

## UNDERSTANDING GENERATIONAL POVERTY AND THE IMPACT ON OUR WORK WITH INFANTS, TODDLERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Melissa Mendez, LCSW, IMH-E®  
Associate Director for Early Childhood Services  
Wheeler Clinic-Plainville, CT  
[mmendez@wheelerclinic.org](mailto:mmendez@wheelerclinic.org)

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## POVERTY IN THE U.S. TODAY-50 YEARS AFTER LBJ'S WAR ON POVERTY

- U.S. poverty rate bounces between 12-15%
- In 2012, nearly half of children in America younger than three were in low-income families; about one in four (25%) was living in poverty; and about one in eight (13%) was in deep poverty.

**Percentage of Children, Ages Birth through Two, Living in Deep Poverty, Poverty, and with Low Income, by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2012\***

Race and Hispanic Origin	Deep poverty (10% FPL)	Poverty	Low income (100% FPL)
White	7	13	34
Black	28	45	66
Asian	4	14	37
American Indian or Alaska Native	31	48	70
Hispanic	13	28	45

\*Year reflects the year that the question was asked. Question was asked regarding the previous 12 months.  
Source: CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement, CPS Table Ch0101, <http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpsr/cpsr.html>. Data refer to children residing with and related to the household.

The Youngest Americans: Statistical Portrait of Infants and Toddlers in the United States (Nov 2013)  
<http://www.childtrends.org/7publications-the-youngest-americans-a-statistical-portrait-of-infants-and-toddlers-in-the-united-states>

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## POVERTY IN THE U.S. TODAY

**“The federal government needs to remember, that the best anti-poverty program is economic growth.”**

-Rep. Paul Ryan, Wall Street Journal Op-Ed, 1/24/2014

**“A rising tide, lifts all boats.”**

-John F. Kennedy, Remarks in Heber Springs, Arkansas, at the Dedication of Greens Ferry Dam., 10/3/1963

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**POVERTY IN THE U.S. TODAY**

*"From 1959 to 1973, a more robust United States economy and fewer people living below the poverty line went hand-in-hand. That relationship broke apart in the mid-1970s. If the old relationship between growth and poverty had held up, researchers find, the poverty rate in the United States would have fallen to zero by 1986 and stayed there ever since."*

-"Growth has Been Good for Decades, So Why Hasn't Poverty Declined?", New York Times, 6/4/2014

**Why aren't we winning?**

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**WHY AREN'T WE WINNING?**

- Yes, equity in economic policy is important to lift families out of poverty.
- But money does not change human capacity...
  - Money does get you past survival.
  - Money does not change patterns of thinking.

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**WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF POVERTY FOR COGNITION?**

- We know and have evidence of the impact of poverty as related to correlating risk factors (*Meaningful Differences, ACE, etc.*).

**The cognitive burden of poverty...**

- *The poor "are less capable not because of inherent traits, but because the very context of poverty imposes load and impedes cognitive capacity."*
  - Poverty Impedes Cognitive Functioning, Science, 8/30/2013

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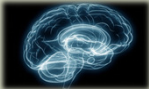
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**HOW DOES POVERTY TAX THE BRAIN?**

(Poverty) sucks up so much mental bandwidth - capacity spent wrestling with financial trade-offs, scarce resources, the gap between bills and income - that the poor have fewer cognitive resources left over to succeed at parenting, education, or work.



Experiencing poverty is like knocking 13 points off your IQ as you try to navigate everything else.

**"That's like living, perpetually, on a missed night of sleep."**

▪ Poverty Impedes Cognitive Functioning, Science, 8/30/2013

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**"CULTURE OF POVERTY"**

- What do you think about this term?
- **cul-ture**  
*noun* \ˈkəl-cher\ : the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time  
 : a particular society that has its own beliefs, ways of life, art, etc.  
 : a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization

**Does poverty have it's own culture?**

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**BEHAVIOR PATTERNS OF POVERTY**



Reality/environment shapes thinking, thinking shapes behaviors.

How we spend our time, and who we spend it with, significantly shapes our behaviors because it creates a different knowledge base.

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**GENERATIONAL PATTERNS OF POVERTY**

- A huge form of privilege is **knowledge**, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge.
- The more stable your environment, the more you can devote time to **learning**.
- When generational patterns of knowledge transmission and learning opportunities are lacking, how does one generation build the resource base and capacities it needs to move from poverty class to middle class?

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**BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITY**

- **“They need our help.”**
- Many of our social service models are compliance models, not choice models
- Mostly, our systems and services operate on a set of middle class norms:
  - Work/achievement/success
  - Future-oriented
  - Individuality and egalitarianism

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**VALUE PATTERNS IN POVERTY AND IN MIDDLE CLASS**

A Framework for Understanding Poverty, Ruby K. Payne

	Patterns in Poverty "Hidden Rules"	Patterns in Middle Class "Hidden Rules"
Money	To be used, spent	To be managed
Food	Quantity-is there enough?	Quality-is it good?
Time	Present-oriented	Future-oriented
Destiny	Fate	Choice
Motivations	Survival, relationships, entertainment	Work, achievement
Discipline	Penance, forgiveness	Change (what did you learn?)

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**BRIDGING GAPS TO BUILD HUMAN CAPACITY**

“Hidden rules break relationships.” - Ruby K. Payne

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYeWJlFu1ZA>

When all players are at the table, we get offended so easily, it is difficult to have meaningful conversation about the “hidden rules.”

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**RESPONDING TO BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS IN POVERTY**

- Rate your tolerance level (high/med/low) for a spouse/partner who:
  - Repeatedly gave money to a family member who did not work but had no documented reason for not working?
  - Allowed a friend/relative to move in for an undermined length of time?
  - Quit a job without having another because he/she did not like their supervisor?
  - Didn't go to the doctor or dentist until he/she is in extreme pain from an ailment?

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**BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITY**

- How do we extract what **we** think **they** need and create a system/service that is based on choice not compliance?

**Reflective Capacity:**  
The ability to regularly examine one's own thoughts, feelings, strengths, and growth areas

*Also good for attachment!*

Support the development of a knowledge base about **themselves** and the ability to think about a future that they see/want.

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**BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITY:  
BUILDING "GRIT"**

- "Grit is **passion** and **perseverance** for very long-term goals. Grit is having **stamina**. Grit is sticking with your future, day in, day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years, and working really hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it's a marathon, not a sprint."  
▪ Angela Lee Duckworth, PhD (TED Talk - April 2013)
- Talent doesn't make you gritty
- Intelligence doesn't make you gritty
- Opportunity doesn't make you gritty
- *How to build grit in individuals (kids) to optimize success?*

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**BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITY**

- "Growth mindset" (Carol Dweck, Stanford University) – the idea that learning is not fixed, that it can change with effort.
- When individuals learn about the brain, and how it responds to challenges, they are more likely to persevere because they start to believe that failure is not a permanent condition.

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**BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITY**

- What are your hopes and dreams for yourself and your family?
- What is the best way I can be helpful to you in meeting those hopes and dreams?
- What kinds of tools or resources do you need to get there?
- Where, along the way, can we find some time to think together about how this is going?
- How will we know when you are struggling?

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**FINAL THOUGHTS/COMMENTS?**

**“If you're in trouble, or hurt or need - go to the poor people. They're the only ones that'll help - the only ones.”**

— John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*

**Thank you!**

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