

Chapter 1 : The Culture of Poverty Reconsidered - Books & ideas

Schwartz's Culture Model The Israeli sociologist Shalom Schwartz developed in the '90es a model for cultural values and a map of where different parts of the world belong in this context. He asked people in almost every country about how important all the values his international team could think of were to them. 1.

Small examines the relations between culture and poverty. Their pluralist and supple view of culture allows them to untie the knot between culture and race that feeds conservative rhetoric. The anthropologist Oscar Lewis defined the concept of the culture of poverty as the set of norms and attitudes that have the effect of enclosing individuals in what was originally formed as a reaction to unfavorable external circumstances, but which, when transmitted from generation to generation, perpetuates the state of poverty regardless of how those circumstances change. This anthropological thesis was soon appropriated by conservatives in the United States, who imputed poverty in the major cities to the disorganization of the black family, suspected of producing a veritable culture of dependence on welfare. This appropriation had the counter-effect of banishing for decades any reference to culture in research on poverty. In effect, anyone who attributed poverty to cultural causes was accused of blaming the victim and of automatically dismissing any social policy. Today the journal *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* devotes a special issue to the relations between culture and poverty, which testifies to the revival of the theme of the culture of poverty among liberal researchers who nevertheless want to distance themselves from the conservative hijacking of this theme. Moreover, it tests the idea of a homogeneous culture of poverty against the many empirical studies and strongly deconstructs such a simplification. This reinvestment is accompanied by a call for qualitative sociology in the field of poverty studies, which has been until now dominated by economics and the quantitative social sciences. This anthropologist, whose monographs on poor families enjoyed worldwide success, defined the culture of poverty as a set of values, attitudes, and behaviors that are essentially different from those of the middle class, and which are adopted in reaction to circumstances that do not allow the poor to be integrated into society. Later on, children appropriate these ways of living and these attitudes, and so adaptation to external circumstances is transformed into a perennial lifestyle that prevents descendants from benefiting from a possible transformation of external circumstances. This thesis was the subject of passionate debates, because in proposing a definition of culture, it situated itself at the heart of theoretical issues that were bitterly disputed. However, it aroused much passion chiefly because of its political considerations. A Case for Public Action. He maintained that the social disorganization noted in the inner cities was due to the dissolution of institutions, foremost the family, in which now women increasingly held the prime role. The idea of a black ghetto sub-culture had already been appropriated by the conservative critique of the welfare state that had become dominant. Thus this culturalist interpretation of poverty was disseminated together with the conservative rhetoric of the Reagan era that was reaffirming American moral values. The culture of poverty became the culture of welfare inasmuch as the latter was being criticized. For the critics of welfare, benefit checks were being considered as their due by people who had lost any sense of social responsibility; welfare was encouraging them not to work and to have children outside of marriage. The idea of an urban underclass was adopted to describe and explain the stream of violent crimes and drug trafficking that had risen to unprecedented levels in the downtown ghettos in the 60s and 70s, before ebbing and shifting to the suburbs in the 80s. The publication of William J. It led a new generation to seize upon this issue, but now rethinking culture in a movement that converged with changes going on in the other social sciences, especially anthropology. Even though this current as the editors of the *Annals* state in their introduction is not structured and has not adopted a coherent research program, the results produced by various researchers are sufficiently significant to mark a reorientation in the problematics and themes in the field of poverty studies. However, their efforts bear on the scientific dimension alone, neutralizing the political dimension. On the first point, while research has identified various resistance strategies, the authors of the introduction stress that the issues remain open: On the second point how the poor escape poverty, the editors call for investigating variations and the heterogeneity of behaviors and decision-making processes among the poor. The Manichean

