Posted: 08/15/11 06:12 AM ET

THE HUFFINGTON POST
CANADA

Poor in Canada: Statistics Canada Reports One In 10 Canadians Are Living In Poverty

THE CANADIAN PRESS -- OTTAWA - The recession stopped progress on poverty in its tracks, according to new data from Statistics Canada that indicates almost one in 10 Canadians is considered poor.

In its first detailed, national picture of what happened to income in Canada during the recession, the agency says the poverty rate edged up in 2009 to 9.6 per cent -- the second straight year that poverty has grown after more than a decade of steady declines.

About 3.2 million people now live in low income, including 634,000 children.

Indeed, children were vulnerable during the recession, with their poverty rate rising to 9.5 per cent in 2009 from 9.0 per cent a year earlier.

But the picture of the recession is one of stagnation rather than complete catastrophe. The median after-tax income for Canadian families was $63,800 in 2009 -- about the same as a year earlier.

In the past, recessions have deepened poverty in Canada for years, and exacerbated the gap between rich and poor. Many analysts feared the pattern was repeating itself.

So far, that doesn't seem to be the case. While the national poverty picture isn't pretty, the number of people in the top, middle and bottom echelons of income in Canada remained fairly steady as the recession took hold.

About 55 per cent of Canadians benefitted from an increase in their after-tax income in 2009, while 45 per cent suffered a decline. Before the recession, in 2007, income rose for 58 per cent and declined for 42 per cent.

Poverty among seniors fell in 2009, to 5.2 per cent from 5.8 per cent in 2008. Seniors have the lowest incidence of poverty of all the demographics, according to the main Statistics Canada measure of poverty, called the low-income cut-off.

And single mothers have also shown remarkable improvement. While poverty is still high for single moms, at 21.5 per cent, that's an improvement from the 23.4 per cent in 2008, and a continuation of the steady declines noted since 2002.

Now, about 22 per cent children living with a single mother were considered poor, compared with a troubling 56 per cent in 1996.

StatsCan has not explored why, but other analysts point to the advent of government programs and benefits for children over the past decade, as well as a growing number of women in the workforce, and tougher enforcement of rules for support payments from fathers.

Regionally, the East was poorer than the West, but the West was bitten by the recession all the same. Poverty jumped in Manitoba, rose slightly in Saskatchewan, and soared in Alberta -- to 10 per cent in 2009 from about six per cent in 2008.

END POVERTY
IN CANADA

Ending poverty in Canada is an achievable goal. Together, we have the capacity to effect change and empower our society to fulfill its true potential. Call on the federal government to make a legally-entrenched poverty reduction plan a reality.

Poverty dims our collective future. Don't accept it as a given.

The Facts

Amidst incredible wealth, more than 3.5 million Canadians live in poverty. In fact, poverty is *increasing* for youth, workers, young families and immigrants and people of colour in this country. Poverty in Aboriginal groups remains appallingly high, both on and off reserve. While Canada officially ranks an impressive 4th on the UN Human Development Index, the statistics measuring poverty in Canada's Aboriginal communities would place us 78th—a ranking currently held by Peru.

The inherited poverty facing our youth is especially emergent. On average, one in every ten children in Canada struggles to have their basic needs met. In First Nations and Inuit communities, one in every four children grows up in poverty. More than twenty years after the House of Commons passed a resolution to eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000; our government has failed to take any meaningful action in this direction.

In Canada right now:

- One in ten children is poor.
- Canada's child poverty rate of 15 percent is three times as high as the rates of Sweden, Norway or Finland.
- Every month, 770,000 people in Canada use food banks. Forty percent of those relying on food banks are children. These statistics point to a betrayal of Canada's children.

What makes the persistence of child poverty all the more disturbing is that Canada is such a resource-rich country. It doesn't have to be this way. All children should have the chance to meet their potential.

The Canadian government talks a good talk of addressing suffering abroad, but we need to focus on poverty reduction strategies at home if we are to have any credibility on the global stage. The national platform of the Make Poverty History campaign in Canada puts forward achievable demands that would make a significant contribution to making poverty history—both globally and in Canada.

