Inequality and poverty were not topics frequently mentioned when I was a graduate student at the University of Chicago in the early 1970s. Many of the lecturers were great teachers but, as far as I remember, the only one who devoted one or two lectures to the topics of inequality and poverty was the late Harry Johnson in what was the third course in Price Theory we had to take. Professor Johnson's lectures were later published in a book entitled *The Theory of Income Distribution* (Johnson, 1973). I must confess however that I did not attend any lecture that the late Theodor W. Schultz might have taught—although, I think, he was no longer teaching at that time. T. W. Schultz was, however, on my committee, and gave me extremely useful advice. I did not meet him often, but each meeting was very rewarding as he was a well of wisdom and common sense. He stressed the importance of human capital, but I do not remember whether or not he advised me to work on poverty.

One of my other advisors was James Heckman, who was at the beginning of his remarkable career. I met him, I think, twice, and he also gave me evidently useful advice. Many years later J. Heckman would make very important contributions to the economics of inequality by stressing the importance of early childhood development. As Heckman (2011, page 31) wrote: “Traditionally, equity and efficiency are viewed as competing goals … What is remarkable is that there are some policies that both are fair—i.e., promote equity—and promote economic efficiency. Investing in the early years of disadvantaged children’s lives is one such policy.”

My interest in inequality and poverty arose however two or three years after I started teaching at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. I had asked a colleague, Jacob Paroush, who was at that time working with Haim Levy on stochastic dominance, what this concept referred to. He explained to me what this notion meant, and while working with him on an application of stochastic dominance to life tables, I came across the famous paper by Atkinson (1970), which is how I was attracted by the topics of inequality and poverty. What was appealing to me over the years was that in this domain there were theoretical papers but also a lot of empirical work. This is evidently not the case of several other fields in economics.

As stressed by Deaton (2014, pages 97–98), “measurement is not much of a focus in economics today … Yet much of what we think we know about the world is dependent on data”. Such a disconnection between economic research and the real world seems to also exist between the teaching of economics and the real world. As argued by Ravallion (2016, page xxiii), “the teaching of economics seems to have become strangely divorced from its application to real world problems such as poverty.”

In the field of poverty analysis empirical work represents an important part of the research. Following Sen’s (1976) path-breaking contribution, it is common, at least as far
as unidimensional poverty analysis is concerned, to make a distinction between a stage of identification of the poor and one where an aggregate measure of poverty is derived. Almost 30 years ago T. W. Schultz wrote that “in general it is easier to identify people who are poor than it is to bring relevant parts of economics to bear on their circumstances” (1993, page 1), adding that “most of the people in the world are poor, so if we knew the economics of being poor we would know much of the economics that really matters” (page 13). Since Schultz wrote this there have been important developments in the field of poverty analysis, although works on poverty are probably still a small part of contemporary economic research. The domain of inequality seems to have become more popular, thanks probably to Thomas Piketty’s (2014) *Capital in the Twentieth Century.*

An important development in poverty analysis is the rising popularity of multidimensional measures of poverty. Here again Sen (1985) is at the origin of this growing literature, following his work on the capability approach. However, this popularity of multidimensional poverty analysis also owes much to Alkire and Foster (2011), who showed how to translate Sen’s ideas into empirical work, the best illustration of such applications being the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which is produced annually by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). Naturally not everyone agrees that deriving an index of multidimensional poverty is a useful development. Some (e.g. Ravallion, 2011) argue that it is preferable to have a battery of indicators, while others believe that a unidimensional approach focusing on income or consumption is much more relevant for developing countries. Greeley (1994), for example, contends that “whether the language is of primary goods, essential functionings or positive freedoms, human material needs take precedence over other aspects of human need”. Some even claim that quantitative approaches may not always be relevant when dealing with developing countries. Thus de Kadt (1994, page 100) writes that “data are collected and processed with much zeal, yet with little thought about their eventual use (or usefulness): ‘information’ accumulates, is ‘available’ yet irrelevant”. Or, as Chambers (2007, page 142) put it: “Economists have come to feel/What can’t be measured isn’t real/The truth is always an amount/Count numbers, only numbers count.”