opposition between the deserving and undeserving poor is re-examined by questioning the pertinence of socially promoted values in the context of poverty p. For a plural approach to culture To better define the notion of culture, the authors propose using a set of concepts, and their introduction distinguishes seven concepts that would enable a better understanding of poverty by refining previous analytical categories. To apprehend anew the relations between poverty and culture, the importance of the values that conservative rhetoric use in order to ethnicize the poor, by showing that they lack any empirical validity, should first and foremost be put into perspective. The poor do not have fundamentally different values from the rest of society, but they do not always possess the repertoires of action and strategies that would enable them to put these values into practice. This perspective strongly pluralizes culture and highlights contradictions among various repertoires of actions with which everyone must deal. Important in a different way is the idea of a framework: The frameworks of interpretation of a neighborhood influence the participation of its residents. This insistence on frameworks shows the internal heterogeneity of poor neighborhoods in terms of behavior and results, and it invalidates the idea of a ghetto culture that is supposedly shared in a homogenous way by the inhabitants of disadvantaged neighborhoods. Apprehending poverty through the concept of framework makes it possible to break with a rigid view of the causal relation between culture and behavior; the notion of framework suggests that culture may make an action possible or probable, but never necessary. It extends into the idea of the narratives that in a certain way individualize the determination of behavior by cultural factors. If individuals act in function of socially constructed frameworks, they also do on the basis of the narrative they have elaborated on their own experience. The authors review the results of previous studies that showed that in the United States workers distinguish themselves strongly from the poor, due to the individualism that prevails there; this is less the case in France, partly due to the Catholic and socialist traditions that provide grounding for the republican idea of solidarity. The problem that results from national comparison is that the cultural categories of merit correspond to political differences in the struggle against poverty in the two countries. Here the concept of symbolic boundary plays the role of interface by proposing a cultural definition of the formation of social structures. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality. However, whereas social boundaries are institutionalized, symbolic boundaries characterize the classification struggles by which the majority of groups try to maintain the privileges attached to their status. Finally, the concepts of cultural capital and institutions complete this theoretical apparatus by attaching the achievements of the first distinctions to the effects of social stratification. The transmission of tastes " and distastes " enables a reproduction of the advantages of middle class families. Pursuing such an analysis foregrounds a cultural mismatch between the tastes necessary for inclusion in the peer group and for integration in the school milieu. This dimension enriches the analysis of skill and spatial mismatches used by Wilson in his study of the unemployment of poor ghetto residents. Culture, poverty, and politics The first part of *Reconsidering Culture and Poverty* is the most important in terms of length, but also thanks to its new approach to culture on the basis of lived experience. It deals with various themes: The analyses respond to previous field studies of poor young men. Here I will concentrate on the two articles devoted to work, which demonstrate the plurality of possible approaches to an almost identical subject. These two contributions illustrate a re-reading of research traditions combined with the presentation of an empirical case study. Her study bears on the service personnel at the University of California at Berkeley where she teaches. On the basis of in-depth semi-directed interviews, she tries to understand the ways in which African-Americans and Hispanics put members of their group into relation with a potential employer " in other words, situations when strong ties play the role of weak ties. She shows that Latinos tend to help more, and more explicitly, the members of their group to get jobs. This relates to the fact that they belong less often than do African-Americans to networks with a significant number of unemployed persons. While this parameter could have " or even should have "worked in the opposite direction, the reason it does not is that black employees consider poverty in moral terms, meaning they have appropriated the dominant beliefs. Therefore they interpret such requests as attempts to save appearances by adopting in a purely external way an expression of being motivated to work. Assisting someone else is performed in a passive and selective manner. There is a major difference between the black ghettos and the barrio: This perspective, underpinned

