The way in which a need is met will also reflect society's values as to acceptable methods of provision e.g. specific subsidies v. income maintenance services rather than money. It may be significant here that writers frequently relate 'need' to need for specific services, as if the one can always be translated into the other. Bradshaw's discussion of felt and expressed read is a good example of this (22). Our view of needs is influenced by present means of alleviating needs, without questioning the appropriateness of these to individuals' felt needs.

e) It is not only perceptions of needs, and evaluations of the nature and level of responsibility for needs, which affect the ways in which subjective need is distorted in policy-making. An important factor is the administrative and economic framework within which policy-makers work. Provision to meet need occurs in the context of limited resources, and policy-makers are constrained by this to meet some needs over others, or to some method of meeting needs over others, simply because of the limited resources

available. An element in this, of course, is the socio-political climate which governs the level of resource available, and this is influenced by the other factors discussed above. Another factor is the constraint of the status quo. Fruin points the effect of this well: "If we are to undertake effective planning for the social services, the logical starting point is one which examines the needs of the community, and then plans the services to suit the needs, recognising however, that planning authorities are unable to start afresh but must work within the restrictions placed upon them by the capital and staff resources already committed. The margin for changes in direction and for the establishment of new programmes is always heavily circumscribed".(23)

f) One of the major reasons why felt need cannot be a basis for action is that its nature cannot be known until it is expressed by those experiencing it; and a wide variety of factors affect whether or not it will be expressed, and also how it will be expressed. This is a problem glossed over in Bradshaw's analysis; both 'felt need' and 'expressed need' is in fact discussing expressed need. Thus, in 'felt need', he says that "when assessing the need for a service, the population is asked whether they feel they need it".(24) Similarly, with expressed need, he says "total need is those people who demand a service". (25) This is essentially the same - the only apparent difference is that there seems to be an implication that in the one people are being asked if they need something; in the other they are stating the need without being asked. This is probably only an apparent difference related to unfortunate wording; at most it is a difference concerned with the specific method of measuring need.

What is significant about both types of need, and of importance in considering the nature of the expression of need, is that in both cases need is defined in terms of need for services - i.e. defined in terms of (probably or possibly) existing solutions to the need, rather than in terms of the nature of the need itself. In discussing the 'subjective' types of need Bradshaw has already moved over to the more 'official' standpoint of policy - need in terms of provision to (supposedly) meet the need. The constraints of existing policy, it

will be seen, are a major factor in determining the form in which subjective need is expressed.

There are two main reasons why this is the case. Firstly, regarding the person who is expressing his needs. His expression of his need inevitably occurs in some context. If the expressed need is to be provided for by others, then the context is likely to be an agency of some relevant kind. To be presenting a need to an agency suggests that the individual, or some proxy, has then decided that the agency has access to specific relevant help which already exists. The help they are likely to offer will be in a pre-existing form. He is likely to ask for what help they offer, as one at least part-solution to his needs. In this interaction for a number of reasons, need is likely, ultimately anyway, to take the form of a demand for an existing form of provision if only because there is nothing else. "The criteria that determine which groups of people are to be served by an agency will relate more to the functions of the organisation than to the circumstances of any individual.....the successful establishment of a link between the agency and the individual will depend on the way the individual perceives his circumstances.....in relation to the supposed functions of the agency concerned"(26). The scope for innovative help to meet the needs of this individual is limited (e.g. range of aids and adaptations may be available for a handicapped person to help them manage at home, but not rehousing).

Needs may not be presented to an agency; they may be more publicly expressed, pressure groups develop, and new more appropriate provision created. Thus, for example, refuges for battered wives. But once provision exists, needs tend to be expressed in terms of it. Thus, battered wives with children who want to stay at home and have their husbands thrown out, but who see this as an unlikely possibility, will express their need in the form of wanting to enter a refuge, because it may appear to be the only option open, rather than because it is the most appropriate solution.

Secondly, the administrator who is trying to assess the extent and nature of need is going to look at the most available information, rather than the most valid. He will see demand for home-helps, waiting lists for Homes for the Elderly etc.; this picture of demand, of presumed expressed need, will be sufficient to absorb his resources without, it would seem, looking for new need: Questions about the relevance of existing provision are not likely to be raised when there is demand for it; and the organisational and legislative constraints on innovation (e.g. lack of legal responsibility for provision, or the need for ministerial permission, etc.) will often be sufficient to deter him from such action.

Thus, the policy framework plays a significant part in determining the form in which subjective need is expressed. This is true also of the extent to which need is expressed - people will often only ask for what they think they are entitled to receive, which is influenced by official decisions as to what is adequate - decisions related to social norms. Ultimately, this is reflected in such distinctions as that between the needy and the scroungers. If need and want are indistinguishable on the subjective level, their expression comes into conflict at some point, demand for some form of help being declared 'justified' or 'unjustified'. This is the 'official' reaction, but again it influences the expression of need; in the presentation of need there is a dialectical relationship between the subjectively experienced need and the official provision, which is itself influenced by the social and economic climate.

A number of factors influence also whether subjective need is expressed at all, in any form: there may be no agency or person to whom the need can be effectively expressed - i.e. 'nowhere to turn'; the person in need may not know of any agency even when it does exist - i.e. need not expressed because of ignorance; the person in need may not be willing to admit to the need, for psychological reasons e.g. it may imply personal failure; they may not admit for social reasons - because such an admission carries a stigma; the person in need may not accept that others should be responsible for meeting his needs i.e. he does not accept the value framework on which provision is based.

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A concern with the subjective dimension of need tends to focus on the individual as the unit of need, because it is the individual, or aggregates of individuals, who experience or express subjectively-felt needs. It is difficult to consider the needs of society from this perspective, yet it may be, as noted earlier, that the two are not synonymous or even compatible. The problem does not occur in the same way when considering the objective dimension. Whatever the public emphasis given to the meeting of subjectively experienced needs in social policy, a host of factors influence the way in which such need is defined in policy-making, and the extent to which it is expressed. Many of these, discussed above, derive from the policy context in which need is measured, and which is heavily influenced by a concern with the more 'objective' dimension in the use of the concept, to which we now turn. Many of the issues raised above will also be relevant to the discussion below.

The 'Objective' Dimension of Need in Social Policy

In the last section it was suggested that social policy may be developed with the intention of alleviating the subjectively experienced needs of individuals, but that a great variety of factors prevent such policy being based directly upon the nature and extent of these needs. The assumption embodied in this was that the subjective feelings of individuals were a relevant concern. This is not necessarily the case, however, as social policy-makers and providers may base their measures or assessments of needs on very different perspectives in which the experience of individuals is irrelevant. Need may be defined as the difference between what is and what ought to be, in a situation, but it is not the people directly experiencing the situation who decide what ought to be. Policy may, instead, be related to socially defined goals, officially recognised. This section will consider the different ways in which ideas of need are developed from this external 'objective' viewpoint.

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Walton's analysis, mentioned earlier, provides a simple clear statement of this objective evaluative approach. He says that the statement 'X is in need' can be divided into three separate statements:

"(i)   X is in state Y

(ii)   State Y is incompatible with the values held in society Z

(iii)   Therefore state Y should be changed." (27)

The important point is that no reference is made to X's subjective evaluation of his (or their, as it may apply to a group) own situation. The judgement of his situation is seemingly made by an outsider, on the basis of wider social values. X's situation is compared not with a situation which he may subjectively want, but with a situation which is acceptable to society. The form of such evaluations, or the basis on which they are made, can vary considerably. Bradshaw's analysis presents two of the main approaches relevant to social policy - i.e. what he calls 'normative need' and 'comparative need'.

'Normative need' he defines as "...what the expert or professional, administrator or social scientist defines as need in any given situation. A 'desirable' standard is laid down and is compared with the standard that actually exists - if an individual or group falls short of the desirable standard then they are identified as being in need".(28)   The B.M.A.'s nutritional standard, Townsend's incapacity scale, and Tunstall's measure of social isolation are given as examples of normative standards used as a basis of need. These relate primarily to individuals. Social indicators, discussed further in Chapter 6, relate to geographical areas, though often based simply on aggregates of individuals.   These examples provide useful illustrations of some of the things which are problematic in the measurement of normative need for policy-making.   One of these is the question of what areas of life are considered as being relevant to the policy-maker i.e. what activities or aspects of people's lives do the policy-makers consider that they have some responsibility for? The examples include nutrition, physical capacity for necessary activities, and social contact.   Other aspects for which standards are more or less officially defined include income, housing, education.   Official interest in aspects of life has changed over time,

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however, and reflects changes in society. What is interesting is why, at different times, different areas of need are seen as a 'state' or 'societal' responsibility. This is equally applicable to areas of subjective needs, and the development of social policy , as Warham has suggested, can be seen as a taking over by the state of responsibility for an increasing range of needs, subjectively or objectively determined.(29)

Another problematic aspect of normative need is what determines the levels or standards considered acceptable; what range of factors influence this e.g. values, resources, etc. Related to this is the problem of who sets up the standards by which need is measured? How far are such standards clearly defined, and at what level (e.g. legislative or operational)?. Another is touched on above: what unit (e.g. the individual, group, society) is the focus of a concern with needs. These are some of the questions which will now be considered, some of which may apply (as has been noted earlier) as much in the consideration of the use of the subjective dimension of need.

1. Who decides?

The first question to be considered is who makes, or influences, the decisions which determine what needs are to be taken into account in the formation of social policy, and the decisions as to what groups or categories of people, or individuals, are to be provided for in the framework of this policy, using what level of resources to meet what level of need? Bradshaw vaguely refers to "the expert or professional, administrator or social scientist"(30) defining need; but the reality is probably more complex and more open than this. The problem arises at two levels - who decides what and who should be provided (for) in the broad social policy as embodied in legislation; and who evaluates people as being in need at the individual level.

On the policy level, a variety of people and groups may have influence. As Warham has pointed out, "..statutory social services for the meeting of need have to be legislated for, and will thus tend to embody ideas about need which are either sufficiently widely held,

or actively supported by those with political power, as to make legislation possible and ensure widespread public acceptance of particular forms of provision".(31) However, as Hill and Bramley have discussed, it is not clear that there is any consensus about needs, either at the conceptual level or in practice: "...while we may have a high level consensus about definitions, these actually imply quite distinct meanings which will be employed in different ways by different people in different contexts" (32).

The extent of public acceptance may not be as important as the active support of those with political power; the two need not always coincide, though governments may ultimately have to look to popular support. Those with political power look to academics and administrators (central and local) for ideas on developing areas of government; increasingly professionals are being drawn in to political activities. The media clearly can exert pressures on governments, and openly campaign on certain social issues. The public at large has influence, particularly though in the form of specific pressure groups. The growth and power of such groups is exemplified well by the passing of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons' Act 1970, in which pressure groups created significant social legislation through the active support of one M.P. (it was a Private Member's Bill) and the general support of other M.P.'s and population at large. Significant individuals, with political influence, such as Sir Roy Griffiths (33), may also play a major part in policy development, though even when invited to do so their views will still be subject to political review (as with the Community Care legislation).

The form which social policy takes, however, does not stop at the legislation. Those who administer the law have some freedom to define what needs they should be concerned with. In a meeting of local government administrators I observed an argument regarding the implementation of the C.S.D.P. Act 1970 in which one administrator argued that the Act merely said that help should be provided to increase 'safety, comfort and convenience' while a professional social worker was concerned that the need for independence should also be taken into account. Here, the values of the profession were

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being used to broaden, in practice, the scope of the legislation. Clearly there is some scope for policy-making and policy application at local levels, and this includes extending or redefining the range of needs for which some responsibility is accepted.

The extent of this freedom is difficulty to establish. For example the 1968 Health Services & Public Health Act empowered local authorities to 'promote the welfare of the elderly' without specifying in the legislation what range or level of need was contained within the idea of 'welfare' (34). Implicitly this would seem to provide local policy-makers with considerable freedom; yet the instructions accompanying the Act specified in some detail what could be done without further permission, and what would require specific ministerial permission. Implicitly, certain needs were to be given priority in provision, and only certain solutions to these needs were immediately acceptable. The ideas of policy-makers and providers at the local level were to be constrained by the administrators of central government. The implementation of the Community Care legislation has similarly been influenced by a range of 'guidance' manuals and circulars, as well as by the resources provided to support the implementation (35).

While the public, and pressure groups, may influence policy in general, professionals and others have a great part to play in deciding who is in need. "In so far as individual services are concerned, one further significant aspect of the structural framework through which social policy is implemented, is the degree of latitude of interpretation which it allows to those who actually administer the service to clients".(36) It is mainly the professional who assesses whether an individual is in need and entitled to the provision created by social legislation. The professional social worker decides whether an elderly person needs residential care; a range of professionals between them usually decide whether a child is in need of care - even though that decision may need legal ratification by a magistrate. A doctor decides whether a person needs medical treatment. Administrators also may have discretion in deciding whether individuals qualify for specific provision. Those with political power may also assess need at the individual level. In parts of Wales, elected

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councillors still allocate council housing; this is often justified on the grounds that they know their local need best. Mechanisms by which need is measured may be the product of interaction between professionals, administrators and elected representatives e.g. in the production of priority systems for council housing, telephones subsidies, improvement grants and other provision. "...with many social services controlled at the local government level it is possible to cite local variations in service outputs as indications of differing attitudes to the definition of need" (37)

This consideration of who influences policy and who implements it is important because in considering the next two questions the problem of values inevitably crops up, and the problem of whose values determine the standards by, and areas of life in, which need is considered is an important one to which there is no clear answer. Many groups are involved - politicians, professionals, administrators, academics, pressure groups etc. and it the interaction of these, in all sorts of ways and with varied results, which gives rise to social policy.

2. What Standards Define People as Being in Need?

From the viewpoint of 'normative need', as Bradshaw puts it, a person is defined as being in need when their situation does not meet some 'desirable' standard.(38) Yet what is the origin of the standards by which people are measured as being in need? How are they established? This would seem to be particularly problematic. Standards in this context are inevitably relative to the society with which one is dealing. What is considered reasonable or desirable in one society will be very different from in another; but this does not get us very far in understanding how standards are defined. Clearly it relates to prevailing social values, as Walton's analysis showed,(39) but which are relevant, and how are they made use of by the people who create and operate policy, and what other factors - e.g. resources - affect the application of these values? "..while there is undoubtedly a consensus about the need for a subsistence income, this is arguably irrelevant to contemporary questions about the level of the poverty line enshrined in benefit scales".

(40) Society may accept that people need accommodation, so there is a rent allowance part of supplementary benefit; but 'how much' is a function of the standard of accommodation considered reasonable. Heating and clothing allowances exist, but how much heating, how much clothing, what standard of clothing? Tokens may be issued to pensioners for them to travel cheaply, but what amount i.e. how much travel are they supposed to need?

What is problematic here is the implementation of the values active in the second part of Walton's process of defining need - "State Y is incompatible with the values held in society Z".(41) The application of the values is mediated by the people described above, who create and implement policy; influenced by, and influencing, public opinion. It is also mediated by the availability of resources to provide for meeting needs. Thus, for example, in the implementation of community care, staff in Dorset Social Services Department have been given a table to record assessed needs. "They have been given guidance on the importance of distinguishing between needs, preferences and wants.......Only justified needs and preferences are recorded on the care plan.......'Reasonableness' features heavily in the guidance as a yardstick for which services to provide.......Because the council is spending public money, it argues 'reasonable' must relate to the standards society would expect it to uphold, taking account of cost, the various options and degrees of disability." (42)

As Bradshaw has indicated, different professionals may have conflicting views about people's needs, based on their own training, experience, and interest (including self-interest). Thus, for example, the clash which often occurs say, between nurses and therapists in hospitals, or between nursing staff and social workers in residential settings. What is clean and convenient for the patient from a nursing viewpoint may not be to his benefit from a therapeutic viewpoint. Just as likely is conflict between the professional and the administrator. What values are operational in this context? There will be wider social values as well as more narrowly held professional values.

Warham, for example, illustrates this by describing how, in the 19th Century, the status of the pauper was only of legal interest to the administrators of the Poor Law; but once importance was attached to the feelings of the recipient and his need for respect, forms of provision began to be evolved which were intended to ensure that his material needs were met without threat to either his legal status as a citizen, or his personal standing as an individual. "The Ministry of Social Security Act (1966) which introduced the concept of supplementary benefit in place of National Assistance, represented an acknowledgement of the fact that the status needs of those entitled to National Assistance had been inadequately met" (43). This may, however, be a naive position. The history of social policy, it can be argued, is just as much about the development of ideas concerning what politicians and professionals think people ought to have, for reasons other than purely their subjective needs. The motivation behind the Poor Laws, the provision of council housing, the health and education services, may all relate much more to the perceived benefits for society than widening the areas of response to expressed subjective needs.

One value frequently referred to in this context is that of equality. What this means in practice is that people in a society should not be allowed to fall too far below standards of the bulk of the population - which in itself is an interpretation a long way from any ideal of 'equality'. The way in which equality is used here leads us to Bradshaw's fourth method of measuring need i.e. 'comparative need'. In a haphazard way, this plays a great contribution to the determination of standards by which need is measured, by professionals academics and administrators. "By this definition, a measure of need is found by studying the characteristics of those in receipt of a service. If people with similar characteristics are not in receipt of a service, then they are in need. This definition has been used to assess needs both of individuals and of areas".(44)

In this form, need is a product of the combination of history (existing provision in 'good' areas) and the application of the value of equality. As Bradshaw goes on to point out

"Need established by this method is the gap between what services exist in one area and what services exist in another, weighted to take account of the difference in pathology. This is an attempt to standardise provision, but provision may still not correspond with need"(45). (He does not indicate what alternative measure of need he is referring to here!) There is little doubt that such comparisons have in the past (and probably continue today) played a significant part in determining the standards of provision. 'Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped' provided norms of provision, some of which are averages of the existing situation; some of which pick out the better supplied areas as targets (46). Both imply a comparative approach. Every year, councils compare their achievements with those of other councils - various publications provide the information upon which such comparisons are based (47). The Audit Commission has used such comparisons as the basis for their analyses of local authorities functioning (48), and various government bodies are currently comparing authorities on a range of 'performance measures'. The sharing-out of resources within and between authorities is often based on a comparative approach (49) (See also Chapter 6 on social indicators). The author of this thesis undertook such a comparative analysis of the provision of home-help services, based on the approach developed by Boldy et al, as the basis for a re-allocation of resources between districts within Mid Glamorgan.(50, 51)

Comparative need can be seen as the extension or repetition of standards of provision set up originally by some other definition - possibly 'normative' or subjective need. That is, it is a perpetuation of previous decisions on other people or other areas, which becomes self-perpetuating by continued extension. Bradshaw confines his discussion of the measure to the question of services, but the use of a comparative approach extends far beyond this. The whole social indicators movement is based on comparisons of areas and this in itself would seem to generate standards. Where other elements e.g. resources, public opinion, are favourable, comparing areas can result in new standards by which areas are seen as 'in need'. Implicit in comparison is the idea of deprivation. It may just be a statement of fact that houses have a certain level of amenities, or residential density,

or homes have X cars. Comparing areas or individuals on these items may give rise to, as well as be the product of, questions as to what is reasonable standard, and what are acceptable variations in standards. As is noted in Chapter 6, indicators are not by definition normative, but tend to become so in practice. Even with the comparative approach, the question still arises - what level, what standard, is acceptable?

The debate about poverty, or 'income needs' is relevant here. Attempts have been made, such as those by Rowntree, in the past to undertake surveys which define a minimum level of income required, irrespective of the wider standards of society (52). More recently, however, definitions of poverty have tended to relate to the conditions of life of the wider society. For example, Townsend suggests that "poverty is insufficient resources to obtain the conditions of life, i.e. the diets, amenities, standards and services to allow people to play the roles, participate in the relationships and follow the customs which are expected of them as citizens" (53). Although Townsend argues that poverty is more than simply inequality, it remains a question of comparative standards, and of the extent to which society accepts or tolerates these, and to which the state accepts responsibility for ameliorating the effects of these inequalities - "poverty means an *unacceptable level* of deprivation" (my italics) (54). What is unacceptable will be influenced by the dominant values, or the values of the dominant group. The availability of resources will also be relevant here.

3. Resources

Another very important factor affecting the levels at which standards for measuring need are set, is resources. Theoretically, need can be measured independently of resources. But in practice, standards are set up in relation to resources. Resources define the level of need at which appropriate provision will be supplied. "Ultimately it may be argued that the scope for expanding services reflects need".(55) But the problem is that there is virtually unlimited scope for improvement in the human situations with which the

personal social services department are asked to deal. "'Need' cannot, therefore, be defined independently of the resources available" (56).