Despite these warnings, at times justified, the focus of the present Handbook is on the measurement of poverty and deprivation. This is the second Handbook I am editing. The truth is that when I published the *Handbook on Income Inequality Measurement* (Silber, 1999) I did not think I would ever edit another Handbook, given the time it took to bring the project to an end. That Handbook had 614 pages (excluding the Foreword by Amartya Sen, my Introduction and the Epilogue by Tony Atkinson) and 20 chapters, which amounted to about 30 pages a chapter. There were 28 authors or co-authors of chapters and 22 authors or co-authors of comments on the chapters. So when Edward Elgar Publishing asked me in September 2020 to edit a *Research Handbook on Measuring Poverty and Deprivation* my first reaction was to decline the invitation; but I replied that I wanted to think about it. I then figured out that in these times of pandemic, when from time to time there are lockdowns and conferences and seminars are canceled, editing a Handbook may be a nice way of staying busy. This is the reason why I finally accepted. I however immediately decided that I wanted this Handbook to have short chapters. My experience with reading chapters in Handbooks
was that the chapters are often very long and cover a lot of material. I preferred to have short chapters with a very specific focus.3

The next step was then to prepare a list of topics related to the measurement of poverty. Quite quickly I ended up planning 70 chapters, so I needed first to find qualified authors for each chapter. I thought that, as much as possible, I would turn to the younger generation—although clearly for some topics I might have no choice but to contact some highly experienced researchers. Then I had to figure out how to organize these chapters and come up with a reasonable table of contents. I ended up with seven parts covering, respectively, unidimensional poverty and deprivation, income poverty over time, measuring poverty in specific domains, measuring multidimensional poverty, poverty measurement and related topics, pro-poor growth, and poverty measurement around the world. The parts devoted respectively to unidimensional and multidimensional poverty each have a section emphasizing more conceptual issues and another focusing on statistical matters. Within a given part or section no importance should be given to the order of the chapters. This is particularly true for the last part, where each chapter is devoted to poverty in a given country or area of the world. Moreover the choice of countries to be covered was essentially guided by the fact that I had in mind a specific researcher that could write a chapter on poverty in his/her country. Given that there was a chapter on poverty in Europe and another one (in a different part of the Handbook) on the European Union’s approach to multidimensional poverty, I decided not to have chapters on specific countries in Europe (Russia excepted). I now realize that maybe I should have included specific chapters devoted to poverty in major countries like the UK, France, Germany, or Italy—countries where I certainly would have found excellent researchers to be in charge of such contributions.

I also must recognize that there are quite a few topics that could have been part of this Handbook but which I did not think of when preparing the table of contents.4 There are no chapters, for example, on poverty and digital inequality,5 poverty and rising automation,6 poverty and transport,7 or poverty and behavioral economics.8 The truth is that I had planned a chapter on poverty and behavioral economics and asked a specific researcher to be in charge of such a chapter. However for personal reasons this person could not provide the material on time. So, rather than wait a few additional months until it would be ready, I decided to drop the chapter—although I am well aware of the importance of this topic for poverty analysis and measurement. The chapter on financial exclusion and literacy and poverty devotes a few paragraphs to behavioral economics, but this is not its main focus. I tend to think that behavioral economics is extremely relevant to poverty analysis, although the measurement aspects are probably not necessarily those that would be emphasized in a study devoted to behavioral economics and poverty.

The final number of chapters of this Handbook is 67. I already mentioned that I wanted to ask authors from the younger generation to contribute, and another goal was to have a significant number of female authors. If I am not mistaken, 39 out of 116 authors are female, which represents a third of the total. Note also that the authors come from around 25 countries, with major representations from the United States, Italy, Australia, Spain and the UK.

