

The Effect of Poverty on Child Education (K-12) in Public Schools: What Schools and the
Government Can Do to Help Student Achievement

Human Services III Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), everyone has the right to pursue an education which includes children. Whether or not everyone is receiving a quality education is debatable. There are a few different school systems, such as public, charter, private, catholic, gender strict schools, magnet and even homeschooling. Children are considered to be the most vulnerable population, especially in the United States (Azzi- Lessing, 2017). When it comes to the child welfare system in the United States, the needs of children are not adequately being met. Azzi- Lessing (2017) states that the United States biggest downfall is the government's lack of concern for poor families. The lack of intervention contributes to trauma and the deprivation of the needs and well-being of children (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). Additionally, this includes the quality of education children in public schools receive, more specifically those living in poverty.

Education is something that government officials do not see as a necessity, very few people realize the impact that poverty has on children (Azzi- Lessing, 2017). This shows in the lack of funding for education. In 2017, the president's budget was \$43,115,523 (U.S. Department of Education). In 2018 the budget was cut to \$34,422,802 (U.S. Department of Education). The money includes only programs in elementary and secondary school such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title 1, teaching grants, state assessments, special education, career and technical education, and English Language Acquisition (U.S Department of Education). The money is distributed throughout the states, with some states receiving more than others and school districts as well.

In the United States, it is considered neglect if parents or guardians keep their children from attending school. Even if parents send their children to school, children living in poverty are more

likely not attending schools that are adequately educating and providing their students with the tools needed for success. A good quality of education is not always something that is seen a right and in some cases a financial burden. What is the point of children attending school if the education is not engaging and allowing students to reach their full potential? There are many families in the world that are affected by poverty but 2.2 billion children worldwide are currently living in poverty (McKinney, 2014). One of the factors that definitely affects the quality of education a child receives is poverty. There is a clear educational achievement gap between those living in poverty compared to those children not living in poverty.

WHAT IS POVERTY?

Poverty is defined as the lack of necessary resources needed to survive such as food, water, healthcare, shelter and housing (McKinney, 2014). In 2005, it was reported that there are 1.3 billion people living below \$1.25 a day (Ravallion, 2016). This means they are making less than 3 times than that necessary for the minimum adequate diet (Ravallion, 2016). Poverty is measured by a threshold set at \$24,069 annually for a family of four, also known as the poverty line (Ravallion, 2016). About 40 million Americans are living in poverty and 16 million live in deep poverty this means that their family income is less than half of the Federal Poverty Threshold (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). The standards for being considered poor have not been changed since the 1960s. The standard of living has not been adjusted since the 1960s to reflect the inflation of prices in food and housing. Poverty is usually associated with unemployment and the need for benefits given by the state and/or federal government. Poverty effects some racial groups more than others. For example, 35% of African American and 31% Latino are affected by poverty compared to 15% of

Asian and 11% of White children (Roy & Raver, 2014). Poverty is one of the main causes of inequality in the United States and one of these inequalities prevail in the education system.

Child Poverty

Children are considered to be dependent on their parents or guardians which is the primarily reason why so many children are born into poverty. If their parents or guardians live in poverty, children most likely adopt the same socioeconomic status as them. In 2009, the U.S. had the highest child poverty rate compared to other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries at 23.1% (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). In addition, 6.1 million children live in families have an income less than half that of the poverty line (Azzi- Lessing, 2017). The rate of children living in poverty are even higher for children of color compared to White children. There are 38% of Black children, 32% of Hispanic children, and 35% of American Indian living in poverty as opposed to the 13% of White children living in poverty. Poverty is a continuous cycle that can be passed down onto generations, it does not promise a life filled with success and social mobility. Children in poverty are robbed of opportunities that can help in the development of their functioning as an adult and their economic status (Azzi- Lessing, 2017). One of the disadvantages that children in poverty receive is within the education system. Education is seen as the key to success however, for children living in poverty the schools they attend do not administer a suitable nor sufficing education to advance the children they serve.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND POVERTY

Children living in poverty and attending public schools not only have to deal with the stressors from school but those dominating their personal lives as well. Most children living in poverty, attend public schools in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and that means the

schools are underfunded. Kozol (1991) writes about the inequalities public schools in America face. Public schools are awarded a certain amount of money that comes from the federal government, the state, grants, fundraisers and property taxes (McCrary & Ross, 2016). If a school is located in a community that is poor, the funding that the schools are provided with is low because the property taxes in the neighborhood are relatively low. Whereas in wealthier neighborhoods, the schools are better funded and they spend more on their students (McCrary & Ross, 2016).