Our Focus

Make Poverty History calls on the government of Canada to implement a plan to reduce—and ultimately eliminate—poverty in Canada. Developed in consultation with people living in poverty, this nation-wide strategy will complement and unify existing efforts at the provincial and territorial level. To-date, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Ontario have implemented poverty reduction plans.

In order for these measures to succeed, we must also adopt a federal anti-poverty act that would hold our government accountable for setting and achieving measurable results within a reasonable timeframe. Poverty reduction plans and coordinated policies have proved an effective combination for turning the tide of poverty in other countries, as well as in the provinces and territories in Canada that have adopted them.

It is possible for all Canadians to have a decent standard of living. Now is the time to take action and make it a reality.

Social Effects of Child Poverty

By Phil Whitmer, eHow Contributor

Living in poverty is defined as not making enough money to pay for food, clothing and shelter needs. Children living in impoverished families are deprived of the basic necessities of life. The short- and long-term social effects on children living in poverty are not good. The United States has the largest percentage of indigent children among the world's 21 wealthiest industrialized nations.

1. Poverty Level

- American poverty levels are determined by poverty thresholds issued each year by the United States Census Bureau. Poverty guidelines are also annually released by Department of Health and Human Services. The 2011 HHS figures indicate that a family of four making below $22,350 is officially poor. Children make up a disproportionate share of the poor; according to the Census Bureau's 2008 figures, 20.7% of all children, or 15.45 million individuals under the age of 18, were living in domestic poverty.

Cognitive Abilities

- Living below the poverty level affects the cognitive abilities of children. They're more likely to have learning disabilities and difficulties than rich kids. Poor children often fall behind in classwork and experience developmental delays. Low achievement levels and failure to finish school will affect their social standing for the rest of their lives. They are likely to be perceived as second-class citizens and treated accordingly. Failing in school can set the pattern for a lifetime of failure as socially maladjusted adults.

Behavioural Problems

- Poverty-stricken youngsters experience more emotional and behavioural problems than non-poor kids. These problems affect the social development and behaviour of the needy kids in and out of school. They may be inattentive and disruptive in class. Difficulty getting along with others and poor social opportunities prevent impoverished children from fitting into society. The children are at risk to become alienated juvenile delinquents turning to gang affiliation and crime as a life style. Failure to feel included in society at large may lead to violent or sociopathic behaviours.

Teenage Childbearing

- Teenagers from poor families have children at a rate three times that of their wealthier counterparts. Children born out of wedlock to underprivileged teen girls often suffer the negative social effects of growing up in a single-parent family. Children growing up under such conditions suffer from poor parental interaction and supervision as the parent struggles with a lack of money and the stress and social stigma it induces. Social isolation and lack of self-esteem in teen parents and their children can be exacerbated by poverty.

Define Culture of Poverty

By James Withers, eHow Contributor

Author Oscar Lewis, a practitioner of cultural anthropology, contends that poverty is systemic in nature. Additionally, it bears certain identifiable cultural norms. Based on observations gathered from field research, Lewis advances a social theory known as the "culture of poverty." In his theory, Lewis speculates that members who function within poverty-stricken communities express certain traits that bear value within such contexts, but which fail to benefit them in contexts extending beyond their own culture of poverty.

1. Oscar Lewis

- American anthropologist Oscar Lewis pioneered the phrase "culture of poverty" in his book *Five Families; Mexican Case Studies in The Culture Of Poverty*, published in 1959. This book provides readers with a glimpse of a "day in the life" of five Mexican families, four of whom live in poor circumstances. In writing these family portraits, Lewis sought to determine commonalities experienced by all of the families. Thus, he established that certain characteristics typical of poor households and communities are not present in more affluent communities.

Conditions

- Six conditions, argues Lewis in A Study of Slum Culture, are typically present within a culture of poverty. Such a culture is prone to flourish in societies that operate with cash economies wherein production for profit is encouraged. Another factor predisposing such societies to the culture of poverty is a high rate of unemployment. Based on Lewis' social theory, four additional conditions can be correlated with a culture of poverty: low wages, insufficient remedies supplied to low-income individuals, the existence of a bilateral kinship system as opposed to a unilateral system and the existence a value system that applauds upward mobility while deeming low economic status to be a consequence of personal inadequacy.

