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INTRODUCTION

Children in Crisis: Child Poverty and Abuse in New Zealand

MICHAEL A. PETERS & TINA (A.C.) BESLEY

Child Poverty, Globalization and Human Rights

Child poverty constitutes a generalized global crisis in both so-called developing and advanced economies. The impact of neo-liberal policies and the impacts of the 2008/9 global economic crisis on child poverty has been devastating (Minujin & Nandy, 2012). Structural adjustment policies have been seen as a major cause of poverty (George, 1990) with almost half the world's population living on less than \$2.50 per day, and 80% living on less than \$10 per day. Too often western countries have dismissed such as issues within the developing world. However, the alarming trend is that child poverty levels in advanced economies have also increased markedly with clear consequences for the health and cognitive development of children, the huge social costs associated with long-term unemployment and poverty, the effects on educational achievement and the prospects of future citizenship.¹

Child poverty is more than just an economic issue, being also both a philosophical and an educational problem especially when framed as a global issue and approached through a human rights perspective. The very issues of distribution (pre- and redistribution) is tied to a notion of justice, at least in the liberal tradition, and questions of growing inequality, lack of access to education and to adequate housing and employment has shaped the various discourses of poverty in both their welfare state and neo-liberal policy orientations. As Vigdis Broch-Due and John-Andrew McNeish (2004–7) note in their project 'Poverty Politics: Current Approaches to its Production and Reduction':

Concerns about poverty who is the poor, why they are poor, and what can be deemed a proper response to them have long been at the core of discourses about society and its others.... Far from being a straightforward condition of deprivation and destitution that is easily defined empirically or unambiguously detected through standardised indicators and measurement, poverty is a contentious and complex construct. Poverty is entangled in an archetypal thick discourse, encapsulating a vast range of social, political and historical struggles, constantly evolving new values, imagery, social identities

and material outcomes. While a lack of key resources is at the core of most poverty registers worldwide—what defines that lack differs widely across societies and over time. The experience of being poor forged from a multiplicity of possible lacks and shortcomings—material, moral, social and metaphorical—defined against what constitutes prosperity and success. Poverty is produced through processes of social differentiation and shaped by the politics of wealth and power, both globally and locally. In other words, while the end results of poverty-producing processes are scarcity, suffering and social exclusion—poverty is formed within cultural frameworks and has to be examined in its proper social and historical context.

(<http://www.uib.no/povertypolitics/research.htm>)

They inquire into how different political values and structures of government can contribute alternative poverty reducing strategies and they plot the changing contours of poverty in scholarly models and development policies. After the fourth development decade they ask:

How has the poverty discourse evolved, and how much has changed in descriptions of poverty and the poor in donor policy as well as in the models of social science? How has the concept of poverty been understood and described until now, and is there one understanding or perception of what poverty is and consensus on how it should be tackled? Is there a hegemonic discourse about poverty and, if so, how are structures of power articulated through it? How are alternative voices and dissenting views framed and negotiated? What is the relationship between the poverty knowledge articulated through research and the more official poverty talk and policies designed by national governments and international donors?

The same or similar questions can be raised about the growth of inequalities and the discourses of relative child poverty in neo-liberal economies.² For example Rebecca M. Blank (2003) reviews five major theoretical approaches that describe the fundamental causes of poverty, focusing on what they imply about government policy towards markets and poverty alleviation. As she points out:

Different causal theories have very different policy implications; it is difficult to recommend specific anti-poverty policies with making assumptions about the nature of economic markets and of individual behavior. (p. 447)

Blank (2003) offers the five theoretical frameworks as follows:

1. Poverty is due to economic underdevelopment; that is, poverty occurs in the absence of effectively functioning markets.
2. Poverty occurs because some individuals within market economies are either unprepared or unable to participate in them productively.
3. The market is inherently dysfunctional and creates poverty.
4. Poverty is due to social and political processes that occur outside the market.

5. 'It's their own fault'; Poverty is the result of individual behavioral characteristics and choices.

(Abridged from Blank, 2003, pp. 447–454)

Blank also acknowledges that

disagreement over anti-poverty policies is not surprising given the very different implications of these differing explanations of the fundamental causes of poverty. At least some of these conflicts are not easily reconcilable, without making some a priori assumptions about the role of markets and the nature of poverty. (p. 448)

Blank then goes on to ask how we should proceed in developing poverty alleviation policies and provides the following comments:

1. Balance the critical economist with the caring economist when assessing policy options. This means taking more policy risks when an issue has a higher moral imperative.
2. Marketization is important, but be suspicious of market-based policies that pay little attention to social and political realities. The organization of markets always has normative implications.
3. Pay attention to who is affected by a policy and how they are affected; that is, pay attention to distribution impacts. With heterogeneous poor populations, multiple targeted programs may be superior to broad single programs.
4. Perverse incentive effects will always exist in direct-aid antipoverty programs. These are not by themselves a justification for inaction.