Kozol (1991) talks about the public schools of New York City (NYC). In NYC, the average spent on each student was \$5,500. On the other hand, in schools with greater income in the community they received as high as \$15,000 to be spent on each student (Kozol, 1991). The inequality that existed based on income within schools in the 1980s still exist today. He gives an account on a school in the North Bronx, Public School (P.S.) 261 of District 10, it is economically disadvantaged like other schools within the district. The school is overcrowded in total numbers and within the classrooms. A single guidance counselor is assigned 930 students in a school with 1,300 students' total. Textbooks are not available to every student which means students have to share. In some cases, two separate classes share a singular classroom (Kozol, 1991). Most of these schools are concentrated with Black and Latino children. Similarly, another school P.S. 79 was so overcrowded that classes were held in the gyms (Kozol, 1991). Overcrowding can be a barrier in learning for some students, small classroom sizes can support students in individualized learning and better service students in a learning style that is beneficial to them (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). It also builds the relationships between the teachers and the students (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). These schools due to funding lack the necessary materials needed for children. Within these schools administrators and teachers were unable to supply their students with the essential tools needed for academic success.

As Uretsky and Stone (2016), Murnane (2007) and McKinney (2014) all imply, income indeed has an influence on the quality of education students receive. This is clearly validated with Kozol's (1991) research of the poor schools in District 10 of NYC. As a result, students in poverty are negatively affected academically and they tend to have low high school graduation rates. Only half of children of color living in poverty complete high school when compared to three- fourths of whites that graduate from high school (Murnane, 2007). Similarly, Roy and Raver (2014) found that living in poverty causes stress in the form of depression and/or psychological distress that can affect children negatively when it comes to their academic performance.

Families living in poverty can be affected by unemployment or the stress of paying bills. Stress could also include lack of emotional or economical needs being met, environmental dangers, toxic waste, drugs, or even racism (McCrary & Ross, 2016). Children of these families are directly affected from the stress of living in poverty. Childhood poverty has been linked to low educational performance, school dropout, teen parenthood, and other life outcomes that are considered undesirable (Azzi- Lessing, 2017). Children living in poverty are also more likely to experience abuse and are placed in foster care at higher rates, this affects a child's ability to focus and concentrate within the classroom (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). McCrary and Ross (2016) review a study looking at the impact of parental education and family development on child and adolescent development. The study found that children living in poverty have a brain surface area that is almost 6% smaller compared to those who are of a higher income level (McCrary & Ross, 2016). This definitely plays a role in the education of children in poverty.

Educating Children with Disabilities

Children living in poverty are disadvantaged however, there are other parts of a person's identity that can further disadvantage them. For example, children with disabilities living in

poverty are deprived of a quality education even more than children only living in poverty. People with disabilities are a marginalized group and often stigmatized. McKinney (2014) describes it as “poverty within poverty” (p.208). Children with disabilities need to be better integrated into the public school education system to ensure that their universal human rights are upheld. A study conducted by MaMahon, Keys, Berardi, Crouch, and Coker (2016) found that students with disabilities met standards of the National Assessment of Education Progress. However, they did not perform as well as the general student population. MaMahon et al. (2016) proceed to talk about how minority students with disabilities such as low- income Black and Latino children are not equally included in school education. According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), people with disabilities have a right to a free and equal education. For students with disabilities, inclusion in academic activities have been proven to improve test scores, motivation, and completion of Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. It is not enough for students with disabilities to be included academically, they need to be included socially as well (MaMahon et al., 2016). Connections with peers in programs such as extracurricular activities help in feelings of acceptance and building networks. Having a sense of belonging helps to develop bonds with people and build relationships which in return foster a sense of community and balance (Brendtro et al., 2002). Students with disabilities are sometimes disregarded and segregated from students that do not hold disabilities, when in fact inclusion of children with disabilities can benefit them academically and personally.

THE WHITE- BLACK ACHIEVEMENT GAP

There is significant inequality when it comes to education not only between those children who are a part of families that have low or high income and race also has a part in the inequality

as well. It is no secret that Whites perform better than Blacks when it comes to test scores (Darby & Rury, 2018). However, there are historical events that have taken place that have set standards for institutional racism that continues to today. The disproportion of the rates of poverty stems from slavery and segregation (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). Before segregation set in place by the Jim Crow Laws, was outlawed, Blacks and Whites attended separate schools. The education that Blacks received in these schools were not comparable to the education Whites obtained. The schools Black children went to lacked resources and were overcrowded. Even after, segregation was abolished, the damage was already done. Whites and Blacks were separated in the schools that they attended based on the neighborhood. Brown v. Board of Education made the integration of Blacks and Whites in the same schools legal. Since the law was passed no justice has happened for Black students when it comes to education.

