

Bringing Psychologists to the Fight Against Deep Poverty

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This article describes the history, inspiration, goals, and outputs of the 2019 APA Presidential Initiative on Deep Poverty. Historically, psychologists have contributed to understanding the causes and consequences of poverty, as well as in interventions to ameliorate its effects. Less attention has been paid, however, to psychologists' unique contributions to studying and ending *deep poverty*, despite psychology's obvious relevance to the topic. As such, a working group was formed to develop the Deep Poverty Initiative (DPI), which had 3 main goals to engage psychologists in the fight against deep poverty: (a) change attitudes and perceptions about people living in deep poverty, (b) change policy to increase support for safety-net programs, and (c) change practices by increasing the use of psychological science and practice to build the capacity of poverty-serving organizations. First, 5 main themes from the psychological literature on deep poverty were identified by the DPI working group as crucial to changing attitudes. Compared to poverty, deep poverty was found to be especially dehumanizing, difficult to exit, and complex to solve, while also causing additional physical and psychological harm and obscuring human strengths. With this information as a basis, the working group mobilized psychologists to use the psychological science, along with their skills and positions within communities, to achieve the remaining goals of the initiative. Specific outputs, lessons learned, and suggestions for future work to continue to bring psychologists to the fight against deep poverty are given.

Public Significance Statement

Psychologists have contributed to understanding deep poverty and developing and applying interventions to end it. Yet, their increased advocacy and mobilization is needed to use this knowledge to change incorrect attitudes and perceptions about deep poverty, as well as to change practice and policy at both local and national levels. The 2019 APA Presidential Initiative on Deep Poverty provided psychologists with a variety of opportunities and tools to begin this work.

Keywords: deep poverty, poverty, economic inequality, socioeconomic status, presidential initiative

The official poverty rate in the United States in 2018 was 11.8%, which is approximately 38.1 million people and the lowest poverty rate since before the Great Recession began

in 2007 (Semega, Kollar, Creamer, & Mohanty, 2019). The poverty rate, however, reports only the number of people below the federal poverty line; it does not indicate how far

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below that line individuals are falling. Within government statistics, *deep poverty* is defined as having less income than half of the federal poverty line (\$6,244 or less for a single person; \$12,547 or less for a family of four), and it is one way to measure depth of poverty. At the same time that the overall poverty rate was falling, 45.3% of those who fell below the poverty line were in deep poverty—approximately 17.3 million people or 5.3% of all individuals in the United States.¹ Thus, a large portion of those in poverty in the United States are facing extreme poverty.

Although true that the United States has a long history of both poverty among its people (Isenberg, 2016) and political policies to mitigate economic hardship (Piven & Cloward, 1971), the statistics related to deep poverty are especially concerning because they represent a change in the amount and distribution of the depth of poverty over the last few decades (Ben-Shalom, Moffitt, & Scholz, 2011). Although the 5.3% deep poverty rate cited above is lower than the 6.7% high point during the Great Recession in 2010 when the overall poverty rate was 15.1%, it is similar to the numbers from 2006 and 2007 just prior to the recession when the overall poverty rate was similar to today at 12.3 and 12.5%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). At the same time, deep poverty is currently 2 full percentage points higher than the rate in 1976 when the overall poverty rate was the same as it is today at 11.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Consequently, although the percentage of deep poverty often rises and falls in conjunction with overall poverty rate, there is more deep poverty today than four decades ago when the overall rate was the same.

Scholars have found that welfare reform in 1996 hastened the increase in deep poverty when it fundamentally undercut

the safety-net programs available for the most economically vulnerable Americans, increasing depth of poverty for these groups. For example, the number of children in deep poverty rose by 700,000 over 20 years from just prior to welfare reform in 1995 until 2005 (Sherman & Trisi, 2014). Welfare reform also made existing programs less effective in raising those in deep poverty up to, or above, the poverty line (Ziliack, 2011). As a result, the experience of deep poverty is now increasingly common (Edin & Shafer, 2015) but not distributed equally across groups.