Blank clearly demonstrates that not only are there different views about the underlying causes of poverty that lead to major differences in policy recommendations but differences concern beliefs about the value of unregulated markets versus regulated markets the extent to which poor individuals make choices that add to or alleviate their poverty. She argues that poverty cannot be regarded simply as an economic problem given its deep embedded nature in the political and policy environments and that the greater importance given to the moral dimension, the less economic analysis should dictate policy.

Valerie Polakow and Syprose Owiti (2013) in their Oxford Bibliography *Child Poverty, Rights, and Well-being*³ provide the following global context for child poverty drawing attention to the philosophical stakes:

Situating child poverty in a global context draws on interdisciplinary sources that cover globalization, neoliberalism, resource redistribution, citizenship, human rights, and philosophical questions about what it means to be fully human. Unlike traditional economic studies that analyze poverty in monetary terms as a deprivation of means, Sen, 1999 argues that poverty must also be understood as multidimensional, incorporating human rights, human freedom, well-being, and the capacity for human functioning and human capabilities. Nussbaum, 2011, building on earlier work (see Nussbaum

2000, cited under Families in Poverty), argues for a capabilities approach that emphasizes human dignity and opportunity within a framework of social and gender justice and embodies a set of political entitlements and central capabilities that society should nurture and support on behalf of its citizens. Stiglitz, 2002 points to the devastating impacts of globalization on the world's poorest communities and questions who benefits from the globalization agenda. He argues that the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization championed market supremacy with high costs to developing nations; instead, global governance should be democratized promoting sustainable equitable growth with a human face. Harvey, 2005 interrogates the inherent contradictions of democratic governance with its attendant political and civic participation, as well as the hegemonic impacts of neoliberalism that thrive best under governance by experts and elites. Key tenets of neoliberalism are analyzed in relation to global inequality, poverty, and the diminution of the role of government and the promotion of the public good. Pogge, 2007 challenges readers to consider the moral and ethical implications and the 'positive duties' that ensue in a global world order where severe poverty and extreme inequality persist. Authors raise fundamental questions about poverty as a violation of human rights, justice, and the right to resistance. Lister, 2004 addresses poverty, social exclusion, and social policy. The author draws on her experience as a member of the UK Child Care Action Group to address participation and voice as essential to understanding poverty within a human rights framework that emphasizes citizenship and agency. She addresses material and non-material definitions of poverty, analyzes global structural inequalities and the politics of representation that create objectification and 'othering,' and argues for a politics of respect, recognition, and redistribution. Public intellectual Tony Judt's volume of essays (Judt, 2010) raises penetrating questions about what he terms 'private affluence and public squalor,' and he suggests a revisioning of social democracy for the 21st century that fosters greater equality and social justice. [All references are provided in the bibliography to this Introduction].

The authors referred to Polakow and Owiti (2013) presuppose a human rights framework addressing the question of child poverty in terms of a tradition of liberal political philosophy. We might say that this is the increasingly dominant framework of world policy agencies even though it might be blended with neo-liberal economics.

Child poverty and neo-liberalism: the moral dimensions

The idea that a society or nation can be judged in terms of what it does for its weakest members is a truism that has been attributed to a variety of sources including Mahatma Gandhi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Pope John Paul II who turns the moral maxim toward the unborn. The late Hubert H. Humphrey, who served as the 38th vice-president of the USA from 1965–69 under President Lyndon Johnson, provides the fullest statement of the moral test of government:

It is often said that the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life; the sick, the needy and the handicapped.