Interrelated Traits

- Traits that are commonly shared between members of a poverty community serve to reinforce the presence of these members within the community, while simultaneously discouraging their departure. Such traits number approximately 70, although numbers and types of traits vary from culture to culture. Examples of such traits are the frequenting of pawn shops, lack of reliance on banks, high rates of male unemployment and the existence of matriarchal families.

Chronic Subordination

- Few opportunities to escape from a culture of poverty exist for subjects who live within the scope of such a culture. Lewis argues that poverty is generational in nature. Almost as soon as children are old enough to be enrolled in public school, they have already absorbed the basic values that undergird their culture of poverty. Consequently, as years pass, they may not deem themselves capable of taking advantage of critical opportunities for advancement.

Controversy

- According to critics of Lewis' social theory, an acceptance of its basic tenets inclines one to believe that little social change can result from individual choice. Despite its value of being a seminal work of cultural anthropology, such critics dismiss Lewis' book as engendering a sub-population of "victims" who challenge their governments to institute comprehensive welfare reform programs. Critics allege that these victims are led to believe that they deserve to be pampered by society, since they are unable to remedy their own situations. Rather than being incapable, such victims are merely subject to an "entitlement syndrome" that dismisses personal responsibility in favour of programs of assistance

The theory of "cycle of poverty" blog discussion

Student
College - Sophomore
Why does the socioeconomic status of one's parents almost always guarantee a child's future in society?

2 Teacher
Community / Jr. College

It's for a variety of reasons, all of which have to do with the opportunities the child has. Let me list some examples:

- Richer parents are more likely to be educated and have lots of books around. They're more likely to read things and set that example for their kids. So their kids learn to read sooner and get a jump on education.
- Richer parents have more time to get involved in their kids' schooling and more of a feeling that they know what they're doing around education. They'll be more likely to make sure that their kids are getting what they need from the school.
- Richer more educated parents can do way more to help their kids with homework and such.

And that's just in the context of early grades of school. There's also the expectations that richer parents have, the ability to support kids as they move on in life, etc.
There are so many ways that richer parents can help their kids that it's no wonder the status of the parent tends to be passed down to the child.

3 Teacher
Doctorate

There are a lot reasons for this:
1. Wealth determines some of the most important elements of a child's life generally speaking.
2. Wealth will give the child the best education that money can buy starting at a young age.
3. Wealth will give a child a social network that he or she can draw on for the rest of his or her life. Unfortunately, it is who you know many of the times that enables success.
4. Wealth will also allow a child to travel and broaden his or her mind.
5. Wealth will also allow a child to spend time with family to develop confidence in life.
6. Children of wealthy parents also inherit wealth!

5 Teacher
Elementary / Primary
Assistant Educator

It's been said over and over that a child becomes exactly what he or she sees and lives with. Children often learn by example and according to the environment in which he or she is born into. In this case, if a child is raised in poverty, chances are that this child will remain in poverty because he or she doesn't know any other way of life. It would take an amazing transformation of

some sort in this child's life. Perhaps someone at school, a teacher, inspires this child to reach beyond what he or she knows to attain a better status in life.

If a child has been raised in a different setting, such as a home with educated parents, circumstances will be different. The child will have access to books and other privileges a child in poverty may not have. This child will aspire to keep the kind of life he or she is accustomed to. He or she may even go on to higher levels in life.

Posted by jcsmith on December 4, 2009.

6 Teacher
High School - 10th Grade

Dr. Ruby Payne has researched this idea extensively. First what you are talking about is generational poverty. This type of poverty has been son ongoing that subconscious rules are perceived by the individuals trapped in this poverty. They don't choose these rules--they simply evolve. Check out the following link for her very clear and precise explanation of this concept.

Posted by ask996 on December 6, 2009.

