

Poverty has many forms and characteristics that affect individuals and families in many different ways. What being poor or living in poverty means to one person may mean something completely different to another person. It doesn't always mean you're homeless or without food, it doesn't mean that your clothes are old and ratty, poverty is not what always meets the eye. I believe one doesn't truly understand the full meaning of poverty until they have lived it themselves.

In the PBS documentary *Poor Kids*, we get a glimpse into the lives of three families who are living in poverty. The families featured in *Poor Kids* have faced different situations that have led them to living in poverty. The first family featured is a family of four, the father just lost his job and they have downsized houses in order to save money. This family makes sacrifices each month when deciding which bills to pay. Later in the documentary, the mom becomes pregnant with their third child creating more stress on their financial status. The second family is a single mom with two kids. The mom is currently in school and has a monthly income of \$1480. After paying her bills which usually add up to \$1326, she finds it hard to buy groceries and gas for her car. The last family featured lives in a homeless shelter after the recession caused the father to lose his job. The father now works in a factory and the family makes a four hour round trip every day to get him to his job site.

This documentary offers a unique perspective through the children's eyes as they navigate life living in poverty. The children's ages range from nine years to fourteen years of age. I was surprised to see how aware these children are of their parents financial situation. To hear these children as young as nine years of age talk about paying bills and how they have adapted to help their family is astounding. I don't think that I had even processed what bills meant at that age, nonetheless, understood if the bills weren't paid our power or utilities would be shut off. Hearing the different perspectives these children have on their life and current living situation is heartbreaking, it doesn't seem fair to see what they are facing at such a young age. One child uses the money he makes from mowing lawns to help his mother

with gas and groceries, one goes around town looking for cans to recycle for money. Other children discuss the importance of their academics hoping that will be their way out of their current situation.

The Hard Times Generation video shows us the harsh reality of being homeless and living in cars. The children featured in this video are mostly scared of living in this situation, most being afraid of being hurt or robbed when they park their car for the night. It was surprising to see the amount of homeless children in this video and in the state of Florida. Some children were tolerable with their living situation and stated that it was an adventure, while others hoped to make it to a motel to have some sense of normalcy. One family was painting rooms of a motel in exchange of being able to stay in a room.

Childhood trauma affects brain development, immune system function, hormone secretion, and the way DNA is read and transcribed. Childhood trauma can range from abuse or neglect or having a parent that suffers from substance dependence or mental illness. When children are exposed to these traumas in high doses, it can lead to severe complications such as heart disease as well as a 20-year difference in life expectancy. Nadine Burke Harris used the example of if 100 children were drinking from the same water well and 98 of them began to have diarrhea, are you going to keep giving antibiotics or start to question what is wrong with the watering well. During her TED talk she discusses the science behind how being exposed to trauma affects the development of a child's brain making them more likely to engage in high risk behavior. Children are very sensitive to repeated stress activation because their bodies and brain are developing, as doctors and nurses, it's our job to prevent exposure and provide treatment.

This assignment has taught me that poverty does not discriminate, there is more to someone's story than what meets the eye. I may not always be able to tell if a patient of mine is living in poverty or living out of their car, and if they are it will not change the way I treat them. When that patient or family is in my care, I am their advocate and they will be treated with kindness and respect. I will also do my part to make sure to connect them to proper resources before discharge so that one less burden will be

placed on the families shoulders. In nursing school we learn about different disease process and are taught how to care for patients with certain diseases. This assignment has opened my eyes to the other side of patient care in that it may not always be about treating a disease, sickness or symptom. Now when I ask myself "how can I care for this patient?", I will not only think of what I can do while they are in my care, but what I can do when they leave my care outside of the hospital or clinic setting.