⁴Humphrey delivered these lines in a speech in 1977 which later became known as the ‘liberals’ mantra’. He died a year later. How far we have traveled away from this moral dictum in the years that followed Humphrey’s death. Barely a year later Margaret Thatcher came to power in the UK to preside over an arrangement between Conservatives and Neo-liberals (two contradictory wings) to argue for a market fundamentalism that prioritized market freedom over equality and social democracy. This was the beginning of the so-called neo-liberal era that saw a set of policies harden up around a form of state phobia first given institutional form by Friedrich Hayek with the establishment of the Mount Pelerin Society in 1948 and a political tract he called *The Road to Serfdom* published in 1944 in which he argued that the abandonment of the individualism of classical liberalism—with central planning and state power over the individual—would lead to a loss of freedom. In his magnum opus *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960) he continued to hold on to a classical British nineteenth century account of liberty defined in the opening pages as the lack of dependence on the will of others. Hayek, inspired by Carl Menger’s liberalism and Ludwig von Mises’ *Socialism*, shifted away from his early infatuation with democratic socialism to argue for private investment in public markets (against large government spending programs characteristic of the welfare state). Lionel Robbins invited Hayek to join the LSE in 1931 and he soon was involved theoretically in undoing its Fabian thinking developed by the Webbs and many others.

On being elected to lead the Conservatives Thatcher organized a meeting with Hayek and at a meeting with the Conservative Research department in 1975 according to John Ranelagh (1992, p. ix):

... reached into her briefcase and took out a book. It was Hayek’s *The Constitution of Liberty*... she held the book up for all of us to see. ‘This’, she said sternly, ‘is what we believe’, and banged Hayek down on the table.

President Reagan also invited Hayek to the White House, listing him as one of the most important influences on his thinking. The Hayekian revolution took root in the Anglo-American alliance that introduced free market reforms across the board and in the UK under Thatcher the wholesale privatization of public assets. She was famous for her ‘there is no such thing as society’ view expressed an interview for *Woman’s Own* in which she states ‘It is our duty to look after ourselves... and people have got the entitlements too much in mind without the obligations’.⁵

Under Margaret Thatcher’s policies poverty almost doubled. *The Guardian* (2013) basing its report on figures from the Institute of Fiscal Studies indicates:

In 1979, 13.4% of the population lived below 60% of median incomes before housing costs. By 1990, it had gone up to 22.2%, or 12.2 m people, with huge rises in the mid-1980s.

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/datablog/2013/apr/08/britain-changed-margaret-thatcher-charts>

Inequality climbed enormously. *The Guardian* reports that Britain's gini coefficient score went up from 0.253 to 0.339⁶. In a review of her governments on her demise *The Guardian's* Malcolm Dean (2013) wrote:

But from the very beginning of the 18 years of Conservative rule the poor were under the cosh. No developed state, with the exception of New Zealand, suffered such a brutal widening of inequality. In 1979 the post-tax income of the top 10% of the population was five times that of the bottom 10%; by 1997 it had doubled to 10 times as much. After three decades during which economic growth was shared across income groups, the distribution went into reverse. <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/apr/09/margaret-thatcher-policies-poor-society>

Thatcherism saw child poverty grow by 121%.⁷ Child (relative) poverty in many advanced Western countries has increased during the policy era of neo-liberalism beginning in the 1980s. The child poverty rate has risen considerably in countries like the US, UK and NZ that impacts negatively on child health, educational outcomes, and social and emotional development. Poor children are more likely to suffer from a range of risk factors including forms of child abuse (this does not mean that poverty causes neglect or abuse). At the same time it has been claimed that children are the most criminally victimized and vulnerable group in society and the scope and prevalence of child abuse is only becoming clear societies codify child abuse definitions and laws and begin to gather data and monitor such laws systematically.

Child poverty in the United Kingdom

Much of the social policy agenda pursued today has its origins in trying to develop new approaches to the child poverty and associated social justice issues that were created a generation ago by the Thatcher governments. It is worth dwelling on these briefly if only to provide the context for understanding the raft of measures employed by successive governments to combat the growth of child poverty. Under Tony Blair, Labour passed the Child Poverty Act 2010⁸ that set up a series of national targets, the Child Poverty Commission and devised a specified set of duties and monitoring report of the Secretary of State and local authorities. The concept of relative poverty defined as 60% of median household income was described as fundamentally flawed because it does nothing to picture the experience of poverty and also creates perverse incentives to provide cash transfers. The social justice strategy based five 'pathways to poverty' identified by the Centre of Social Justice:

... re-moralises the condition of the poor by attributing the causes of the problem... to social and personal failings—debt, addiction, family

breakdown—rather than to macro-conditions in the labour market or broader demographic trends... seeks to reverse the ‘relativisation’ of the problem that occurred... in the 1960s, when Peter Townsend and colleagues articulated a broad conception of relative poverty and deprivation... (Bamfield, 2012, pp. 832–833).