Owens (2018) investigates the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites. She mentions that it is also due to income. Black families have lower incomes than White families. Azzi-Lessing (2017) mentions that 42% of Black families are poor compared to 14% of White families that are poor. Despite that, even when Black and Whites have the same income, there is segregation in the neighborhoods in which they live in. White children still attend schools in wealthier neighborhoods while Blacks who are middle class attend poor schools because most Black families live in the same area (Owens, 2018). This is a result of segregation which forces Blacks and Whites to live separately. Blacks typically live in impoverished communities while White communities had more resources and better schools.

Darby and Rury (2018) point out that the racial achievement gap between Whites and Blacks has not changed very much in over 40 years using the National Assessment of Educational Progress. This gap will even continue to grow over time (Potter & Morris, 2017). This shows that

the problem is deeper than academics, it is institutional. The disadvantage between Whites and Blacks is systematic. Darby & Rury (2018) propose that the environment that Black children are in plays a role in the achievement gap as well. Residential segregation places minorities in neighborhoods that are economically disadvantaged and have high rates of crime, pollution, poverty and unemployment (Potter & Morris, 2017). If more money was invested in Black communities the gap would lessen. In addition, an effective residential integration plan, has to occur in order for problems Black urban youth face to change. On the other hand, Darby and Rury (2018) also propose that these schools cannot be fixed. Problems within poverty, unqualified teachers, and even challenges within leaderships of high level poverty schools are too great to resolve by just changing one issue. The achievement gap between Whites and Blacks, is one reason why high poverty schools are low performing when it comes to academics.

PROBLEMS IN HIGH POVERTY SCHOOLS

Public schools have for a long time, and even more today, are primarily geared towards getting students ready for testing (McCrary & Ross, 2016). The test scores in math and reading rank below average for children in poverty compared to those not living in poverty (Murnane, 2007). The success of students in primary and secondary public schools are measured by standardized testing such as Common Core. It assesses students' competency in the subjects of English Language Arts and mathematics. The Common Core Standards was a result of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2008 initiated by George W. Bush. According to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), American students perform relatively low in reading skills compared to the international average (Haskins, Murnane, Sawhill, & Snow, 2012). The scores obtained from standardized testing can either affect the school in negative or positive way. If test scores are low, programs and

funding for schools could be in jeopardy. This is a counterproductive approach that only hurts children going to schools in economically disadvantaged areas. Schools in economically disadvantaged areas need more funding and programs to help address their academic needs and emotional needs as well.

Not only are schools focused on standardized testing but there is an inequality when it comes to the organization of students amongst school districts. Owens (2018) illustrates how segregation between income and school districts influences the children of low-income families' educationally and economically in the future. Whites and Blacks are segregated in schools due to racial inequality in the housing market. Owens (2018) writes that poor students are more affected by school segregation than non-poor students. The study investigates how the test scores vary between children depending on family income and race. This also varies upon on the level of segregation based on income within school districts. She argues that income segregation creates inequalities in social and economic resources, the advantaged versus the disadvantaged (Owens, 2018). She suggests that policy makers must look at what benefits those who are advantaged and brainstorm how they can replicate their practices for low-income students. Owens (2018) provides a well-detailed outline of how child poverty is intersectional. Inequality is the root of disadvantages amongst people which she mentions impacts students of color the most (Owens, 2018). As Uretsky and Stone (2016), Murnane (2007) and McKinney (2014) all imply, income indeed has an influence on the quality of education. In wealthier neighborhoods, the property taxes are higher with generates revenue for that neighborhood (Owens, 2018). The research is useful in producing an analysis of inequality in schools and housing relates to education inequality.

CURRENT POLICIES

There are a few policies aimed at addressing the issue of children in poverty and education. Murnane (2007), Ravallion (2016), and Uretsky and Stone (2016) all discuss and critique policies that were established to aid children in poverty going to schools. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1962 signed by Lyndon B. Johnson marked the official War on Poverty (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). Following that, Ronald Reagan portrayed poor families in a negative light using the “Welfare Queen” narrative (Azzi- Lessing, 2017). The narrative portrayed Black women in a negative way and perpetuated stereotypes. As a result, his economic policies reflected his feelings towards the poor. On the other hand, the earliest of the government policies is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 that was passed during America’s declare for War on Poverty. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1995) provided funding to schools with a large number of students in poverty (Murnane, 2007). The Act also included Head Start programs that are supposed to help poor families from being disadvantaged when it comes to starting school (Ravallion, 2016).