Take a practical example. An occupational therapist has to go out and assess people as to their need for aids and adaptations to enable them to live at home. He may consider that he assesses the need regardless of resources. Yet he may also know that there is a limit to the amount of money he can spend during the year. He has to ration what he provides; if he does not, some administrator above him will, by refusing to supply certain items, or by cutting resources off in mid-year, saying that there is no money left. He may visit a handicapped person, who has difficulty getting up the stairs to the toilet. A range of alternative provision may be possible, taking into account the physical diagnosis and prognosis - stair-rail, stairlift, downstairs toilet built; chemical toilet installed, commode. These various possibilities will improve the quality of life to different degrees, while all solving the same problem. Which is he in 'need' of? Values will impinge here - is the handicapped person entitled to provision enabling him to live a completely normal life - i.e. going upstairs like everyone else, via a stairlift? Or is he merely entitled to provide for his bodily needs in the cheapest way possible, to his and others inconvenience - e.g. by a commode. Values will influence the decision, but so will available resources (the size of which themselves partly reflect these values, in that the amount of money available for help reflect value-laden decisions on how much should be provided to help the handicapped to what sort of life). How much money is available will be a crucial element in the decision as to what the person 'really' needs.

Given that the money is limited, decisions of the kind X is in more need than Y have to be made - the level of their need is compared, and decisions into most needy, less needy (ultimately - really in need, not in real need) are made; such decisions are at least partly based on the resources available. Priority systems for telephones, housing, etc., are all there because of limited resources. (Factors influencing the assessment of need are discussed further in Chapter 6) It isn't just a question of X is in need, but the resources to

meet the need are not available.. In theory it could be that, but in practice it often becomes who is really in need and who isn't, and the line is drawn by the resources available.

Such problems have given rise to controversy and Parliamentary Questions e.g. in August 1975 Mrs Castle pointed out that once a local authority accepts that someone is in need of one of the services listed in Section 2 of the Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act: "it is incumbent on them to make arrangements to meet that need. While it may be difficult sometimes in present circumstances to balance the discharge of the duty with due exercise of financial restraint, I believe that on the whole the right balance is being maintained"(57). Acknowledging the evasive parliamentary answer, this clearly implies that assessments of need must not take into account the financial resources available. The reaction of one person to this: "We hope that disabled people who have been refused help by their council on grounds of lack of resources will have no hesitation in taking up this offer"(58). Clearly, where they have been assessed as in need of something, but refused it, this is one problem; but it is the assessment itself which is influenced by resources, meaning that this particular problem may not often crop-up, except in cases of extreme hardship. (Chapter 6 looks at this further.)

4. Areas of Life

In the earlier section of this chapter, it was suggested that one problematic aspect of the relationship between need and social policy is the areas of life included i.e. what sorts of needs are considered to be the responsibility of the State or of specific departments such as the Department of Health or Social Security. This applies equally when considering 'objective' measures of need - what aspects of life are assessed as the basis of defining people as being in 'need' of something about which 'something should be done'. As with standards, discussed above, this will be determined by the values of the society concerned, and the way in which these values delineate the extent to which 'society' or more specifically, the welfare agencies should be responsible for the quality of people's

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lives. Clearly, there will be disagreements about these values, or they will be held by differing groups, and at differing intensities.

In his classification, Bradshaw indicates that felt needs may not be recognised by suppliers of services, that there are 'needs' which are not within their ambit(59) . Yet the example he uses, loneliness, indicates that problematic nature of defining what areas are within this ambit. The delimitation of responsibility can change over time - loneliness of <u>elderly people</u> has been seen as within the ambit of personal social services, with the provision of social centres, etc. However, more recently policy has focussed more on the care needs of elderly people, with the provision of social activities being seen more as an area of activity for voluntary groups and not government agencies (60). Loneliness provides an interesting example: responsibility for alleviating loneliness is drawn between sections of the population - the responsibility is not recognised for the young or middle-aged to quite the same extent as it is (or has been) for elderly people. Social clubs for the young tend to be provided for reasons other than the possibility of loneliness (such as keeping them off the streets); yet loneliness may be just as possible for this age-group.

Warham points out that the development of social services reflects a society's identification of, and response to, needs of three distinct if interconnected kinds:
a) Material needs - housing, food, income.
b) Emotional needs - security and affection.
c) Status needs - need for respect, protection of the rights of citizenship(61).
What is interesting is how this process of identification and response occur. She suggests that social services are a response to 'felt wants' which are of such a scale and intensity as to constitute a social problem. Her emphasis is very much on the subjective need viewpoint, but as we have seen, policy can develop from other sources. We can agree with her point that "we may expect social legislation on balance to provide for needs the meeting of which is functional to the values which society at any given time wishes to protect" (62) without using the term 'need' primarily in its subjective meaning, as she

tends to do. The values here may relate to the needs of society rather than the individual, and may even be in conflict with the latter; there is no necessary relationship between these values and felt needs or wants.

The values relevant to the making of social policy are varied; such values can also change over time, as Warham has indicated with regard to children(63). She has described how forms of provision for children have traditionally reflected attitudes current in society about the needs of children. A dominant 19th Century idea stressed the need to remove children from unsatisfactory home conditions. By the mid 1940's there was demand for legislation to meet a child's need for a 'normal home life'. After the 1948 Act, emphasis shifted to the child's need to remain with his own family. The 1963 Act further aimed to diminish the need to receive children into care. Values with regard to the punishment of delinquent children have similarly changed - the 1969 Act aimed to take a less punitive approach to delinquent children - though it did not necessarily have that effect. The 1989 Children Act emphasised the paramount importance of the welfare of the child. Thus the standards by which people are defined as in need, and the aspects of their lives within which their needs are considered, whether of parental care, of diet, of housing, money, are related to the values of the society in which they live, values which can change over time; values which are not necessarily held by all, but by those in a position to influence policy.

Services to children are one area where Hill and Bramley argue that there may not be consensus over what need is, or whose needs are of prime concern: "Interventions are made in the interests of the needs of children which may cut across the perceived needs or interests of parents. With older children or offenders the interventions may be concerned with protecting the needs and interests of other citizens as potential victims of crime or anti-social behaviour." (64) This brings us to a concern with the 'unit' of need under consideration.

5. Unit of need

Chapter 2 indicated how the concept of need may be applied to different dimensions - individuals, groups, society - and that there were differing views as to the extent to which these might coincide. In looking at the subjective approach to identifying or measuring need, it was noted that the focus will tend to be on the individual, because it is difficult to determine how the needs of society might be 'subjectively experienced'. This constraint does not operate in the same way in relation to the objective approach. The idea that "State Y is incompatible with the values held in society Z" (65) does not limit the nature of unit 'Y' to individuals. "..it is important to stress that personal social services do not simply exist to provide help to a 'person-in-need'; the help is also provided for the benefit of society, by, for example, 'making life safer' through the control of delinquents or by 'satisfying the conscience' of society, faced with child neglect or the total isolation and deterioration of an elderly neighbour.......Arguably, the existence of the personal social services is a sort of collective insurance policy for society as a whole" (66).

There may be conflict between the way in which a delinquent expresses his subjectively experienced need for status, and the wider society's need for a safe environment. How policy is developed will depend on which needs are given priority, which are acknowledged as being the responsibility of the state, and these will be affected by the relative power of different groups in society, values, and resources. The status needs of the delinquent may be ignored, and the behaviour punished, or acknowledged and alternatives for its expression provided (such as 'car clubs' for teenagers convicted of stealing cars, as in South and Mid Glamorgan). Whatever the nature of the response, the needs of other groups, or the perceived needs of the society as a whole, have taken precedence. Warham's comment quoted earlier about the providing for needs functional to the values society wishes to protect is particularly valid here.

Need, Ideology and Social Welfare

The above suggestion that needs are perceived and met within the context of the values which exist or predominate in society is something that has recurred several times in this thesis. In chapter 2 the discussion of Lenski highlighted how responses to need reflected the ideology of a given society (p 34). Ideology, in broad terms, refers to those sets of ideas about society (including values) which may arise in that society, but also have their effect on it, often "contributing to the legitimacy and stability of a particular form of society".(67). Any approach to the concept of need in social policy necessarily brings us into a discussion of ideology in society, Such ideology is embodied (among other places) in the socially and politically determined policies which create the social welfare framework within which need is identified, measured, and responded to. Its importance has been indicated several times already in this chapter, for instance with references to the historically changing ideas about the status of paupers and how they should be treated (p 57); to the significance of equality as a value in determining levels of provision (p 57); to the relative importance of different groups in implementing their own ideas about how policy should operate (p 54); to the significance, again, of values in influencing changing ideas as to what aspects of people's lives should be the subject of policy (p 62).

Analyses of the ideological basis of the concept of need (and the meeting thereof in social policy) in society very often focus primarily on ideas about the relationship between the individual (or group) and the society in the economic sphere. As Fiona Williams has commented, "Much critical analysis of welfare begins, quite appropriately, with an analysis of the relation of welfare policies to *Work*, that is to the economic and social organization of production -- the needs of capitalism (for a literate, healthy and obedient workforce) on the one hand, and the struggles of the working class to improve their working and living conditions on the other" (68). However, at the start of this chapter it was suggested that there are conflicting views about the functions of the welfare state in relation to the meeting of needs (p 40), and the relationship of this to the functioning of

the economy. Various writers have attempted to analyse this relationship between state welfare and the economy (more specifically, capitalism).

Such analysis becomes complex because it inevitably incorporates some consideration of the nature of the society and the state within which the social policy is developed and operated: " Theories of society, of the state, of social problems and of social policy are inter-related. The view a social scientist holds of societal organisation and of the nature of the state will affect the explanation he or she gives of the incidence of social problems and of the government's response, if any, in the form of social policy measures" (69). Analysis can be further complicated by the fact that there are theoretical perspectives concerned with explaining the relationship, and prescriptive ones which present alternative views of how to achieve the maximisation of welfare in society. Ideologies are themselves embodied in the process of analysis, making any classification of perspectives a complex activity (70).

It will be useful to consider such social policy analyses here because of the differing ways in which they perceive the nature of needs and the role of the state in meeting them; such perceptions reflect differing ideological positions concerning the nature of society and the economy and the extent to which social policy could or should be used to change them. Such perceptions vary, for example, between the anti-collectivists who see a minimal role for the state in a market economy which will best meet the needs of individuals if left alone to function effectively; the social reformists who consider collective state provision to be essential in meeting those needs not met by (and perhaps created by) a market system; while the political economy of welfare analysis sees inevitable conflict between working class needs and the needs of the capitalist system, which are not necessarily resolvable within that economic system. (The classification and terminology is that used by Fiona Williams (71)).

Anti-collectivists believe that a free market economy system is the most effective for ensuring that needs and desires are met. The freedom of individuals to pursue their own interests (including needs and wants) is what drives the economy to respond to those interests. Individualism is a fundamental value: "....a strong sense of individualism makes unnecessary or impossible large-scale state intervention or coercion." (72). The professionalisation and bureaucratisation of the welfare state is seen as reducing the choice and control the individual consumer has in health, education and the personal social services: "A public service provides what officials, professionals and politicians *think* people need. Judgements are not made by consumers but by other people on their behalf." (73) This is seen as bad not only for the consumer, but also for the functioning of the economy. Wants and needs become perceived as rights; people are provided with things they do not need or could provide for themselves; unnecessary burdens are placed on the economy; the initiative and self-reliance of individuals is reduced; this reduces their willingness to participate in economic activity. State policy in this perspective is focussed on the needs of the economy and the importance of reducing anything which interferes with its free functioning. The needs of the economy are central, and social needs are not so much secondary to, as subsumed under, those of the economy.

In contrast, the various shades of social reformism all believe in the importance of collective state provision to alleviate the problems and meet the needs which may arise for individuals in the market system; they differ somewhat in the extent to which the see those problems as arising from those individuals or from the system, and in the corresponding policy solutions they consider appropriate. The 'non socialist welfare collectivism' variant acknowledges "..the failure of the market to meet basic needs" (74),and that there should be some intervention to resolve some problems (though these may not be seen as being caused by the system itself). However, the state is not seen as the best agent for (all of) this intervention; family, community, voluntary sector, among others, are seen as key players.

The Fabian Socialists consider it to be capitalism which creates many social problems, because it is "unethical, unjust and undemocratic" (75). However, government action can transform capitalism, particularly through the welfare state. The state will not just respond to needs not met by capitalism, but extends this to ensuring the provision of rights - civil, political and social. The state ensures the right to a basic minimum of welfare, topped-up for areas or groups in greatest need. Underpinning such an approach to policy is a more collective, less individualistic ideology, interestingly expressed by Winifred Holtby in her novel about local government during the inter-war period: "But when I came to consider local government, I began to see how it was in essence the first line defence thrown up by the community against our common enemies - poverty, sickness, ignorance, isolation, mental derangement and social maladjustment. The battle is not faultlessly conducted, nor are the motives of those who take part in it all righteous or disinterested. But the war is, I believe, worth fighting, and this corporate action is at least based upon recognition of one fundamental truth about human nature - we are not only single individuals, each face to face with eternity and our separate spirits; we are members one of another." (76) However, there is argument within this perspective as to the extent to which the welfare state is a result of society's recognition of social responsibility, and how far it is a pragmatic response to the problems thrown up by capitalism, and consequently supporting it by alleviating the worst effects of such problems. Here, again, the power of the state to define needs is seen as a problem: "..they confer too much power on the professionals and the administrators; ...they allow very little, if any, say to the users of the service."(77)

Within the Radical Social Administration perspective, the state takes on a much greater significance in its relationship with the economy. Capitalism is seen as a major cause of many of the problems in society, though the solutions are not seen as contained in its overthrow, but more in changing ideas and values (the prevailing ideology) to alter the structure and institutions of the market. The state should develop its policy process - "social and economic policy need to be unified through a democratic decentralized

process of social planning according to need"(78). The emphasis is on the social policy determining economic policy, rather than reacting to and compensating for it. The needs of the population or society determine the needs of the economy, rather than vice versa.

While some of the above variants of social reformism may partly derive from a Marxist view of capitalism, they nevertheless see solutions through changing ideas in order to modify the market system via such things as state welfare, rather than overthrowing the economic system. The perspective of the Political Economy of Welfare focusses more on explanations of the relationship between the state and the economy, though it is less clear about prescriptive solutions. Capitalism "is seen as ultimately antagonistic to the welfare needs of the working class, but nevertheless forced ....to concede welfare reform"(79). The development of state welfare is seen as assisting in the maintenance of capitalism by ameliorating its worst consequences, and helping to ensure a sufficiently fit and educated workforce. While state welfare may have developed out of the struggle of people to meet their own needs, it may nevertheless (in some forms, or within certain parameters) meet those of capitalism. "Public services do create stresses on the political system because of the problems involved in raising the necessary revenues but, on the other hand, they contribute to political stability in four possible ways: by easing potentially disruptive problems; by adopting individualistic explanations of social problems; by fostering certain values and forms of behaviour; and by helping to replace class conflict with less threatening group conflicts."(80)

Ideology is seen here as playing an important part in maintaining capitalism through the operation of welfare, as the above comments about "individualistic explanations" and "certain values" suggest - it is the ideas, in the form of explanations and values, incorporated in the welfare system which help to avoid the potential for conflict within capitalism. As Taylor-Gooby has indicated, there are different ways in which this can be seen to operate (81). On the one hand, the ideology of the ruling class is made to dominate through that class's control of the key social institutions which present and

legitimise the social order - government, education, welfare. As noted earlier, when considering 'Who decides?' (p52), it is those who make and implement policy who have the more significant influence on the ways in which need is perceived. Most analyses of the welfare state indicate how power rests largely with the bureaucrats and professionals, not least in their influence in defining need. "The possible discrepancy between expertly ascribed needs and felt needs not only raises questions about the definition of need in question but also questions the extent to which it is possible for disadvantaged groups, even with the help of community workers, to get their own felt or articulated needs attended to or on to the agenda of politics or recognised as legitimate needs, and in this sense issues about the definition and articulation of need are inseparably bound up with issues of political power and the extent to which it is possible for disadvantaged groups to gain access to a political hearing."(82)

Alternatively, it is argued that ideas themselves are the product of social life under capitalism - for example, economic relations are individualised and privatised - which produces and reinforces a particular type of conciousness, and thus those ideas are more plausible to the working class. As Pinker has pointed out, "The formation of individual and public attitudes towards social services needs to be viewed as a process separate, in some respects, from legislative procedures. As we grow up, the most authentic rights we acquire and exercise are those we use in the roles of buyers and sellers in the market place.....For the majority the idea of participant citizenship in distributive processes outside the market place has very little meaning." (83) Hence the difficulty many people have in accepting income for which they do not go out to work, and identifying needs and accepting assistance for which they do not pay; not without feeling an attached stigma (84). A development of this view of the impact of ideology is that it prevents people from recognising their 'real' needs: "...not only will the existing structure of power prevent felt needs from being articulated within the political arena, but also, the power structure that is both legitimated by and reflected in all kinds of meaning systems - moral norms, institutions, social rituals etc. - may so mould individuals that they are in some sense

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unaware of their real needs or the depths of their poverty and deprivation."(85) The effect of this is that it is difficult to generate welfare through changing values and ideas within the context of capitalism because the underlying ideology of each is conflicting, welfare being based on the values of solidarity and co-operation. In contrast, "the economic organization of capitalism depends on and fosters an individualist ideology.......This means that if values are to be changed, this is possible, not through moral argument, but when the economic organization of society is changed."(86) These ideas reflect those of Marx, discussed in Chapter 2, contrasting the 'inhuman, depraved, unnatural and imaginary appetites' created under capitalism, compared with the 'human needs' which would be liberated and met under socialism (see p 14). Enabling such 'real', 'human needs' to be acknowledged, expressed and met is seen as difficult, if not impossible, within the capitalist system.

The above discussion of ideology and the part it plays in determining the character of the welfare state (including how needs are generated, perceived, and met) has focussed primarily on the relationship between the state and the economy. However, these are not the only elements of ideology which influence the nature of the welfare state. Hill and Bramley identify "two other closely related things of dominating importance as far as social policy was concerned . One was the emphasis upon the family as the key grouping in society....The other...is the idea of the dominance of the male breadwinner" (87) Both of these can be subsumed under the general heading of the family, the importance of which in the development of social policy has also been emphasised by Fiona Williams: "... issues of sexual divisions and the family are both specific and *central* to the study of the welfare state". (88)

Hill and Bramley have identified the ways in which the emhasis on the family affected the development of social policy in Britain in both the 19th and 20th centuries. The importance of the role of the man as breadwinner was seen as dominant in "Thinking about social security or housing needs" (89) in Victorian times. "The female headed

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household secured minimal assistance from any source..........Unmarried mothers, in particular, were treated very harshly" (90). Similarly, the rules of social insurance developed in the 20th century "are still built around a view of the male as a breadwinner and as the supporter of dependants" (91). Also, the care of those who cannot look after themselves - the young, disabled and elderly, among others - is largely undertaken (and expected to be) by the family. The provision of services tends to be rationed according to the availability of family members, particularly female ones, to provide support, on the assumption or belief that they should, and will: "In relation to domiciliary services and other forms of practical support for dependent people living in their own homes, there is evidence that the level of provision remains poor and inadequate to meet demands, especially so if the person who needs care lives in a household with other adults (particularly women)...."(92).

It is largely through the critical and campaigning work of the feminists that the significance of the prevailing ideology of the family on the nature of the welfare state has been identified and emphasised: "....welfare policies have appealed to and reinforced ideas of what constitutes family life.."(93) These have influenced the ways in which needs, and the needs of women in particular, have been perceived and responded to in policy. "If the conventional woman is one who stays married and stays at home, the conventional man goes out to work. Women who work seriously are either bad or mad - that is deviant or sick- while men who do not work are bad or mad - that is, deviant or sick." (94) The needs of women were largely subsumed under those of their families or husbands, within this view. Policies to meet these needs were developed with this underlying perspective.

Within the feminist critique, however, are differing views of what these perceptions of women and their needs are, whether they should change, and how social policy should respond to them. There have been those (the welfare feminists) who feel that the emphasis on work and the role of the male breadwinner have ignored the important

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contribution of women; however, their contribution here is defined through their roles as wives and mothers, and that their needs in this context have been neglected. In this view "the struggles for reforms for women are aimed not towards their access to opportunities in the public sphere, but at their needs as wives and mothers within the private sphere".(95) This approach has been criticised not because there were not legitimate needs in this context, but that it accepted the ideological view of women's primary role within the family.

Radical feminists have seen this acceptance as the exercise of male power through the state, resulting in the "marginalisation of the needs of those women who do not fit the conventional nuclear family form"(96) In effect, the perception of women's needs is seen as being narrowly defined by their role in the family. "The dominant ideology of reproduction actually states that while all women want to be mothers, they really want to be wives and mothers. That is, no sane, well-adjusted rational female wants to be a mother outside marriage" (97) Radical and socialist feminists have both been concerned to question this emphasis on women's family role, and to criticise welfare (and other economic and social) policies which are based on it. There has been criticism of policies (both government and trade union) focussing on the provision of full-time employment and a family wage for men, which assume women's domestic and caring role, and ignores any needs they may have for income and employment, and support in the parenting role to enable them to work. (The contradiction identified by Delamont above offers some modification to this, in that there is a concern to provide child care to enable single mothers to work, to support themselves and their families, and not be a burden, which is less evident for married mothers. The capitalist value of individual self-reliance here overwhelms that of selfless motherhood). Socialist feminists have argued for a reallocation of labour and wealth within the family, with employment being organised to meet alternative modes of social reproduction. It is argued that there is an alternative in which "welfare provision and human need are central to the social and economic

organisation of society" (98), compared with a situation where social organisation meets the needs of capitalist production.

