

Shame by dick
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Trey Swearingen ENG 100 Instructor: Charley Duvaal March 7, 2013 word count: 1643 Psychological Effects of Poverty The psychological effects of poverty on children are embarrassment and public humiliations of dealing with poverty. Imagine going to school without breakfast, much sleep and clothes that may still be wet from the night before since they didn't dry due to a lack of appropriate appliances.

Many people face these hardships everyday and they learn to cope with them in the best way they can. In the short story "Shame" by Dick Gregory, he writes about his life and how he went through those same things as a kid growing up in poverty. He clearly shows that poverty brings much privation as well as a great deal of shame. However, there are still ways to gain pride and happiness. This story shows that by emulating somebody you respect, even a very poor person can derive pride from small actions, which the average person sees as insignificant.

Related essay: Shame is Worth a Try

They have to deal with being put in a stereotype for "poor" or "lower income" people. The psychological effects of poverty on children are the lowering of self-esteem, being isolated, and becoming determined. So what is it exactly that creates a rift between children from low income homes and those living above the poverty line? For one, these children lack the stability that comes with a higher income home. This means not having the things that other children have, from adequate nutrition to weather appropriate clothing.

In addition, less income generally means there are fewer opportunities for activities and learning experiences. Gregory tells of his shame of living in poverty, and having only one set of clothes and a jacket that welfare gave to all the poor children. Gregory writes, " There was shame in wearing the brown and orange and white plaid mackinaw the welfare gave to 3, 000 boys. Why did it have to be the same for everybody so when you walked down the street the people could see you were on relief? " (194). He is expressing how inadequate he felt compared to children from higher means.

He saw that they were able to afford nicer things. Children face monumental hardships in our country because of poverty or the condition of not possessing the means to afford basic human needs. Children are under a lot of pressure in today's society to excel in everything they do: from school to sports. Being a child in poverty adds even more stress that can ultimately be detrimental to a child. Poverty causes a rift in children who live above the poverty line and those below the poverty line. In general, children from homes living under the poverty line have poorer performance in school.

Emotional development is lower in poverty children than those children who live in homes whose income is above the poverty line. In the short story, " Shame", Richard is a poor boy without a father, living in the ghetto. However, there is a girl at school named Helene that he is in love with. Unlike Richard, Helene is well off, wears clean clothes, and is very smart in school. Richard tries very hard to be like Helene. He melts the ice water from the grocery store so he should be able to wash his clothes for the next day of school. The only reason he goes to school is for her. Everyone else condemns his behavior.

Nobody understands that the reason why he does not function like everyone else was because when he gets up in the morning he does not have breakfast. Nobody realizes that he is just another boy who wants to be recognized and seen as just a normal kid like everyone else. They do not comprehend how hard he is trying to accomplish that. While everybody else is having fun after school, he is shining shoes just to get a little change so he could get by. When the day comes that the kids pledge their fathers' money to the Community Chest, naturally Richard wants to match Helene's pledge.

However, when Richard gets up to match Helene's amount, the teacher becomes upset at Richard. She said, firstly, that the money is for "him and his kind," and therefore, if he is able to give, he has no reason to be receiving relief. Secondly, she said that he did not even have a daddy. The story shows many different aspects in which poor people suffer, and also things that they may derive pride from that we do not understand. It also shows that the emotions that they show and actions that they do, regardless of how weird or unimportant they seem, may provide great relief and happiness to a poor person.

Growing up in poverty can take a toll on anyone; not having money can affect the biggest of people, and the smallest, black or white, male or female. Many people living in poverty have to deal with the stereo-types and there are many of those. Dick Gregory writes in his essay "The teacher thought I was a troublemaker. All she saw from the front of the room was a little black boy who squirmed in his idiot's seat and made noises and poked

the kids around him. I guess she could not see a kid who made noises because he wanted someone to know he was there” (192).

This excerpt from his story describes the stereo-types of stereo-types, assuming that this little boy is a bad seed because of his color and financial background. Many emotional aspects are damaged in life because of many reasons, being poor can have a damaging result on your Self- Respect. People tormenting you, teasing you, making you feel unworthy, and unwelcome, unappreciated can ruin your self- esteem, making you feel exactly what they said you are. Gregory writes about a man in his story, a wino, which was living in poverty as well.

The old man was hungry, went to a restaurant and to eat, and when it was time to pay he had no money. Gregory writes “ The old wino sat down at the counter and ordered twenty-six cents worth offood. He ate it like he really enjoyed it. When the owner, Mister Williams, asked him to pay the check, the old wino didn’t lie or go through his pocket like he suddenly found a hole. He just said: “ Don’t have no money. ” The owner yelled: “ Why in hell you come in here and eat my food if you don’t have no money? That food cost me money. Mister Williams jumped over the counter and knocked the wino off his stool and beat him over the head with a pop bottle. The he stepped back and watched the wino bleed. Then he kicked him, and kicked him again” (195). Gregory made it strongly clear that this man had lost all self respect for him self, to just let the owner rag on him, and beat him. Poverty can make you feel worthless and like you do not deserve respect from anyone. Poverty can affect anyone; I have dealt with poverty first hand. When I was in eighth grade I went on a mission trip with my church to New Orleans.

It was right after hurricane Katrina had hit and everything was destroyed. Damage estimated was in the tens of billions of dollars. At least one million people in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama were without electrical power, and it took weeks to fully restore service to all affected regions. Clean drinking water was scarce, and the flood waters were covering city streets that were contaminated with gas from ruptured gas lines, chemicals and human waste, raising a serious danger of infectious disease.

Poverty affected almost every single person in New Orleans. It was a heartbreaking trip but I was glad to be able to help people rebuild their houses and help them start new lives. I have also dealt with shame and how it can also make you feel worthless. I personally felt sad when I read parts in "Shame" about his teacher embarrassing him. This reminded me of a time when I was in elementary school. One day, in my fourth grade class, my teacher, Miss Brooks, called on me to give the answer to a geography problem the class was working on.

Although I was not afraid to speak out in class, most of the class was having problems with this particular problem, so I was not too confident I had the right answer. However, I gave the answer I had anyway, and it turned out to be wrong. At first, I was not too upset, but almost immediately, Mrs. Brooks began to laugh, and then the whole class started to laugh. I felt so sad and embarrassed that I almost fainted and fell out of my chair. I always remember that day as one of the saddest days of my life. These are just a few examples of how poor people can get pride and happiness from small actions that we do not understand.

Also, we see how they can sometimes be misunderstood when they do these actions. In general, we should try to be more yielding and considerate of such people. We should see ourselves in these situations and try to understand. In conclusion, many children are in need of our attention. The best we can offer them is positive remarks and acknowledgment. Whatever we tell them stays in their memory for a long time and would affect their thought processes. As seen in the "Shame" essay, the child felt humiliated by the teacher's criticism. That criticism made him realize how different he really is.