# Diversity Competence Essay (ie: "Major Assignment")

# Assignment 1: Diversity Competence Research

**Topic: “Children living in poverty”**

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# Introduction

The chosen group is Children living in poverty in Canada. This group experiences a variety of issues, including limited access to school, poor health, and financial difficulties. Given their disparate backgrounds, they share comparable narratives of marginalization and structural problems. The focus of this essay is the multifaceted nature of child poverty and how it affects children's health, education, and overall well-being. The organization's Pathways to Education and Canadian Feed the Children use these measures to address issues and provide assistance to underprivileged children and their parents. We can start a culture in Canada that prevents the cycle of poverty and promotes happiness for all children by implementing equity and whole-family interventions.

# Children Living in Poverty

A systematic denial of life's possibilities and necessities faces Canada's various impoverished children. Some children come from families where parents are separated, immigrant families, indigenous/native communities, and families with disabilities with distinct backgrounds (Anzovino et al., 2019). Despite different demographics, they share similar economic poverty, and lack of access to education, health care, and social services and they tend to experience adverse outcomes. Dispersed geographically across urban, suburban, and rural areas, they face particular challenges influenced by regional inequalities in housing affordability, job opportunities, and access to basic services (Anzovino et al., 2019). To meet the needs of children living in poverty, Canada should promote holistic approaches that focus on equity and social inclusion as well as children-centered intervention aiming at stopping the intergenerational poverty cycle and enhancing the well-being and potential of children.

As per the latest figures, around 1.2 million children were living in low-income Canadian households in 2015, amounting to about 17 percent of all Canadian children (Young, 2017). However, the year 2020 witnessed an increase to 15.2%, which is quite a worrying sign (Canada, 2022). The rate of child poverty demonstrates regional differences, from 14 percent in Quebec to an alarming 38 percent in the territories (Zhang & Bernard, 2022). According to recent information from 2024, the child poverty rate fell to 9.7% which was largely due to an increase in government transfers that included the CCB which also had extra pandemic relief benefits (Bush, 2024). The improvement notwithstanding, specific populations like racialized, Indigenous, immigrant, and single-parent families, face higher risks of poverty. The statistics reinforce the persistent obstacles of child poverty in Canada and magnify the ongoing requirement for custom-tailored interventions and programs to address systemic disparities and enhance the welfare of children in need.

# Challenges faced by the group:

## Poor health outcomes:

Children in poverty are faced with a multitude of health problems through which their entire well-being is compromised. As per the study, they are at a risky end to experience low birth weight as they are individuals who suffer from asthma, type 2 diabetes, and malnutrition (Anzovino et al., 2019). The genesis of these health inequities is inadequate access to fundamental healthcare services such as prescription drugs and dental care which are usually not affordable to families living in poverty. There is more, research that highlights the fact that lower socioeconomic status comes hand in hand with high mortality rates due to cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, and cancer even in countries with universal healthcare systems. The study reported that the mortality rate ratio of the lowest SES group relative to the highest SES group was 1.6 for men and 1.4 for women (Meisel et al., 2022). Secondly, childhood poverty is related to higher levels of physiological stress and reduced memory in adulthood. Research showed that for every year of poverty experienced during childhood, there was a 1.4% increase in allostatic load, the biomarker of chronic stress (Meisel et al., 2022). Such findings accentuate the urgency of targeted intervention aimed at countering the systematic inequalities that propagate poor health outcomes in children living in poverty.

## Lower academic achievement:

Poverty in childhood has a deep impact on academic success in childhood which affects their future success and hence passes on the cycles of unfortunate events. The research consistently shows that poor children are behind their middle-class counterparts in academic achievement, leaving lasting effects on their later course of life. Research shows that poverty not only damages children's cognitive development but also decreases their interest in school and their motivation as well (Anzovino et al., 2019). It translates into the persisting gaps in education and restricted lateral mobility. An analysis was conducted which indicated that the poor children perform poorly as compared to their middle-class mates in schools, and eventually in their working life. The report points to the harmful impact of low SES and adversity on educational success, revealing that the children of low-income families enter high school with literacy skills five years behind those of their high-income peers when they start high school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Likewise, UNICEF Canada’s findings highlight the prevalence of academic gaps among impoverished kids, with major score gaps in reading, mathematics, and science compared to their wealthier peers. This calls for holistic approaches that seek to alleviate the key determinants of poverty alongside ensuring that all children enjoy equal chances of accessing quality education, irrespective of their socioeconomic status.

## Social stigma and discrimination:

Poverty to children makes not only the material privations of their surroundings but also the oligarchous mischief of social stigma and discrimination. Although efforts have been made to eliminate child poverty, such sentiment continues to reinforce bias, induced by a sense of guilt, shame, and othering (Anzovino et al., 2019). Such attitudes reinforce a general feeling of social rejection and segregation, depriving children of their dignity and making them feel alienated. Meisel et al.'s study shows the devastating effect of a social stigma on young adults who have not attended 4-year colleges - they are more anxious and depressed. Similarly, the framework of Stangl et al. shows that prejudice related to health propagates poverty pitfalls that prevent children from accessing essential resources, support networks, and healthcare facilities. Such dynamics perpetuate the cycles of poverty and inequality which in turn institutionalize the structural mechanisms which violate the rights and well-being of children (Anzovino et al., 2019). To overcome social stigma and discrimination it takes more than fighting prejudice; it also involves an effort to build empathy and understanding and the formation of communities that accept all and every child is important too.

# Local organizations that could support the group

## Pathways to Education:

Pathways to Education started in 2001 in Regent Park, Toronto, and deals with educational gaps in low-income neighborhoods. Initially from Toronto's low graduation rate- 56% in Regent Park and 81% in Ontario, the organization now runs in 20 locations across the nation (Cotrina, 2018). It supports more than 5000 students with holistic services through academic, financial, social, and advocacy pillars such as tutoring, mentoring, scholarships, and career guidance. Pathways has gained recognition having received awards such as the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship (Cotrina, 2018). Pathways to Education, by engaging at-risk youth to graduate from high school and pursue their further education or training afterward aims to end the poverty cycle and also to bring about lasting, positive changes in the communities. Its effects transcend graduation rates; instead, it prepares students with the required skills and resources necessary for career, college, and life success.

## Canadian Feed The Children:

Established in 1986, Canadian Feed The Children strives to alleviate food insecurity and improve children's lifestyles domestically and internationally (Children's Charity Canada, 2022). In partnership with local partners, it bolsters food security, health, education, and livelihoods for Indigenous communities in Canada and children in developing nations. It is one of the top 100 Canadian charity organizations (Children's Charity Canada, 2022). It has been recognized by various highly respectable accolades, for instance, the Canadian Network for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health Impact Award. Through tackling systemic barriers and child sponsorship, the organization envisions executing a sustainable approach to poverty elimination and lifting vulnerable children and families in every corner of the globe. The programs target immediate relief initiatives as well as interventions aimed at building resilience and empowering communities to initiate and sustain positive change.

# Conclusion

Child poverty can only be addressed through a holistic approach where all dimensions of equity, social inclusion, and child-centered approaches are prioritized. Organizations such as Pathways to Education and Canadian Feed The Children act as the pillars of support and systemic change. We shall have a fair society where all children prosper by targeting the root causes and strengthening the disadvantaged kids and families.

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