Family (or a particular view of it) is not the only other element of ideology which influences the ways in which needs are perceived and responded to in welfare policy. "In this area of 'political socialisation' the state and other institutions are able to make use of a panoply of ideas and symbols of proven appeal, to which the national and often the imperial history of these countries has added even greater potency."(99). Racism, seen to derive from imperialist ideology, complicates the picture further. For example, Black feminists have indicated how the concern for the needs of women as "wives and mothers" is not seen to apply to them in the same way as it does to white women(100). When there was a demand for more cheap labour, black women were seen as acceptable, not least because many of them arrived without their children, who were left to be brought up by other relatives. If they did have children here, their willingness to work was seen as another indicator of their inadequacy as mothers, compared to white women. The racist ideology which allows or enables black people to be treated differently does not just apply to women. Programmes which identified the "special needs" of unemployed black youth for training addressed to changing their language and attitudes ignored the racism of their teachers and employers.

Perspectives on the social divisions of class, gender and race have been seen as key elements in understanding the ideological basis of social policy (101), although there are many other elements (such as perspectives on age, disability, etc) which make the picture a complex one. It has been shown that there are differing views on how these divisions are and should be perceived, what kinds of needs are acknowledged as a result, and how these should be responded to in the creation and operation of social policy. Some argue that it is impossible to identify, express and respond to real or human needs within a capitalist system. Others feel that changes can occur to acknowledge and meet needs more appropriately without fundamental change in economic and social organisation.

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Either way, the importance of ideology in influencing and maintaining a particular form of welfare state has to be emphasised: "Decisions in the development of social policy must be seen as choices. These are made, of course, in a context of economic, cultural and ideological constraints nevertheless they are choices, indeed to some extent choices about which of those constraints to accept and which to challenge.........Social policies do not merely emerge in the form they do because of a particular family system or economic system; they must be seen as choices in favour of those systems. These choices then reinforce those systems, and the ideologies that sustain them." (102)

Conclusions

"In the social administration tradition.....need is the rationale and the principal guide for policy....In political debate, assertions about need are frequently used in a manner which suggests inherent persuasiveness and perhaps even unchallengeability.....In practice, it is not clear that the word has any coherent meanings, let alone that its many users share a definition" (103)

Two essential dimensions to the concept of need and its use in social policy have been identified - the subjective, involving experienced and expressed need, which cannot easily be distinguished from wants, and the objective, involving external judgements irrespective of subjective feelings. The development and implementation of social policy incorporates both, often mixed up, and often without making clear distinctions between them, or considering the implications of the different dimensions. While the policy makers' concern may be primarily with the objective dimension, with external standards which may relate more to what society, or those in power, consider essential (maybe for the stability of society), the practical difficulties of separating the measurement of this from the subjectively expressed needs of individuals, plus the 'democratic' justification, and the potentially political persuasiveness of an apparent interest in the individual's expressed need, all work to include the subjective dimension in policy.

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A range of issues has been identified which have to be addressed when making use of the concept, decisions having to be made about such things as the areas of life, the standards, the units of need etc. All of these have been shown to be wrapped up in what is essentially the political process - of dominant or conflicting values, of the availability of resources, of the power of individuals or groups to influence policy decisions. Underlying this political process are ideologies, ideas about how society is, and how it should be; deriving from and influencing the social and economic organization of society. Such ideologies present alternative views of how needs arise, what they are, and how they should be responded to. It is argued that the dominant ideology in the capitalist system can distance professionals' 'objective' assessments of needs from the true felt and expressed needs of those they assess, or even that the latter will not be able to experience their true needs in such a context.

Those undertaking research concerned with the identification and measurement of need in a policy setting have to work within this political and ideological framework, however complex and unclear. It may in theory be possible to choose some esoteric definitions of the concept, and claim some kind of 'objectivity' based essentially on a lack of contact with the real world. But the carrying out of research requires such contact, and the real world's definitions cannot be ignored, whether in carrying out the research or in claiming some validity and worth for the results. Neither can the researcher avoid the impact of idcology on their own work; in studying women, for example, "Researchers have almost always been so blinded by the dominant reproductive ideology that they have restricted their sampling, their questions and their conclusions to within its basic premises" (104) It has been argued above that the ability of professionals and bureaucrats to define people's needs for them is part of the process by which the dominant ideology can be maintained."Imposing definitions is an exercise of power which mystifies and hinders people thinking for themselves."(105) The same argument can be applied to those undertaking research, and is a particular danger in the political and ideological context of social policy. Doyal and Gough have identified one (optimistic) approach to defining

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needs: "Where there are fundamental conflicts over the definition of need itself, or the basic forms of provision to satisfy need, then we have seen that their rational evaluation will entail democratic debate in the light of the best technical and practical understanding available."(106) The ways in which researchers have approached the concept of need, have attempted (or not) to resolve the issues discussed above, and the influence of the context in which the concept is used, are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Operationalising Concepts In Applied Social Research

Chapter One identified the nature of concepts, and their use by social scientists, as problematic. In considering how the concept of need is used in applied social research, it is necessary here to explore further the problems identified there - i.e. the significance of concepts, the necessity for, and problems of, operationalising them in research activity, and the particular influence on such operationalising in the context of applied social research.

Blumer, in his analysis of 'What is wrong with Social Theory', which he criticises as being divorced from the empirical world, and defective in its guidance of research inquiry, identifies the crucial position of concepts:

"In my judgement the appropriate line of probing is with regard to the concept. Theory is of value in empirical science only to the extent to which it connects fruitfully with the empirical world. Concepts are the means, and the only means, of establishing such connection, for it is the concept that points to the empirical instances about which a theoretical proposal is made. If the concept is clear as to what it refers, then identification of the empirical instances may be made ... contrariwise, vague concepts deter the identification of appropriate empirical instances, and obscure the detection of what is relevant in the empirical instances that are chosen"(1).

However, Blumer does not see the solution in the form of developing what he calls 'definitive concepts' i.e. concepts which refer precisely to what is common to a class of objects by the aid of a clear definition in terms of attributes or fixed bench marks. Such fixed and specific procedures designed to isolate a stable and definitive empirical content encounter a number of difficulties in attempting to produce genuine concepts related to the empirical world. If the definitive empirical content is regarded as constituting the

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concept, it no longer has the more abstract qualities of a concept, of a class of items with specifiable attributes, without which it has no theoretical value. But once it is argued that the definitive empirical content represents something else, beyond itself, it is no longer a simple definitive concept - as Blumer argues "the concept continues to be constituted by general sense or understanding, and not by specification"(2). A further problem arises in the relevance of the definitive content in the empirical world to which it refers; "A specific procedure may yield a stable finding ... (but) ... unless this finding is shown to have a relevant place in the empirical world under study, it has no value for theory"(3). As argued in Chapter 1, the sociologist working in the area of social policy has to be particularly concerned about the relevance of the concepts he uses (and their definitive content) for the empirical world he studies, not disregarding their meaning and significance for others.

Blumer argues that the concepts used by the sociologist are essentially 'sensitising concepts', as distinct from 'definitive concepts'. Where the latter refers precisely to what is common to a class of objects, by the aid of a clear definition in terms of attributes or bench marks, a sensitising concept lacks such specifications, providing instead a general sense of reference. "Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitising concepts merely suggest directions along which to look"(4). It is the unique nature of the empirical world which determines this aspect of sociological concepts - "If our empirical world presents itself in the form of distinctive and unique happenings or situations and if we seek through the direct study of this world to establish classes of objects and relations between classes, we are, I think, forced to work with sensitising concepts ... the concept must guide one in developing a picture of the distinctive impression ... one moves out from the concept to the concrete distinctiveness of the instance ... this is a matter of filling out a new situation or of picking one's way in an unknown terrain ... The concept sensitises one to this task, providing clues and suggestions"(5).

This view of concepts poses problems for those undertaking empirical research, particularly where the emphasis is on a quantitative methodology. The latter normally requires 'definitive' concepts, i.e. concepts which refer precisely to what is common to a class of objects by the aid of a clear definition in terms of attributes or fixed bench marks. The production of such operational concepts, which ultimately cannot be avoided if such research is to be undertaken, is part of the overall research process, in which the researcher has a powerful role in influencing the results he ultimately produces. "The data ... of research are not so much given as taken out of a constantly elusive matrix of happenings ... The quantitatively interchangeable grist that goes into the mills of reliability studies and rating scales is the expression of a processing that we do on reality, which is not the expression of the processes of reality"(6).

The methodology of sociological (and social) research, such as the definition of the problem to be studied, the selection and operationalising of concepts, the selection of the population to be studied, the methods of study, the type of data analysis (including statistical) chosen, all influence the final results of research, whether qualitative or quantitative. "The process of observation, selection, and transformation of aspects of social reality define the nature of the links between a resulting sociological interpretation and the realities under investigation ... the methodological problem is to show how the sociologists interpretations are constructed and how they relate to the meaningful actions they are trying to comprehend"(7).

Phillipson goes on to criticise the ways in which sociologists have ignored the impact that the selection of methods, concepts and statistical techniques have on the outcome of research activity. In relation to the use of concepts he says: "As operationalisation is the means by which a concept is actually linked to phenomena in the social world, the process would seem to be highly relevant to the theoretical perspective adopted and the kinds of concepts used. A description of operationalisation would show how the theory or hypothesis was to relate to the empirical social world"(8). He considers that, too often,

the sociologist has regarded this process as common sense, independent of the particular researcher and the influences on the way he works, and thus neutral.

It is important, therefore, to explore the influences upon the carrying out of applied social research, and to consider how these affect the selection and operationalisation of concepts used in such research.

Influences on Operationalisation of Research being 'Applied'

In the above section it has been demonstrated that the operationalisation of concepts is a complex matter, and that the results of the process have a significant impact on the nature and meaning of the findings of the research. We have seen that the "interpretive leap from theory to data"(9) is influenced by many factors, and that these influences cannot be avoided, but should be explored and clearly spelled out, and their likely impact on the research recognised.

A critical influence on the use of the concept 'need' in research, with significant effect on the way in which it is operationalised, is the fact that it is usually used in what is commonly called 'applied research'. Now while the distinction between 'applied research' and what is otherwise called 'theoretical' or 'basic research' may not be clear cut, there are definite differences in approach, orientation or emphasis, which it is important to consider here.

MacDonald suggests the following distinction "Basic research is usually taken to refer to investigation directed towards the accumulation of knowledge for understanding the world. The motivation in basic research is understanding, without regard to immediate practical consequences ...In contrast ... applied research usually refers to investigation directed toward the acquisition of knowledge in order to control natural phenomena"(10). This distinction indicates the different orientation of the two types of research, as well as allowing one to see the overlap e.g. knowledge gained for the purpose of understanding

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may also prove to be very useful in attempts to control. Despite the overlap, the difference is significant and important, and can be illustrated by the following suggestions as to how research should be approached (even when the 'theoretical research' is in the area of social problems, which is also of interest to the 'applied researcher' such as one involved in social work research).

Becker, in discussing how the social scientist should approach the study of social problems, prescribes the following orientation: "Even though he does not accept the current definition of the problem, he is prepared to investigate the problem area, to see what data he can gather and interpret in the light of accepted theories of society.......The social scientist analyses a social problem area by locating it in a social context; he sees it as a public issue of social structure to be analysed as he ordinarily analyses structural problems...he uses the available framework of sociological theory to identify the social relationships and social structures in which people participate, the constraints that such participation places on their behaviour, the relation of structures and relationships to one another and to society as a whole, and the way these inter-relations affect the actions taken by sub-groups and organisations within the society. Having identified all these phenomena and their inter-relations he can then give an account of what is 'really' involved in the area defined as a social problem."(11).

Deutscher suggests that the motivation of the social scientist working in the field of social problems may be much more practical and value-driven than this: "We (The Society for the Study of Social Problems) seek, on the one hand, to achieve a better understanding of the problems society creates for some of the people within it and, on the other, more effective application of socially relevant knowledge to the solution to these problems. Ultimately most of us are concerned with finding ways to alter this world in such a manner that more people may find it a better place in which to live......whatever changes we have to recommend...must be directed toward those who make or influence policy in our society" (12). Macdonald takes the potential commitment of the researcher to a

particular set of values, and a particular organisational context much further: "The function of social work research is to contribute to the development of a dependable body of knowledge to serve the means and goals of social work in all its ramifications... The objectives of the social work practitioner and the research worker are the same - simply, the improvement of practice". (13) The same position could be applied to any other area of social policy.

While all approaches mentioned are concerned with obtaining knowledge, the critical difference lies in the aim of applied research, that it should provide knowledge which is of practical use. This might not be so critical if the possibilities of 'practical use' were open-ended and the consequent search for knowledge was correspondingly broadly based. The reality, however, is that practical use occurs within a restricted framework, of policy makers and operational agencies of various kinds. Applied research is required to provide knowledge which will assist such agencies to function more effectively, or efficiently. "There are increasing demands being made upon social science. There are expectations that we can be helpful - and we ought to be."(14)   The expectation, however, is likely to be for that help to be in terms of existing policy and practice. For example, using the social work context, as above, the applied research question might be asked in the form 'How can social work be more effective in alleviating situation X?' rather than the more theoretical approach which might ask 'What are the nature and causes of situation X?' or 'Does social work have any significant. part to play in influencing situation X?', whether X be baby-battering, poverty, poor school attendance, or many other 'social problems'. Some of the research discussed in the next chapter was concerned to identify the scale of responsibilities arising from specific legislation, rather than the nature of the problem to which that legislation related.(15,16)

Applied research is essentially oriented towards addressing practical matters, and these matters are identified by institutions or agencies with a particular role to play in relation to such matters. Generally speaking, educational institutions aim to provide education as

defined by legislation and by such things as the National Curriculum, and to solve the 'problem' of those who do not achieve within such definitions; hospitals and other public health institutions aim to meet the health care requirements of the population, or even to improve its levels of health; social service agencies aim to ensure appropriate standards of care for children, elderly people, disabled people, among others.

However, each such agency or institution operates within a framework, not always clearly defined, but which nevertheless constrains the ways in which it works, and, indirectly, the kinds of knowledge it seeks in order to do its work. For example, a local authority Social Services department's activities are significantly influenced by a range of factors, most of which can be perceived as constraints:

1. What it is legally required to do by legislation;

2. What is empowered (and, by implication, not empowered) to do, by legislation.

3. What it has to ask special permission to do (from central government).

4. Ministerial guidelines or 'norms' of service/staff provision.

5. Professional views on what it ought to do, and how.

6. What it is given specific financial aid to do, (by central government).

7. What resources it has to implement its chosen policies.

8. What policies are favoured by those elected to the committees which govern it.(17)

The fact that a Social Services department's (or other governmental organisation's) activities are heavily circumscribed by these kinds of influences and constraints limits its constructive involvement in the analysis of the nature of the problems it has to confront, or in the evaluation of experimental alternatives. This in turn constrains the kind of information and research required by the agency. The emphasis is on information which enables the agency to establish the scale of its obligations under the above, rather than investigating the 'real' nature of these obligations, or of the problems they are intended to solve.

Thus, for example, if an Act of Parliament requires an agency to provide work for particular categories of disabled people, then the information required is likely to be 'How many disabled people are there in that category in a given area?' This is a much narrower approach than one of researching the employment problems of disabled people and the range of solutions available and preferred. As Rose has suggested: "Public officials tend to define their work in terms of the problem immediately confronting them. They wish to apply knowledge to the policy process, rather than achieve an understanding which, however relevant theoretically, is not relevant to the task before them".(18) Consequently, the 'research' required by the agency is constrained, the definition of the problem limited, and the concepts used are likely to be appropriately defined and operationalised, if the research is to be 'useful'.

The Role Of The Researcher In An 'Applied' Context

The researcher who works in an applied context, or who wants his work to be useful in the practical, everyday world, cannot avoid facing up to the influence this context has on the way he does his work. As Richard Rose has pointed out, the relationship between the social scientist and public official is not an easy one: "Because social scientists study the conditions of man in society and governments seek to influence these conditions, there is a logical relationship between the interests and activities of social scientists and public officials. There is a cash nexus because the activities of social scientists are to a very large extent dependent upon support from public funds... Notwithstanding these many points of contact, there is an uneasy relationship between social scientists and public officials in many countries where major efforts have been made to utilise the social sciences in government".(19)

Working in this context, there are diverse influences on the way in which the social scientist (in particular the sociologist) approaches his work, the role he adopts, the way he defines his problems and concepts, and the methods he uses. Martin Albrow, in exploring the role of the sociologist as a professional, has indicated how the claim of

sociologists to a high degree of professional independence, similar to that of others professions such as medicine or the law, is not well supported. "If professionals have won a high degree of immunity from the process of social control in their relations with their clients, this is clearly dependent largely on the extent to which they have developed autonomous codes of practice and methods of corporate discipline. By comparison the professionalisation of sociology is still... partial ..." (20). The result of this, he goes on to argue, is that the sociologist is much more subject to the expectations of men. Sociologists, and the 'confused and inconsistent' image that others may have of him is what determines the kind of tasks he may be asked to undertake. There is no unified corporate view or body of people to refer to in deciding what tasks to undertake, or how, and thus "there is no immunity from clients attempts to influence the principles and methods of the sociologist, save by terminating the relationship(21)".

He illustrates some of the problems which can arise for the sociologist in the context of urban planning, with a particular example of the problem of defining a concept, 'community', and measuring the likely extent of its destruction by the building of a new road, something he was asked to undertake as a sociologist, by a local council. He shows how the term 'community', which has an important place in the language of sociology might in theoretical work be defined by the sociologist in a way which is constant with his purposes and will facilitate communication with his colleagues. However, when working in a professional capacity, as an 'expert' he considers that "It would be grossly neglectful of his client's interests to disregard what he had in mind simply because he does not command the use of appropriate sociological jargon. Furthermore, as a sociologist, one cannot disregard the respondents' interpretations of reality(22)". What he studies, and the way in which he undertakes his work, is inevitably influenced by the interpretations of reality, and of language, that are held by those for whom he is working. In Albrow's case, he found himself "moving back and forth between the language of the residents and the language of the discipline", and "through the language of sociology, translating the significance the proposed road had for one sub-culture, traditional working class, into

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terms which were acceptable to another sub-culture, that of the professional technocrat".(23)

The outcome of this activity reflects its problematic character. The 'professional sociologist' in this situation found that nothing that a sociologist would call a community would be destroyed. Nevertheless, the building of the road would have an impact on the lives of residents which they perceived but had not 'expressed adequately' (at least in the sociologist's language). They had, however, referred to 'hardship', not a sociological term, but a useful heading under which it was possible to make use of more acceptable sociological concepts and data - kinship ties, neighbouring relations, associational affiliations and economic relationships - to show the likely degree of impact of the road under consideration.

This illustration reflects some of the difficulty inherent in applied social research, inevitably involving the use of language which may vary amongst those undertaking the research, those funding and hoping to make use of it, and those who are the subject of it. 'Community' is one such word; the residents thought the road would disrupt their community; those planning the road did not; the sociologist said that it would not disrupt what he would call a community, but would nevertheless have a very disruptive effect on the lives of the residents - presumably what they considered to be disrupting their community. 'Community' is not an atypical concept in this respect; the considerable overlap in the language of sociologists and the remainder of the population means that it the potential for confusion and obfuscation is considerable in the undertaking, use, and misuse, of applied social research. The concept of 'need' is just one of many such concepts.

It is not simply in relation to the definition and operationalisation of concepts that there are profound influences on the researcher working in applied social research. There are other processes in the carrying out of research about which important decisions have to

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be made, which will be linked to the business of conceptualisation. The initial decision about the approach to the study - the 'definition of the problem' is one of these. As Greer has indicated in relation to the kinds of problems that give rise to social inquiry: "The policy problem...is the problem of everyday life in the society...such problems are always defined by the *values* of the society."(24) Others include the delineation of the topics to be considered within the defined problem; the selection of the human subjects to be studied; the methods of study - survey research, participant observation; these will influence and be influenced by the conceptualisation process, and will all contribute to the final form of the outcomes or results of the research - "the processing that we do on reality" (25). The social policy context in which research on need is undertaken is likely to have some influence on all of these - as the discussion in Chapter 3 would suggest. The researcher has to make choices about the areas, units and levels of need which are to be studied, and how this is to be conceptualised and carried out; the context of the research, including the essentially political context of policy-making, implementation and resource allocation, will be a major influence on this.

As noted in Chapter 1, Pauline Morris indicated that "An essential contribution of the sociologist working in the field of the Sociology of Law will be to examine the differing ways in which need is perceived by the various participants in the situation ..... the definition of need likely to be adopted in terms of the service provided will reflect the power and status of those providing the service rather than the definition of those receiving it"(26). The applied social scientist will be constrained in the extent to which he can follow such conceptual explorations, if he is to complete a practical piece of useful research for, say, a public body, but he cannot ignore their implications. The least he has to do is to present clearly the scope of his research, his definition of the problem, to explain thoroughly how he has chosen and defined his concepts, both theoretically and operationally, and similarly the subjects and methods, so that those who make use of his findings are in a position to judge their value; equally so those who wish to object them.