While the Labour government failed in its target of halving poverty it did make some progress on alleviating educational disadvantage. Louise Bamfield (2012) notes that child poverty has risen high on the policy agenda of the current UK Coalition with parties trying to demonstrate their ‘fairness credentials’. She indicates:

So far, besides the analysis contained in an initial ‘State of the Nation’ report in May 2010, the coalition has produced official strategies on child poverty and social mobility, both published in April 2011; a separate DWP strategy on social justice, released in March 2012; a governmental update on social mobility (distinct from the Milburn paper) in May 2012; as well as the latest child poverty report in June 2012, with a Green Paper on poverty measurement to follow in autumn 2012. (p. 830)

The Liberal Democrats pursue a social policy goal designed ‘to create a more open and mobile society, where the social exclusiveness of unearned wealth and privilege is replaced by a more deserving, meritorious elite’ (p. 830). By contrast ‘The Conservatives’ positioning on poverty, fairness and social justice is a more complex mix of moral conviction and political calculation’ (p. 831). Bamfield (2012) goes on to remark:

Common to all of the coalition’s ‘fairness’ strategies (child poverty, social justice and social mobility) is a strong emphasis on tackling worklessness and improving the ‘life chances’ of disadvantaged children through a number of flagship policies and programmes: intensive support for vulnerable families, especially in the early years of life, with 4200 additional health visitors to increase capacity; free nursery provision and ‘refocused’ Sure Start services in order to compensate for early disadvantage; the introduction of a new Pupil Premium for low-income pupils, aimed at narrowing gaps in pupil attainment and future outcomes; a new ‘Youth Contract’ to boost young people’s position in the labour market; and a new Work Programme and redesign of the tax and benefits system to create stronger incentives for those out of work to gain employment. (p. 831)

Importantly for our purposes in this introduction, Bamfield (2012, p. 834) reviews the body of empirical evidence that all indicate early interventions are effective in both improving children’s developments and achievements and hold promise for longer-term economic and social outcomes in adult life. The Department of Education’s (2011) report *Disadvantaged Two Year Olds Entitlement to Early Education: Options for Extended Eligibility Impact Assessment* suggests that free entitlements in the early years will return billions of dollars in the first decade. The Equality Impact Report⁹ drawing on the findings of Sylva et al. (2004) suggests ‘good quality childcare and pre-school

provision, especially from age 2 upwards, has positive benefits on children's all round development and that these benefits last through primary school to age 10/11'. Yet Bamfield (2012) indicates that these improvements are unlikely and that 'it will be challenging for providers even to maintain existing levels of staff qualification and training, let alone improve the level of skill and experience that research shows is the single biggest factor affecting children's development and later outcomes' (p. 834). She is jaundiced about the prospect of policy in the current environment for improving the life chances of children as she is about the prospect for reducing poverty and wider disadvantage over the next five or ten years. Levels of child poverty are predicted to climb from 18% to 24% by 2020–21. The Coalition's strategy fails not because of the main planks of the programme or its analysis that 'worklessness, low educational achievement and poor maternal and infant health are the key drivers of poverty and limited life chances' but because of the 'wider spending cuts to key public services and changes to the tax and benefit system that will have an overall adverse effect on children and families' (p. 837).

Child poverty in New Zealand/Aotearoa

In 2011, returning to New Zealand after 11 years living abroad we were appalled to find that inequalities had blown out and that the level of child poverty had greatly increased. In view of this situation and the publicity the issue was demanding by stalwart organizations like The Child Poverty Action Group¹⁰ formed in 1994 and the Office of the Commissioner for Children (OCC)¹¹ established in 1989 we decided to hold a conference in 2013, named Children in Crisis, with the byline, Children are our taonga [treasure]: Children are our future, focusing on four major themes: child poverty, child abuse, children's rights and policies for children, with an accent on *The White Paper On Vulnerable Children* (2012).¹² We prefaced the conference website¹³ with the following:

The Centre for Global Studies in Education at University of Waikato, Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato, Hamilton, hosted this important national hui in response to recent reports and research on children and young people in crisis in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This three-day conference provided an opportunity for all interested groups (e.g. practitioners, teachers, counselors, social workers, academics, police, paediatricians and agencies) to discuss these vital issues and seek evidence-based solutions for better services for children and young people. This included:

- discussing government policies and initiatives
- promoting an ongoing forum
- producing other relevant publications (in process)

The conference is aimed as much at practitioners and social agencies as at academics. This is an all-Faculty conference to highlight recent reports and research on children in crisis in NZ. The conference is designed to promote debate on issues affected children in NZ, to provide an opportunity to hear

from all interested groups, practitioners and agencies, to discuss government policies and initiatives, to promote an ongoing forum, and to develop a Handbook for Teachers among other outcomes.

