

CHAPTER FOUR: CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERATIONAL POVERTY

"Generational poverty" is defined as having been in poverty for at least two generations. It is important to recognize this time factor to be able to separate it from "situational poverty," characteristically understood as a lack of resources due to particular sets of events, i.e. a death, chronic illness, divorce, etc. from the discussion of generational poverty in this chapter. These two concepts are distinguishable, which will help us put our students' behavior in better perspective. A key indicator in defining and separating these poverty types is "attitude." In generational poverty, the players feel that society owes them a living whereas in situational, they often allow pride to keep them from accepting needed assistance.

In examining these distinguishing differences, our author gave a humorous case study of an actual court case. While the nature of the case is quite disturbing from the perspective of a middle class reader, behaviors become crystal clear and predictable.

Generational poverty has its own culture, hidden rules and belief system. This chapter deals with the role of the "momma" as central to the family structure. She is the powerful one and the ultimate caregiver and rescuer. Punishment in her mind is about forgiveness – not about change – and hers is the love and relationship that ties to the soul.

The key issue for males is to be the "man". Rules are rigid: hard worker, good fighter and lover. Physical attributes are important, favoritism is desirable, and discussions center around people and relationships while communication may be mostly nonverbal.

There are 2 checklists and 2 graphs in this chapter which are very helpful in assessing situations and behaviors of students and families that we all have in schools today.

In summary, these points are made from this chapter:

- * Education is key in getting out and staying out of generational poverty
- * Being in poverty is rarely about a lack of intelligence or ability
- * Individuals stay in poverty because they do not see "choice", or if they do, they do not know how to access proper resources or people to get them to the point of actually "choosing" to organize themselves, complete assignments, behave respectfully, plan for the future, and communicate in conventional register.
- * Schools are really the only places where students can learn about the choices and rules of the middle class or have access to people who are willing and able to help them.