Subsequent chapters will attempt to consider some of the ways in which the concept of need has been used in various types and examples of applied social research (including two by the author), and consider some of the benefits and limitations of these, and the extent to which these have been made explicit by those using them.

Chapter 5

Need Surveys

Surveys of need have been undertaken in many forms over a long period of time. Not all have necessarily clearly identified themselves as such, but many have made explicit use of the concept of need. The extent to which they have clearly discussed the concept, and the manner in which they have operationalised it, has been varied. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the use and operationalisation of the concept in several surveys. It will consider whether or not the surveys (in their written reports) acknowledge the issues involved in using and operationalising the concept, discuss how they approach the conceptualisation and operationalising process, and in what ways they use the findings to produce policy-relevant results. All of these surveys can appropriately be described as 'applied social research' in that they have been undertaken for the purpose of producing policy-relevant information. Several of these have been national surveys, commissioned by government, to produce information specifically relevant to the production or implementation of legislation, such as those connected to the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act(1), discussed below. Others have been commissioned, or undertaken, by local authorities planning services on a different scale. Two of these were carried out by the author of this thesis, in conjunction with others. 'The Needs of Old People in Glamorgan' (2) was carried out under the supervision of Martin Albrow, who was joint author of the final report. It was commissioned by a local authority Welfare Services Department, to inform its planning of services and support to elderly people. 'Elderly People in Older Private Housing'(3) was undertaken jointly with Brian Jones as the initial stage of the Newport Staying Put Project. An earlier example of a local survey is discussed first.

<u>C. BROCKINGTON and S.LEMPERT: The Social Needs of the Over-80's(4)</u>

During the 1950s there was concern about the ageing of the community in Stockport, and it was agreed "That a scientific survey of the needs of elderly persons in the Borough be undertaken in conjunction with the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine of Manchester University."(5) The book which was produced following some extended analysis of this survey data provides a comprehensive account of many aspects of the lives of elderly people in the area - housing, diet, illness, mobility, sociability, and so on. This account is then used as the basis for an analysis of existing services and for policy proposals concerning the range of services required to meet the needs of elderly people.

The researchers came from a medical background, and this was a major influence on the focus of their approach, and the grounds for selection of those considered elderly. Early on, the book discusses the choice, or delineation, of the subject matter, and acknowledges that there is no simple way to characterise elderly people, other than by their age, yet they are nevertheless treated differently: "There is no disease peculiar to old age and very few from which it is exempt and the only common denominator is advanced age. Yet it is usually just this factor which places the old in a different category, which excludes them largely from general hospitals and which leads to an assessment of their needs different from that of other age groups."(6) The researchers still used disease as the main justification of delimiting their study to the over 80s. "Degenerative diseases may occur at any age or may in fact be part of our genetic heritage, but only in extreme old age are they present in large numbers and in exaggerated form against a background of failing strength. Thus the over 80's present an ideal group in which to study incapacities primarily due to old age."(7)

The use of the term 'assessment' of their needs would seem to suggest that they concentrate on an external or objective approach to the concept of need; although the term may be used to incorporate the individual's views today, I am not sure that this

would have been the case thirty years ago. This view would seem to be justified by the subsequent chapter on 'Methods, Definitions and Criteria of Measurement'. The concept of need does not appear to have been seen as problematic at all, for it is not discussed, despite its frequent use throughout the book. The chapter provides a fairly comprehensive view of the practical methods of the study - every effort was made to ensure that elderly people were not missed and that the interviews were carried out effectively. And there are detailled explanations of each area of 'need' explored - diet, sociability, housing, mobility and so on. But there is no effective discussion of why these particular areas of life were selected as being of concern, nor of the potential difficulties in identifying or measuring need within each of these areas. In fact, the researchers do actually make use of the old people's subjective judgement in relation to one aspect - mobility - but do not acknowledge that this differs from what they are doing elsewhere, and do not seem to use this approach in any other context.

In respect of most areas of life explored in the study, the approach is exclusively one of external or 'objective' judgements of need. In relation to diet, respondents were asked to record or recall what they had eaten over given periods of time, so that measures of calories and nutrients consumed could be obtained. The respondents' own views of the adequacy or otherwise of their eating habits were not reported. Social life was treated in a similarly technical fashion: "Sociability was measured in terms of activities inside and outside the home; by the degree of communication with the "closest" relative; and by the extent and frequency of visiting"(8). The one concession to a more subjective approach was that (as far as can be ascertained) the old person could influence the choice of 'closest relative' - which was defined as "the one to whom the old person was most closely linked by home ties and friendship"(9). The subjective experience of the possible effects of isolation, such as loneliness, was not explored, and to be fair, the researchers do not attempt to translate explicitly from the external or objective measures to the more subjective ones. They do, however, use their measures to make judgements about their subjects apparent 'need' for more social contact or other intervention: "Almost one-fifth

of those living with single sons were not visited by relatives and emerged again as candidates for community care.."(10) and "Old people living with their children or with others of their own generation, with the exception of those who lived with the single sons, were less in need of an outside visitor".(11)

In relation to housing, the size type of housing and the number of amenities were identified, not the appropriateness or adequacy of these from the point of view of the old people living in, or using, them. It may be that respondents offered their own subjective views on their houses - "many lived in houses far too big for them, which were regarded by the old people themselves as a serious additional burden"(12) - but requesting their view point is not identified as a systematic part of the researcher's approach to identifying need. This does not prevent them drawing conclusions about what old people 'really need': "These findings confirm other surveys and corroborate the statement often made that there are far too many old people with more accommodation than they really need."(13). The basis for this judgement seems to be the researchers' own definitions and measures of housing need.

It is interesting that while subjective feelings in relation to such matters as isolation and social contact were not considered of any great significance, nor subjective evaluations of the housing situation, much more emphasis was placed on the old people's own judgements of their mobility: "The survey focused attention on mobility in terms of a subjective evaluation by the old person themselves, based on questions designed to discover the limits of their activities....Subjectively the underlying conditions which prevent an old person from leaving his room or bed are..of less significance to the old people themselves and to the health and welfare authorities than the actual degree of incapacity which is experienced......The patient's own evaluation also makes allowance for the large individual variations which occur in the ability to accommodate to pathological changes.."(14). Given such obvious understanding of the complex relationship between

objective measures of need and more subjective expression of need, it is strange why this was only considered in relation to mobility.

The report concludes with a discussion of the kinds of policy which the authors considered should be developed in relation to elderly people in Stockport. This was not done in terms of specific estimates for services based on analyses of the range of needs identified in the survey, but a much broader view of the approach and organisational framework which they felt was necessary to provide a more 'preventive service' for elderly people (15). This included developing the roles of health visitors, changing the housing policies of the local authority, and combining the responsibilities for health and welfare services in one local authority health department. These conclusions do not derive in any simple or direct way from the survey data, but from a broader analysis of the aims and structure of health and welfare services in the area, and the authors views' on what these should look like. As such, they are more involved in the process of policy-formulation than is acknowledged in the description of their work as a 'scientific survey'.

M.WATSON and M.ALBROW: The Needs of Old People in Glamorgan(16)

This study was undertaken at the request of the then Welfare Services Department of Glamorgan County Council, who were at that time involved in planning the implementation of paragraph 45 of the 1968 Health Services and Public Health Act, which stated: "A local authority may with the approval of the Minister of Health, and to such extent as he may direct shall, make arrangements for promoting the welfare of old people"(17). While requesting that a survey be undertaken of the needs of old people, in order to inform such arrangements, the Department was not particularly prescriptive about how this should be done. Nevertheless, in funding such research in this context, there was an assumption that the findings (and implicitly the methods) would be of relevance to the policy-making process.

While this was acknowledged by the researchers (including the author of this thesis), it was felt that this should not place a straitjacket on the approach chosen for the study, which was being undertaken by staff of a university Department of Sociology. The introduction to the final report focusses attention on the measurement of need, and spends some time describing how the concept was operationalised, and what the value and limitations of this were. This was seen as particularly important by the authors, who recognised the significance that the process of research, particularly the processes of conceptualisation and the operationalising of concepts, can have on the results. Being partly my own work, this study's account of these processes is quoted in some detail.

An examination of the literature had led the researchers to agree with Shanas et al that "...research in depth suffers from a lack of basic knowledge about the aged in general and certain popular assumptions or myths are perpetuated in the public mind...To the extent that these assumptions are generally accepted they have serious implications for social policy. The elderly tend to be treated in policy as a monolithic homogeneous group, rather than as a heterogeneous section of the population with diverse needs, with the result that programs for the elderly may offer too little flexibility and choice to those they are designed to serve".(18)   As a result, the researchers felt that the research should not confine itself to considering need or demand for existing services, or even to those areas of life typically considered the responsibility of Welfare Departments, or local authorities more generally... "We decided that the aim of our research should be to obtain a reasonably comprehensive picture of the general situation and everyday activities of old people in the county, including such aspects of these as accommodation, financial position, domestic activities, social contact and health; further, to ascertain the needs which arise in these different areas of their lives, and to consider some of the ways in which these needs are being, and could be, alleviated." (19). No further justification was given for this selection of the areas of need to be considered.

Despite feeling that the selected topics of study were not too constrained by the policy and organisational framework within which the research was being undertaken, the researchers were influenced by this, and acknowledge this in the report. Before considering how this was addressed in the report, an anecdote relating to the development of the research framework is of relevance here. The two (relatively young) researchers were discussing the research proposals with their (relatively elderly) professor. He enquired as to why they were not considering the sexual needs of elderly people. The hurriedly improvised explanation was that they did not consider that the Welfare department would consider this relevant to their work (a constraint they would not normally consider justifiable). However, the reality was that it had not even been considered, a reminder that all researchers are influenced by culturally determined perceptions of the world (in this instance, an ageist perspective on sex and elderly people).

The research focussed very much on the individual, with all discussions of need being addressed in those terms, as will be seen later. While there is no explicit analysis in the report of the problem of deciding on the unit of need to be considered, there was considerable discussion of this in the development stage of the survey (personal recollection). It was acknowledged that needs relating to housing, coping with household tasks, or managing a household budget, were not always reducible to individual needs. However, the problem of asking for the subjective views of households was also recognised. These were essentially seen as practical research problems rather than major conceptual ones around the different units of need which could be addressed - the debate was between individual and household rather than anything wider. The report pointed out specific areas where this influenced the understanding of statistics e.g. "It should perhaps be emphasised here that all figures, in this chapter as elsewhere, refer to the number of individuals for example, in particular types of housing, or holding the different forms of tenure, not to the number of household units." (20) Also: "Information on weekly incomes was obtained on a different basis for two distinct categories of respondents: for

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all who were either single, widowed, divorced or separated, the normal weekly income of the individual respondent was ascertained; for all married respondents the weekly income of the married couple of which the respondent was a member was obtained".(21) The concern was mainly to ensure that population estimates from the sample were calculated from a clear base figure, of individuals or households.

The report allocates several pages to a discussion of 'The needs of old people, and the measurement of these'. This begins by making the statement that "it should not be thought that there is a range of needs peculiar to this category of people which are common to all its members, and which differentiate them from other ages....the needs of old people, where needs exist....will thus be as diverse as the needs of other people, of whatever age."(22). The selection of those aged 65 and over as the subjects of the study is justified on two grounds, one practical, one more substantive. In practical terms, it would enable comparisons to be made with other studies which had selected this age group. More importantly, it was seen as the age when retirement was likely to affect many people, directly or indirectly, and it was felt that the changes resulting from retirement would play a significant part in the lives, and therefore the needs, of older people.

The report goes on to discuss the concept of need, distinguishing between 'subjectively experienced' and 'objectively determined' need, some of the problems inherent in their use, and the complex relationship between them. "Need can be said to exist when, for any individual, there is a discrepancy between his existing situation and a situation which is felt to be desirable, for whatever reason" (23). A distinction is then made between the situation when an individual feels that disjunction for himself (when it is difficult to distinguish need and want), and (more typically in the development of social and economic provision) when someone else makes that need judgement, against some officially defined standard. "In this research we have made use of both of these approaches to the measurement of need, which for convenience we shall call 'subjectively experienced' and 'objectively determined' need." (24) The report then comments on some

of the factors which can influence the existence of need as measured by these two approaches, and the way in which they can be inter-related.

In relation to subjectively determined need, the main point made is that this may vary between individuals in similar circumstances, because of their own perceptions of their situation, based on their experience. Deprivation can be seen as relative from this angle, which has its own difficulties from a policy-making perspective. In relation to 'objectively determined' needs', the authors acknowledge the political nature of standard-setting, in order to identify need, and that the researcher is inevitably caught up in the political process. "The setting up of standards, whether of income, housing or other factors, in order to ascertain the extent of 'objectively determined' need, is an expression of the values of those who establish the standards. The decision as to what is an acceptable or desirable standard of living for any society, or sub-group in that society, is a political decision.....What is poverty, what is a slum, is..... relative to a given society. Official definitions of these are political definitions. The researcher who is attempting to 'objectively determine' needs is therefore contributing to this process of evaluation and political decision-making." (25).

In operationalising the concept of need, (in both modes) in deciding what areas of life to consider, what level of amenities to measure, what aspects of life to explore, what to describe and what to ignore, the report indicates that the researcher is influenced by (and may also influence) the political and policy-making processes within which he is operating. The report also points out that the reader is similarly involved when deciding which of the researcher's findings to accept and which to reject. Having discussed this general background to the conceptualisation of 'need', the various ways in which need was measured in the survey were then explained:

"1. A description of the situation of respondents. This measure is primarily concerned with the existence of "objectively determined" need: the extent to which the description

indicates the existence of need is dependent on the reader's evaluation of the situation described (against the standards he defines as "necessary"), which, as mentioned above, is limited by the aspects of the situation which the researcher describes. Examples of this measure include an account of the levels of income received, the existence of household amenities, the amount of social contact, and the social activities of respondents.

2. The recording of difficulties expressed by respondents, such as difficulty with domestic tasks, or problematic expenditure. This is dependent upon respondents actually expressing their "subjectively experienced" needs - need in this case existing because the respondent is in a situation with which he is unable to cope satisfactorily.

3.Recording the existence of needs admitted by the respondents, usually expressed in terms of a lack of something (such as the items mentioned as "needed" in reply to Q.66), or as a feeling of dissatisfaction (as with Q.49 on accommodation), or as an emotion, such as loneliness. As above, this is dependent on respondents admitting to their "subjectively experienced" needs.

4.Recording the respondents' expressed desire for help of some kind such as more money or domestic assistance - on the assumption that there exists a need which will be alleviated by the receipt of this help. In this case the respondent not only experiences a need, but has also decided upon a suitable means of alleviating the need.

5. Recording the respondents' desire for certain services (such as the Home-help) - on the assumption that a need exists which receipt of this service will alleviate. This is a more limited measure because it involves not only the respondent admitting to his "subjectively experienced" needs, but also that a service exists, the use of which will alleviate the need, and that the respondent is aware of it and willing to make use of it. Also, the questionnaire did not allow for the recording of the desire to receive a service more

frequently among those who were already in receipt of it, but whose need for it was not totally met.

6.Recording the extent of receipt of certain services. Firstly, this is a measure of certain met (or partially met) needs, those for which an existing service was appropriate and obtained. It can also be used in the measuring of "objectively determined" need, as a basis for determining the extent of unmet need of this kind, by comparing the apparently relevant characteristics of those wanting services, or otherwise appearing to need services, with the corresponding characteristics of those in receipt of services. (For example, comparing the amount of difficulty with, and neglect of, domestic tasks among those not receiving a home-help, with the difficulties of those in receipt of this service)." (26)

The report goes on to point out some of the practical difficulties in using these different measures as the basis for policy-making: "From a policy-making point of view, ascertaining the existence of needs by means of these different measures has correspondingly differing practical implications. For example, when a person 'subjectively experiences' a need, it may be a long process before this need is expressed in a specific demand for help or services, not least because the latter may not exist.....Further, to say that, by some 'objective' standard, a person is 'in need', when that person does not 'subjectively experience' that need, can mean that the person concerned may not be willingly involved in changing his situation to meet the need. Or, even if he feels the need, it may be low in his priorities, so that, for example, he would prefer to remain in unsatisfactory accommodation rather than accept a solution which might involve moving away from family and friends, and possibly result in loneliness." (27)

Having identified some of the problems and issues which have to be confronted when operationalising the concept of need, the report of the survey goes on to present and discuss the findings, informed by these discussions. Acknowledging the problematic nature of the concept, and the inevitable involvement of the researcher in the political

process, did not prevent the researchers from trying to produce information which was relevant to those requesting that the survey be undertaken, including estimates of the need for increased service provision. As was indicated in Chapter 4, unless researchers are willing to accept this role, they cannot effectively operate in policy-related areas. In trying to spell out the implications of different approaches to measuring need, and exploring such things as 'subjective' and 'objective ' approaches to similar subject areas, it was hoped that the information provided would contribute to a more informed approach to policy-making than a simpler 'demand for existing services' approach might have provided, or any approach which did not acknowledge the conceptual problems.

This can be illustrated by the discussion of domestic tasks, the difficulty people had with these, the extent to which they wanted help, and would request services. This began with an account of the "number of factors which can intervene between a person experiencing difficulty with a domestic task, and his asking for, and receiving, an appropriate service. It may be that he prefers to manage as long as he can, despite the difficulties, not admitting to others, or to himself, that he might need help; he may have some alternative source of help; he may not know that a service exists, or that he would be eligible for it; a service appropriate to his needs may not exist; if one does he may not know how to set about obtaining it, or may be reluctant to ask for it; if he finally makes contact with those providing the service, it is possible that he may not qualify for it, and be turned away." (28) The report goes on to explore some of these factors - whether those having difficulty admitted a need for help, whether there were sources of help available to them, whether they knew what services were available and where to make contact with them, and whether they would feel happy doing so.

Figures were produced to illustrate the possible effect of some of these factors:

Number in 'at risk' category not receiving help with:		Number admitting to needing help:	Number wanting:	
a) Getting meals	16	6	Meals on wheels:1	
b) Dusting&tidying	18	7	Home-help	6
c) Heavy cleaning	13	7	Home-help	5

The report then makes the point that "The amount of need discovered depends very much on the type of measure used; difficulty and expressed need will not automatically give rise to demand for services...."(29). While it was hoped that a presentation of the issues involved in different approaches to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of need would inform the policy-making process, and not lead to simplistic estimates of 'need for service' as a basis for planning, it is not possible to know whether this makes any difference. The problem for the researchers, being outside the organisation funding the research, was that they were in no position to further influence its interpretation and use.

B.JONES & M.JENKINS: Elderly People in Older Private Housing(30)

The Staying Put Project was set up by Newport Borough Council in order to study the housing situation of elderly people living in private sector housing, and to develop appropriate supportive measures. One of the objectives of the project was "To identify and assess the housing needs of elderly people in the private sector...living in the project area".(31) In the first year of its operation a survey of over 200 households was carried out. It was explicitly stated that the information was being collected in order to inform the policy and practice of the project: "It was considered that an exploration of these questions would provide information relevant to decisions on the most appropriate structure and activities for the Staying Put Project" (32)

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The subject matter of the survey extended beyond simply looking at housing conditions and preferences, because it was recognised that housing needs and policy to meet them could not be considered in isolation. Housing affected other aspects of life, and other needs, and was in turn influenced by them: "The following account of some of the characteristics of the elderly people, and of their lifestyles, will help to illustrate the point that, even in such a limited area, we are dealing with a group of people varying in age, ability and circumstances, and that this needs to be taken into account when looking later at their housing and at problems relating to this." (33)

Given that the central focus of the study was housing, the decision was made that the unit of study should be the household, whatever its size. Much of the information collected was about the house; but a considerable amount was also about the occupants. The two types of information could be separated in parts of the analysis, but this was not always possible. Many of the questions related to the respondents' subjective evaluation of the condition of their housing; the availability of more than one opinion on this did not present itself as problematic, even though over one-half of the households contained more than one person. However, problems were identified in relation to the exploration of respondents' views of their housing preferences: "From a practical housing point of view, it is more useful to think in terms of households than of individuals. The problem when considering options and preferences is that there can be disagreement between households, e.g. in this case there were several households where the two respondents disagreed as to whether or not they would consider moving house." (34) Having presented individual views, a practical decision was made to use the responses of a selected "main respondent as representative"(35). While such action makes assumptions about the decision-making dynamics of the household, it is difficult to avoid when the subject matter of housing inevitably relates to the behaviour of households, not individuals.