by groundwork that is well conducted and recounted, deepens rather than challenges the results achieved in twenty-five years of research on black unemployment from the perspectives of the sociology of networks and of social capital. Moreover it exposes the mechanisms of statistical discrimination within the very ethnic group that it affects the most. These mechanisms perpetuate the stigmatization and exclusion from which blacks suffer. Young is interested in the concept of framing. He details the way in which low-paid workers interpret and present the images of their social reality and then review the literature on the culture of poverty. Young believes that the way in which disadvantaged African-Americans make sense of opportunities has been neglected in favor of a binary moral logic: His framing perspective help distance the study of the cultural dimensions of poverty from its normative and moralizing dimension. Unsurprisingly, those who have been to school give more importance to gratifications linked to autonomy and expressivity. The elasticity and changing nature of the very notion of framework spring from this analysis, going beyond the pluralism of representations within a group considered a priori as homogenous. The second part, composed of two articles, focuses on the relations that are shaped between culture and poverty in the conception and implementation of public policies. Its resolutely communicational approach to culture belongs to the normative perspective of Amartya Sen and the sociology of recognition. Summarizing research on the relation between social ideas and policies, the author finds that they share this common trait: While this point is important, the author says it does not address two key issues: For example, mentioning the reform of AFDC Aid to Families with Dependent Children and its transformation into TANF Temporary Assistance for Needy Families , Guetzkow recalls that its promoters not only described the poor as undeserving but also represented them as victims of a security net whose generosity had supposedly pushed them into dependency. From this perspective, it was an act of compassion toward these poor people to impose strict temporal limits on aid benefits. In the s, in was the crumbling of the community that was held responsible for poverty, but the psychological problems encountered by blacks were seen as connected to their limited opportunities to become integrated into the mainstream. The poor were seen as unarmed and desperate victims of economic transformations and of discrimination; society was responsible for their fate; those who wanted to escape could not do so. Those who did not want to escape were victims of a context that prevented them from developing values convergent with those of the rest of society. By contrast, in the neo-liberal period it was individuals themselves who were held responsible for their poverty, and the values that would allow them to make good choices were simply lacking. The dissolution of the family was considered to be the result of government action, because generous benefits produced dependency on social assistance “ meaning that it produced maintenance of poverty in addition to other evils deficits, slowed growth, etc. In the s and s, then, welfare itself and no longer poverty became the problem, the sickness to be cured. Increasing illegitimate births among black teenaged girls were the index of a culture of dependency whose intergenerational reproduction was feared although nothing attested to this. The final part, composed of an article by William Julius Wilson and reflections by political actors who look back on their contributions, returns to the articulation between structure and culture in the understanding of “ and the fight against “ poverty. For him, structural factors prevail. And it is all the more essential to reaffirm this because the United States is distinctive in its belief in the individual responsibility of the poor. This explains the American preference for explaining poverty by cultural factors, which social science arguments should be careful not to feed. If cultural factors were indeed the most important, the inhabitants of neighborhoods where poverty is concentrated would not have been able to benefit from the economic boom of the s. But they did and urban poverty considerably diminished. Properly understood, the specific effects linked to the fact of living in a neighborhood where poverty is concentrated which should not be confused with the effects of individual variables “ are not merely structural. This kind of environment also lessens cognitive and verbal competences. Discrimination and its reproduction over time exposes individuals to psychological states that analysts may wrongly consider as norms inasmuch as they seem to govern behavior “ resignation, for example. The psychological effects of racial discrimination and economic status are condensed in behavioral models that in turn reinforce the difficulty of integrating into mainstream society. In this collection the diversity of themes and approaches, going from micro dimensions and the impact of cultural factors to a plurality of methods, is remarkable. Its breadth enables a dialogue between qualitative cultural sociology and

the results from quantitative research. It affirms the autonomy of qualitative sociology and assures its insertion into a field of research on poverty that on the far side of the Atlantic has been largely dominated by studies using quantitative methods. Finally, the editors have given space to contributions that nuance the analytic framework they are offering: Stephen Vaisey returns to the differences in educational aspirations in various groups, and Wilson works on cultural factors from the perspective of an articulation between culture understood as norms and values and structural factors. These contributions allow the reader to evaluate the limits of the proposed paradigm, and they open up new fields of research. Possible comparative applications This anthology is principally aimed as an intervention in the American debate on poverty but it also offers renewed analyses of culture within European sociology. This reintroduction of concepts from the sociology of modernity in order to detach the object under study the relation between culture and poverty from any national sociology offers various advantages for comparisons.

Chapter 2 : Schwartz's Culture Model | US DK Expats

Keywords: Poverty, cultural causes, structural causes, corruption, unemployment introduction Poverty is the oldest and the most resistant virus that brings about a devastating disease in the third world or.