At the same time, there has been no corresponding comprehensive national policy to aid people who find themselves at the bottom of an ever increasingly steep economic ladder, despite global attention to the issue. In its annual assessment of the U.S. economy in 2016, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned the United States that despite a strong economy, its high poverty rate, if left unchecked, could erode future growth and the standard of living (IMF, 2016). Consistent with this warning, but in much stronger language, United Nations (UN) special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights Philip Alston pointed out in the following year that although the United States could eliminate extreme poverty, it is steadfastly choosing not to. He called these choices human rights violations, which he believes are undermining the country's democracy (UN, 2017).

It was in the context of increasing attention to deep poverty in the United States that the first author launched the 2019 APA Presidential Initiative on Deep Poverty. She was specifically interested in what, if any, unique contribution psychologists could make to both the science of deep poverty and solutions to ameliorate it within the United States.² She then sought to mobilize psychologists to use this knowledge, along with their skills and positions within communities, to collaborate on solutions.

The present article details these efforts by first discussing the history and inspiration for the goals of the DPI. Next, an analysis conducted by the DPI on the psychological differences between poverty and deep poverty is presented, be-

¹ As of this writing in March 2020, the most recent U.S. Census Bureau statistics on poverty and deep poverty were for 2018. Although the COVID-19 pandemic is currently unfolding, it will not show up in the next census data in September 2020 because that data release will showcase the numbers for fiscal year 2019, and the economic effects of COVID-19 did not unfold in the United States until spring 2020. Despite these limitations, the numbers provided here are even more useful because they represent a "best case" rather than a "worst case" scenario. Pandemics and associated economic contractions are likely to exacerbate the arguments and data that follow in this article, and the current events around the COVID-19 pandemic further underscore the vital role that psychologists can play in the fight against deep poverty.

² Although deep poverty is a global concern, the present article focuses specifically on deep poverty in the United States for three main reasons: (a) the Deep Poverty Initiative was a product of the American Psychological Association, a U.S.-based organization; (b) the psychologists convened for the DPI were U.S. poverty experts; and (c) much of the psychological data on deep poverty utilizes U.S. samples.



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fore discussing how this information was used to achieve the goals of the DPI. The article concludes by tracing the lessons learned from this initiative and providing suggestions for continuing the work of bringing psychologists to the fight against deep poverty.

History, Inspiration, and Goals of the APA Presidential Initiative on Deep Poverty

Although psychologists have not studied poverty as intently as other social problems, they have offered important insights (Williams, 2009, 2019). As noted in a recent special issue of the *American Psychologist*, psychologists' unique contributions include understanding the causes and consequences of poverty, as well as developing and implementing interventions to ameliorate its effects (Bullock, 2019). For instance, psychological research has demonstrated that individuals believe there is more economic mobility than there actually is (Davidai & Gilovich, 2015) and that these kinds of individualistic explanations for poverty are associated with support for restrictive poverty policies (Bullock, Williams, & Limbert, 2003). Yet, when individualistic beliefs in mobility are challenged, defense of the current systems that limit mobility decreases (Day & Fiske, 2017). Thus, psychological research on attitudes and perceptions plays two important roles in the fight against poverty: helping individuals understand the barriers to leaving poverty and providing tools to persuade individuals to support poverty alleviation programs.

Psychologists' interest in, and insights about, poverty are not new. Archival analysis indicates that psychologists have long been studying issues of poverty, including the psycho-

logical effects of unemployment in the 1930s and evaluating antipoverty programs in the 1960s–1970s (Bullock, Lott, & Truong, 2011). In more recent decades, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2000) formalized its commitment to issues of socioeconomic status (SES) by first adopting as policy the Resolution on Poverty and Socioeconomic Status, then convening the APA Task Force on Socioeconomic Status in 2005, and finally adopting its recommendation to the create both an office and a standing committee on SES (APA, 2007).

Yet, psychologists have not always disaggregated data about poverty from deep poverty in their research, making it difficult to determine whether there is a unique contribution by psychologists to the study of deep poverty beyond insights about poverty generally. Similarly, psychological science is not always used to create interventions targeted specifically for deep poverty. Research by social scientists other than psychologists tends to dominate national discussions of deep poverty, despite psychology's clear contributions.