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The objectives of the survey indicated some of the ways in which housing needs were being conceptualised:

"To describe the current situation of the elderly themselves, their physical, social and financial circumstances;

To describe the type and condition of the accommodation in which they live;

To explore their perceived needs and problems in living in and maintaining their accommodation;

To explore the extent to which they had the knowledge and ability to help themselves in relation to their housing;

To ascertain their preferences with regard to housing options, and examine the reasons for these preferences." (36)

While some aspects of the description were essentially of the 'objective ' type, in terms of the age of the house and the amenities it contained, many of the questions focussed on the respondents subjective perception of their housing needs, as well as on their preferences. Thus, questions relating to the warmth of the house, its state of repair, its need for repairs, accepted the respondents judgement of these. The problem of the relationship between the subjectively identified needs of the elderly and more objectively assessed needs (e.g. through a professional housing survey) was acknowledged: "A survey of this kind can only provide a picture of the expressed need for repairs. Whilst recognising the limitations of our type of approach from a technical viewpoint, the picture provided here is important in understanding and providing for the needs and desires of elderly householders. On the one hand it suggests that those concerned about the condition of their house would benefit from technically qualified assistance in assessing the need and priority order for repairs and maintenance. On the other hand, it indicates that elderly people will have differing perceptions of what they need or want, or are willing to tolerate, in relation to house repairs. To assist elderly people to remain safely and comfortably in their own homes will require balancing what is considered technically necessary or advisable with what is considered acceptable by the elderly householder"

(37). The discussion of policy in the report tried to take into account the consequences in practice of the complex relationship between needs viewed from these different perspectives. Again, it was up to the policy-makers whether to acknowledge or ignore such discussion.

A.I.HARRIS: Social Welfare for the Elderly(38)

This study, typical of many before and after it, was undertaken in response to the recognition that there was a need for a more rational approach to the planning of welfare services. "The reason for doing the study at all goes back to the Ministry of Health 10-year plan for the development of community care, when all authorities were asked to give details of their plans for the long-term development of their Health and Welfare Services, including those for meeting the needs of the elderly." (39). The plans produced by the different authorities seemed to bear little relation to such things as the relative sizes of their elderly populations, or to their projected growth: "...we could compare two contiguous London Boroughs, of equal economic status, and with similar proportions of elderly people, and find that there is a difference of 40% in the proposed rates of home helps." (40).

Variability in levels of provision, and plans, led to speculation as to what factors determined such provision; was it needs, or available finance? The response was to commission some research into the subject: "The Ministry of Health had...some indication that the size of the service was sometimes determined without full knowledge of the extent of local need, and Authorities were asked to consider undertaking local studies to enable them to review realistically their service and plans."(41). Recognising that local authorities might not have the time or skills to undertake or experiment with such surveys, a major study was established not only to try to measure the need for services, but also to develop a basic method which others might use in studying their own areas. The idea of a national survey providing the model for local approaches to research has been used on other occasions, as will be seen later.

"The first problem one meets is how to define "need"." (42) This study starts by recognising that the concept is problematic. It then turns immediately to the legislative framework of provision to look for working definitions, but finds this limited, and 'loosely worded'. It then goes on to look at the ways in which local authorities identify the need for particular services. It explores the way different authorities have very different approaches when it comes to determining whether or not people are 'in need'; it says nothing (at this stage) about the constraints of an approach which concerns itself only with existing services, or those areas of life which are encompassed by them.

The study shows how local authorities, in determining eligibility or need criteria, are constantly making quite explicit value judgements about what people need. In relation to home helps, it points out the variation between "the Authority which says that elderly people should be given, as far as possible, as much help as they need to keep their homes the way they would have kept them themselves had they been able, and the Authority which rules that home helps should spend the minimum amount of time necessary to ensure that the rooms used exclusively by old people are kept in a sanitary condition."(43). The one authority is seen as accepting the responsibility to keep people happy, the other merely to prevent deterioration. While in both cases the concept is used in the context of (specified or unspecified) goals, the nature of these goals can vary considerably in terms of the quality of life or the range and extent of need, that responsibility is accepted for. Similar differences in the interpretation of 'need' occurred in relation to other services, and it was emphasised that "these differences are not necessarily due to practical difficulties in meeting a need, but in policy as to the circumstances which justify help being given" (44). Having acknowledged that attempts to measure need are bound up in (political) value-based policy regarding what quality of life people are entitled to, the study tries to develop a method of measuring need which would enable different authorities to estimate the levels of need in their area according to their own choice of standard.

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The study effectively takes on board the practical requirements and policy framework of the agencies concerned, in both the levels of need, and the areas of need, considered. Thus "It would have been impossible so to define the circumstances in which assistance is necessary so that the criteria would be acceptable to all National and Local Authorities. It was therefore decided that what had to be done was to establish the criteria used by individual Authorities, and base need on these criteria."(45) and "Since the purpose of this survey was to determine need in order to guide Authorities in planning to meet need, it was suggested that for this part of the inquiry the scope be limited to cover those services directly administered by the Local Authority, that is the Home Help Service, Home Nursing Services, Health Visitors, and any others, administered by the Medical Officer of Health and/or Welfare Officer."(46)

Even when constraining the survey to reflect the policy judgements and services of local authorities, the approach is not unproblematic. In attempting to determine how need was assessed by local authorities, it found that it was preferable to explore this from three angles:

"i) Asking the responsible officer for a statement of the basis.

ii) Examining the records of those getting the service, or who are on 'live' waiting lists, to extract from them enough details to enable us to compile a basis.

iii) Ask the elderly people for details of the circumstances which led to their being given a service."(47)

None of these was considered as satisfactory in its own right - there were practical problems with all of them, recognised by the researchers. There are also theoretical problems with regard to each and the relationship between them. The approach is essentially using a combination of normative need and comparative need as described by Bradshaw (48), and outlined in chapter 3 i.e. establishing the basis, or criteria against which professionals or agencies measure someone's need for the service, and looking at

the characteristics of those who receive the service, and using these to estimate the numbers in the general population who are in a similar situation. But it does also try to incorporate the subjective element of felt need or demand, when asking such questions as "What sort of things do you have difficulty with?" and Would you like someone to come along and clean your windows?" (49). The author acknowledges the problematic relationship between the two: "We do recognise that there is a difference between demand and need..." (50) "In the comparison of need and demand there are two schools of thought. One thinks that offered a "free" service, more people than the number actually needing it will apply. There is the opposite angle that elderly people are too "proud" or too self sufficient to apply for a service, even if they are in need. Both arguments are, to some extent, true. We have shown, in the area reports, that the people who say they need help in the home are not necessarily those who can be shown to be in need, and others struggle manfully on, not "wanting to be a bother" when they do have a very good reason for applying, or realise they have a need, but would still refuse a Local Authority home help." (51)

The theoretical limitations of each approach have practical consequences, and Harris tries to improve the estimates from the different approaches by adjusting them in relation to each other: "If we subtract from our estimate of those in need those who would not accept a home help, we get the actual need to be met"(52), and finds that this ties in with simple demand at a national level; but finds the local variations problematic. While suggesting that local authorities might be better advised to replicate the model in their area, she makes the point that the range of variables affecting both need and demand are complex. Harris indicates that it would have been beneficial if the survey had shown some relationship between likely need (however defined) and some existing numerical data (of the kind used in social indicators), so that need estimates could be derived for areas; however, she acknowledges that the inter-relationships of such variables makes this extremely difficult. She goes on to admit the limitations of 'demand' because it is

influenced by people's perception of the adequacy of the service. The value of waiting lists (another measure of expressed need or demand) is also questioned.

At times in her analysis, felt need is equated with demand for existing services, although sometimes she asks about things which may not be available in some areas, or which are provided by volunteers only. Generally, the measurement of need is tied up with existing service solutions. At this time there is no recognition of the difference between a 'needs led' and a 'service led' approach to the identification and measurement of need, something which played an important part of discussions around service planning twenty years later (see Chapter 6).

This survey acknowledges many of the problems when working with the concept of need, and tries to approach it through a combination of the 'objective' and 'subjective' approaches discussed in Chapter3, yet it still attempts to work through existing policy and service provision without questioning in any way the inequalities that these involve, or the impact on the research results of simply accepting this as a framework. Thus, in acknowledging some of the problems in conceptualising and operationalising need in the research process, it chooses to ignore others. In attempting to produce useful results for the policy makers and administrators at a local level, it largely avoids issues which might be considered significant at a broader policy level.

A.I.HARRIS et al: Sample Surveys in Local Authority Areas (53)

A major stimulus to surveys of need(s) was the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, which "requires the authorities concerned to secure that they are adequately informed of the numbers and needs of substantially and permanently handicapped persons in order that they can formulate plans for developing their services"(54). A national survey had been undertaken(55), and this was seen as providing local authorities with some guidance as to numbers as well as possible approaches to their own surveys. While pointing out that the ultimate task of local authorities was to identify everyone who

both needs and wants a service, an initial stage might involve undertaking sample surveys to build up an assessment of total demand for services and their variety.

Local authorities used various approaches to the identification and/or measurement of need (or demand) in their areas, but many used the national OPCS survey conducted in 1968-69(56). as the basis for local surveys. In this survey, individuals were initially identified through a postal questionnaire, containing questions designed to identify any impairment, and in particular "those who were so handicapped as to need special care"(57). Data were collected about:

" the causes of impairment;

how far impairment resulted in handicap limiting self-care;

the extent to which handicapped and impaired people were helped by various authorities;

the extent to which handicapped and impaired housewives could carry out their duties;

the housing conditions of handicapped and impaired people;

their financial position;

and the effects of handicap and impairment on ability to get suitable employment and on social life and leisure activities." (58)

This range and variety of data collection clearly recognises the complexity of the concept of need, and incorporates both 'objective' and 'subjective' approaches. The former are exemplified by the description of the housing conditions and financial position of handicapped people, the latter by asking respondents about the effect of handicap on them, and whether they need help with particular tasks

Harris and Head subsequently produced a guide and model for local authorities to replicate the national survey: "The purpose of this handbook is to set out a method whereby local authorities will be able to get a reasonably good estimate of the number of people in their area who are handicapped, and how many of them need local authority services, so that services may be planned to cope with their needs."(59) This provided a very detailled technical guide to undertaking a local survey of handicapped people, but it

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did not address the operationalising or measurement of need to anything like the same extent. Several references were made to the concept, without attempt at explication, and usually in the form of 'need for services' e.g.: "Estimating the numbers of impaired and handicapped people, and their need for services"(60) Similarly, "...only those cases in the sample where questions onward properly apply are to be considered as a basis for assessing need for services"(61).

Harris and Head identify the problem of deciding which unit to consider as the subject: "Addresses, households or people?" (62). They see the issue in relation to the provision of services. "..ideally the sample should be of individual people of all ages living in private households where the service is personal - for example chiropody and nursing - , or of households where, if there were more than one handicapped person in a household, one provision would benefit all, for example home help and ramps." (63) In effect, they are saying that needs are essentially individual, but that the solutions to them may be addressed at the household level (ignoring the possibility that the needs and/or solutions for individuals within a household may be in conflict). As with all other surveys, need is not related to society.

It is interesting to note that Harris and Head use the term 'assessing' in relation to determining the extent of need. "The identification and assessment of needs has been shown in three stages, the first eliminating those households where there are no impaired, the second where there is no-one 'at risk', so as to conserve the more qualified personnel for the final stage of interviewing to assess need". (64). Later on they, in effect, admit that the survey provides a framework for what in the final stages can be a professional assessment of need, and that this will be influenced by the variable standards of different local authorities: "..assessment of qualification for a service may vary from authority to authority, and the type of support allocated will depend on different criteria." and "The need for services, therefore, should really be assessed by studying each case." (65). The language used here seems to avoid any discussion, even recognition, of the debate about

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the possibility of there being differences between a 'professional' assessment of need and need measured against set criteria, typical of many local authority approaches. Neither does it address the issues of a potential difference between an external assessment of need, and the expression of the subjective experience of need.

That each local authority should use the survey in their own way to provide data for planning their own (variable) services is clearly encouraged in the discussion of the third stage of the survey, where it is pointed out that there is scope for local variation related to local services. "..the data collected at questions 16 to 36 should enable a very reasonable assessment to be made of the major services, and can be adapted to cover any further services provided, or which it is proposed to provide, by individual local authorities."(66). Later, in discussing specific questions as examples, they list particular help that a local authority might provide, asking if it would make life easier. They then go on to say "Now, if you (L.A.) can do anything else to help - you can add this in. If there are things you are not prepared to do, for example install a sitz bath or a shower, these can be deleted."(67). Here, the operationalised measurement of need is quite clearly geared to the Local Authority's pre-determined areas of concern and levels of provision.

Some flexibility in the approach to the areas of need was allowed, in that questions were included about the need for help with activities for which local authorities might not provide assistance, and which could be done by volunteers - lighting fires, and window cleaning were two of these. It was up to each authority, however, to decide what to include, providing them with complete 'authority' over the needs identified in the survey. Given that most local authorities today would probably consider lighting fires an essential part of home care responsibilities, where considered necessary, this is an interesting illustration of the ways in which the operationalisation of need in surveys can be heavily influenced by the policy context, which changes over time..

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The survey questionnaire also reflect some more unusual value-laden perceptions about what people should and should not do, and consequently what kinds of needs they may have. Thus it asks 'housewives' about household tasks - the term incorporating all men and women living alone, and married women. Married men were obviously perceived as having no needs in relation to household activities, presumably because they had no responsibility in these matters. More peculiarly, it instructs the interviewer to ask women and children only about their ability to comb and brush their hair. Men, it seems, did not need to do this! The influences of culture on the researcher's operationalising processes are sometimes difficult to fathom.

The purpose of the Harris and Head guide was clearly stated in the introduction: "The purpose of this handbook is to set out a method whereby local authorities will be able to get a reasonably good estimate of the number of people in their area who are handicapped, and how many of them need local authority services, so that services may be planned to cope with their needs." (68) The methodology presented follows from this fairly directly: needs are mainly identified according to the assessment of local authority staff (or following their guidelines) and solutions are seen in terms of the services which local authorities choose to provide. Some limited flexibility is allowed for new ideas for services, possibly by other providers, but it is the existing policy framework which largely determines the ways in which need is, quite explicitly and apparently without reservation, conceptualised and measured.

OPCS surveys of disability in Great Britain(69-72)

A series of surveys of people with disabilities was undertaken between 1983 and 1988 by the Office of Population Census and Surveys (OPCS), commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS), and several reports have been produced (69-72). The purpose of these surveys was quite explicitly concerned with informing policy and practice. "They aim to provide up-to-date information about the number of disabled people in Great Britain with different levels of severity and their circumstances for the

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purposes of planning benefits and services." (73). This was obviously an extensive task, and the authors acknowledge this - "the surveys had very wide ranging aims........we have been able to collect only key items of data in each area". (74) Yet the importance of this information derived at least in part from what it said about needs: "Both type and severity of disability are obviously very important factors in the need for and use of all kinds of services, use of transport and extent of mobility and employment handicaps. "(75). And this was to be used, as noted above for the purposes of planning benefits and services.

The prevalence of disability was a major concern of these surveys, and there is rightly considerable discussion of the concept of disability and related ones such as handicap and impairment, and of how these could be operationalised. A range of people and a variety of techniques were used to develop operational measures of disability which it was felt would stand up to scrutiny. The concept of need is less prominent, and is used and discussed explicitly much more sparingly, even when the surveys were seeking similar kinds of information about disabled people as the earlier ones discussed above. In this case, the explicit use of the concept is primarily confined to 'need for services' while the 'consequences of disability' or the 'circumstances of the disabled' are preferred where the reports provide descriptions of the circumstances of people with disabilities. This is indicated in the account of the aims of the surveys of adults which, in addition to establishing the prevalence of disability, were to provide:

"(ii) information about the financial and social consequences of disability, in particular sources and levels of income and the nature and levels of extra costs arising because of disability; also the effect of disability on employment and mobility;

(iii) some information about the use of and need for health and personal social services." (76). There is no discussion of the way in which the descriptive information is an approach to the measurement of need, implicitly or explicitly, in the way that Watson and Albrow suggest(77), but, in effect, that is why the description is provided.

The various reports provide quite detailed accounts of the characteristics of disabled people and their circumstances. Clearly these have been selected for research because they are of interest to policy-makers. But there is no discussion of why the particular areas of study were chosen. When describing the questions concerning the 'circumstances of the disabled', the areas of concern are identified very briefly:

"Although concentrating particularly on the financial circumstances of the disabled person and the extra expenses of disability, this part also covered a number of other topics. It was divided into the following sections:

S Health and social services

T Aids and Adaptations

U Extra personal costs

V Mobility and transport

W Education and employment

X Income

Y Household finances

Z Financial situation"(78)

These were, of course, in addition to the bulk of the questions which focussed on disability, concentrating on the nature and level of disability, while "some questions about dependence on others for help with self-care activities were included" (79). It would appear that the researchers have taken for granted what areas of life policy-makers will be interested in when planning to meet the needs of disabled people.

Given that a major purpose of the survey was to identify the numbers and types of disabled people, it is not surprising that much of the discussion focusses on the individual as the unit of study. However, when it comes to looking at financial matters, the focus changes to the family unit: "It was decided when the survey was designed that information about financial circumstances would be based on the family unit of the disabled person who was the subject of the interview........Our decision...was determined by practical considerations" (80) Such considerations related to the family as the unit for

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tax and benefit purposes, and the difficulties of obtaining financial information for all other members of the household. They were not seen to relate to the needs of the family as distinct from the individual, although much of the discussion of finances does, in effect, address this.

It is in relation to financial matters that the researchers find that they cannot avoid the concept of need or the issues surrounding its use in research. The second report concerning the financial circumstances of disabled adults starts to address these issues. Having spent some time describing these circumstances, the report starts to make use of the concept more explicitly - perhaps because the terms 'circumstances', 'problems' or 'difficulties' do not always adequately express what they are concerned with - and finds itself having to confront the kinds of issues discussed in this thesis, one way or another. "However, the amount of disability-related expenditure incurred depends not only on the need to spend extra because of disability, but also on having the necessary income to meet that need as well as the other necessities of everyday life." (81)

Once into this concern explicitly, the researchers soon find themselves having to acknowledge the differences between the 'subjective' and 'objective' dimensions in trying to explore the concept and some of the problems involved with each: "We have used two general approaches, each of which has advantages and limitations. The subjective approach involves asking people's opinions of their situation, using the same standard question for everyone. However, although the same question is asked, there is no means of ensuring that respondents are using the same basis for choosing between the alternative answers. Nevertheless, these questions are widely used and, as we shall show, agree well with more objective indicators. The second approach is to use objective indicators, which leads to the opposite problem. It is relatively easy to obtain answers which are factual and therefore not subject to differences in respondents interpretations, but the analysis involves treating all similar answers as equivalent, ignoring the possibility that the same factual situation may be interpreted in very different ways by different respondents." (82).

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The report goes on to describe how these two approaches are involved in looking at such things as "their financial situation", "financial problems", "standard of living", "being able to afford a range of standard consumer durables and being able to afford a number of basic items" (83). These all relate back to the earlier discussion of need and the necessities of everyday life. For example: "The survey collected information about two aspects of standard of living: the possession of various standard consumer durables, ranging from items like a fridge, which almost all households possess, to a video recorder which can definitely be seen as a luxury; and having various items which the majority of the population view as basic necessities.......The basic items were chosen from a longer list which previous research....had established as being items that a majority of the general population think are both necessities and items that people are likely to lack because they cannot afford them rather than from choice." (84). That is, in approaching the measurement of need (explicitly or implicitly) through a description of the circumstances of disabled people, the authors have thought through to some extent the issue of what level of material ownership to describe - using the 'majority of the general population' as the arbiter of what is necessary. They also address the problem of the relationship between this 'objective' approach and a 'subjective' one by ascertaining whether the lack of an item was "because they did not want it or could not afford it, and present results according to the answers given" (85). That is, they modify the results of the "objective" approach by trying to ascertain whether the respondent's lack of an item is the result of them not being able to afford it, or a lack of their own subjective "want" for it.

This use of the subjective expression of need (or want) is also used in relation to some services or other help which might be of use to the disabled respondents. For example, respondents were asked about aids (such as vision or hearing aids) which they did not have but which they thought would help them. This is then translated in the report as percentages of people who "Thought (more) vision aids were needed" (86). This was linked to the "objective" approach to measuring their need, in that those who were asked

the questions were those who had been previously defined as having the relevant disability, according to the various methods of measurement used in the survey. Thus "Questions on the use of walking aids were only asked of those with a locomotor disability; it has been assumed that walking aids were not used by those with no locomotor problems."(87)

The subjective approach is taken further when considering aspects of the disabled respondents daily lives. "All disabled adults were asked whether they needed help with a variety of self-care activities, such as getting in and out of bed or dressing and undressing, and a variety of household activities such as doing the shopping or preparing a snack for themselves." (88) This analysis then takes the research into an interesting area. Having asked about the need for help, questions are then asked about who provides this help. These 'carers' then become themselves part of the research's subject matter. Their characteristics are described, and some aspects compared with those of the general population: "Looking first at all main carers under pension age we see that 54% of male carers were working, in most cases full-time. This compares with the corresponding figure of 79% of men in the general population who were working."(89). In effect, the research has moved from a concern with disabled people to one with their carers, reflecting quite clearly policy interests more typical of the late 80's and early 90's, and not addressed in earlier surveys.