While for the Handbook of Income Inequality Measurement each chapter was followed by comments by some other author(s), I decided for the present Handbook, given the great number of chapters, not to have comments. Each chapter was however sent to an anonymous
referee. Almost all of the referees were authors of another chapter, and I am very grateful for their help in improving the quality of the chapters. Upon receiving the report on his/her chapter, each author was asked to revise it in accordance with most of the referee's comments. After receiving the revised version of the chapter, I checked that as a whole the author had taken account of the referee's remarks, and decided not to send the revised chapters back to the referees, so as not to further delay publication of the Handbook.9

As stressed previously, my goal was to come up with a Handbook that would be useful to researchers as well as to policy makers. The idea was that, after reading a chapter, one would have a good idea of what the topic is all about. Readers could then expand their knowledge by exploring the articles cited in the chapter's references. I hope that as a whole this goal has been reached, although I am well aware that this is probably not true for each chapter.

Given that the present Handbook has 67 chapters, I will not summarize them here. However, the website for the Handbook provides abstracts and key words for all chapters, which I recommend to those interested in knowing what a given chapter is all about.

I cannot complete this introduction without paying tribute to the late Martin Ravallion, whose untimely death in December 2022 is a terrible loss for those working on poverty. Martin was without any doubt the most famous specialist of poverty analysis, and we all will miss his insights and his wisdom. Let me end this introduction by thanking Daniel Mather, who was my contact at Edward Elgar Publishing and of great help, as well as Maria Anson, the copy editor of this Handbook, who did a great job. Finally, I owe my greatest thanks to my wife Fanny, who let me work quite intensively on this book, especially during the last six months of 2022. She has been my wife for 53 years. I would never have completed my PhD if she had not been with me during my studies at the University of Chicago, and she has been of constant help during my career. I have been very lucky indeed to have her as a wife, mother of our five children, grandmother of our 16 grandchildren and great-grandmother of our great-granddaughter.

NOTES

1. My main thesis advisor was Marc Nerlove, who became at the age of 48 the President of the Econometric Society and can be considered, with the late Pietro Balestra, as one of the fathers of the econometrics of panel data. Marc Nerlove was a very nice advisor, and it is certainly thanks to him that I managed to complete my thesis, not only because of his conscientious guidance but also because of the financial help he managed to arrange for me for quite a few years.

2. This became the bestselling book in the history of Harvard University Press. To be fair however, it should be stressed that the works of Atkinson, Bourguignon, Chakravarty, Milanovic, Stiglitz and others also contributed to this somewhat rising popularity of the field of inequality. As far as poverty is concerned, the works of Banerjee and Duflo and of the late Martin Ravallion had also an important impact.

3. From the beginning I informed the authors that a chapter should not exceed 5,000 words, including the bibliography. This was the size I came up with after Edward Elgar Publishing informed me that the maximum number of words in the Handbook should be 350,000. Most authors did actually stick to this limit of 5,000 words. However, once I realized that there would be only 67 chapters, I did not impose this limit on the authors who sent revised versions of their chapter which included slightly more than 5,000 words.
4. There are two topics which I deliberately did not include: poverty and climate change, and poverty and the COVID-19 pandemic. Much has been written recently on these two topics, and I therefore thought it was not necessary to include chapters on them. Maybe I was wrong …
5. See, for example, OECD (2015).
6. On this topic, see, for example, Acemoglu and Restrepo (2021) and Lohr (2022).
7. On this subject, see, for example, Benevenuto and Caulfield (2019).
8. On this issue, see, for example, Jäntti et al. (2014).
9. For Chapter 47, of which I am one of the two co-authors, I submitted a list of five potential referees to Daniel Mather, my contact at Edward Elgar Publishing. He then chose one of them as referee, without telling me who that person was, so that here also anonymity was preserved.

REFERENCES