Homelessness is another level to poverty that some families and children experience. For children exposed to homelessness, their right to an adequate living is not being upheld. Homelessness affects the functioning of children in school deeply. In 2013, according to the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), 1.3 million students experienced homelessness in the United States (Uretsky & Stone, 2016). The research done by Uretsky and Stone (2016) explores the link between homelessness in children in high school and their academic performance. They also review the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 that sets an outline of policies and procedures for schools in dealing with students that are homeless in order to protect their educational rights. They conducted 4 years of research using the McKinney- Vento Act on 10th-

12th graders receiving services. They found that the McKinney- Vento Act does not support the needs of homeless students effectively. It focuses on access to school but not achievement within schools and quality of educations. Homelessness is clearly related to poverty and has a major impact on the academic performance of students who do not have a home to go to once they leave school. Absolute homelessness is a serious issue that affects a child's education more than those who only come from low- income households. William (2013), like Uretsky and Stone (2016), provides insight on homelessness amongst high school students as well as how attendance and test scores can be indicators for child homelessness. Ultimately, the study done by Uretsky and Stone (2016) illustrates that the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 does not adequately serve the needs of homeless students to improve their academic performance. Homeless students do poorly in school compared to students who come from low income households. K-12 children that are homeless have lower grade point averages (GPA) and are absent more (Uretsky & Stone, 2016). The policy fails to meet the needs and rights of children living in poverty struggling in school.

A more recent government implementation is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 which is an update of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. The act holds schools more accountable for the academic success of its students due to the American education system not being as competitive internationally (Klein, 2015). It also focuses on closing the achievement gaps between students. Failure of states to comply or meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act results in the loss of federal funding. The No Child Left Behind Act focuses more on testing in math and reading annually. Schools must report test scores even of those in sub groups such as non- English speaker, racial groups, special education, and those children that come from low- income families. The Act itself is underfunded with \$14.5 billion allocated towards the

implementation recorded in 2015 (Klein, 2015). Murnane (2007) outlines all of the flaws within the NCLB Act. One of the critiques he mentions is that it heavily relies on the performance of students through testing. The states are required to set standards that are deemed successful but that are not attainable for many students. Murnane (2007) makes a common point that Uretsky and Stone (2016), William (2013) and Owens (2018) all prove. Test scores among children in poverty are lower than those of children not living in poverty. Students living in poverty lack the resources and funding needed to have access to better educational outcomes. If test scores in poor communities are low then they are not getting the sufficient funding needed to academically advance their students.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, along with the NCLB Act all aim to help the academic achievement of students. One point that Murnane (2007), Ravallion (2016), and Uretsky and Stone (2016) all conclude that the policies are not doing all that they could to properly assist children in poverty when it comes to the achievement gap. The programs were not developed to meet the needs of those children in poverty. Those that go to schools in wealthier areas do not need the same resources and tools that children going to schools in disadvantaged communities do. Murnane (2007) and Uretsky and Stone (2016) examine the needs of those children living in poverty. All conclude that there is little being done to support the educational needs of impoverished children.

UNDERSTANDING THE INEQUALITY AND ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Marx's Class Theory

The inequality and education gap between those of a low socioeconomic status and children from a high socioeconomic status is very clear. Murnane (2007), Uretsky and Stone (2016), Owens

(2018), and McKinney (2014) include in their research information that proves that children in poverty perform at lower levels when it comes to education than those who are not living in poverty. Wealth plays a factor in inequality however the wealth is not distributed evenly throughout the United States. The top 1% possess over half of the American revenue. This causes segregation between schools and families with different incomes (Owens, 2018). The inequality can be explained using Karl Marx's class theory. He thought that the root of poverty was capitalism (Ravallion, 2016). He referred to the inequality as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or the haves and the have nots. Those in power remain in power and keep control of the means of production which are those of a lower class. Those living in poverty do not have access to resources which continues the cycle of poverty through generations. McCrary & Ross (2016) make a strong connection to Marx's theory in relation to education. Public schools in economically disadvantaged communities, students are taught to follow basic instructions. As a result, the jobs that most obtain after graduation are low paying jobs, such as gas stations or retail stores. Whereas, those from wealthy communities are taught to be decision-makers otherwise known as the "deciders" (McCrary & Ross, 2016). Students in poor communities are not being taught to be successful in life and not afforded the necessary skills needed to succeed which makes them disadvantaged and not exposed to a quality education.