7 drmonica
Associate Educator, Debater, Expert, Instructor

Ruby Payne is a fantastic speaker and hearing her last year was extremely educational for me on this topic. I have looked at behaviors in my students' parents in the past and been utterly befuddled. Understanding the cycle of poverty and the culture it breeds helps to cast light on these behaviors.

I'm not excusing the single mother on welfare who has a cell phone and a weekly upkeep on her glittering acrylic nails...but understanding her choices helps to be able to better help her child in school.

Posted by drmonica on December 29, 2009.

8 scarletpimpernel
Teacher
High School - 12th Grade

Post #7 makes an excellent point--the choices of parents influence the choices of their children. In my state, we had a 50% high school drop out rate. While the rate has decreased somewhat, it is still difficult to fathom how it can be so high in 21st century America. What I've noticed is that I still have students who come from parents who do not have high school diplomas or from homes where parents still do not consider college or tech school necessary. Obviously, these students do not come from wealthy homes because their parents have either been satisfied with the status quo (reliance on government assistance) or feel trapped in their situation even when they have a desire to get out. I've witnessed such parents teaching their children how to "work the system" so that school/education is no longer about learning as

much as possible or preparing for post-secondary education and a career; instead, it is about developing ways to take advantage of social programs such as free and reduced lunch even when it might be unnecessary or intentionally testing into special education programs so that students will not be held to standards that are appropriate for them.

Sadly, parents who are content with lower socioeconomic levels teach their children how to "settle" or discourage them from achieving more than they have themselves.

Posted by scarletpimpernel on December 29, 2009.

9 Teacher
High School - 12th Grade

Your socioeconomic status often determines where you live. Where you live determines where you go to school and what you witness day to day. It determines who you socialize with and the amount of crime in your neighborhood. All of these things can trap a person in a cycle of poverty. There is also a tendency for some parents who were raised poor, or who are poorly educated, not to want their children, especially girls, to become more educated than they are.

Posted by brettd on May 25, 2010.

10 besure77
Teacher
Middle School

Socioeconomic status determines how you are raised and also contributes to what privileges you may have. You may, for example, receive a better education if you are in a higher socioeconomic status. This may be due to dues factors such smaller classroom size, etc.

Posted by besure77 on June 5, 2010.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

April 2008 | Volume **65** | Number **7**
Poverty and Learning Pages 32-36

Note, this is an excerpt; I cut off the last page of the article as it was not relevant to our purpose.

The Myth of the Culture of Poverty

Paul Gorski

As the students file out of Janet's classroom, I sit in the back corner, scribbling a few final notes. Defeat in her eyes, Janet drops into a seat next to me with a sigh.

"I *love* these kids," she declares, as if trying to convince me. "I adore them. But my hope is fading."

"Why's that?" I ask, stuffing my notes into a folder.

"They're smart. I know they're smart, but . . ."

And then the deficit floodgates open: "They don't care about school. They're unmotivated. And their parents—I'm lucky if two or three of them show up for conferences. No wonder the kids are unprepared to learn."

At Janet's invitation, I spent dozens of hours in her classroom, meeting her students, observing her teaching, helping her navigate the complexities of an urban Midwestern elementary classroom with a growing percentage of students in poverty. I observed powerful moments of teaching and learning, caring and support. And I witnessed moments of internal conflict in Janet, when what she wanted to believe about her students collided with her prejudices.

Like most educators, Janet is determined to create an environment in which each student reaches his or her full potential. And like many of us, despite overflowing with good intentions, Janet has bought into the most common and dangerous myths about poverty.

Chief among these is the "culture of poverty" myth—the idea that poor people share more or less monolithic and predictable beliefs, values, and behaviors. For educators like Janet to be the best teachers they can be for all students, they need to challenge this myth and reach a deeper understanding of class and poverty.

Roots of the Culture of Poverty Concept

Oscar Lewis coined the term *culture of poverty* in his 1961 book *The Children of Sanchez*. Lewis based his thesis on his ethnographic studies of small Mexican communities. His studies uncovered approximately 50 attributes shared within these communities: frequent violence, a lack of a sense of history, a neglect of planning for the future, and so on. Despite studying very small communities, Lewis extrapolated his findings to suggest a universal culture of poverty. More than 45 years later, the premise of the culture of poverty paradigm remains the same: that people in poverty share a consistent and observable "culture."