Social Movements Causes and Effects of Poverty Any discussion of social class and mobility would be incomplete without a discussion of poverty, which is defined as the lack of the minimum food and shelter necessary for maintaining life. More specifically, this condition is known as absolute poverty. Today it is estimated that more than 35 million Americans—approximately 14 percent of the population—live in poverty. Of course, like all other social science statistics, these are not without controversy. This is why many sociologists prefer a relative, rather than an absolute, definition of poverty. By this standard, around 20 percent of Americans live in poverty, and this has been the case for at least the past 40 years. Of these 20 percent, 60 percent are from the working class poor. **Causes of poverty** Poverty is an exceptionally complicated social phenomenon, and trying to discover its causes is equally complicated. The stereotypic and simplistic explanation persists—that the poor cause their own poverty—based on the notion that anything is possible in America. Still other theorists have characterized the poor as fatalists, resigning themselves to a culture of poverty in which nothing can be done to change their economic outcomes. In this culture of poverty—which passes from generation to generation—the poor feel negative, inferior, passive, hopeless, and powerless. Not only are most poor people able and willing to work hard, they do so when given the chance. More recently, sociologists have focused on other theories of poverty. One theory of poverty has to do with the flight of the middle class, including employers, from the cities and into the suburbs. As a result of this view, the welfare system has come under increasing attack in recent years. Again, no simple explanations for or solutions to the problem of poverty exist. Although varying theories abound, sociologists will continue to pay attention to this issue in the years to come. **The effects of poverty** The effects of poverty are serious. Children who grow up in poverty suffer more persistent, frequent, and severe health problems than do children who grow up under better financial circumstances. Many infants born into poverty have a low birth weight, which is associated with many preventable mental and physical disabilities. Not only are these poor infants more likely to be irritable or sickly, they are also more likely to die before their first birthday. Children raised in poverty tend to miss school more often because of illness. These children also have a much higher rate of accidents than do other children, and they are twice as likely to have impaired vision and hearing, iron deficiency anemia, and higher than normal levels of lead in the blood, which can impair brain function. Levels of stress in the family have also been shown to correlate with economic circumstances. Studies during economic recessions indicate that job loss and subsequent poverty are associated with violence in families, including child and elder abuse. Parents who experience hard economic times may become excessively punitive and erratic, issuing demands backed by insults, threats, and corporal punishment. Homelessness, or extreme poverty, carries with it a particularly strong set of risks for families, especially children. Compared to children living in poverty but having homes, homeless children are less likely to receive proper nutrition and immunization. Hence, they experience more health problems. Homeless families experience even greater life stress than other families, including increased disruption in work, school, family relationships, and friendships. Many of the industries textiles, auto, steel that previously offered employment to the black working class have shut down, while newer industries have relocated to the suburbs. Children of poverty are at an extreme disadvantage in the job market; in turn, the lack of good jobs ensures continued poverty. The cycle ends up repeating itself until the pattern is somehow broken. **Feminist perspective on poverty** Finally, recent decades have witnessed the feminization of poverty, or the significant increase in the numbers of single women in poverty alone, primarily as single mothers. In the last three decades the proportion of poor families headed by women has grown to more than 50 percent. This feminization of poverty may be related to numerous changes in contemporary America. Increases in unwanted births, separations, and divorces have forced growing numbers of women to head poor households. Further, because wives generally live longer than their husbands, growing numbers of elderly women must live in poverty.

The culture of poverty significantly influenced social policy in the s until empirical verification of the theory failed to hold (Rankin & Quane,). Wilson's (&) studies.

Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations grew out of the civil rights movement of the s and continued from to This pronouncement was taken as a program by Governor W. Averill Harriman in New York state from to The clinic was named for Paul Lafargue , a medical doctor and the son-in-law of Karl Marx Its director was psychiatrist Frederic Wertham Thurgood Marshall and Kenneth B. Clark were members of this church. Supreme Court case, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, which outlawed segregation in public schools. Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin were retained as consultants. To motivate delinquents to adopt not only the goals but the approved means, opportunity must be provided. In support of this idea, Leonard S. This committee recommended that one million dollars be granted to the program. The Department of Labor under the Manpower Development and Training Act granted another half million dollars for job training aspects of the program. The initial directors were Cloward and George A. He had earned a BA in history and political science from Inter-American University of Puerto Rico , after which he became a school teacher. Immigrating to New York, Velez became a social worker. On the basis of his antipoverty network, which provided needed social services and jobs to residents of Puerto Rican neighborhoods, he gained popularity and turned this social and economic success toward politics. In the s he was elected to the New York City Council, a step downward in his estimation, and served only briefly. This evidently was a slap at Democratic primary opponent, Herman Badillo, whom Velez supported. The rise of Puerto Rican political power in the South Bronx was attained at the expense of Jewish politicians who previously had controlled the area. Changing demographics accounted for the transition. The result would be a deliberate increase in the federal deficit. This was an attempt to establish Keynesian economic theory as a viable basis for government economic policy. The president accepted this advice. The particular cabinet departments and programs involved in the spending increases and tax cuts were determined in other ways. Kennedy , the new attorney general. Robert Kennedy selected his friend David Hackett as executive director. In the committee gave planning grants to agencies in sixteen cities. Cloward then lent his principal assistant, sociologist James A. Jones , to Kenneth Clark to design a similar program for Harlem. Heller , to pull together all available information on the poverty issue. Heller assigned this task to council member Robert J. Harrington, thus, had been a wellknown worker for left and liberal organizations and journals throughout the s. In July , he wrote an article on poverty for Commentary Magazine, and it was from this article that the book *The Other America* grew. It was precisely this idea that recommended him to the Kennedy administration, because it undercut left leadership of the anti-poverty struggle. That he had worked for Catholic organizations did not hurt his acceptance by the president, even though he had lapsed from the faith by then. After Lampman reported that the U. Other departments proposed programs over which they had jurisdiction. Budget Bureau staff member William B. Cannon wrote a memorandum suggesting that the community action program begin with ten demonstration areas across the country, and that a development corporation be established in each. Someone added community to action program, and the community action title of the proposed legislation was born. The next day, on the basis of the task force report, Johnson delivered a message to Congress calling upon it to enact legislation creating such an agency. He stated that the program would not consist of top-down planning from Washington, but would involve the talents of people from all over the country, at every level of society. He also called for the establishment of an office of equal opportunity. In testimony before Congress in , Shriver listed people who had participated in writing the legislation. The OEO was initially lodged in the Office of the President, but subsequently became an independent agency. Shriver was named director of the OEO and served until Here were placed those economists who had actual experience in administering economic planning. The first director of this office was Joseph A. Kershaw , who served from to He was succeeded by Robert A. Levine , Robinson G. Hollister , and Walter Williams Levine attempted to establish a five-year plan to end poverty that