Two studies by economists that captured national headlines in 2016 and 2017 are illustrative. Contradicting closely held beliefs about opportunity for economic mobility, Chetty and Hendren (2016) found that moving from the economic bottom to the top is very difficult in the United States. They reported that the highest percentage chance of moving from the bottom quintile to the top quintile is greatest in San Jose, California, where the chance is 12.9%. In Memphis, Tennessee, that percentage drops to 3%. In the following year, Case and Deaton (2017) found that mortality rates for White non-Hispanic men and women without college degrees have been increasing, whereas the same rates for non-Hispanic Whites with a college education have been falling, as have the rates for Black and Hispanic communities regardless of education. The explanation for why is tied to job losses in sectors like manufacturing and coal mining for non-Hispanic Whites without a college education. The resulting economic inequalities from these losses are causing hopelessness and prompting increases in drug overdoses, alcohol-related deaths, and suicide, leading Case and Deaton to coin the term *deaths of despair* to describe these deaths.

As an avid listener to National Public Radio, Rosie Phillips Davis heard stories highlighting both these studies, and they caught her attention for a couple of reasons. First, as a child who lived in deep poverty in Memphis but who was now in the top economic quintile, when she heard mention of her hometown in Chetty and Hendren's (2016) research, it made her wonder how she had made it out of deep poverty when so many others around her had not. Second, as a practicing psychologist herself, and given that psychologists are on the front lines of treatment for addiction and suicide prevention, she pondered what psychology could add to

discussions of deaths of despair that economists might be missing.

Together, then, Rosie Phillips Davis recognized that although there was significant work across disciplines on poverty, not nearly enough attention was being paid by psychologists to deep poverty specifically. Moreover, it seemed to her that psychologists' particular set of skills—from science, education, practice, and policy—could be better utilized in this fight given psychology's obvious applications to ideas like economic mobility and deaths of despair. Knowing at that time (in 2017) that she would need to lead the American Psychological Association (APA) as its president in 2019, she particularly wanted to galvanize psychologists to do more to fight deep poverty (and the attendant physical and mental health consequences) through an APA presidential initiative on the topic. Consistent with the call by Bullock (2019) to bring our “insights to the forefront of our discipline and the national discourse on poverty” (p. 637), as president she felt that an initiative of the APA presented an opportunity to highlight deep poverty to a national, and even international, audience. It was an opportunity to provide psychologists with tangible examples of what they could do to move the needle on deep poverty.

With the support of APA staff from the Office on Socioeconomic Status (OSES), the Public Interest Directorate's Government Relations Office, and Communications, a call for a working group was created in summer 2018, and Wendy R. Williams was asked to chair the working group. Six additional working group members were chosen in fall 2018 for their expertise on issues of poverty (APA, 2019d). All members were psychologists who represented several subdisciplines, including social, developmental, clinical, and community psychology. They joined the APA president, the working group chair, APA staff, a graduate student research assistant, and OSES interns. The hope was that the work of the DPI would subsequently be permanently housed within the OSES, with ongoing support from the Public Interest Directorate's Government Relations staff, allowing the work to continue long after the DPI concluded at the end of 2019.

In determining the goals of the DPI, consideration was given to (a) where psychology had already made strong contributions and (b) where impact was most needed. By keeping these two considerations central to the work, the working group felt that psychologists would be best positioned to make a significant contribution. Toward the first point, compared to other fields, one of psychology's unique contributions is understanding attitudes and perceptions generally and applying this knowledge to understanding poverty specifically. In addition, because research has demonstrated that beliefs about the causes of poverty and mobility are often incorrect (Williams, 2019), basic psycholog-

ical science on attitude change could be better harnessed to increase endorsement of antipoverty programs.