We also provided the following excerpt from the White Paper as a means of contextualizing the current debate and government emphasis on *vulnerability* (rather than poverty):

CHILDREN IN CRISIS IN AOTEAROA

The White Paper On Vulnerable Children, 2012—The Sad Reality

Too many children live a life far below the norm, most of them let down by the very people, often the only people, who they should be able to trust and rely on to love and protect them. Here is the sad reality:

Between seven and ten children, on average, are killed each year by someone who is supposed to be caring for them. In 2010, 209 children under 15 required hospital treatment for assault related injuries.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2012, 152,800 care and protection notifications were made to Child, Youth and Family. After investigation, Child, Youth and Family found:

- 4766 cases of neglect
- 3249 cases of physical abuse
- 1396 cases of sexual abuse
- 12,114 cases of what social workers term ‘emotional abuse’, often children who have witnessed family violence.

As of 30 June 2012, there were 3884 New Zealand children in out-of-home state care. *But*, recent advances in research and technology mean we can now start to get ahead of the problem, identifying and helping some 20,000–30,000 vulnerable children and families, in many cases *before* the greatest harm occurs.

The White Paper On Vulnerable Children, 2012

<http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/the-white-paper/the-sad-reality>

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner in the report *Child Poverty in NZ: A Fair Go for all Children: Actions to address child poverty in New Zealand*

Child poverty rates rose sharply in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. During this period, inequality rose more in New Zealand than in any of the 20 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries for which comparable data is available. The key drivers were low wage growth for many working families, high unemployment and reductions in welfare payments.

http://www.occ.org.nz/home/childpoverty/the_report

In New Zealand, the call concerning child poverty has been insistent and historical ongoing from diverse groups and organizations that have commented on the immediate and long-term individual, social, educational and health effects of child poverty. We highlight a selection of these comments below:

... long term or recurrent poverty... can have serious and permanent effects on a child as it influences their physical, emotional and social development. The causes of long term poverty can be various—long term illness or disability, sole parenting, poor workforce skills may prevent parents from earning an adequate income. But whatever the causes, one thing is certain—the child is not responsible for the poverty which is damaging their life. That’s why eliminating that poverty is a social responsibility rather than just a parental responsibility.

<http://www.everychildcounts.org.nz/resources/child-poverty/>

New Zealand has substantial rates of child poverty and material deprivation. These rates significantly exceed those of many other developed countries and, at least on some measures, are much worse than three decades ago. The evidence suggests that child poverty, especially when experienced in early childhood and/or when persistent and severe, can be very damaging—both to the children directly affected and society as a whole. Amongst other things, child poverty contributes to the large educational achievement gaps between children from lower and higher SES backgrounds. For such reasons, there is a powerful case for reducing child poverty. I have argued that decision-makers have the available policy tools to alleviate child poverty and mitigate its effects—at least to some extent. The issue, in other words, is not the means, but the political will.

Improving Educational Performance: Why Tackling Child Poverty Must be Part of the Solution, Jonathan Boston, May 2013–0731

<http://igps.victoria.ac.nz/staff/team/Education%20and%20child%20poverty%20V4.pdf>

Judith Nowotarski [President, New Zealand Educational Institute] says socio-economic status is not the only factor in determining children’s educational outcomes but stands out in the research as by far the single largest one. It is estimated that ‘out of school’ factors—socio-economic status, family stress, housing, health, level of maternal qualifications—constitutes up to 80 percent of factors influencing student achievement: Great teaching makes a difference but alone it cannot overcome the powerful influence of family and social environment, including poverty, on children’s achievement. Blaming under-resourced and over-stretched schools for not eliminating the achievement gap conveniently ignores his Government’s responsibility for tackling child poverty—and its single biggest cause—insufficient family income.

http://www.nzei.org.nz/NZEI/Media/Releases/2013/7/Finance_Minister_Bill_English_ignores_the_evidence_about_child_poverty_s_impact_on_educational_achie.aspx#.Ufg_RFNPrUM

Poverty increases the likelihood of poor nutrition and other health problems, housing transience, unstable parent and caregiver relationships, negative peer group influences and other factors known to impact on educational achievement. Poverty during the early years of childhood can be particularly detrimental, with negative educational effects persisting at least into the middle years of schooling, even when family incomes improve. The relationship between income and education outcomes is not linear—increases in household income have significantly greater impacts on education outcomes for children in low-income families than outcomes for children in high-income families.