proposed a national negative income tax program to replace Aid to Families with Dependent Children AFDC. The war on poverty required for its success a definition of poverty and a means of measuring it. Two months later, the OEO officially adopted the Orshansky poverty thresholds as a working definition of poverty. The OEO divided the country into seven to ten regions, each with a regional director. Fieldworkers in the Washington headquarters traveled to regions to help establish and monitor the operation of community action agencies located in the major cities of each region. In addition, the OEO funded national organizations to facilitate theoretical and empirical research on the issue of poverty. Its first director was Harold W. By the institute was no longer the national poverty center, but only one among several area poverty centers. The National Rural Center was established in , with F. Ray Marshall as president and director. The other half went to local initiative programs developed by the community action agencies themselves. New York City, where the theory and operational model for the war on poverty had been developed, now received feedback from the federal government. Logan " was the first chairman of the community action program under Wagner. Wagner was defeated in by former congressman John V. The task force recommended the establishment of a superagency comprised of all agencies having any responsibility for providing services to the poor. Sviridoff served as head of the Human Resources Administration from to He was replaced by Major Owens in , and Owens served until The NIMH funded the proposal, its first grant to a community action agency to conduct economic advocacy planning, and the Brownsville Advocacy Planning Agency was born. His staff at Columbia in consisted of two economists and four psychologists and social psychologists. The grant to the Brownsville Community Council was a departure, as advocacy planning was developed largely by architects and city planners. In the s the NIMH had established a unit to finance outside research. It was the conjuncture of these institutions and forces that enabled the grant to the Brownsville Community Council in Robert Kennedy resigned as attorney general and was elected senator from New York in This title caused a shift in the OEO toward community-controlled business development through community development corporations. The community development corporations were designed as community holding companies or community trusts. In the meantime, Kenneth Clark in founded the Metropolitan Applied Research Center and served as president until Reeves " as director. These organizations were intended to provide economic expertise and advocacy for their respective communities in dealing with the City Planning Commission and other relevant city, state, and federal agencies in developing and locating commercial, industrial, and service enterprises. The Ford Foundation, a major partner of the federal and city governments in the war on poverty, provided grants for advocacy planning to the Black Economic Research Center from through The center developed the theory that the major economic problem of black Americans was not labor market inequality but capital market inequality, which included access to the major stock and commodity exchanges, as well as to the Treasury Department, which represented capital interests, on a communal basis. Current capital reallocation was necessary, and the first stage of such a transfer was social capital, including infrastructure, and educational facilities with financing for operations. Current income redistribution was also deemed necessary, along with future nondiscrimination in markets to maintain the gains achieved. These developments were a direct confrontation of the theory upon which the war on poverty was based"that a change of unmeasurable internal states of being could result in a measurable diminution of poverty in a finite and short period. It also confronted the theories of economists Gary S. Becker, Theodore Schultz " , and Milton Friedman " , which defined lifetime earnings as capital stock, human capital, and focused on future income distribution and not current income redistribution. This polemic was one of the sources for the development of the reparations argument in the black community. Reparations as a large lump sum would enable the purchase of capital assets by the residents of black communities, and avoid the necessity for politically impossible capital expropriation. This concept, which had been a tenet of black nationalist doctrine since the s, began to gain academic and social respectability at the Black Economic Development Conference in Detroit in Nixon " as president in heralded the demise of the OEO and the war on poverty. In April , Donald H. Rumsfeld was appointed OEO director with the charge to dismantle the agency. He selected Richard B. Cheney as his assistant. However, court decisions forced the administration to expend the funds appropriated, because the Equal Opportunity Act had a ten-year life by law.