The Critical Race Theory

In the *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller and Thomas (1995) outline the key points of the Critical Race Theory (CRT). The Critical Race Theory (CRT) is based on the racial and power construct and representation within American society. Crenshaw et al. (1995) indicate that the CRT argues that white supremacy has an impact on people of color and constructs aspects of society such as the law and protection. The

second idea of the CRT is there is a relationship between racial power and law that needs to be changed. The idea that there is racial power is illustrated by Darby and Rury (2018). Darby and Rury (2018) analyze the achievement gap between Whites and Blacks which dates back to slavery. Blacks were enslaved because they were seen as the inferior race. As a result, they suffered in all aspects of society including education. In addition, the CRT recognizes the disparities within economics and racial injustice (Crenshaw et al., 1995). The disparities in economics has an impact on the future outcomes of people of color. Owens (2018) illuminates the relation between income, race, and the quality of education children receive. Blacks attend schools with poverty at higher rates than White students (Owens, 2018). These schools with high levels of students living in poverty tend to shortfall in qualification of teachers, extracurricular activities, and individualized services for students. Racial prejudice and discrimination harms Blacks not only in economics but in education as well.

Application to Poverty and Education

Both Marx's theory and the Critical Race theory are based on inequality. Marx's theory is based on the inequality of those who are poor and those in power, influenced by a capitalist society. The Critical Race theory acknowledges the inequality within economics and race. This inequality disadvantages those who are poor. Blacks live in poverty at higher rates than Whites (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). The inequality is racially based. Blacks were abandoned by the government when it came to schooling. If schools needed resources for its children, the Black communities had to provide it (Darby & Rury, 2018). High schools in Black communities suffered the most, in return high school graduation rates decreased (Darby & Rury, 2018). There is this idea that the poor are the reason they live in poverty, they are the ones to blame. There is the undeserving and deserving poor (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). This is the belief that some live in poverty due to circumstances

and others are at fault because of their own actions (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Instead of providing those living in poverty with the necessary and basic needs to survive, the poor is blamed for their situations and seen as not worthy of help. However, those in poverty should not be blamed, lack of resources, economic and racial inequality, and government assistance is to blame.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM: INTERVENTIONS

Micro Level

For children living in poverty there are a number of initiatives that public schools can take to establish a curriculum that fosters the needs of each child individually. Not every child is the same and should not be treated the same way. Children living in poverty have different needs than those who come from a higher income family. McKinney (2014) provides a global perspective to examine what other countries are doing to address the issue of education amongst impoverished students. One of the countries focused on is the United Kingdom. The overall well-being of the child is focused on from an early age. Teaching is focused on as an emotional practice in order to educate students through different challenges. The study found that in the United Kingdom social competence, autonomy, sense of purpose, and problem solving- skills are characteristics of resilient students (McKinney, 2014). This study aligns with the Circle of Courage model which focuses on different components necessary for youth development such as independence, generosity, mastery, and belonging (Brendtro et al., 2002). Within the classrooms, these traits are integrated into the learning curriculum to help develop the well-being of children in poverty overall which in return will improve their performance in school. Similar to McKinney (2014), McCrary and Ross (2016) state that focusing on the health and well-being of children in poverty promotes progress in their academics. Both tackle the issue that schools should not only be focused about

learning academics but on other needs of the children need to be assessed. For children in poverty, they face stressors that affect their ability to focus in school. By altering the curriculum to tackle the well-being of the child, their self-esteem can improve leading to more opportunities of success.

Mezzo Level

Schools in economically disadvantaged areas mainly serve children that come from low-income families. Typically, schools in poor communities employ teachers that are not qualified to handle or educate children living in poverty. Teachers in urban communities are more than likely to be removed from the school. In fields such as math and science, most do not qualify to teach the subjects because they do not hold a certificate in assigned subjects. Teachers serve an extremely important role when it comes to the educating children. Morgan (2012), Murnane (2007), and McCrary and Ross (2016), all note that teachers play an essential part in the lives of children and agree that more qualified teachers need to be hired in economically disadvantaged schools. In poor schools, teachers tend to lack credentials and schools employ teachers without a teaching license (Morgan, 2012). In research executed by Morgan (2012), he found that in New York City inadequate teachers were hired in schools and in many incidences teachers even failed licensing exams. Like McKinney (2014), Morgan (2012) examines other countries and their approach to educating students. He reports that in Singapore, new teachers are provided with mentor teachers as a way to guide beginners into the field (Morgan, 2012). Similarly Azzi-Lessing (2017), suggest that teachers need to be provided with support that is ongoing and mentors to guide them through the challenges that comes with teaching. Teachers in Singapore are also recruited from the top-class ranking compared to the United States where most teachers in poor schools fall in the bottom half (Morgan, 2012).