Lewis ignited a debate about the nature of poverty that continues today. But just as important—especially in the age of data-driven decision making—he inspired a flood of research. Researchers around the world tested the culture of poverty concept empirically (see Billings, 1974; Carmon, 1985; Jones & Luo, 1999). Others analyzed the overall body of evidence regarding the culture of poverty paradigm (see Abell & Lyon, 1979; Ortiz & Briggs, 2003; Rodman, 1977). These studies raise a variety of questions and come to a variety of conclusions about poverty. But on this they all agree: *There is no such thing as a culture of poverty*. Differences in values and behaviors among poor people are just as great as those between poor and wealthy people.

In actuality, the culture of poverty concept is constructed from a collection of smaller stereotypes which, however false, seem to have crept into mainstream thinking as unquestioned fact. Let's look at some examples.

MYTH: Poor people are unmotivated and have weak work ethics.

The Reality: Poor people do not have weaker work ethics or lower levels of motivation than wealthier people (Iversen & Farber, 1996; Wilson, 1997). Although poor people are often stereotyped as lazy, 83 percent of children from low-income families have at least one employed parent; close to 60 percent have at least one parent who works full-time and year-round (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2004). In fact, the severe shortage of living-wage jobs

means that many poor adults must work two, three, or four jobs. According to the Economic Policy Institute (2002), poor working adults spend more hours working each week than their wealthier counterparts.

MYTH: Poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning, largely because they do not value education.

The Reality: Low-income parents hold the same attitudes about education that wealthy parents do (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Leichter, 1978). Low-income parents are less likely to attend school functions or volunteer in their children's classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005)—not because they care less about education, but because they have less *access* to school involvement than their wealthier peers. They are more likely to work multiple jobs, to work evenings, to have jobs without paid leave, and to be unable to afford child care and public transportation. It might be said more accurately that schools that fail to take these considerations into account do not value the involvement of poor families as much as they value the involvement of other families.

MYTH: Poor people are linguistically deficient.

The Reality: All people, regardless of the languages and language varieties they speak, use a full continuum of language registers (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008). What's more, linguists have known for decades that all language varieties are highly structured with complex grammatical rules (Gee, 2004; Hess, 1974; Miller, Cho, & Bracey, 2005). What often are assumed to be *deficient* varieties of English—Appalachian varieties, perhaps, or what some refer to as Black English Vernacular—are no less sophisticated than so-called "standard English."

MYTH: Poor people tend to abuse drugs and alcohol.

The Reality: Poor people are no more likely than their wealthier counterparts to abuse alcohol or drugs. Although drug sales are more visible in poor neighborhoods, drug use is equally distributed across poor, middle class, and wealthy communities (Saxe, Kadushin, Tighe, Rindskopf, & Beveridge, 2001). Chen, Sheth, Krejci, and Wallace (2003) found that alcohol consumption is *significantly higher* among upper middle class white high school students than among poor black high school students. Their finding supports a history of research showing that alcohol abuse is far more prevalent among wealthy people than among poor people (Diala, Muntaner, & Walrath, 2004; Galea, Ahern, Tracy, & Vlahov, 2007). In other words, considering alcohol and illicit drugs together, wealthy people are more likely than poor people to be substance abusers.

The Culture of Classism

The myth of a "culture of poverty" distracts us from a dangerous culture that does exist—the culture of classism. This culture continues to harden in our schools today. It leads the most well intentioned of us, like my friend Janet, into low expectations for low-income students. It makes teachers fear their most powerless pupils. And, worst of all, it diverts attention from what people in poverty *do* have in common: inequitable access to basic human rights.

The most destructive tool of the culture of classism is deficit theory. In education, we often talk about the deficit perspective—defining students by their weaknesses rather than their strengths. Deficit theory takes this attitude a step further, suggesting that poor people are poor because of their own moral and intellectual deficiencies (Collins, 1988). Deficit theorists use two strategies for propagating this world view: (1) drawing on well-established stereotypes, and (2) ignoring systemic conditions, such as inequitable access to high-quality schooling, that support the cycle of poverty.