The illustration, through comparing the situation of carers with the general population, also takes us into another approach in the measurement of need. While not explicitly acknowledging the comparative approach as a way of identifying needs, nevertheless the authors use it by allowing for the possibility of comparing the situation of disabled adults (and their carers) with the general population. Going back to the concern with ownership of necessary items and consumer durables; "The consumer durables included are listed below. Information about levels of ownership of these items is collected on both the General Household Survey and the Family Expenditure Survey and so it is possible to

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compare ownership levels for disabled people with those of the general population..."(90).

These various approaches to the measurement of need - description, comparison, subjective expression - are not used in any way to estimate the possible need for particular sorts of help and services. Whereas some of the other studies described above move from description to estimates of the need for particular solutions, these reports do not generally take this approach. Even when there is an implicit suggestion (from a description of problems arising from disability) as to levels of need, for example, when discussing how disability seems to affect people's ability to find employment (91), the reports do not attempt to turn this into policy recommendations or estimates of the need for particular provisions. The various research reports focus very much on describing, or providing information about, various aspects of disability, as outlined in the original aims. The assumption seems to be that this is an approach which is in some way policy neutral; that issues concerning the measurement of need only arise in the specific instances where they are discussed further, as indicated above, and that description, and the opportunity for comparison, are not presented as explicitly involving such measurement.

BEBBINGTON ET AL: The Domiciliary Care Project: Meeting the Needs of the Elderly(92)

This study was concerned with exploring the relationship between the needs of elderly people, and the provision to meet these needs. More specifically: "it explores the relations between need-related circumstances of recipients and potential recipients, resources and outcomes, and so provides the information required for judgements about equity and efficiency and the explanation of system differences in them." (93). In this study the concepts used, like most aspects of the research, are very much thought out as part of the overall framework, not just for the particular study but in relation to a much broader range of interest. "The (production of welfare) approach ... provides the meta-theory:

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general questions which set aims for the collection of evidence when worked out for the specific context, the concepts and classifications for the collation of the evidence..." (94).

The researchers nevertheless focus their concerns on the specific context of social care intervention, and seek their measurements of need (i.e. their operationalising of the concept) in this context. Having reviewed various typologies of elderly people classified by their circumstances, according to their supposed need for social care intervention, they opt for the approach of Isaacs and Neville. This is described as "a classification of individuals according to those characteristics linked to needs in the Maslovian sense, and independently of service considerations" (95); the individual being the focus of the study. The choice of areas of need to consider is seen as being influenced by the identification of areas of effective intervention by social welfare agencies. "They focussed in particular on two dimensions: firstly, that of sufficient basic care - satisfactory food, warmth, cleanliness and security and secondly on the burden on carers, where the care obtained in the community threatened the physical, psychological, or social well-being of the helper"(96). This choice was seen to derive from the assumption that these were the kinds of areas of life within which the effects of intervention could be most predictable. "The implication is that while social services may aim to meet a wide range of needs, since these are the needs they are best equipped to meet effectively it is these which should be regarded as most central".(97) Here the areas of study are clearly defined in terms of the specific policy context of the work.

Within this context, Bebbington et al are attracted to Isaacs and Neville's approach because of its firm rooting in a theory of the causes of need, which they consider is lacking in many of the alternative typologies. Their application of it is described in detail in their report. Essentially, it identifies a range of tasks which they present as essential for the 'basic care' mentioned above, divided into three categories according to the time scales within which they might be needed:

A)Long interval needs, e.g. shopping, sweep floors;

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B)Short interval needs, e.g. wash face and hands, make a snack;

C)Critical interval needs e.g. able to get to the toilet in time.

These are then qualified by the availability of support, resulting in seven categories of dependence , from complete independence in these tasks, through an allocation to one of these three categories, each subdivided according to whether or not help is available(98).

The information upon which the classification is based is derived from a number of sources. These included interviews with the clients themselves, for their views of their own abilities, but it also included the views of service providers, interviewers etc. Several of these are used to derive the classification of elderly people, making use of both 'subjective' and 'objective' approaches in the identification or measurement of need. Thus, in describing the process of classifying the elderly people into different categories, four stages are described. The first stage involved allocating them to categories according to their expressed ability to perform the listed tasks. The second stage involved a 'Reclassification of dependency'. In this, individual cases were inspected and some reclassified into higher dependency categories "because the evidence of all other sources indicated their own account was not strictly accurate"(99). The third and fourth stages similarly involved judgements about the adequacy of the visiting and support available to the elderly people involved. This acknowledges the existence of the two main dimensions of need discussed in Chapter 3, but allows for the dominance of the objective approach, as indicated there. The authors do not really justify or investigate the implications of this approach, but seem to accept that research should mirror the policy processes.

This approach to measuring need is not surprising given that the purpose of the research is concerned with the relationship between needs and provision, and that an important part of this relationship is the assessment process. The researchers are explicit in their attempt to reflect the assessment process in their research - it is an essential element in their approach: "A starting point... is to examine our current understanding of the key factors in assessment, and from them to derive a typology of individuals which has two

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features: firstly it uses the characteristics which are acknowledged by the best of research literature to be most relevant to assessment decisions, and secondly individuals are grouped so that, very broadly, we might a priori expect similar outcomes given similar interventions for people in the same group".(100). This mirroring of the assessment process explicitly ties up the measurement of need with the policy framework, as is discussed in the second part of Chapter 6, where the essentially political influences on the assessment process are identified.

Conclusions

Conceptualisation and operationalisation are critical processes in the process of doing research, as the last chapter demonstrated. In such activities as survey research, they have a major influence on the way in which reality is represented. In relation to the concept of need, it has been noted that the selection of such things as areas of study and units of study are related to and influence the operational definitions of need used. If researchers wish their readers to be able to judge for themselves the validity and usefulness of their results, they ought to explain the processes by which they have moved from concepts to operational definitions, and their reasons for selecting areas and units of study, levels against which need are measured etc. It will always be possible to be critical of the selected approach; operationalisation is inevitably affected by the conceptual and practical constraints in undertaking any piece of research. The researcher's presentation of these constraints enables the reader to accept or reject the results from a position of understanding, rather than be forced to take on board the researcher's perspective and consequent results from a position of ignorance.

The different studies discussed vary in the extent to which they acknowledge what they are doing as explicitly measuring need. Not all identify themselves as doing this initially, although all at some stage find themselves discussing their results in terms of needs. Watson and Albrow try to explain the various ways in which need is approached in their

survey, and discuss some of the implications of this, as do Jones and Jenkins. Harris acknowledges the concept as problematic at the start; Harris and Head do not seem to consider it necessary for those carrying out local surveys under their guidance to worry themselves about this matter; Brockington and Lempert do not appear to acknowledge the measurement of need as problematic overall; the OPCS surveys are not initially concerned with the concept, but find themselves caught up in the issues when discussing the results.

Whatever the initial awareness, there is little doubt that the policy context played a major part in influencing the operationalisation of the concept of need in these surveys. While all acknowledge the policy context, some allow it to determine their approach much more than others. Thus, Harris and Head's research guidance permits different authorities to measure needs differently according to their own views of their responsibilities and their own existing service structure, as does Harris. Bebbington et al are also explicit about their concern to mirror the assessment process as the basis of their research, and to concentrate on those areas of life in which social services intervention is seen to be most effective. The others tend to be more cautious in their use of the policy framework, providing information which would be useful to policy makers, but also trying to provide a broader perspective on need, and the possible solutions to it. The policy framework is still influential here, but it may be less obvious, or less limited than in the other studies; the extent to which it is explicitly acknowledged varies.

In utilising the concept of need, explicitly or otherwise, most of the researchers found themselves having to deal with both the subjective and objective dimensions of the concept, although they varied in the extent to which they considered the consequences of the different approaches for their results. Brockington and Lempert for some reason found the distinction significant only in relation to mobility; Watson and Albrow, and Jones and Jenkins, tried to spell out the practical implications for policy makers and implementers of disjunctions between the objective identification of need and the

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subjective acknowledgement of that need. Harris and Bebbington attempted to measure need by a combination of the two dimensions (with the objective usually the final arbiter) as did the OPCS surveys in relation to financial matters. The emphasis, overall, would seem to be that needs are essentially defined by external, 'objective', approaches and standards, but that the subjective dimension cannot be ignored, for practical or ethical reasons which are not always clear.

All of them acknowledged that they were concerned to produce policy-relevant information, and thus implicitly or otherwise accepted that this at least partly determined the boundaries of the work they did. While some attempted to provide estimates of particular types of provision, using whichever measures of need they felt were appropriate, others were less prescriptive, and Bebbington in particular takes a more critical stance in relation to levels of provision via a concern with values such as equity and efficiency.

Selection of the unit to be studied related mainly to practical concerns, rather than conceptual ones. The focus was usually the individual, with aggregates of individuals in families or households where this made more sense of the subject matter, such as housing or income and expenditure. It may be that it is the nature of survey methodology which tends to make this inevitable; the study of groups or societies requires a different kind of methodology. That such units may have needs which are not simply the aggregate of individual needs cannot effectively be addressed within that methodology. It could be argued that it is the societal needs which determine the broad areas of concern, or the definition of the problem. It is this which influences whose needs, at the individual level, will be addressed, and in what way i.e. "to provide for needs the meeting of which is functional to the values which society at any given time wishes to protect"(101).

Discussion of the range and levels of need which may be involved in operationalising the concept is rarely discussed. Watson and Albrow indicate that the choice of what to

describe involves a process of setting standards, and that the researcher and subsequent reader will be part of this process. They do not indicate the basis for their own choice, however, merely claiming that it is a "reasonably comprehensive picture of the situation and everyday lives of respondents" (102). The OPCS surveys of disability are an exception here, in that they try to justify some elements their description of the circumstances of disabled people (which can be used as a comparative measure of need) by the standard of the general population, which at least clarifies the basis on which the comparison is possible.

The surveys considered here thus varied considerably in their approaches to the use of the concept need, its meaning and operationalisation. They also varied in the extent to which they acknowledged the difficulty of using the concept, the diverse ways in which it could be understood and operationalised, and the implications of, and effect on the research of, working in the political context of social policy. As Gilbert Smith has said about other research in this field, "There is an overconcern with questions of data reliability, to the neglect of questions of the validity of the research material".(103)

In undertaking work which is intended to be useful to policy-makers rather than be analytical of policy processes, the researcher will inevitably be influenced by the constraints of that context. It is, essentially, a political context; policy is the product of judgements about the values which underlie social provision, about the priorities which are assigned to particular sections of society and to particular areas of need, about the resources which will be allocated for given purposes. These are all part of the political process. The researcher cannot pretend that research can be undertaken without being affected by this context, that there is an 'objective' way through. At best, they can spell out the implications of their particular choice of subjectivity, and allow the reader to make their own judgements. In one sense, the researcher has considerable power in determining the picture of the needs they survey; in another they have no power because

they are not usually in a position to influence the ways in which their results are used, if at all.

Chapter 6

Other Approaches to Operationalising the Concept "Need"

Introduction

Survey research is not the only kind of applied social research which attempts to make use of the concept of need, and therefore has to, or ought to, address the issues involved in its use. This chapter will explore some other ways in which the concept is used. These include the development of need indicators (also known as social or deprivation indicators) and the approaches used by Social Services Departments in the process of social care planning following the requirements of the Health Services and Community Care Act(1). In relation to both of these, the results of survey research are often used, directly or indirectly; even when they are not, many of the same issues surrounding the operationalisation of the concept remain.

A: Social Indicators

One approach which has had considerable emphasis in the work of national and local government agencies, and in academic institutions, has been the development of what have been variously called 'need indicators', 'social indicators', and 'indicators of deprivation'. While these may be used in different ways, they are frequently used interchangeably, and all will be subsumed here under the general term of need indicator. Basically, such indicators are used in attempts to describe or classify areas according to the kinds of economic, social or health needs or deprivation which are the particular concern of the researchers, often related to attempts to prioritise areas in the battle for financial resources from government. The development of indicators is usually an area in which social scientists are closely involved in policy development, often working in, on behalf of, or analysing the work of, government agencies.

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The close but complex relationship that can exist between social scientists and government is raised by Richard Rose in the context of social or need indicators. "The social indicators movement for many people raises the prospect that the skills of social scientists can become more relevant to government, and the activities of government more responsive to social needs." (2) However, the difficulties of that relationship are seen to remain: "It would be ironic if efforts to introduce social indicators.......taught social scientists more about the needs of politicians than it taught politicians about the needs of society"(3).

It is partly because of the difficulties of measuring and collecting policy-relevant information on deprivation, health or social needs need that indicators have been developed. They are derived from more easily available information which is known, or believed, to be correlated with various kinds of deprivation or needs. Census information is widely used in the formation of indicators, not least because it has extensive coverage of the population, and can be broken down into small unit areas. (It is, itself, only one type of survey). Agency data on such things as unemployment, service provision such as home-helps or inpatient statistics, or birth and death statistics may also be used. While this is information usually derived from, or about, individuals, it is often used in aggregate to characterise areas, which are often the focus of the concern with need or deprivation.

There are a number of problems relating to the production of such indicators, many of which are discussed by Shonfield and Shaw,(4) but only some of which it will be relevant to raise in this context. One concerns the units which are the subject of measurement. There is a distinction between the variables which are characteristic of individuals and those characteristic of a collectivity, such as a family, neighbourhood, or society. Cazes suggests that there are two ways of measuring the attributes of a collectivity: one based on aggregate attributes and the other on global attributes. The former is based on information about individuals, such as average income. The latter cannot be related to individuals, though it will be the product of their joint activity - such as leisure resources, the leniency

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of the legal system, the availability of public transport or hospitals, or other cultural manifestations. The tendency is for indicators to be of the aggregate type, because this is the kind of information which is easier to define, obtain and manipulate. There is also, a tendency to "reductionist social theory" which "leads to a minimization of the importance of institutional and organisational dimensions in explanatory or prescriptive social research" (5). As noted in earlier chapters, there is a problem in determining the 'unit' when considering needs and how they should be measured. As with surveys, the focus of need indicators tends to be on individuals, for practical reasons if no other, and this in turn can influence the way in which need is understood and policies aimed at addressing needs formulated.

This partly relates to a second problem with social or need indicators: that there is often a limited relationship (explanatory or otherwise) between an indicator (as an operational definition) and the concept or characteristic it is meant to represent - what Cazes calls "fractional measurement"(6). The indicator usually represents a lot less than the concept, whether technically or in relation to the more qualitative aspects of the concept. Technically, simplified representations of the age structure of a population may hide the complex nature of changing demographic structures, such as the growth in population over 75 increasing while that of the 65-74 age group decreases. In terms of qualitative aspects of such concepts as the 'needs' of the elderly, the size of the relevant population is an even more limited representation of the concept. As argued in Chapters 1 and 4, unless the links between an operational definition and the broader concept can be demonstrated, it is not possible to evaluate the information presented.

For example, the DHSS study "A classification of the English Personal Social Services Authorities (7) used 23 indicators based on census information to represent age structure, immigration, housing, household composition, socio-economic status, economic activity and car ownership. Authorities were then grouped in a number of different ways, one of which identified four types of authority:

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1. Residential and rural counties and metropolitan districts with fairly stable but ageing populations;

2. Newer suburban London Boroughs and Metropolitan districts with predominantly young but affluent populations;

3. Similar London Boroughs and Metropolitan districts with good housing stock but with other generally deprived characteristics;

4. Inner city areas with poor physical amenities and more deviant characteristics such as a high proportion of one-parent families and privately rented furnished properties.

One of the problems of attempting to classify areas in this way is that the various forms of deprivation combine in a range of different ways, with the result that there are many different kinds of areas with different kinds of problems or needs, which do not fit easily into such classifications e.g. the DHSS study identified two distinct types of areas with high social need - inner city areas and those with a high proportion of council tenants: "These two types of area present a different social picture: the groups in the inner city areas tend to contain more people who do not fit the usual pattern of society (where families have two parents and the elderly are cared for by their children) and migrants are often culturally distinctive and contain a higher proportion of persons whose wider family background has been disrupted. On the other hand, those living in areas with a high proportion of council property tend to have problems associated with financial poverty whilst conforming to the general norm of society albeit not very successfully." (8). Such studies, then, while identifying to some extent the very different types of areas with their particular combinations of deprivation and concomitant social problems, cannot provide any simple measure of the relative deprivation or needs of different areas - the concepts are not uni-dimensional. Concepts such as need or deprivation have to be defined much more explicitly before indicators can be developed which even begin to represent them adequately or usefully at the operational level.

One example of such an attempt was the DHSS paper, "The Elderly and the Personal Social Services"(9) (based on the Watson and Albrow study discussed in Chapter 5), which explored the possibility of developing an index of the needs of the elderly more directly from survey data of need. The aim was to provide "an index of 'need' for the Personal Social Services for both forward planning of the services and the allocation of resources between the local authorities" (10). This makes it quite clear that the concern is the production of policy-relevant information. The limitations of existing indicators were noted: "Currently simple indicators are used - in the case of the elderly, those aged 75 years and over or those who are living alone, since it is *assumed* (my italics) that these groups are those most likely to need social services" (11). The ideal aimed for are indicators derived from better knowledge about the existence of need and its distribution in the population: "Ideally, the numbers in different categories of the elderly could be weighted according to the proportion of the group likely to need assistance and the weighted sum used as a basis for an aggregated indicator of need"(12).

The paper went on to discuss an attempt to develop an index based on the General Household Survey, which based its weightings on the percentage of age groups in receipt of home help service. Here, need is equated with met demand, the limitations of which have already been discussed. "This index has a severe disadvantage as a measure of need in that it is based on the current rate of provision of the home help service.."(13) The preferred alternative was to classify, from the Watson and Albrow data, the "groups with the most widely dispersed likelihood of being unable to manage household tasks" and then produce "estimated values for those likelihoods" (14). The result, while still being based on the relatively crude breakdown of the population into such things as age groups and household types, relates these much more precisely to particular needs through weightings derived from survey data. While thus producing indicators of the need for personal social services, it avoids the constraints of existing service provision by making use of the survey data on perceived difficulty with tasks. In effect, in using the survey data, it relies on the survey's conceptualisation and operationalisation process.

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The development of social indicators has often been based on attempts to relate the incidence of particular characteristics of interest, such as deprivation, need or crime, to more measurable indicators such as population, households, one-parent families etc. These may be derived from correlation analysis, or from explorations of the process of causation. What the DHSS approach does is try to be more precise in its statistical estimates of the relationship between the indicator and what it indicates, and attempts to explore the causative relationship through a discussion of the statistical relationship between variables derived from the survey data and the reasons for them. What it does, in effect, is rely on the survey process which produced the data to address the relationship between the two. The same will be true of any other attempts to develop indicators based on survey research to identify the nature and scale of the subject under consideration. The issues around the operationalisation of such concepts as need in surveys have already been discussed. The DHSS paper identifies some of the problems of the approaches used by Watson and Albrow in measuring need, particularly the use of "subjective assessments" where "some responses may be misleading" (15). The discussion, however, is mainly around the more technical problems of designing questions and interpreting answers, rather than the issues around the acceptability of subjective responses as a measure of need. While acknowledging the problems of working with operational definitions of need, the DHSS paper justifies its development of indicators based on the data because it felt that these had been addressed to some extent in the original survey: "This survey (Watson and Albrow) was chosen for several reasons, but primarily because of the technical quality of the sample, and of the simplicity, clarity and relevance of the questionnaire, both of which are related to the sound conceptual framework set out in the opening chapter of the main report" (16). Setting out the conceptualisation and operationalisation process, however flawed or limited they have to be in the practice of research, provides the opportunity for those making use of the research to make their own judgements of the validity of the findings.

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The DHSS paper also identifies and addresses the problem of the appropriate unit to consider when looking at needs. "it was also intended to adopt the approach of making the respondents' households, as well as the respondents, the units of analysis: in many ways the household is the socially significant unit..."(17) However, the nature of the data, interviewing only those over 65, meant that detailed information on the whole household was not available, so the approach was not possible. This is another interesting illustration of the way in which the conceptualisation process, in this instance concerning the unit of need under study, once operationalised, makes it difficult or impossible to use the data, or even think about it, in alternative ways. The researcher's influence on his or her results is a powerful, and often hidden, one, as this thesis has been concerned to demonstrate.

In their analyses of territorial need indicators, Bebbington and Davies (18)have commented on the often limited, or non-existent, theoretical basis upon which such work has been based, and of the problem, noted above, of the difficulty of relating individual to societal characteristics (eg. the relationship between individual and social disorganisation). The selection of indicators to characterise areas has been based largely on the availability of the information and the strength of the statistical relationship between variables, rather than on any understanding or theory of the generation of need or deprivation. Neither has policy relevance usually been an important factor in the choice of variables for grouping areas. Given that much of the work on indicators is done in the context of policy-making, this is a significant limitation.