<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/definition/family-and-community-engagement/3981>

‘New Zealand has chosen to tolerate significant child deprivation. We could choose otherwise’, says Jonathan Boston, academic and co chair of the Expert Advisory Group on child poverty set up by the Children’s Commissioner. The EAG’s initial options paper certainly brought the issues to public attention—with its call for a universal child allowance—and its final report, released before Christmas also hit the headlines. The EAG comprised health experts, economists, policy advisors and business lobbyists as well as academics. It’s become part of a growing wave of opinion that something must be done to address New Zealand’s dismal record on child poverty and its long-term effects.

<http://www.educationaotearoa.org.nz/all-stories/2013/1/7/child-poverty-the-too-hard-basket.html>

At least 1000 Auckland children are ‘lost’ to the education system with 70 per cent of youth offenders not engaged with school at all, a new report reveals. Poverty is so bad some children are growing up sharing small homes with other families—one family to a room.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/7,005,396/Children-in-poverty-lost-to-education-system>

Children living in poverty have a higher number of absenteeism or leave school all together because they are more likely to have to work or care for family members. Dropout rates of 16- to 24-year-old students who come from low income families are seven times more likely to drop out than those from families with higher incomes. A higher percentage of young adults (31 percent) without a high school diploma live in poverty, compared to the 24 percent of young people who finished high school.

<http://www.dosomething.org/tipsandtools/11-facts-about-education-and-poverty-america>

In 2006/07 230,000, or 22 percent, of New Zealand children were still living in poverty. That is, in households with incomes below the 60 percent

median income poverty line, after taking housing costs into account. This is more than the entire population of North Shore City (205,605) or the Manawatu-Wanganui region (222,423) and means one adult and one child were living on \$430 a week before housing costs. Of these children, 170,000, or 16 percent, live in households with incomes below the 50 percent median income poverty line, after taking housing costs into account. This means one adult and one child were living on \$355 a week, before housing costs.... Child poverty is unevenly distributed across society. For children living in sole-parent families, the rate of poverty (49 percent) is five times as high as that for children in couple households (nine percent). Poverty rates are also significantly higher among Maori and Pacifica children than Pakeha children.

http://www.occ.org.nz/home/childpoverty/about_child_poverty

Poverty affects a child's development and educational outcomes beginning in the earliest years of life, both directly and indirectly through mediated, moderated, and transactional processes. School readiness, or the child's ability to use and profit from school, has been recognized as playing a unique role in escape from poverty in the United States and increasingly in developing countries. It is a critical element but needs to be supported by many other components of a poverty-alleviation strategy, such as improved opportunity structures and empowerment of families.

The Effect of Poverty on Child Development and Educational Outcomes

Patrice L. Engle & Maureen M. Black

<http://www.globalchilddevelopment.com/sites/all/pdf/effects%20of%20poverty%20on%20child%20dev%20and%20ed%20outcomes.pdf>

Children growing up in poverty and disadvantage are less likely to do well at school. This feeds into disadvantage in later life and in turn affects their children. Our research shows that: Socio-economic differences affect children's learning through a range of factors; Some influences are felt inside school, interacting with children's attitude towards education; Others occur outside school, but are nevertheless important for learning and development; Only by understanding the varied factors influencing social differences in education will it be possible to design effective responses in policy and practice. A key message of the evidence is that equality of educational opportunity cannot rely solely on better delivery of the school curriculum for disadvantaged groups, but must address multiple aspects of disadvantaged children's lives.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/education-and-poverty>

The effects of poverty shape long-term health and development in profound ways. When children are exposed to adverse experiences—physical, emotional, or substance abuse, mental illness, violence and the burdens of family economic hardship—without the buffer of supportive adults, their

systems are stressed to the max. Jack Shonkoff, who heads up Harvard's Center for the Developing Child, likens this to 'having an adrenaline rush 24/7,' wreaking great havoc on the burgeoning infant brain. Most importantly, toxic stress, as this phenomenon is known, diverts energy from the prefrontal lobe, center of executive function, or the heart of kids' capacity to plan, focus and learn. The outcomes, immediate and long-term, include developmental delays, learning challenges, and physical and mental illness that extend all the way into adulthood.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-ochshorn/education-poverty-students_b_2246448.html