Toward the second point, people living in poverty are impacted not only by broad public policy decisions but also by how these get implemented in their local communities (Reppond & Bullock, 2018). Because psychologists are located in a variety of settings, including in government and community organizations, aiming the DPI goals at both policy and practice would harness the full potential of psychologists' social locations to make a difference. Focusing on policy and practice would ensure that scientific evidence was used as the basis for the creation and implementation of antipoverty policies, while also making it available to community organizations to aid them in amplifying their effectiveness. Consequently, the three goals of the APA Presidential Initiative on Deep Poverty were as follows:

- *Change attitudes and perceptions.* Utilize psychological science (along with related communications science in framing and persuasion) to challenge biases, stereotypes, prejudicial attitudes, and narratives about people living in poverty that lead to discriminatory behaviors and decision-making.
- *Change policy.* Reframe negative poverty-related attitudes to garner political support for effective safety-net and other scalable programming that benefit those living in deep poverty and mitigate ineffective or inequitable policies.
- *Change practice.* Build the capacity of poverty-serving organizations to access and utilize psychological science to more effectively promote and implement evidence-based antipoverty programming and policies in their communities of influence.

Because policy and practice goals needed to be grounded in accurate attitudes and perceptions, parsing the difference between psychology's contributions to studying poverty from their contributions to deep poverty was an essential first step for the group. In late 2018, the working group began meeting virtually, followed by two in-person meetings in early and then mid-2019. The working group began by examining differences and similarities in the causes, consequences, and solutions for those in poverty versus those in deep poverty.

What Does the Psychological Research About Deep Poverty Reveal?

When the literature was examined for disaggregated differences between psychological knowledge about poverty versus deep poverty, five themes emerged: deep poverty (a) is dehumanizing, (b) is physically and psychologically harmful, (c) is difficult to exit, (d) is complex to solve, and (e) obscures humans' strengths. What follows is a brief synopsis of the conclusions of the working group on these

themes, with examples from the literature given for illustrative, rather than exhaustive, purposes to highlight the differences.

Deep Poverty Is Dehumanizing

The experience of poverty is dehumanizing, but the experience of deep poverty is especially brutal. Numerous quantitative and qualitative studies have demonstrated that those at the bottom of the economic ladder are disparaged, discounted, belittled, and ignored, but the denial of humanity is especially prevalent for those without housing or who are receiving public assistance (Desmond, 2016; Harris & Fiske, 2006; Lankenau, 1999; Nicolas & Jean Baptiste, 2001). Negative beliefs about those in poverty begin at a young age (Mistry, Brown, White, Chow, & Gillen-O'Neel, 2015; Weinger, 2000), and they result in both cognitive and behavioral distancing from low-income individuals (Lott, 2002). For instance, cognitive distancing occurs when beliefs about the causes of poverty and inequality inhibit empathy for those in deep poverty or undermine support for policies that alleviate economic suffering (Bullock et al., 2003; Day & Fiske, 2017; Hafer & Choma, 2009; Piff et al., 2018; Rodriguez-Bailon et al., 2017). Similarly, behavioral distancing occurs when education, employment, health care, housing, and legal systems seek to isolate, or give different treatment to, low-income individuals compared to others (Downing, LaVeist, & Bullock, 2007; Halpern, 1993; Kozol, 1991; Kroft, Lange, & Notowidigdo, 2012; Reiman, 2004). Policies that problematize or criminalize poverty among those at the very bottom, like "sleeping bans" or withholding economic support from individuals not deemed sufficiently "worthy," are especially dehumanizing (Bullock, Truong, & Chhun, 2017; Repond & Bullock, 2018). The result of these combined interpersonal and institutional injustices is that the psychological experience of deep poverty is particularly cruel, demeaning, and inhumane.

Deep Poverty Is Physically and Psychologically Harmful

Although psychological research has shown that poverty is harmful for both adults and children, the consequences for those in deep poverty are even worse. A large body of research has demonstrated that material hardship negatively impacts behavioral, cognitive, linguistic, physical, and socioemotional outcomes. The data for children, from infancy through adolescence, are strong and consistent; poverty is indisputably detrimental to children (Duncan, Magnuson, & Votruba-Drzal, 2015; Heberle & Carter, 2015; McLoyd, 1998; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, & Medicine, 2019; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012; Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee, 2012). Poverty affects everything from their motivation and intentions regarding their education

(Destin, 2017; Destin & Oyserman, 2009) to their likelihood of repeating grades and dropping out of school (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000).