The implications of deficit theory reach far beyond individual bias. If we convince ourselves that poverty results not from gross inequities (in which we might be complicit) but from poor people's own deficiencies, we are much less likely to support authentic antipoverty policy and programs. Further, if we believe, however wrongly, that poor people don't value education, then we dodge any responsibility to redress the gross education inequities with which they contend. This application of deficit theory establishes the idea of what Gans (1995) calls the *undeserving poor*—a segment of our society that simply does not deserve a fair shake.

If the goal of deficit theory is to justify a system that privileges economically advantaged students at the expense of working-class and poor students, then it appears to be working marvelously. In our determination to "fix" the mythical culture of poor students, we ignore the ways in which our society cheats them out of opportunities that their wealthier peers take for granted. We ignore the fact that poor people suffer disproportionately the effects of nearly every major social ill. They lack access to health care, living-wage jobs, safe and affordable housing, clean air and water, and so on (Books, 2004)—conditions that limit their abilities to achieve to their full potential.

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Reconsidering Culture and Poverty

Highlights from The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Volume 629, May 2010, David J. Harding, Michèle Lamont, and Mario Luis Small, eds.

New Thinking about Culture and Poverty

Culture is back on the poverty agenda. The last generation of scholarship on the poverty culture relationship was primarily identified, for better or worse, with the "culture of poverty" model of Oscar Lewis[1] and the report on the Negro Family by Daniel Patrick Moynihan[2]. Lewis argued that sustained poverty generated a set of cultural attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices, and that this culture of poverty would tend to perpetuate itself over time, even if the economic conditions that originally gave rise to it were to change. Scholars in the 1970s were accused of "blaming the victims" for their problems because they seemed to imply that people might cease to be poor if they simply changed their culture. The heated political environment dissuaded many young scholars of the time from studying the connections between culture and poverty.

Scholars began to reconsider culture and poverty after the publication of Wilson's The Truly Disadvantaged (1987).In recent years, a new generation of scholars of culture and poverty has conceived of culture in substantially different ways. It typically rejects the idea that whether people are poor can be explained by their values and questions the utility of the old distinction between "culture" and "structure." It generally does not define culture as comprehensively as Lewis did, instead distinguishing values from perceptions, and attitudes from behavior. It sets aside the ideas that most members of a group or nation share "a culture" or that a group's culture is more or less coherent or internally consistent. Its conceptions of culture tend to be more narrowly defined, easier to measure, and more plausibly falsifiable.

Why Re-examine the Role of Culture in Poverty?

• To debunk existing myths about the cultural orientations of the poor. Developing a complete understanding of the conditions that produce and sustain poverty requires analyzing empirically how the poor make sense of and explain their current situations, options, and decisions, and what they do to improve their own prospects and those of their children. The authors emphasize that the poor share many of the same cultural views as the middle class and that there is considerable diversity in the cultural orientations of those living in poverty.

• To understand better why people respond to poverty the way they do, both in how they cope with it and how they escape it. A cultural lens helps us to understand why poor people living in the same high poverty neighborhoods make substantially different decisions regarding pregnancy, studying, community participation, job search and even crime. Exploring further how low-income populations make sense of their experiences and options is essential for developing stronger explanations of how some are able to escape poverty while others are not.

• To improve the efficacy of social policy. Ignoring culture can lead to misguided policies if the true motivations of poor people are misunderstood or ignored. In addition, the authors conclude that we need to better understand the cultural assumptions that guide policy decisions concerning the poor.

The objective of a recently published volume of the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science is to demonstrate that the theoretically informed and empirically grounded study of culture can and should be part of the poverty research agenda. In their introduction, Small, Harding and Lamont describe seven cultural concepts now widely used by scholars—values, frames, repertoires, narratives, symbolic boundaries, cultural capital, and institutions. These concepts are employed in the volume's essays to illustrate the value of understanding the cultural perspectives of both individuals living in poverty and the policy elites who make poverty policy.