Another limitation of the use of such need indicators, is that they give no indication of the kinds or amounts of resources that the areas may require to reduce their deprivation. Need indicators, it has been argued, should be able to compare areas on the resources they require to achieve specified goals. "..studies..do not reflect judgements about interventions and their resource implications in the derivations of their indicators"(19). This requires going far beyond describing the elements of deprivation in an area, into

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deciding what the aims for an area should be (specifying goals and priorities) and knowing what resources are required (and how they can be used) to achieve these aims. This takes on board, and steams ahead, with the view that social indicators are inevitably normative. "In truth there is nothing in the technical definition of a social indicator which destines it to express an aspect of the well-being or ill-being of a society........We must rather argue in reverse and say, the social indicator is not by nature normative, but becomes so from the moment that there is a desire in any quarter to record a situation and to modify it" (20). As has been noted throughout this thesis, it is impossible to discuss the concept of need without relating it to goals and the possible means of achieving them; in the context of social policy, this is inevitably a political discussion.

This is exemplified by Bebbington and Davies, in explaining the development of need indicators. They relate them to the existence of individual pathology, and the 'need judgement' associated with this: "A need judgement is an opinion about an individual's condition of welfare, given that the means exist to improve that condition. It often takes the form merely of a description of a diswelfare, but more usually combines this with an assertion about what form an intervention should take. Since interventions involve the deployment of resources, these are assertions about the allocation of resources" (21). The need indicator is derived from these judgements, and "is an estimate of the total cost implied by the needs of a group of individuals" (22). The need judgement, in their terms, is similar to the assessment process, discussed later in this chapter. They go on to develop a framework for survey work which builds on, or reflects, the need judgement approach - an example of which was discussed in Chapter 5 (23). In developing the body of work involving indicators and surveys, Davies et al are very much involved in the policy-making and policy-implementing process, and the ways in which they conceptualise and operationalise the concept of need acknowledges this and make it explicit. This, at least, provides a basis for others to analyse and judge the relevance and value of their work.

Elsewhere the development of social or need indicators has been criticised because of the lack of explicit recognition of the influence of the policy (and by association, political) framework. In the mid-1970's the Resource Allocation Working Party (RAWP) published proposals for the allocation of revenue expenditure and capital resources to Regional Health Authorities based on indicators of the "health needs of the population served".(24) These involved a system of weighted populations, to take account of geographical variations in the age, sex, morbidity, fertility and marital status of the population. These indicators were then related to hospital costs (and community services) - to develop target revenue allocations for the health regions. This approach partly addresses the problem identified by Bebbington and Davies, of measuring needs in relation to specified goals and the resources required to achieve them. The goals were identified, " to reduce progressively, and as far as feasible, the disparities between the different parts of the country in terms of the opportunity for access to health care for people at equal risk" (25). The costs of treating particular medical conditions could also be established and incorporated into the calculations.

There were technical, conceptual and other problems in relation to the development and use of these indicators, however, which have produced continuing problems, and a subsequent review. Technically, morbidity statistics were inadequate for the purpose, so mortality had to be used as a proxy. Yet there is argument as to the closeness of the relationship between standardised mortality ratios (SMR) and morbidity, and it is argued that other socio-economic factors affect the utilisation of health services independently of morbidity. Sheldon and Carr-Hill argue that "there is no valid way of combining morbidity indicators in a way that reflects need, so there is no statistical way to produce a formula which can avoid the problem of valid measurement" (26).

Subsequent attempts to improve, or at least change, the basis for measuring need involved a significant shift in its conceptualisation. In 1988 the RAWP formula was reviewed; utilisation of health services was incorporated as a proxy for need - with the SMR's

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playing a much smaller part in the calculations. This has been criticised because it moves the conceptual focus from need to demand: "The fundamental problem is that utilisation data models met demand rather than total demand or underlying need for healthcare. The exact relationship between the three is not known..."(27). The problems relating to the use of the concept remain. Similar criticisms are made of the indicators and formulae making up the Standard Spending Assessments which have a major influence on local authority expenditure. They are calculated not "on direct estimates of need, but on measures of actual expenditure or the current extent of provision" (28). The ways in which need is defined has a significant impact on the outcome - that is the financial allocation to councils. George refers to the "judgemental nature of government mathematics"(29) and illustrates this with the example that the different options considered by the government that year could have had the result of making Hackney's poll tax anything from 48 to 606.

A major concern about such indicators, then, is that their presentation as sophisticated statistical techniques tends to obscure the extent to which they are based on, or influenced by, (political) policy and resource issues. "But our principal concern is that such analysis can, by its very opaqueness, obscure the true policy assumptions underlying the conclusions. Statistics can become a scientific 'fig leaf' providing a legitimation of what are essentially political judgements." (30) The original goal of the RAWP is explicitly political - relating to equality of access - but the involvement in 'political' activity does not end there. The process of constructing social or need indicators requires "identifying a best proxy measure of need and the way this is to be incorporated into an allocation formula. These are not purely technical problems but will involve political judgements as to whose 'needs' are most important and which should be made explicit"(31). As with the selection of questions in a survey questionnaire or, as we shall see later in the assessment of needs, it is not possible to separate the academic or technical processes of defining and measuring need from its political context. "The fundamentally political nature of the

construction of an allocation policy and the choice of indicators of 'need' must be acknowledged" (32).

B: Social Care Planning for Community Care

Introduction: Requirements

It has been noted earlier that research around the concept of need has often been related to the planning or implementation of legislation, and a recent example of this is the work that has been generated by the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990(33). This legislation required local authorities, more specifically Social Services Departments, to produce Social Care Plans - referred to in the Act as "plans for the provision of community care services" (34) for certain client groups - elderly people, people with physical and sensory disabilities, people with chronic/terminal illness and those who abuse drugs or alcohol. In Wales, the Welsh Office provided guidance on what these plans should contain; an important component being to identify the 'needs' of the relevant client groups: "The first social care plans should therefore concentrate on the social and community care needs of ... client groups" (35). The minimum content of plans was identified, in the form of nine topics: one of these was "an assessment of need, including relative needs, and the basis on which these have been identified" (36). This guidance provides the essential background, then, for the development of Social Care Plans; in doing so it necessarily had to address, in some way, the concept of need and how this should be measured.

One main explanation of the use of the concept was contained in the 'key principles' to be followed in addressing the listed topics. One such principle was that plans should be:
"Related to need:
The plans should show how they are based on a systematic assessment of the needs of the local population. They will need to describe all relevant existing services and the extent to which these meet identified needs. Proposals for the maintenance or further development of access to services should be explicitly related to this analysis.

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The assessment of need will build on existing sources of information, including the use of current services. It should, however, be supplemented by consultation with users' interests, including representatives of carers, and by other evidence of users' opinions, by the annual assessment of health care needs carried out by the Chief Administrative Medical Officer/ Director of Public Health Medicine and, probably most significantly over time, by taking account of experience in the assessment of individuals' needs and of managing individual cases." (37).

That is, a fairly broad approach to measuring the concept of need was envisaged, with reference to a range of elements: existing sources of information, current service usage, assessment of individuals' needs. These are subsequently defined more explicitly in the identification of 'core data sets' which are to provide the basis for strategic monitoring. Among the data areas which are considered necessary for the planning process are needs, resources, users, agencies and legislative requirements. After some discussion of the potential range of data it would be possible to collect, and the difficulties, methodological and practical, of obtaining some of this, a 'recommended package' of data is identified, which "is intended to be the minimum required for the purpose of strategic monitoring at the all-Wales county levels"(38). The data set relating to 'needs' is described thus:

"Statement of known population at risk derived from local registers, survey or estimates. In the case of people with a mental handicap this will be derived from the local register maintained for planning purposes. For all groups estimates of those living in the community, residential homes, hospitals or special housing schemes are required. For people who are elderly over 75 or people with a disability, an estimate of numbers in the general population is required, irrespective of whether they are actual or potential users of services" (39)

Thus, although the emphasis of the earlier discussion is on the development of information through needs assessments, the lack of the means to do this results in a dependence on a mixture of other approaches, including registers of existing clients,

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estimates of the size of particular populations such as those over 75 years, those living in particular types of residential setting, and those with particular disabilities. That is, there would be a considerable dependence on information derived from the census, and from surveys of relevant sections of the population, as these would be the main bases upon which such estimates could be made. In relation to the use of surveys, this only serves to emphasise the influence of those who design surveys and operationalise "need" in the development and operation of social policy. Some of the limitations of using existing service users as measures of need were discussed in Chapter 3.

Some Illustrative Examples: Mid Glamorgan and Gwent(40,41)

Local authority Social Service Departments were required to produce Social Care Plans in time for the implementation of major parts of the NHS and Community Care in April 1993, with subsequent annual updates. Not surprisingly, the two plans discussed here reflect strongly the framework identified by the Welsh Office. Before considering how they approach the identification and measurement of need in their areas, it may be of interest to note that each plan contains a 'Glossary' of terms to help the readers through the jargon of Community Care. Despite the frequent use of the term in the plan, the Mid Glamorgan glossary does not contain any explanation of the term 'need' or any variant of it. The Gwent glossary does at least offer some definition or delineation of its use:

"Health Care Needs: Those needs which are the responsibility of Health Care Gwent.

Social Care Needs: Those needs which are the responsibility of Gwent County Council.

Community Care Needs: A generic term to cover all the various types of need which will be eligible for assistance within Community Care i.e. health needs, social needs, accommodation needs etc. This covers the responsibilities of all the various agencies involved." (42). Here, the concept of need is defined explicitly and without qualification by the legislative framework which determines the responsibilities of the agencies concerned. Within the plans themselves, any discussion of the concept of need is contained in the presentation of issues around its measurement, and how this is to be achieved.

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The Mid Glamorgan plan began addressing the issue of how need should be measured by accepting the view of the Welsh Office that "overall assessment of needs is a key element in the social care planning process. Ideally, this should be built up on the basis of individual assessments and reviews". (43). The plan acknowledged that key strategic changes were needed to achieve the aims of the Social Care Plan, including some relating to the assessment of need: "Chapters concerned with the framework for services development, clearly makes the point that future developments around acquiring and providing services will be based upon the accumulating experience of individual need" and: "As experience of assessment and care management grows, measures for identification of need, met and unmet, will also be developed to ensure that evidence of a robust nature is provided to inform both budgetary and resource planning processes" (44)

This is a very clear statement of how the policy makers saw the measurement of need - embodied in the process of the professional assessment of individuals. 'Overall' need is the sum of individual needs, the individual being the basic unit for measurement of need. Assessment is a professional activity, an external or (as used in earlier chapters) 'objective' approach to the measurement of need. An overall picture only requires greater professional and technical skills: "However, it is acknowledged that it will take some time to develop both the professional and technical capability to build up this overall assessment"(45) the technical presumably to work out methods of aggregation of individual professional assessments.

Gwent County Council's Social care Plan followed similar lines, with a considerable emphasis on the importance of a 'needs-led' approach underpinning the work of the agency. "Indeed the philosophy underpinning Community Care is that we should start by finding out what people need. Only then can we begin to think of what we do as being 'needs-led'. With such a philosophical foundation we can begin to create policies which articulate this agreed philosophy and set up services which are comprehensive, flexible,

responsive - but above all - 'needs-led'".(46). The implicit tone of this would appear to be a concern with the more subjective dimension of need, with ascertaining felt and expressed need: "finding out what people need". This would be done through the assessment process.

However, it was recognised that moving towards improved estimates and measures of need was a difficult process. "How to assess need - at least in overall terms - is not easy."(47) As with Mid Glamorgan, the ideal was seen as producing an overall picture on the basis of individual assessments of need. While working towards this ideal, other (less satisfactory) methods of estimating need would be necessary: "For consumers, what counts are individual assessments of need. The purpose here is to describe a process which moves from one of estimation (using various proxy measures of need) to one of realisation (by the overall analysis of real individual assessments)." (48).

The nature of this process is described in more detail later: "The move from estimation begins by a review of where we are. For the first plan, estimation of need, of what are overlapping groups of people, used the population profile of the county, and estimated the likely change in this in the future...........Population figures alone can only ever be a broad proxy for need. To move closer to the realisation of need, and to 'fill the gap' until individual assessments become a reality, the Social Services Department has used, and continues to use surveys." (49).

The report goes on to describe the kinds of surveys which are available or useful to the department in its work - surveys of existing clients and of the general population. All such surveys, it says "help to bring into closer focus the likely needs of differing communities" (50). The availability of the 1991 Census information is also seen as an important source of information on needs: "It is used as a means of identifying problems and assessing needs" (51). It is seen as useful as a survey in itself, asking questions about long-term illness and carers, and also as a source of "basic demographic and socio-economic

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indicators"(52). However, it goes on to re-emphasise the fundamental importance of the assessment of individual need: "...definitive individual assessments are the only sure way to discover *true need* (my italics) on an individual basis.......When this process has been set up, aggregate information for planning purposes can be used from this source data."(53) That is, surveys and indicators are seen as rather flawed but useful ways of measuring need; the assessment process does not suffer such flaws, but produces a · picture of 'true need'.

Mid Glamorgan follows a similar path. The later version of the plan spells out the "framework for estimating and categorising the needs of the population of Mid Glamorgan. This will ensure that informed decisions are made in developing effective services within the overall level of resources available".(54) The plan then goes on to list five areas of analysis as the framework for measuring or estimating need and these are as follows:

"i) Estimation of the total client group in need.

ii) Key indicators of need emanating from the 1991 Census

iii) Surveys and Research

iv) Key indicators of need identified by the Health Authorities

v) Need identified by service users, carers and staff of the statutory agencies and voluntary organisations." (55)

Like Gwent, the last of these, the assessments of individuals, is of prime importance:

"Point 3v) above is a crucial area of activity as it involves our primary responsibility concerning assessment of individual need. The Social Services Department has put in place a system whereby referrals for assessments, number of assessments begun and completed etc. are recorded. ....The activity which feeds this system is the Social Workers Individual Assessment of Need.....providing the Department with information about Social Care Needs that will inform both our planning, financial and operational activities." (56)

Despite the importance attached to individual assessments, however, the plans have had to rely so far on the other kinds of information listed above. Thus, the "Total estimated client group in need has been determined by using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (O.P.C.S.) Survey of Disability..." (57). The approach of this survey to the measurement of need was discussed in Chapter 5. The basis of this survey's approach to the measurement of disability is that "it developed a single scale of which all people above the relatively low threshold of disability set for the survey can be placed" (58). There is no discussion of how such measures of disability relate to the needs of those experiencing that disability.

The social care plan then moves on to a presentation of a range of "social indicators", pointing out that "The association between adverse socio-economic factors and increased health and social care needs has been described in numerous scientific studies, several national reports and in a detailed local analysis " (59). Here the attempt is made to be more specific about the concept of need in the use of the terms 'health and social care needs', which at least suggests some boundaries to the topic, without the more specific 'definitions' offered by Gwent. In presenting statistics on such indicators as the 'Welsh Office deprivation Index' and individual ones such as social class, employment, reference is made to the relationship between these and health and social care needs, while others are seen to influence demands on specific services - "In general, lower social class, unemployment...and high population mobility are all markers of increased health and social care needs. In addition, factors such as low car availability, lack of household amenities and higher than average numbers of people who live alone may place higher demands on ambulance and domiciliary services or delay discharge from hospital" (60). Here, some, if limited, attempt is being made to relate social indicators to the existence of specific needs or service provision which are the concern of the plan.

The above accounts of the approaches contained in Social Care Plans indicate three ways in which they may try to measure need i.e. operationalise the concept. Two of these, the

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use of social indicators and survey results, have already been discussed in this thesis. The essentially political context within which need is operationalised in these approaches has already been discussed. The third is concerned with the assessment of individual need, and the aggregation of this into a broader picture of needs which can then be used as the basis for planning. In the plans this approach tends to be viewed as the ideal, with surveys and indicators a second-best, or interim, attempt at approximation. It would be useful to explore the assessment process in order to consider whether it is different from the others, more valid, providing a picture of 'true need'.

Assessment of needs

It may be thought that the assessment process would be outside of the focus of a concern with 'need' in the context of applied social research. However, we saw how, with Harris and Head's survey, (61) it was incorporated into the later stages of the survey method. Here, in social care planning, it is used as the basis of a process of what is, in effect, researching the needs of particular populations. In practice, as we have seen, the local authorities actually make use of more traditional methods to ascertain the needs of their areas - social surveys and need indicators. Nevertheless, the idea of producing pictures of needs based on the aggregation of individual assessments remains as an important goal, so discussion of the concept is useful.

The importance of the assessment of need in the implementation of the Community Care legislation was emphasised from the start. The White Paper incorporated it into its key objectives, one of which was "to make proper assessment of need and good case management the corner-stones of high quality care". (62) As we have already seen, this was then to be turned into the basis not only for individual care planning, but also for authority-wide need-measurement and planning. However, there has been considerable debate since about what the assessment of need means in practice, and how it should be recorded (in particular 'unmet need'): "While civil servants and directors wade through the

legal quagmire of whether to record unmet needs, many staff who have to implement the policy are already up to their necks in it"(63).

The process of assessment of need may be defined and delimited in a wide variety of ways. The DoH guidance views the process thus: "Assessing Need: Understanding individual needs, relating them to agency policies and priorities, and agreeing the objectives for any intervention" (64) An apparently broader view of assessment (even allowing for the inclusion of the multi-disciplinary dimension) has been espoused by another arm of government: "Essentially, multi-disciplinary assessment is a process by which professionals from various disciplines and agencies share their knowledge and expertise about elderly people to illuminate their understanding of the causes which prevent the client from achieving the lifestyle to which he/she aspires." (65) Their subsequent steps are, however, somewhat more pedestrian: "They then draw upon their knowledge of a range of available services to identify which of these can most effectively meet the client's needs" (66). While the response to the needs may be limited by existing provision, here the suggestion is that the assessment of need is very much concerned with the individual's subjective aspirations with regard to his/her lifestyle - offering no particular delimitation of the boundaries of those aspirations, whether to the areas or levels of need expressed.

The diverse ways in which assessment of need can be understood and approached is discussed by Dant et al in their attempts to develop tools for the assessment of elderly people. They point out that in the more traditional approach "...assessment is determined by the professional interest of the assessor; it is an assessment of what they can do rather than of what needs doing" (67). This is contrasted with the 'biographical' approach which they develop in their study, in which they "encourage the elderly person to offer a life history and describe their present circumstances in the context of their past life.......The biographical approach may yield information about the person's ability to cope with their changing circumstances" (68). The latter reflects much more a concern to explore a

person's needs in relation to their own life and their own subjective view of how it and their needs are changing - comparable with a concern about their ability to 'achieve the lifestyle to which he/she aspires' - than does the 'traditional' approach.

Agencies responsible for the assessment of needs may well espouse a concern with the aspirations of individuals. The tone of Gwent's social care plan seemed to imply an interest in the expressed needs of individuals. In the Mid Glamorgan social care plan, there is a clear concern that the individual should have a key role in the assessment process. This is indicated in the identification of themes emerging in the social care planning process, including "People's need to be in control of their own assessment and review of their needs." (69). It is also emphasised in the aim that "Joint work undertaken on assessment of need and service planning should be guided by, and build on the principles and aims agreed in the joint Social Services Committee Health Authority Statement on Community Care" (70) These principles link the concern with people's needs with their human rights, the first principle stating:

"That all people should enjoy their basic HUMAN RIGHTS by being treated in a way which enables them to:

- retain their INDIVIDUALITY

- enjoy PERSONAL DIGNITY

- exercise SELF DETERMINATION

- live a NORMAL LIFE within the COMMUNITY" (71)

This identifies a powerful statement of values, not uncommon in the context of social services, and often relating to the values of the dominant profession of social work.

However, all needs and rights have to work within some constraints, the second principle stating: "That intervention must be consistent with people's human rights and their need for help, but must recognise that their choice may have to be subject to the requirements of the law and be within the constraints and obligations which apply in society" (72). Again, we see that needs are defined within the broader societal framework, however

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vaguely. This would appear to reflect, in a more generalised way, the Department of Health Guidance about relating need to agency policy and priorities, which derive from such things as legislation, resources, and professional fashion - all part of the 'broader societal framework'.

The constraints within which needs are assessed is spelt out more explicitly and restrictively in the DoH guidance on assessment, and it will be useful to quote this extensively here:

"Need is a complex concept which has been analysed in a variety of different ways. In this guidance the term is used as a shorthand for the requirements of individuals to enable them to achieve, maintain or restore, an acceptable level of social independence or quality of life, *as defined by the particular care agency or authority* (my italics).

Need is a dynamic concept, the definition of which will vary over time in accordance with:

- changes in national legislation

- changes in local policy

- the availability of resources

- the patterns of local demand.

Need is thus a relative concept. In the context of community care, need has to be defined at the local level. That definition sets limits to the discretion of practitioners in accessing resources.....

A needs-led approach requires needs to be explicitly defined and prioritised in policy statements....

This definition of needs should be incorporated into publicity material which clearly distinguishes between needs that are a mandatory, legislative responsibility and those that are a discretionary duty under the law, assumed as a matter of local policy. The more explicit the definition of need, the clearer users and carers will be about their access to services." (73).