The data concerning the psychological effect of scarcity (i.e., feeling like one has less than they need) on both executive functioning and cognitive bandwidth are especially powerful. These effects include decreased ability to think about items not immediately present, make complex decisions, and move attention between tasks. When these effects are combined, it leads to decisions that maximize short-term over long-term gains (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013).

As a result, psychological research on scarcity has helped explain what often appear to be "bad" decisions by those in deep poverty (e.g., taking payday loans, spending money on consumer products like phones and computers) because those same decisions often maximize a short-term "good" (e.g., meeting rent that month, providing a point of contact for potential employers, and access to the Internet for job searches). Because scarcity exerts effects on the cognition of people who have resources (but who are temporarily deprived of them), as well as with actually economically deprived individuals, choices made under scarcity must not be interpreted as reflecting the character or intellect of people themselves (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). Rather, they are best understood as the direct result of the situation of deprivation. In other words, anyone, if they are in scarce-resource conditions, makes the same kind of short-term over long-term decisions, and more encompassing scarcity leads to stronger negative effects (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013).

These findings are in direct contrast to dominant narratives that attribute poverty to individual shortcomings (e.g., laziness, irresponsibility, lack of competence; Fiske, 2012) rather than structural causes (e.g., discrimination, lack of good-paying jobs; Hunt & Bullock, 2016). Consequently, the effects of scarcity on cognition and behavior are especially important in addressing beliefs about the causes and consequences of deep poverty. Furthermore, they demonstrate a unique psychological contribution to understanding these experiences.

In addition to psychological effects, poverty exerts a strong negative impact on child and adult physical health. Across a variety of measures, from disease acquisition to mortality rates, increasingly negative effects are found with each decrease in economic level (Adler et al., 1994; Adler & Newman, 2002; Braveman, Cubbin, Egerter, Williams, & Pamuk, 2010; Poulton et al., 2002). For example, children in deep poverty are more likely to be obese, have elevated lead levels in their blood, have higher levels of stress, and are less likely to be seen as "flourishing" than either non-poor children or children in poverty who are not deeply poor (Ekono, Jiang, & Smith, 2016).

Deep Poverty Is Difficult to Exit

Deep poverty is particularly difficult to exit because the negative effects of poverty accumulate over time, shaping both short- and long-term outcomes (Dickerson & Popli, 2016; Duncan, Ziol-Guest, & Kalil, 2010). For example, children in deep poverty face more violence, greater pollution, and inferior schools, while managing their situations with less social support, unpredictable surroundings, and low-quality housing (Evans, 2004). Moreover, these environmental factors have long-term effects on mental health, including increasing externalizing behaviors and learned helplessness behaviors (Evans & Cassells, 2014). As risk factors and their effects accumulate, individuals are more likely to experience poverty that is extreme, stable, and chronic, inhibiting their ability to be as successful as their peers who are not in deep poverty at all stages of life (Cuddy, Venator, & Reeves, 2015).

Finally, deep poverty is spread disproportionately across some groups more than others, which adds to the difficulty of exiting poverty. Race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability intersect to increase the risk of experiencing deep poverty. For instance, African Americans, Latinas/os, Native Americans, women, female-headed households, and children experience higher rates of deep poverty than others do (Akee & Simeonova, 2017; Semega et al., 2019). Intersectional feminist research has indicated that low-income individuals in these groups are likely facing discrimination in a variety of settings (e.g., work, school, social services) because of their multiple identities (Weiss & Fine, 2000). Further obstacles, like coping with domestic violence, mental and physical health issues, addictions, and criminal records, add to the difficulty of attaining and maintaining consistent income (Corcoran, Danziger, & Tolman, 2004; Scarbrough, 2001). Accordingly, those in deep poverty have a harder time exiting poverty compared to those closer to the top of the poverty line because of the sheer amount and number of barriers they are facing.