Chapter 4 : Causes and Effects of Poverty

Kaaryn Gustafson: Early writings on the culture of poverty, for example those by Oscar Lewis and Michael Harrington, suggested that the culture of poverty was an effect, namely an effect of economic and social exclusion. Those writings suggested that people who faced few economic opportunities in society grew hopeless.

Roundtable October 14, Despite its great wealth, the United States has long struggled with poverty. The phrase was originally coined by Oscar Lewis, who believed that children growing up in poor families would learn to adapt to the values and norms that perpetuated poverty. The children would replicate these in their own lives, creating a cycle of intergenerational poverty. His claims were harshly criticized by many black and civil rights leaders, among others, for explaining black poverty as a product of black culture rather than deeper structural inequalities. The debate about its relevance has re-emerged with controversial comments by politician Paul Ryan, as well as numerous editorials in the Atlantic, The New York Times, and elsewhere. How has the culture of poverty debate evolved over the years? There has been some evolution, but it has probably been less in the political sphere than among social scientists. Both positions are quite old, dating at least to the 1960s. Those who study poverty rarely think about cultural questions in this way, instead tending to focus on basic structural factors, such as the quality of schools or the availability of jobs, as explanations for poverty. Few social scientists have attempted to understand poverty through these alternative conceptions. Many of those who do focus on questions such as the impact of poverty on culture or cultural practices, rather than the impact of culture on poverty. Early writings on the culture of poverty, for example those by Oscar Lewis and Michael Harrington, suggested that the culture of poverty was an effect, namely an effect of economic and social exclusion. Those writings suggested that people who faced few economic opportunities in society grew hopeless. In many ways, the early discussions of the culture of poverty were a call for action, a demand that the United States, a country that prides itself in economic opportunity, take notice of the many who could not realize those opportunities. In the 1960s, the culture of poverty became associated with African Americans living in concentrated pockets of poverty in urban areas. Since then, the idea that social and economic well-being ought to be measured by how few people are using government programs and not by the well-being of American families themselves has come to guide government programs. For example, the success of the federal welfare reforms passed under President Bill Clinton has been measured by the dramatic decline in the number of families receiving cash benefits. What is forgotten is that the number of American families living in poverty has risen since the welfare reforms. Why have culture of poverty arguments been so persistent? The term is easy to reinvent from year to year. Since the Civil Rights Movement, almost everyone in the USA has come to believe that all citizens deserve equal opportunity and most have come to believe that all have equal opportunity. Most of us believe that our values are actually implemented. The idea of equal opportunity for all supports the idea of a culture of poverty. I limit myself here to a discussion of African Americans. African Americans do less well than otherwise comparable whites on many measures of performance; poor people do less well, by definition, economically, but they also do less well educationally and are incarcerated at higher rates whatever their actual criminal activity. Social scientists are, however, less likely to believe that equal opportunity is in place, which immunizes many of them from falling into this trap. This simplistic account of poverty—one that suggests that certain populations have developed settled social and economic sub-cultures outside the mainstream—blinds us from the historical contingencies and the political decisions that have led to a high rate of poverty relative to most wealthy nations. The current understanding of the culture of poverty suggests that poverty is intractable and dismisses that idea that policy changes can lower the rate of poverty in the United States or address the concentration of poverty in certain populations such as African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and recent Asian immigrants; the disabled; and the parents of young children. How has the idea of a culture of poverty affected politics and society? These arguments result in policies that seek to change blacks. Such arguments miss the nature and consequences of contemporary discrimination. While there is plenty of overt discrimination, disparate treatment, the more important form of discrimination in the USA today, is disparate impact. This is where

