

Teaching Children of Poverty

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Objective:


- ① **By the conclusion of this discussion, participants will have a better understanding of how poverty affects students' behavior and learning.**

Facts About Poverty

It's More Than a Lack of Money



Poverty Quick Facts

- 📄 **This information is based on patterns. There are exceptions to all patterns.**
 - 📄 **An individual brings with her into each situation the hidden rules of her class (culture).**
 - 📄 **Socioeconomic status and parent education level affect student learning more than any other factors.**
 - 📄 **MYTH: *If you're wealthy, you're brighter*".**
 - 📄 **MYTH: *"Poverty is about race"*.**
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Two Types of Poverty




- ✎ **Two or more generations**
- ✎ **Characterized by survival activities**
- ✎ **Communication & learning based on concretes (touch, see, hear, smell, taste - sensory information)**
- ✎ **Little or no exposure to abstracts (ability to describe sensory information)**



- ① **One generation or less**
- ① **Caused by:**
 - divorce**
 - chronic illness/death**
 - limited financial resources**
- ✎ **Students usually exhibit middle class behaviors**

Hidden Rules

- ① **Schools operate within the rules of the middle class.**
 - ① **Students from poverty live with another set of rules.**
 - ① **The middle class rules are often hidden (assumed and not discussed).**
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When Rules Collide

Poverty vs. Middle Class

- ❏ The rules of poverty and middle class are very different.
- ❏ Each culture's rules are **cuing mechanisms**.
- ❏ Cuing mechanisms let one know if you do or don't belong by a look or gesture.
- ❏ When students don't know the hidden middle class rules, they don't get these messages.
- ❏ They continue to behave within the parameters of their own class/culture.
- ❏ This creates a direct conflict in behavior, values and communication.

The Hidden Rules of the Classes

	POVERTY	MIDDLE CLASS	WEALTH
Possessions	People	Things	One-of-a-kinds/legacies
Money	To be used/spent	To be managed	To be conserved/invested
Personality	Sense of humor valued/entertain	Achievement highly valued	Connections most valued
Clothing	Individual style/expression of personality	Quality & acceptance/label important	Artistic sense/designer important
Time	Present most important/decisions about survival	Future most important	Traditions, history & decorum
Education	Valued as an abstract/not a reality	Crucial for success and money	Necessary traditions for connections
Family Structure	Matriarchal	Patriarchal	Depends on who has money
Driving Force	Survival, relationships, entertainment	Work, achievement	Financial, political, social connections

\$How Me The Money



MIDDLE CLASS:

- 📖 People must be responsible about money.
- 📖 Plan for the future, make investments: job, house, car, education.
- 📖 Don't ask for money.
- 📖 Common judgment: "If that family is poor, why spend money on expensive clothes and shoes...make sure they have lunch money and school supplies".



POVERTY CLASS:

- 📖 If I don't have money/things, I don't belong.
- 📖 Try to belong: cell phone. \$200 Nikes, flash money.
- 📖 OK to ask for money/"borrow" from others.
- 📖 Parents will do anything for their child to fit in.
- 📖 Middle class judges poverty class as "irresponsible" for any of the above.

Concrete Learners

⌚ Poverty is about **survival**

⌚ Survival is very **concrete** and non-verbal

⌚ Without abstract skills, a student **can't plan**

⌚ When they can't plan, they **don't know cause & effect**

⌚ When students don't know cause & effect, they **can't identify consequences**

⌚ When they can't identify consequences, they **can't control impulsivity**

⌚ When impulsivity is not controlled, there is **an inclination toward criminal behavior.**



Poverty is More Than Lack of Money

Resources Commonly Lacking:

Financial	Spiritual
Mental	Support Systems
Emotional	Role Models
Physical	Knowledge of Hidden Rules

Language Registers

REGISTER	EXPLANATION
FROZEN	Always the same (Lord's Prayer, wedding vows)
FORMAL	Standard sentence syntax & word choice of school & work. Has complete sentences & specific word choice
CASUAL	Language between friends, characterized by 400 - 800 word vocabulary. Often incomplete sentences
INTIMATE	Language between lovers or twins. Language of sexual harassment

The Voices of Teachers

Correcting Behavior

	CHILD VOICE	PARENT VOICE	ADULT VOICE
Description	Defensive, whining, emotional	Judgmental, authoritative, punitive, threatening	Often put in form of a question, factual, non-judgmental
Common Comments	"I hate you", "Don't blame me", "You made me do that!", "Quit picking on me"	"Life's not fair - get over it", "Do as I say", "Stop that right now!"	"Is there a way we can work this out?", "Let's explore the choices you have here", "I'm recommending..."
Application in School	DO NOT USE!	Use to IMMEDIATELY stop unsafe behavior	Use to CHANGE behavior