Deep Poverty Is Complex to Solve

Complex and multilayered systems of oppression make deep poverty difficult—but not impossible—to solve. A host of structural inequities causes the circumstances that give rise to economic marginalization and deep poverty (Aron, Jacobson, & Turner, 2013; West-Bey, Mendoza, & Bunts, 2018). As described above, although low and stagnating wages often form the basis of deep poverty, ineffective education and training programs, as well as lack of affordable childcare, transportation, and health care compound the difficulty of finding and maintaining good-paying jobs. Furthermore, weak safety-net programs fail to catch individuals and families on their way down the economic ladder, and regressive taxation and limited tax credits dis-

proportionately penalize low-wage workers. Moreover, violence, addiction, mental and physical health issues—and lack of affordable treatment for them—further restrict individuals' abilities, whereas discrimination exerts cumulative effects, both on individuals and across generations. Together these factors limit opportunities, making escaping deep poverty especially challenging throughout one's lifetime (Belle & Doucet, 2003; Riger, Staggs, & Schewe, 2004; Sawhill, Winship, & Grannis, 2012).

As a result, psychology can uniquely contribute to solutions for deep poverty by helping to shift explanations away from those that emphasize bad choices and poor character to ones that appropriately highlight the role of structural impediments. In fact, when antipoverty programs include comprehensive, structure-based solutions, their impact can be significant (Giannarelli, Lippold, & Martinez-Schiferl, 2012). Moreover, interventions should be coordinated across "silos," because many of the issues faced by those in deep poverty are interwoven. For example, making childcare affordable will not solve issues of adequate transportation, access to physical and mental health care, or low wages. And yet, all of these pieces are important for addressing deep poverty. Consistent with these ideas, a growing body of research has found success utilizing a two-generation approach in which interventions address both parents and children at the same time (Acs & Martin, 2015; Golden, Loprest, & Mills, 2012; Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

Deep Poverty Obscures Humans' Strengths

Because of its dehumanizing effects, the strengths of people living in deep poverty are often obscured. Surviving on less than the federal poverty level requires frugality, creativity, and resourcefulness. Repeated economic setbacks often strengthen perseverance, and political mobilization against class-based injustice can cultivate optimism that the future holds better outcomes. Research that centers the experience of those in poverty as a window to understanding their lives has highlighted some of these positive qualities (Baker Collins, 2005; Cohen & Wagner, 1992; Smith, Baranowski, Abdel-Salam, & McGinley, 2018). Yet many of the insights about the assets of those in deep poverty come from fields outside of psychology (Desmond, 2016; Edin & Shafer, 2015). As some authors have noted (Bullock & Lott, 2001; Williams, 2019), lack of attention to strengths may be because psychology has tended to problematize poverty, focusing more on deficits than resilience.

Nevertheless, a small body of psychological literature has examined resilience among those in deep poverty. To say that resilience in the face of deep poverty is commonplace would be too strong (Infurna & Luthar, 2018). Moreover, individuals who show resilience in one domain can show deficits in another (Luthar, Doernberger, & Zigler, 1993). Yet, the psychological literature has demonstrated that de-

spite the factors stacked against people in poverty, their strengths can be harnessed to achieve better outcomes for them and their families (Luthar & Eisenberg, 2017). For example, both familial (e.g., positive parent–child relations) and structural (e.g., extracurricular activities) opportunities can protect low-income children from the negative consequences of exposure to violence (Hardaway, McLoyd, & Wood, 2012). Recognizing the assets of people in deep poverty, and empowering individuals to take action, are vital to creating solutions to address deep poverty.

Are There Promising Psychology-Based Solutions for Ameliorating Deep Poverty?