McCrary and Ross (2016) discuss qualities that teachers need to possess in order to effectively teach children living in poverty. In the classrooms, teachers need to be well rounded and know how to approach and aid children living in poverty. In order to better assist students in poverty, teachers can help children get school supplies and clothing, know connections to community resources, help students find ways to complete homework if it cannot be completed at home, and lastly teachers need to connect with other teachers (McCray & Ross, 2016). For students living in poverty, problems in school are not the only problems they may experience. Barriers such as homelessness, lack of food or supplies, or even abuse can contribute to a child's ability to concentrate in school. Teachers often first hand witness the effects of poverty on children and must be equipped to deal with what complications they may be struggling with at home. Not only are teachers significant influencers in a child's education but parents/ guardians are as well.

Alameda- Lawson (2014) explore how parent involvement can help specifically low-income students of color through a model called Collective Parent Engagement (CPE). She examines previous parent involvement programs, one being Epstein. It is criticized for not being inclusive to low income families. Furthermore, low- income parents of children of color most times are not able to get involved in the education of their child/ children due to obstacles in health, socio economics, food, and the environmental factors that they face often times more so than white parents (Potter & Morris, 2017). The CPE model is based on Zimmerman's theory of empowerment of parents. It focuses on home based visits, referral for resources and support, intervention for students with behavioral challenges, and peer mentoring between students. The model emphasizes the utilization of community resources for families and empowerment of individuals. Ultimately, the study on the CPE shows implications for positive outcomes for children. The study does an effective job in using pervious parent involvement programs and

analyzing what worked for children and what did not. She uses these programs to introduce a new program, the Collective Parent Engagement. Even though Alameda -Lawson's study shows implications for improvement, it also illustrates that it is not enough for parents to be involved. The problem of academic performance of children in poverty has multiple dimensions. It is not only the job of school administrators and policy makers to improve academic performance within children living in poverty but also the role of parents and/or guardians. Parents can have an immense impact on their child's life just by being more involved in their child's education.

Lastly, the inclusion of children in poverty in extracurricular activities can be beneficial to their performance in school. Schwartz, Cappella, and Seidman (2015) explore extracurricular activities and the effects they have on low-income children in the NYC urban area. It was found that youth that take part in activities such as sports or programs within their communities, have higher GPAs than those who do not get involved (Schwartz et al., 2015). Extracurricular activities are good opportunity for children to get involved and learn social skills. For children living in poverty, they can be a gateway to opportunities for success and even an escape from the stressors experienced at home. Extracurricular activities also give opportunity for personal and social development in areas that have been proven to heighten motivation and academic performance (Schwartz et al., 2015). Even though Schwartz et al. (2015) identified a link between participation in extracurricular activities and academic performance, they found that not many low-income students in urban areas take part in these activities. This conclusion is also made by Potter and Morris (2017) but they also include Latino children. Children living in poverty need to be encouraged to engage in extracurricular activities that in the future will possibly contribute to positive life outcomes.

Macro Level

Schools in poor communities are under-funded. To recruit qualified teachers necessary to educate children in high- poverty schools cost money because qualified teachers need to be paid what they deserve. In general, the United States federal government spends less than 5% of the total budget towards education. The rest of the money schools acquire comes from the state or private grants. If the federal government spent more money towards education then there would not be much pressure on the states to fund public schools. More funding is needed for schools with high levels of children living in poverty to pay teachers appropriate wages, institute tutoring programs, and implement extracurricular programs.

The issue of high poverty- schools is greater or more complex than implementing policies to help the children. The overarching issue of poverty needs to be addressed. If poverty did not exist and wealth in the country would be distributed evenly, inequality in the quality of education students receive and achievement gap would be reduced drastically. Economically disadvantaged families need to be connected with a variety of resources such as affordable housing, health care, mental health services and nutrition programs (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). These are all different aspects of children's lives that effects their education. There overall well- being is highly important, McKinney (2014) argues that the well- being of children is crucial and should be a priority in order to promote chances for social mobility and achievement. Alameda- Lawson (2014) and William (2013) come to the conclusion that efforts towards improving schools with high levels of children living in poverty is not enough, poverty itself needs to be addressed.

Shaefer, Collyer, Duncan, Edin, Garfinkel, Harris, Smeeding, Waldfogel, Wimer and Yoshikawa (2018) address the overall social issue of child poverty in the United States. The United States falls behind many countries and has a high national average of child poverty in the world.