The conference was attended by over 150 people. It brought together people from many sectors (welfare, health, education, justice, Maori from both government and voluntary agencies) and, which as many told us was something of an innovation in the current competitive funding era which sees organizations and many workers siloed and somewhat isolated—a disciplinary technology in action. It came hard on the heels of the report by the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on *Solutions to Child Poverty in New Zealand: Evidence for Action* released by the OCC in December 2012 that provided 78 recommendations to combat child poverty including eight that specifically addressed education.¹⁴ The EAG are looking to persuade authorities to adopt a national strategy to combat child poverty driven by the Government in monitoring poverty reduction targets within an accountability and reporting framework embedded in legislation. Clearly this suggestion echoes the kinds of action followed under Tony Blair's government and modified and developed in subsequent years.

The EAG report was followed by *The White Paper On Vulnerable Children*, 2012 that focused on the issue of protection of vulnerable children rather than poverty.¹⁵ The relevant legislation has made child protection a statutory responsibility for five departments (NZ Police, and Ministries of Health, Justice, Education and Social Welfare). The Action Plan has also established Children Action Teams to bring together Ministries and various agencies to develop a single response plan focused on vulnerable children.¹⁶ In the 2014 Budget an extra \$33.2 million in operating funding was made available. The Minister Paula Bennett reports that there are 22,000 cases of abuse and neglect of children in New Zealand every year and 'More than 50 children have died in the past five years because of extreme abuse, and one child aged under two years is hospitalised every five days'.¹⁷ The problem is, like the UK Coalition's strategy, there is not enough of a serious recognition of the causal links between child abuse on one hand and child poverty of the other, or links between the success of government sponsored child support policies and programmes and wider social spending strategies.

The NZ Treasury's Budget 2014 'Managing a Growing Economy' put the emphasis on the responsible management of the Government's finances and building a productive and competitive economy. The third strand that some say stole the Labour Party's social policy, 'provides significant extra support for families and young children who most need our care and protection' including a \$500 million package to support families:

- \$172 million to extend paid parental leave
- \$42 million to increase the parental tax credit
- \$90 million to provide free GP visits and prescriptions for children aged under 13
- \$156 million to help early childhood centres
- \$33 million in 2014/15 to help vulnerable children, including eight new Children's Teams to identify and work with at-risk children¹⁸

While there are many positive aspects to the Budget and to family and children support the central question remains: will these policies and measures reduce child poverty?

This Special Issue takes up the issue of 'children in crisis' from the conference in 2013. We selected a wide range of intersectorial keynote speakers including politicians from government and the opposition but not all have contributed to this Special Issue. Their details though are on the conference website. Everyone was disappointed that the Minister for Social Development and Youth Affairs, Paula Bennett gave very short notice of not being able to attend despite months of negotiations and notice. The substitute speaker, Alfred Ngaro, clearly had not read the Minister's speech notes and appeared to ruffle the audience of practitioners with his off-the-cuff remarks. In contrast, Jacinda Ardern, the Spokesperson for Social Development and Children in Labour's shadow Cabinet was an engaging and passionate speaker on 'Building policies for kids, not electoral cycles'.

Our other excellent keynote speakers included Jonathan Boston, co-author of the EAG report; Susan St John, one of the leaders of the Child Poverty Action Group. Boston and St John have been leading academics who have demonstrated long-time commitments to social justice and equality in New Zealand society and have been instrumental in keeping the issue of child poverty in the public eye. Anthea Simcock (ONZM) Chief Executive of Child Matters, an important child protection social work and education organization based in Hamilton presented 'It takes a Community to Nurture and Protect a child—What we know works'. Justine Cornwall, the Deputy Children's Commissioner in the Office of the Children's Commission presented 'Getting it right for all our children', outlining the issue of child poverty in New Zealand including key statistics, information and the impact poverty has on children's short and longer term outcomes. Helen Harte and Kuni Jenkins, both academics at University of Auckland and from Mana Ririki, presented 'Child Policies and Practices: When NGOs tell their governments about grass roots issues do policies and practices to save the child change?' They discussed the work of Mana Ririki, its research and advocacy role about Maori children and communication with whanau (family) and its political nature. Both the teacher union presidents were keynotes: Angela Roberts, New Zealand Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) presented 'Equipping schools to mitigate the impact of poverty on learners' which presented the PPTA's 'Schools as Community Hubs' policy paper; Judith Nowotarski, NZEI President, questioned, How many more ambulances at the bottom of the cliff? in looking at the Government's Green paper.