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Here, very clearly, the framework within which need is measured is 'an acceptable level of social independence or quality of life, as defined by the particular care agency or authority'; that is by the external or 'objective' approach of professionals or other agency staff - with no reference to the aspirations of the individual. The DoH guidance is fairly clear: needs have to be measured within the context of agency responsibilities and resources - i.e. within the constraints of political conditions and 'objective' value judgements about the areas of life and levels of need which are the concern of the authorities. That is, the work of these agencies has to relate to the legislative, economic and other framework currently applying, with regard to the needs identified, or recognised as their responsibility, and provided for. What is considered an acceptable level of independence or quality of life is defined by the agency, apparently without reference to the subjective views of the individual.

This external or objective approach to the measurement of need is reflected in le Grand and Bartlett's analysis of the current operation of social policy as quasi-markets: "Need refers to the resource requirements of the individual concerned, with the specific implication that the more care resources an individual requires to bring his or her level of welfare up to some pre-determined level, the greater is his or her need."(74) But it is not primarily the individual who has an influence on that pre-determined level, or how they measure up to it. One of the characteristics which makes the provision of welfare increasingly into a 'quasi-market' is the fact that it is not the individual user or consumer who exercises choice in purchasing decisions; this is often delegated to a third party, such as the Social Services Department, care manager, G.P. or health authority. This creates its own problems: if the needs and wants of users are to be met, purchasers "must be motivated to pursue the welfare of users" (75); yet they may have their own agendas (not least as professionals, employers and employees) which could conceivably interfere with this. While the importance of the individual's own views are acknowledged in the DoH guidance, the intervening factors of the care manager, policy and resources remain: "However, need is also a personal concept. No two individuals will perceive or define

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their needs in exactly the same way. Care management seeks to recognise the individuality of need by challenging practitioners to identify the unique characteristics of each individuals needs and to develop individualised, rather than stereotyped, responses to those needs within the constraints of local policy and resources." (76)

Despite the DoH guidance, there has been considerable confusion, and legal argument, over the measurement of need through the assessment process, as noted at the start of Chapter 1. Legislation around needs always seems to generate problems of definition and measurement, and responsibility. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 was similarly problematic. "Once local authority accepts that someone is in need of one of the services listed in Section 2, declared Mrs.Castle, 'it is incumbent on them to make arrangements to meet that need.'" (77)   This caused problems around the business of doing and recording assessments, because of the legal obligations which might result. In relation to the Health Services and Community Care Act there has been what has been called "a legal quagmire of whether to record unmet needs" (78), creating similar problems. One authority, in an attempt to work around this, has "given guidance on the importance of distinguishing between needs, preferences, and wants. A bottle of whisky a day would definitely come on the wish list...Only justified needs and preferences are recorded on the care plan......If a preferred way of delivering a service cannot be met but the care manager feels it is an unreasonable demand, the department advises it should not be recorded as an unmet need but as an unmet preference." (79)   In this authority as elsewhere, despite all the guidance, the difficulty of defining need in practice, delimiting levels and areas of need to be considered, and distinguishing it from the subjective wants and preferences, remains. Recourse, again, is made to some (assumedly shared) view of the standards of society: "'Reasonableness' features heavily in the guidance as a yardstick for which services to provide. Because the council is spending public money, it argues, 'reasonable' must relate to the standards society would expect it to uphold, taking account of cost, the various options and degree of disability." (80)

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Reasonableness is a difficult concept to operate in practice, where there are (implicit or explicit) assumptions regarding what a 'needs-led' assessment should involve. The apparent emphasis on the central importance of the individual being assessed (the user) does not sit comfortably with the reality of 'finance-led services': "Many projects were learning to confront the repeated (sometimes daily) experience of identifying needs for which no service resource was available. The implications of making explicit, through comprehensive assessment documents, what has always been the underlying reality are far reaching for users, carers, practitioners, managers and politicians. The immediate short-term effects on users and carers are likely to include initial high expectations followed by disappointment and frustration which are likely to be debilitating in themselves. For the workers involved the impact is likely to be in terms of increased dissatisfaction and low morale. The longer term resource and political implications of a system where senior managers and politicians will increasingly be asked to confront hard decisions about rationing services are far reaching but presently imponderable"(81).

The problem remains, however, as we saw in Chapter 3, that it is not clear who decides what is 'reasonable', and what the 'standards of society' are; nor is the assumption that such views are shared by all a valid one. This is illustrated by the arguments around the assessment of need of one boy with learning difficulties: "The conflict between her view of her son Mark's needs and where he says he wants to live, and Avon County Council's view of what reasonable meets his needs, has been at the heart of a legal struggle which has gone to judicial review. Now two and a half years, eight different homes, two complaints hearings and a judicial review later, Mr. Justice Henry has ruled in favour of the family." (82)

Conclusions

This discussion of the ways in which need is understood and operationalised in the development of social indicators and in social care planning has helped to illustrate the kinds of problems that arise when attempts are made to measure need in the context of

social policy development and implementation. The problems are the same throughout, whether in surveys, or in the development of indicators (often derived from survey data), or in social care planning which makes use of both of these as well as deriving data from the process of assessment. As Smith has suggested, "There is a serious lack of definitional clarity, accompanied by the notion of need being used inconsistently".(83) Not only is there a lack of clarity in the use of the concept, with a diversity of approaches including objective and subjective dimensions, and differing areas, levels and units of need being considered, but also the inevitable value-based political context has a significant impact which is often not explicitly recognised. The results of the work undertaken, the information produced, are all heavily influenced by the ways in which need is defined, and the context in which it is defined, but it is often treated in the policy process as if it had an intrinsic validity, or, at a more pragmatic level, on the basis that any information is better than none.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

"Analyses of need are undertakings firmly embedded in the context of subjective value judgements about the desires and demands of individual human beings. I say this in order to affirm that however much in this chapter and in our day to day activities we may talk in a dispassionate way about the needs of groups of people, fundamentally we are concerned with individuals, and the judgements we make about them reflect our own attitudes on matters of human and social concern. Any analysis, no matter how scientific and objective it may appear, implies a framework of value judgements. For even if we concentrate on what we consider to be the bare essentials for remaining alive, we must still solve the problem of value judgements about whose existence should be maintained, at what cost, and who should make the decisions."(1) The inevitable value-based, and consequently political, framework in which any analysis and measurement of the concept of need are carried out, and the implications of this for those undertaking research and related activities, are what this thesis has tried to demonstrate. It has attempted to discuss some analyses of the concept in social theory and social policy; to consider the implications of this for the researcher working in this field; and to explore some of the ways in which researchers have defined and operationalised the concept in practice, in survey research and the not unrelated areas of need indicators and social care planning.

In the introductory chapter, it was suggested that "An essential contribution of the sociologist working in the field of the Sociology of Law will be to examine the differing ways in which need is perceived by the various participants in the situation: the legal profession, the government, - bureaucracies ..... and clients ..... If, as seems likely, there are marked differences in the definitions of need as understood by these various groups, it will not be relevant to argue about the rightness or wrongness of particular definitions, nor will it be possible to measure need as a scientific absolute. Need will be seen as

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relative, and it may then be useful to point out how, and why, in specific situations, one set of definitions (or combination of definitions) prevails over others, and to illustrate the way in which this relates to the authority structure in society, since the definition of need likely to be adopted in terms of the service provided will reflect the power and status of those providing the service rather than definitions of those receiving it".(2)

Here the essentially political context in which the concept of need is used and researched was identified. Morris was concerned primarily about how the theorist might address the concept in order to understand its use; this thesis has been more concerned to identify the extent to which applied researchers have acknowledged the diverse meanings of the concept in an essentially political context, what effect this has had on the ways in which it has been operationalised, and on the results produced.

Chapter 2 showed how the concept of need was an important element in the analysis of social and economic organisation. It was Marx's view that the satisfaction of individual human needs was a major factor determining patterns of social and economic organisation, and in turn being influenced by them. This was reflected by Etzioni, who felt that societies could be measured according to the extent to which such needs were satisfied. All of the writers acknowledged or implied that needs could only be identified in relation to a particular model of man or of 'human nature' - in that they identified particular individual goals against which need was measured. Marx referred to the goals of survival and fulfilment, against which it was possible for need to be identified. Lenski's listing of man's needs (or the 'goals towards which men strive') was more detailed than this, and included survival, health, status, creature comforts, salvation in the next world and affection in this. This list is not dissimilar to those produced by psychologists such as Maslow.

The idea of needs as goals is acknowledged in social policy analysis: "The definition of need presents a central problem for the social services, since this defines the objectives of

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the services. To speak of a need is to imply a goal, a measurable deficiency from the goal, and a means of achieving the goal"(3). The importance of the idea of need, and the increasing role of the state in developing policy to meet needs was identified in Chapter 3. Social policy was seen as concerned with political decisions and action in order to address problems with which society was concerned, which included meeting needs. However, the needs of individuals may not be the only ones of concern when looking at social organisation. In Chapter 2 it was indicated how the concept could be applied to different units in that analysis, such as individuals, groups and society as a whole. There were differing views as to how these varying levels of need related to each other, and whether they were always compatible or could be in conflict with each other. The functionalists talked of the needs of society; they varied in the extent to which they considered these needs to be compatible with those of the individual. This raised the issue of the extent to which society will be interested in satisfying the needs of individuals, and at what level. Parsons' view was that individual needs would only be of concern to the extent that meeting them was of benefit to the social system, or met the needs of society. It is functional for individual needs to be met, up to a point; there could be consequences for the society as well as the individual if they are not. Etzioni, like Marx, sees the non-satisfaction of needs as a source of alienation - there are individual and social costs if needs are not satisfied.

While social policy may be concerned with meeting needs, it was indicated in Chapter 3 that this is not likely to be a simple process of acknowledgement and response. A range of factors can influence what areas of need would be seen as the concern of the state, what levels of need would be met, what resources would be made available to meet them. As Warham was quoted there: "we may expect social legislation on balance to provide for needs the meeting of which is functional to the values which society at any given time wishes to protect" (4). She may have been referring here to the needs of individuals, but the same could be applied to the needs of the society. Any government concern to identify and measure needs, or any policy to meet these needs, and any legislation

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deriving from these, will be related to the 'values which society at any given time wishes to protect'. This places a concern with need firmly in the political arena.

The inclusion of the phrase 'at any given time' raises the issue of the changing nature of needs, and Warham further discusses how the changing values of society have resulted in recognition of different needs, and different responses to them at different times. The ways in which needs are manifested can also change. Marx suggested that needs change with such things as an increase in population, changes in social organisation, and increased productivity. One reason given for this relates to the view that such needs are manifested in the subjective experience and views of individuals. It is necessary to distinguish between the needs which are attributed externally to various subjects, whether individuals or societies, and the subjective experience of those needs in individuals (i.e. their motivations or need-dispositions). Cultural and social factors will influence the latter, so that the manifestation of needs is always culturally determined. This introduces the idea that need is relative. The relativity of need is at least partly dependent on a concern with the subjective element in the concept 'need' - that the individual's experience of need is based on his own comparison of his own situation with that of others. Marx thought that social, demographic and economic changes create more opportunity for such comparisons, and create the wealth which engender the increasing differences visible in such comparisons.

The recognition of the subjective nature of the individual's experience and expression of need results in an acknowledgement of the potential difference between an external or 'outsider's' view of man's needs, and the subjective experience of those needs by the individual. Marx made a distinction between 'true needs', such as the need to work, which the individual may not recognise, and artificially created 'appetites', which may or may not derive from such needs. What is being said, in effect, is that the subjective expression of want may or may not relate to the needs as defined by outsiders; wants may derive from other sources and may even be in conflict with needs.

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This use the term 'want' introduces the problem of the language of need in its subjective expression; in that context it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish need and want, or desire, or other substitutes. The language of needs is potentially confusing, not least because different writers use the terms in different ways. The expression of a particular want is the individual's subjective affirmation of a desired course of action. This may or may not relate to needs, whether of the individual or society, which, in theoretical analyses tends to be seen as existing independently of the subjective views of the individual. Needs are seen to derive from an external view of the nature of man or society; a standard or goal which is pre-existing and universal. However, what varies is its culturally determined, subjective expression by individuals, and it is at least partly in this context that policy and research have to occur.

In considering the use of the concept of need in social policy in Chapter 3, the importance of the two dimensions - the subjective, involving experienced and expressed need, which cannot easily be distinguished from wants, and the objective, involving external judgements irrespective of subjective experience or expression, were identified. The development and implementation of social policy was seen to make use of both, not always clearly distinguished, and with limited consideration of the implications of the use of the different dimensions. In relation to both, but particularly the 'objective', a range of issues was identified which have to be addressed when making use of the concept in policy making and research. These included the need to make decisions about what areas or aspects of life were of concern to policy makers, what standards were used in measuring need, who decided these things, and what resources would be used in addressing needs not met in other ways. All of these were shown to be wrapped up in what is essentially the political process - of dominant or conflicting values, of the availability of resources, of the power of individuals or groups to influence policy decisions. This political framework is the environment in which those undertaking applied

research have to work, and they have to address its effect on the way they do their work; it cannot be argued that they stand outside, or above it.

Chapter 4 considered what was particular or different about the researcher working in the policy context, or undertaking 'applied social research'. The process of research involves making many decisions about the focus of the research, the selection and operationalisation of concepts, and the methods to be used. All of these will be influenced by the desired outcome of the research, and all influence that outcome. Where the desired outcome is to produce information, or more broadly improve knowledge, relevant to the policy making process, then the researcher has to acknowledge, and at least to some extent work within, the framework of those she hopes will make use of her findings. The language used, the concepts and their operational definitions, must be shared by, or understandable and relevant to, those to whom the research is meant to be relevant. The areas or topics to be studied, the approaches to measurement, the selection of subjects, must all be acceptable if the results are to be so. In turn the results will be affected by the choices made, and thus by the framework within which the work is carried out.

This does not mean that the researcher can only work within very narrowly defined constraints. As the discussion of the concept of need has shown, there is a lack of clarity, even amongst policy makers, as to how the concept is used and understood. In policy making it is not just the language which may be unclear; the goals and the means to achieve them may be equally uncertain. The researcher, even in this context, may have considerable freedom to explore the subject matter. The extent of this freedom will partly be determined by the research brief, where the work has been commissioned; partly by the desire to produce knowledge which is seen by the policy makers as relevant and useful in their terms. However, it cannot be assumed that the basis for the research, its language and understanding of (and approach to) its subject matter, are shared. It is important for

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the researcher to present and explain how and why he has set about the research, how and why he has made the various choices of concepts and methods, and how he thinks this influences the results. Without such explanations it is not possible for those who may wish to use, or reject, the research to do so.

The different studies discussed in Chapter 5 varied in the extent and ways in which they presented the conceptualisation and methodology of their research. Most were explicitly addressing 'need' in one way or another; the OPCS surveys were focussed on disability and paid greatest attention to that concept, but nevertheless moved into the identification and measurement of need, and began to address the issues in the course of presenting the results. Those which were more explicit about describing need did not always consider it worthy of explanation. Brockinton and Lempert, together with Harris and Head's guide to carrying out a survey, did not seem to find the concept problematic, or present any explanation of how they were defining it, and the implications of this. Most other aspects of their methodology were presented quite clearly, but conceptualisation and operationalisation were not.

Harris, on the other hand, presented considerable discussion of the problems of using the concept, as did Watson and Albrow, Jones and Jenkins (to a lesser extent), and Bebbington et al. All of these acknowledged that they were working in a policy context, and (implicitly or explicitly) that this influenced the way in which the concept of need was used. They nevertheless approached the operationalisation of the concept in rather different ways. Harris and Bebbington largely take on board the existing policy and operational frameworks, if in different ways. The former works largely within the existing service structure, so that their results will be useful for those trying to establish the required scale of existing services. Harris did not (similar to Harris and Head) consider the implications of this, for example, that there might be an alternative approach. Bebbinton instead approaches the research by trying to mirror the assessment process,

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which is not so related to the existing service structure, but still accepts the constraints of existing policy i.e. that assessment is the basis for determining provision.

Watson and Albrow, and Jones and Jenkins, each claim to take a broader perspective, attempting to put the particular areas of study into a wider context, as do the OPCS surveys, and Brockinton and Lempert. However, even here the choice of areas or topics is influenced by what is considered of relevance or use to those most likely to use the data, i.e. the policy makers, though this is not always explicitly recognised. Watson and Albrow do try to identify the various ways in which need is operationalised, and the different implications of using each of them, before they begin to discuss results. Some of the other studies do this more as the problem arises in particular aspects of the research findings (as with OPCS attempts to compare disabled with able-bodied), rather than as an essential part of their presentation of their methodology. Such presentation does provide more of a basis upon which research findings can be judged; lack of it presents an assumption of shared understanding which may not exist, and often is simply an implicit acceptance of the framework of the policy makers, given a gloss of respectability because it is often undertaken by researchers seen to be outside of the policy-making power structure. Too often in research .."the objectivity of the research is more apparent than real. Generally the value bias remains unexplicated".(5)

Social indicators may equally be presented as an approach to measuring need which is not influenced by the policy framework, though it is often policy makers who are interested in them. The selection of indicators, or of elements in the formulae of indicators may not be clarified, or may be presented as technical issues, as the product of statistical techniques, when the policy framework within which they are developed may have a significant influence on them. Sheldon's comments about indicators applies equally to the discussion of research methods above: "These are not purely technical problems but will involve political judgements as to whose 'needs' are most important and which should be made explicit"(6). As with the selection of questions in a survey questionnaire, or elements for

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an indicator, so it is in the assessment of needs; it is not possible to separate the academic or technical processes of defining and measuring need from its political context.

The assessment of need is of concern in this context because, as with Harris and Head and Bebbinton, it was seen as part of the approach to the research; and in the context of social care planning it tends to be seen as the ideal approach to measuring the needs of areas or the relevant sections of the resident population. Social care planning, in the areas looked at, relied on surveys and other indicators for want of information regarded as preferable - the aggregation of individual assessments. The reasons for this are not altogether clear, but the implication seems to be that such assessments provide a picture of real or true need, presumably because they provide information derived directly from the expressed needs of individuals. However, the national and local guidance on assessment indicates quite clearly the constraints on the assessment process i.e. the boundaries which limit the areas and levels of need with which an assessment should be concerned. These boundaries are determined very much by the legislative responsibilities of local authorities, and by their resources (not to mention an assumed societal view of what is 'reasonable').

Deutscher, addressing the Society for the Study of Social problems in 1965, said: "We do not know the current extent of our influence or its future limits. No doubt it will increase. It may be that as consultants or advisors or sources of information we are used by policy makers only when our knowledge is expedient to bolster positions they have already arrived at for other reasons. But the fact remains that we are used." (7) Nearly thirty years later the comments remain valid, both pessimistic and optimistic elements (and the potential ambiguity of the term 'used'.) The difficulties of the relationship between social scientists and policy makers has been raised in Chapter 4, and the influence of working in the social policy context outlined.

This thesis has tried to explore how working in that essentially political context has an unavoidable influence on the ways in which applied social research is carried out. Focussing on the concept of need, it has attempted to demonstrate that the context has a significant influence on the ways in which the concept is defined and operationalised, even when there is no clear, shared, understanding of the concept by policy makers. The process of research, in any setting, requires the clarification of concepts used and, (in survey research in particular) the use of operational definitions. Such definitions are inevitably a selection from the range of what is possible. In attempting to be policy relevant, the applied social researcher has to take into account the understanding and use of that concept by those who require, or may be interested in, the research.

The researcher may simply accept their definitions, as some of the research discussed tended to do. The researcher may explore the range of understanding of the concepts concerned, and attempt to provide some alternative operational definitions, and alternative results as a consequence, as others did. It was suggested in chapter 1 that the development of concepts involves an abstraction from experience, and that there is "absolutely no rule for abstraction".(8) This lack of rule also confronts the researcher when delineating the concept for her own use. To try and 'be useful' in the policy context does not of itself solve the problem. There are many possible value standpoints within this position, from wanting to provide information relevant to the immediate application of existing policy, to wanting to represent the views of those who may be affected by that policy, to presenting information which provides a critique of that policy. There is no obvious value basis: Deutscher's comment in the 60s that "As social scientists, we have responsibility for encouraging and working for social change"(9) assumed a shared value base which may not be as generally acceptable today (if it was then).

As has already been noted in earlier chapters, the social science researcher working in any context cannot avoid the problems surrounding the variable use of language by those being studied, doing the research, and using the results. This is particularly true of those

working in the essentially political context of social policy, where clarity in the use of language is not always considered desirable. While the researcher cannot avoid the influence of the context on the research undertaken, he should at least try to be aware of it, and make others aware of it, so that they are in a better position to judge the results of his work. Clarity around the processes of conceptualisation and operationalisation is an important part of this. As quoted in Chapter 1: "Unless we can reconstruct the processes through which the observer moves from his observations of the social world to his conceptual description of it, we are in no position to evaluate this description."(10) Not all research makes the explication of such processes part of the published reports; when they do, the implications are not always discussed. Such presentation and discussion may be ignored by those using the results in policy development and implementation, but they do appear, to me at least, to be an essential part of the presentation of any research, in whatever form, if others are to be given the proper opportunity to judge its relevance and value.

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