Shaefer et al. (2018) discuss the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC), which are policies that provide monetary assistance to children within working low-income families. Furthermore, Azzi-Lessing (2017) acknowledges that the EITC has been beneficial to low-wage families. It helps families maintain an income if they are working. Studies show that families that receive the extra cash assistance from the EITC, their children have greater performance in schools and improved income in the adult life (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). Despite this, it does not benefit children whose parents are unemployed. Shaefer et al. (2018) suggest a universal child allowance to reduce poverty. The plan would be a monthly allowance to each child in families to aid low-income families in the economic burdens that they may have (Shaefer et al., 2018). In order to reduce the achievement gap between children in poverty and those not who are not living in poverty, policies to reduce poverty needs to be reevaluated.

Azzi-Lessing (2017) proposes a few possible solutions to tackling poverty, one of them being an increase in the United States minimum wage. For families living in poverty, those that work are not making enough to provide basic needs for their family. The cost of housing and food is constantly increasing and the minimum wage in the U.S. needs to adjust more to aid in lifting families out of poverty. Families working low wage jobs often have little room for flexibility. Low-wage employers do not offer benefits such as health care or vacation/sick time (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). For parents with children, the flexibility is needed. For example, if a child gets sick the parents cannot afford to take too much time off because their job will be in jeopardy. Increasing the minimum wage to reflect the changes in the economy will allow families living in poverty a chance to potentially advance social classes.

HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

McKinney (2014) gives a general overview of the relationship between poverty and education. He examines child poverty and the policies currently implemented in schools to address the quality of their education. A global perspective of poverty is looked at as well. McKinney (2014) uses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to illustrate that poverty is a moral issue and everyone is entitled to a quality education. Both McKinney (2014) and Murnane (2007) connect poverty to the lack of quality education as a human rights issue. The lack of these needs is related to poverty which both mention has negative effects of the educational outcome of a child. It is a violation of our human rights when there is not access to an adequate living. Article 25 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to an adequate living which includes basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and social services (United Nations, 1948). Those living in poverty are not being granted their human rights and therefore, suffer the consequences. The UDHR shows the need for government officials to work towards developing these rights.

The rights of children in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child align with the rights stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 27 in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, mentions that children have the right to an adequate living as in article 25 of the UDHR (United Nations, 1989). The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child also mentions that children have the right to an education in Article 28. Schools must respect the dignity of children and educate in a manner that allows the child to reach their full potential according to Article 29 (United Nations, 1989). Correspondingly in Article 26 of the UDHR, states that everyone has a right to an education that is equally accessible amongst all groups of people (United Nations, 1948). Currently, that is not what is happening in the United

States in regard to education. Those living in economically disadvantaged communities are mostly students of color (Owens, 2018). The students that attend schools in these neighborhoods do not perform as well as those living in high income neighborhoods. The schools in these areas are well funded. Wealthy schools send twice as much money on students than those in poorer schools.

Even though the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is ratified and incorporated into the law by some countries, the United States has not yet ratified the convention. If the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by the United States, it would automatically become integrated into the law. The convention outlines the rights of children in the areas of housing, education, mental health, disabilities, independence, and it even addresses discrimination. In order to ratify the treaty in the United States, two-thirds majority of the vote in the Senate is required (Attiah, 2014). Aside from the United States, two other states has not ratified the treaty but one is in the process of ratifying the treaty. The child welfare system in the U.S. is not one that puts the needs of children first. There are approximately 400,000 children in foster care (Azzi- Lessing, 2017). These children experience trauma and maltreatment. With that said, why has the U.S. not ratified the CRC yet? According to Attiah (2014), the U.S. believes that it holds the rights of child by following the constitution. In addition, the U.S. does not want to be associated with countries that are known are their mistreatment of children (Attiah, 2014). Despite this, the U.S. still fails to meet the basic needs of children. The U.S. has the highest child poverty rate compared to other countries, this should be an indicator that change needs to happen. With the ratification of the CRC, it is the first step to recognizing the mistreatment and abuse of children within the United States.

Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1848) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989) underline the need for an equal access to education and adequate

living. Children living in poverty are being robbed of their human rights. This is partly due to limited efforts towards properly educating these children by the federal, state, and local governments as well as schools. Even though there are some policies and interventions implemented aimed at improving academic achievement of students living in poverty, it is not enough to ensure that the life outcomes of children in poverty are successful. More than half of all public schools in the United States are currently living in poverty (McCrary & Ross, 2016). In addition, in twenty-one states, majority of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch (McCrary & Ross, 2016). Schools need to be better equipped with funding and resources to ensure that the right to an education that fosters the development of the children and caters to their personality and talents (McKinney, 2014). Even though schools need to be more prepared to teach children living in poverty, the overarching issue is poverty which needs to be addressed.