Voices in the Classroom

Research indicates 80% of discipline problems come from 11% of the staff

\$\$\$ - Incorrect use of teacher voice costs schools millions every year

Relationship building = adult voice

2 main classroom problems:

(1) little structure (child-voiced teacher)

(2) little student choice (parent-voiced teacher)

How Poverty Affects OUR Students

Manifested Characteristics



Common Behaviors


- ⌚ **Louder voices (their environment filled with noise)**
- ⌚ **Concrete thinkers (can they see, hear, touch, smell or taste)**
- ⌚ **Nonverbals more important than verbals (“He looked at me wrong, Miss!”)**
- ⌚ **Value among others based on ability to ENTERTAIN**
- ⌚ **Lack conflict resolution skills**
- ⌚ **Fighting = survival (poverty is all about survival of the fittest)**
- ⌚ **Relationships more important than work or achievement**
- ⌚ **Resiliency based on 2 components: (1) Creativity (2) Humor (commonly manifested as laughing during discipline)**

More Behaviors


- ① Often very disorganized (life often in chaos)
- ① Doesn't do homework (lack of support, often no place or supplies)
- ① Can be physically aggressive to other students
- ① Dislikes authority
- ① Working in class based on LIKING the teacher
- ① Has many excuses
- ① Sees only part of what is on a page
- ① Does only part of an assignment
- ① Slow to start; asks directions over and over
- ① Needs help, but can't express what, why
- ① Extremely verbally participatory
- ① Lacks self-monitoring skills
- ① Lacks understanding of steps for assignment completion
- ① Often quit after initial failure

Students Speaking


How Class Affects Word Choice

- ① Middle class students possess the words to express emotions
 - ① Poverty students do not have a grasp of these descriptions
 - ① They express feelings through touch (hugging, hitting, “posturing”)
 - ① Limited words manifested through cursing, non-verbal actions, shows of frustration
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“He Won’t Quit Talking”


- 📄 **Students of poverty live in a noisy world, and they bring that into the classroom**
 - 📄 **Concrete learners are REPETITIOUS and need repetition**
 - 📄 **Concrete learners are very oral and non-linear (abstract learners are linear and print-oriented)**
 - 📄 **Oral learners are story-centered**
 - 📄 **Oral learners MUST talk to comprehend**
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Oral Cultures

- 📄 **Relationship focused**
 - 📄 **Spontaneous**
 - 📄 **Repetitive**
 - 📄 **Repeats same story**
 - 📄 **Takes in everything bombarding the senses (shows as not listening/not paying attention)**
 - 📄 **Jumps from part-to-part and subject -to-subject**
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Entertaining

 **In poverty, ability to entertain highly valued**

 **Entertainment a large part of life (TV, music, loud conversation, notes)**

 **Humor inappropriately used in school to reduce punishment (works at home!)**


 **Failure-avoidance exhibited by humoring class teacher**

Helping Students Find Success


Small Actions - Large Results



In The Classroom

- ① **Students of poverty come from chaotic, unpredictable environments...**
 - ① **Maintain a routine and structure (make rules clear and stick by them!)**
 - ① **Help them mediate (explain why, how, results)**
 - ① **Teach them the *hidden rules* of schools**
 - ① **Be supportive: teach them, lead them, model for them**
 - ① **Maintain high expectations**
 - ① **Be insistent - don't cave into their humor or story**
 - ① **Teach students coping and mediating skills**
 - ① **Emphasize respect for others is non-negotiable**
 - ① **Develop a relationship - it is the most POWERFUL skill you can hone**
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Helping Parents of Poverty

- 📄 **Make parents feel welcome**
 - 📄 **Send them letters, make calls, make contact!**
 - 📄 **Ask the child whom you're calling (name, relationship)**
 - 📄 **Many parents resist your intrusion...they want their child to be strong to survive**
 - 📄 **Don't be surprised that parents support fighting...**
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Children in Poverty:



Concrete - use the 5 senses to receive information



Must be taught the middle class rules



Strive to fit in by spending/prioritizing differently than middle class



Touch and non-verbal oriented



Entertain and use humor



Oral, NOT print oriented



Talkative and repetitive



Respond best to the adult voice



RELATIONSHIP ORIENTED - need role models