ostensibly neutral structures and organizations, organizations that treat blacks and whites as if they were the same, generate adverse consequences for blacks. They result in policies that seek to change blacks rather than change organizational constraints and persistent discrimination. When blacks and whites perform different cultures, act out different cultural identities, there is no reason to think that the differences are intrinsically relevant to educational performance; however, they may well affect performance when taken in conjunction with how students who perform these cultural differences are regarded and dealt with in organizations. African Americans may have a different subculture than whites, but if they perform less well than whites, it is not because of that subculture, but because of how they are processed in organizations because of it. Photo by Alonzo via Flickr Creative Commons. This discussion is, of course, too simple. This perpetuates the illusion that those people—“the poor people who lack a real work ethic”—are poor for a reason, but that others, particularly hardworking members of the middle class, are invulnerable to economic risk so long as they are working hard enough. The persistence of the culture of poverty theory also distracts the public and lawmakers from celebrating the policy decisions that have been successful in ameliorating poverty. As a result, popular and governmental commitments to fighting poverty are slight. Does talk about the US as a post-racial society influence the rhetoric around the culture of poverty? Before the Civil Rights Movement, when discrimination against African-Americans was overt, liberal-minded people could explain differential performance between blacks and whites as due to overt discrimination. In post-Civil Rights Movement America, which some erroneously see as a post-racial society, the logic of this argument changes fundamentally. There is a paradox here. Participants in the Civil Rights Movement fought for the inclusion of African Americans, and derivatively others within the American Creed, for their inclusion as full citizens. The success of the Movement, the inclusion of African Americans, including the poor, within the egalitarian values dominant in American society, and given the reality of African Americans performing less well than whites in many areas, has resulted in the construction of a New Racism. What can sociologists contribute to the discussion of poverty policies? Social scientists concerned about social inequality should turn their attention to poverty, especially child poverty. Scholars can play a role in informing students and the public of the very fact that child poverty is widespread, can take opportunities to study the long-term effects of child poverty on families and society, and can use their skills to study the effectiveness of particular policies in reducing child poverty. More work needs to be done in tracing and examining the successes of government led-anti-poverty efforts, from the drop in poverty among elderly Americans to the documented, long-term effects of Head Start programs. We tend to focus on failures and ignore successes. Sociologists keen on historical and comparative work might promote awareness that the United States is an outlier and that policies common in other countries—“universal health care, paid family leave for workers with young children, and universal child allowances”—are effective in reducing poverty there. Sociologists might promote awareness that the United States is an outlier, that policies common in other countries—“universal health care, paid family leave for workers with young children, and universal child allowances”—are effective in reducing poverty. Finally, qualitative sociologists can serve an important function in carefully and critically documenting the experiences of the poor, particularly because there is little in the popular media about the experiences of the poor and poor people have little political access in a country where money is speech. While most Americans are overexposed to the lifestyles of the rich and famous, we rarely hear about how poverty affects daily lives and how it limits choices and life chances. I think three things are missing: First, a broader understanding of the many ways that anthropologists and others who study culture but not poverty have conceptualized culture, its impact on behavior, its response to intervention, and its limitations as an explanatory factor. Third, more dispassionate analysis. The one advantage of the new generation of scholars working on these questions is that they were not part of the highly acrimonious debate over culture during the 1970s and 1980s. The debate was so contentious and the rhetoric so heated that it has been difficult to address even basic empirical questions from a scientific perspective. This shows how far we need to go. For example, a lot of people assume that social scientists who examine the relationship between culture and poverty must have a particular political agenda. Some even believe that studying culture necessarily implies a particular political posture. Yet notice that entire academic disciplines—“most notably, anthropology”—are fundamentally devoted to the study of culture. The fact that

anyone believes that studying culture means rehashing that old idea shows how far we need to go. There are a number of conceptual distinctions we need to make before we can formulate effective policies. Social values regulate what is desirable; they constitute obligations. If folks do not find a good job desirable, if they do not feel the obligation to work, they will not seek out jobs when the opportunity to do so arises. If students do not value education, do not feel an obligation to do well in school, they will not orient themselves to educational opportunities. In contrast to these contentions, there is a lot of evidence that inner-city blacks share the dominant values of USA society, including the positive evaluation of hard work and a commitment to education. If this is correct, we would expect them, for example, to seek work when it is available, and they do so. There is a lot of evidence that inner-city blacks share the dominant values of hard work and a commitment to education. Often, an oppositional culture is understood to inhibit intrinsically educational or occupational success; it may be seen, for example, as devaluing educational success. This is an oppositional culture, but only in the sense that African-Americans do not want to sacrifice it. As an oppositional culture, it is fully compatible with the values dominant in United States society. If this analysis makes sense, our concern should be to construct opportunities for the inner-city poor to succeed, ladders of achievement that facilitate their success in school, that make it possible for them to find jobs that will support their families in dignity, and to reconstruct organizations in a way that makes it possible for African-Americans to share in organizational governance so that African-American cultural identities might be actualized to the benefit of all Americans. Mark Gould is in the sociology department at Haverford College. Mario Luis Small is a sociologist at Harvard University.