Culture and the Experience of Poverty

Persistent black joblessness has long been a core cause of poverty. In her examination of how Hispanic and black blue-collar workers decide whether or not to help co-ethnics in their search for jobs, Sandra Susan Smith finds that both groups apply plausible criteria in judging whether to help friends, family, and neighbors find jobs and in judging whether their support may tarnish their own reputations in the workplace. Smith concludes that, because of differences in perceptions regarding joblessness between black and Hispanic communities, there may be a greater reluctance on the part of black workers to provide support. Because of the importance of social networks in finding a job, this reluctance should be viewed, along with other factors, as part of the reason why persistent black joblessness has been so difficult to mitigate.

Young African-American men are at high risk of unemployment and poverty. How young unemployed African-American understand what makes for a good job is the focus of Alford A. Young's contribution. Young concludes that young men exhibited diverse perspectives in framing the attributes of an ideal job. Some focused on wages and benefits, while others focused on features of the work itself, such as autonomy and creativity. Both the extent of their prior work experience and their postsecondary educational experience contributed to these variations in how they characterized a good job. He concludes that greater attention to such variation, rather than attempts to broadly characterize a group's culture, can help us better understand the work orientation of low-income people.

Education is a proven pathway out of poverty, but why do some children achieve this goal while others do not? Stephen Vaisey investigates the role of "ideals" and "expectations" in educational success. Low income young people, he finds, have lower ideals for higher education attainment than non-poor respondents and also have lower expectations for what they will actually attain. Stressing the importance of this connection, he concludes that scholars need to integrate values into their research and to work to understand the social and cultural sources of differences in values and motivations.

Child support and responsible parenthood have long been important policy topics. Yet as Maureen Waller points out, policy thinking has been largely dominated by economic considerations such as support payments and has not incorporated perceptions of the parents themselves about indicators of good parental involvement. Drawing on interviews with poor mothers and fathers, she identifies non-economic factors that parents find important in the father's role: caregiving, spending time, role modeling, and material support. Financial support, though important, did not overshadow noneconomic factors, and parents often view informal financial support as signaling a greater commitment from fathers than coerced formal child support payments. The latter were often viewed as potentially damaging to the relationship between the father and child. Incorporation of these cultural perspectives, Waller concludes, will strengthen public child support and parenthood policies.

Poverty is more common among single mother households. The prevailing view that unwed pregnancy in the inner city stems from men's unwillingness to commit to long-term monogamous relationships is challenged by Nathan Fosse in his study of low-income African-American men. He argues that three "cultural logics" underlie attitudes toward faithfulness and non-monogamy: doubt (the belief that one's partner may also be cheating); duty (obligations to male peers, family, or partners); and destiny ("life is short" justifications for cheating vs. future orientation monogamy). He stresses, though, that none of these logics produces clear-cut courses of action. His analysis shows that inner-city culture is far-more heterogeneous than traditionally thought.

Culture, Poverty and Effective Social Policy

The importance of both culture and structural factors in understanding poverty is the central thesis of William Julius Wilson's argument. While both culture and structure matter, it is the structural impediments that have the largest negative effects on black inner-city neighborhoods. A significant policy challenge, he argues, is that despite the significant effects of structural factors in prolonging inner-city poverty, most Americans believe that the causes are rooted in the personal behaviors of the poor. Wilson argues that a holistic approach, one that appreciates both the structural challenges and the cultural dynamics, has greatest potential to address deep-rooted poverty problems. He discusses the potential of the Harlem Children's Zone as an exemplar of this approach. What lessons should policymakers take from this volume? Representative Lynn Woolsey stresses the need for legislators to constantly re-examine the assumptions they use in framing problems, and to be aware of societal changes that make their assumptions obsolete. She cites the shifting nature of the American family toward two-worker families, and the ways these changes have affected economic and social dynamics for families. She argues that policies that support modern families are essential. Representative Raúl Grijalva argues that poverty is far more complicated and "insidious" than policy makers often believe. Expanding perspectives on the causes and consequences of poverty is essential if appropriate solutions are to be envisioned and carried out.