HUMAN SERVICE IMPLICATIONS

Micro Level

The role of human service professionals is to help and guide service participants through changes in their life and provide assistance to resources as well. When it comes to children living in poverty on the micro level human services workers can focus on the well-being of the child. As McKinney (2014) and McCrary (2016) mention, acknowledging and working towards developing the overall well-being of a child stimulates their academic progress. Social workers in schools are considered to be human service professionals. School social workers can work with teachers to provide them with more information on how to incorporate and cater to the well-being of the children within the classrooms. Human service workers can even enlighten teachers on the Circle of Courage model. The model could be beneficial for teachers dealing with youth at risk living in

poverty. The term youth at risk refers to children who are in harmful situations, they are normally referred to as troubled or difficult to work with (Brendtro et al., 2002). Implementing the Circle of Courage into the training of teachers could help boost children's self-esteem therefore, possibly improving their academic performance. Enhancing the self-esteem of youth instills confidence within themselves despite whatever problems they may be experiencing outside of school.

The Circle of Courage is a philosophy that explores the areas necessary for the development of children mentally, emotionally and physically for them to be well balanced and successful in life. The Circle of Courage also aims to promote self-esteem as an essential component in socializing children (Brendtro et al., 2002). Those groups are independence, generosity, belonging, and mastery. Independence is related to the autonomy and control that a child has over their life (Brendtro et al., 2002). Generosity is the opportunity to give back (Brendtro et al., 2002). Belonging refers to positive relationships in a child's life inside and outside of the home (Brendtro et al., 2002). Lastly, mastery refers to the competence and achievement of a child (Brendtro et al., 2002). Similarly, Schwartz et al. (2015) discuss the importance of development of autonomy, industry, competence, and identity is necessary in early adolescence to meet the needs of children. It is important that education policy incorporate this model as a sense of accomplishment in these areas can be beneficial to children especially those living in poverty.

Mezzo Level

In public schools with high levels of poverty teachers tend to be under qualified and sometimes even not licensed. Human service professionals can intervene when it comes to advocacy for teachers. If teachers were trained and prepared more to pass licensing exams then schools would be able to hire more qualified teachers to aid children. Murnane (2007) mentions that teachers who are qualified to teach in high poverty schools, teach for a while to gain experience

then leave to teach at a different school that pays more. If teachers were paid more teaching in high poverty schools, finding qualified teachers to employ would not be much of a problem. Schools with high amounts of poverty have a difficult time attracting teachers that are qualified to teach (Darby & Rury, 2018). If human service professional, in addition to policy makers and teachers, would advocate for the rights of teachers and promote higher wages for qualified teachers then children living in poverty would be better equipped to perform academically well within school.

Human service professionals need to be able to aid children living in poverty when it comes to finding community resources. Children living in poverty have other stressors aside from school that affects their performance. McCrary and Ross (2016) state that the stress negatively impacts their educational attainment. Human service professionals need to have knowledge of resources such as clothing students can get for free, extracurricular activities, centers that specialize in abuse or trauma, and even support groups. Children living in poverty can be facing a number of life encounters that human service professionals need to be aware of in order to service them.

CONCLUSION

Education is a pathway to achieving what is known to many as the “American Dream.” However, the “American Dream” is not easily accessible to everyone. People living in poverty are at a greater disadvantage when it comes to academic success. The better the socioeconomic status the better the education outcomes are for children (Ravallion, 2016). Unfortunately, the United States has the highest child poverty rate compared to other countries. The United States is referred to as one of the superpowers of the world. Yet with all the resources and money the country has, it fails to produce an education to children living in poverty that provides them with the necessary tools to prosper in life. Children are the future and should be catered to the most. If children are

not provided with basic needs how are they supposed to succeed, what does that mean for the future of the United States?

Poverty is not just an issue in the United States but one that affects many children globally. It is easy for the rights of children to be abused because they are considered to be a vulnerable population. A quality education is something that everyone should have access to but unfortunately that is not the case. Education is a right that opens doors for those that pursue and complete it. Those in poverty need to be assisted in order for those children to have access to such opportunities. Helping children in poverty in education will boost their life chances in addition to their well-being contributing to potential social opportunity. This in the long run will pass on to future generations hopefully lessening the inequality achievement gap amongst children living in poverty.

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