This Special Issue comprises a number of selected articles given at the conference and later submitted for this publication. Jonathan Boston's article provides a very

clear answer to the issue *Child Poverty in New Zealand: Why it Matters and how it can be Reduced*. Boston considers the available evidence on child poverty in NZ and explains why it has been tolerated over the last 20 years. He also suggests ways of developing a more child-friendly policy focus in the current political environment. What follows are three short reflections on Boston's article by Tim Dare, Nesta Devine and Liz Gordon.

Susan St. John in her article *Putting Children at the Centre: Making Policy as if Children Mattered* discusses the moral justification for putting children at the centre especially in a policy environment that prioritizes paid work and explains that this 'confusion arises because the unpaid work of caring for children is invisible until it is marketised'. She explores family and child-related policy that in the tradition of egalitarianism puts children first.

The Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA)¹⁹ released their article *Equipping Schools to Fight Poverty: A Community Hub Approach*, that was prepared by Tom Haig and presented by PPTA President Angela Roberts at the Children in Crisis conference as a models to increase 'the provision of health, social and community services to students and their families on school campuses' and the PPTA calls 'on the Ministry of Education to support schools to work in partnership with other agencies in developing and sustaining community hub models'. Arguably this community hub approach is the social democratic reading of *Tomorrow's Schools* rather than the neo-liberal corporate model that was imposed.

E. Jayne White & Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson, both renowned early childhood educators, provide an analysis for focuses on the 'crisis' in the early years. Their article *Global Crisis: Local Reality? An International Analysis of 'Crisis' in the Early Years* examines the local rhetoric and reality in nine countries, considering what counts as a crisis and how it plays out in the local context.

Sarah Te One and her colleagues Rebecca Blaikie, Zoey Caldwell, Michelle Egan-Bitrán in their article *You Can Ask Me if You Really Want to Know What I Think* make a plea for the voices of children and for children to be directly represented in the policy process. This is also a train of argument adopted by Liz Jackson in her article *Won't Somebody Think of the Children?' Emotions, Child Poverty, and Post-humanitarian Possibilities for Social Justice Education*. Finally, Sarah Ashton considers *The Rights of Children and Young People in State Care*.

We are extremely grateful to our contributors who responded to our call and to their efforts in responding to one of the most morally vexing and intolerable situations of our time. We wish also to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the major sponsor, the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia (PESA) and the Wilf Malcom Institute of Educational Research (WMIER) at the University of Waikato for making a substantial contribution to the funding of the conference.

Notes

1. See e.g. <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>; see also <http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm>. See the literature reviews in the bibliography.

2. The poverty measure used by OECD countries (including New Zealand) is a relative poverty measure based on 'economic distance', of income below 60% of the median household income. In contrast the World Bank measures absolute poverty, defining extreme poverty as living on less than \$US1.25/day and moderate poverty as less than \$2/day. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Measuring_poverty
3. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9,780,199,791,231/obo-9,780,199,791,231-0134.xml>
4. Remarks at the dedication of the Hubert H. Humphrey Building, November 1, 1977, *Congressional Record*, November 4, 1977, vol 123, p. 37,287. See http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Hubert_Humphrey
5. See <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106,689>
6. The gini coefficient is a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent the income distribution of a nation's residents. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gini_coefficient).
7. See http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2011/pdf_files/full_hbai12.pdf (p.60).
8. See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/9/contents>
9. See <https://www.education.gov.uk/.../Entitlement%20Equality%20IA.doc>
10. See <http://www.cpag.org.nz/>
11. See <http://www.occ.org.nz/>
12. The conference organizers were M. Peters, T. Besley, J. White, Paul Flanagan, Karaitiana Tamatea, Timotei Vaoileti, all from the University of Waikato.
13. See <http://2013cic.wordpress.com/>. The site provides latest news items, the conference programme, keynote speakers (abstracts and biographies), information of the venue, organizers, sponsors and also presenters' materials.
14. See the OCC at <http://www.occ.org.nz/>; the EAG report at <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/EAG/Final-report/Final-report-Solutions-to-child-poverty-evidence-for-action.pdf>; and the 2013 progress report at <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Publications/EAG-Child-Poverty-Progress-29Oct13.pdf>
15. See <http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/>
16. See <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-children%E2%80%99s-teams-announced>
17. See <http://beehive.govt.nz/release/investing-protect-our-most-vulnerable-children>
18. See <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/budget/2014/execsumm/04.htm>. See also the Budget website <http://m.budget.govt.nz/>
19. See <http://www.ppta.org.nz/>

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