Chapter 5 : Bonnie D. Schwartz Â» Department of Second Language Studies

Poverty relates to the integral of the distribution to the left of a particular poverty line. Inequality refers to the dispersion of the distribution." (page 2) The three questions should therefore be seen as components of the central question of the improvement of human welfare.

The Index ranks Minnesota as the second highest state in the nation. Indicators of opportunity measured include the state of the local economy, access to education and community health and civic life. While perusing other information about disparities that contribute to poverty in the U. Income and education are among the most potent determinants of health. Simply stated, the rich are healthier than the middle class, who are in turn healthier than the poor. This statement leads me to believe that the same conditions that contribute to poverty in the rural southeast and the urban northeast also remains a challenge in Minnesota. The article confirms the suspicions of many of us in the poverty alleviation field, that the cycle of poverty is created and sustained by multiple issues feeding into one another throughout low-income communities in the U. We are also learning that there is great need to create focused interventions at the community level around several critical factors simultaneously to result in healthier, more prosperous, and more sustainable communities. The culture of poverty, i. This culture has perpetuated racism and has supported the ignorance or blinding of more affluent Americans from understanding the challenges that their neighbors experience. The culture of poverty exists for all members in a community but expresses itself quite differently based on the zip code that someone is born into. It is also clear that the conditions of poverty that create cyclical or intergenerational poverty must be surrounded and encircled by the efforts and strategies of community members, non-profits and their funder partners to help transform a culture of poverty into a culture of prosperity. There is a rich history of several efforts that have done this, so, why has this culture continued to grow in our country? Could it possibly be the lack of national imagination or the access to opportunity that moves someone beyond the experience of his or her parents? In a recent trip to Minneapolis, I noted several neighborhood-based interventions in process with non-profits, faith-based groups, individual residents, local government and philanthropy all poised to re-develop the north Minneapolis neighborhood. Some are targeting housing quality, affordability or zoning; others are investigating how to develop the large neighborhood as a new, gentrified haven; other are concerned about facilities offering recovery and rehabilitation for the homeless or recovering from substance abuse. Still, others are targeting crime prevention, youth development and economic development and new transit options. We heard few conversations about how these efforts result in permanent improvement for all current residents regardless of socio-economic standing, race or ethnicity. What if we could knit together, community-by-community, efforts to improve income, education, community health and civic life with integrated, adaptive leadership skills among local leaders from the poorest neighborhoods, businesses and local government? Working together, simultaneously with the same goal in mind -- opportunity for all -- might local wise men and women develop a critical break in the cycle of intergenerational poverty across the nation in our lifetime? Much of what The Declaration Initiative TDI is developing with communities experiencing intergenerational poverty is the ability to help create the connective tissue between philanthropy, government, non-profit, and the families experiencing its conditions. TDI is a movement to inspire the efforts of non-profits, families, philanthropy and government to focus on greatly reducing intergenerational poverty in the U. We intend to facilitate the implementation of: Permanent improvements not palliation. Comprehensive work on social, economic and health conditions that have been prioritized by poorest residents. Community centered, inclusive, integrated decision-making including donors, beneficiaries, non-profits and government. Outcome based evaluation capacity that sustains community engagement in determining results linked to the goal of ending intergenerational poverty in the poorest U. As we have travelled the nation and witnessed the work being done in neighborhoods, cities, and states during our planning phase, we have met with many committed individuals and organizations who are doing the hard, focused work in their communities. They too want to destroy debilitating conditions that breed the culture of poverty. This gives us hope that we can achieve the TDI vision.

Chapter 6 : Culture of Poverty in America | HuffPost

The authors return to "the culture of poverty," a concept that became taboo in the s because of its conservative and racist recuperation. Their pluralist and supple view of culture allows them to untie the knot between culture and race that feeds conservative rhetoric.

Chapter 7 : How Poverty Affects Behavior and Academic Performance

The culture of poverty, i.e., the environment, institutions, individual behaviors, policies and practices of poverty in the U.S., have affected those who experience poverty as well as those who.

Chapter 8 : Re-evaluating the "Culture of Poverty" - The Society Pages

Oscar Lewis's theory of the "culture of poverty" was investigated by interviewing a population of poor young Israelis and their parents. Both the model—that is, the claim that poverty traits and norms in the four spheres of life (individual, familial, communal, and societal) appear simultaneously—and the cultural explanation of the continuity of poverty were rejected.

Chapter 9 : NPR Choice page

Viewed through the lens of genetics or culture, the issue can feel intractable, Eagle says, but reframing it as a matter of resources points toward tangible solutions. "This is something.