Once the working group determined these five themes, they considered what solutions were implicated by the themes and how psychology could best contribute to the amelioration of deep poverty. First, psychological knowledge can be utilized to interrupt the negative outcomes of deep poverty. Because deep poverty results in dehumanizing attitudes, psychology-based interventions that target misconceptions can increase positive attitudes about poverty (Mistry, Nenadal, Griffin, Zimmerman, & Cochran, 2016). Similarly, interventions that address class-based differences in resources and opportunities can improve physical and psychological outcomes, as well as resilience (Hostinar & Miller, 2019; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). Interventions that focus on traditional barriers like lack of housing, equality of opportunity, and school readiness, can influence short- and long-term results that make exiting deep poverty both difficult and complex (Brown, Jason, Malone, Srebnik, & Sylla, 2016; Chetty et al., 2016; Joo et al., 2020; Reynolds, Ou, Mondt, & Giovanelli, 2019).

Second, harnessing basic psychological science to address attitudes and behaviors that have prevented both small- and wide-scale change is a second way that psychology can make a unique impact on deep poverty. For example, a white paper published by ideas42, *Poverty Interrupted: Applying Behavioral Science to the Context of Chronic Scarcity*, details a number of ways that basic psychological science can be employed to mitigate deep poverty's negative effects, cut through needless complexity to reduce barriers to leaving poverty, and leverage the personal empowerment of individuals in deep poverty (Daming, Hayes, Barrows, & Wright, 2015). Specifically, awareness-raising education and persuasion tactics that “nudge” people toward desired behaviors are another way that psychology can be deployed in the fight against deep poverty.

Third, because psychological research has indicated that deep poverty results from complex structural barriers but that recognition of individual human strengths is also important to returning people's humanity, the working

group felt that solutions will require place-based, structural interventions that cut across jurisdictional divides. A number of successful antipoverty programs either have been or are being implemented across the United States to do just that. For example, in New York, the successful Family Rewards program provides cash incentives to families for specific educational, health care, and employment activities linked to economic achievement (Riccio et al., 2010). Similarly, the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis (2020) was able to partner with public and private agencies, local government, service providers, faith-based organizations, granting organizations, residents, and other stakeholders to raise household income by 49% in one of the poorest zip code areas in Memphis by taking a collaborative and community-based approach. Because many psychologists are located within communities, they are well positioned to collaborate with organizations in these types of community-based interventions.

Finally, in addition to these community-based programs, the working group concluded that antipoverty efforts must be supported at the national level by strengthening existing policies. Research has shown that existing policies for combating deep poverty are actually quite effective at raising individuals' economic standing. Although Social Security helps raise the most adults out of deep poverty and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP; formerly food stamps) raises the most children out of deep poverty, it is the combination of programs (i.e., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, housing assistance, refundable tax credits, unemployment insurance) that brings about the strongest reductions in poverty overall (Sherman & Trisi, 2015). Fully funding—and even expanding—these national-level programs will be vital to impacting deep poverty over the long term. Because psychologists can speak with authority on solutions for deep poverty, the working group wanted to mobilize psychologists' policy engagement in advocating for these kinds of antipoverty policies.

Outcomes of the Deep Poverty Initiative Working Group

Despite the effectiveness of the interventions reviewed, large-scale implementation to fight deep poverty has not been achieved. The working group felt that rather than lacking psychological science to support interventions, two key missing variables were psychologists' active awareness of the research on deep poverty and their active engagement in advocacy about deep poverty. As such, President Rosie Phillips Davis and the working group sought first to change psychologists' own attitudes and perceptions about deep poverty before mobilizing

them to change others' attitudes and perceptions, along with policy and practice in their communities. This was a tall order given that, as a presidential initiative, the time line was limited to 1 year. Nevertheless, the below outcomes were achieved.

Talks at State Psychological Associations

As part of the process of changing attitudes and bringing the issues of deep poverty to the forefront of psychology, it was important to use what psychological science has indicated about changing attitudes and behavior with information. According to Clayton and Myers (2015), if people already have positive attitudes about behavior, they only need to be reminded of that behavior to create attitude change. Psychologists tend to have strong social justice values and attitudes, as evidenced by the mission statement of the American Psychological Association ("to promote the advancement, communication, and application of psychological science and knowledge to benefit society and improve lives" APA, 2019e, p. 4). Perhaps gathering in large groups to discuss deep poverty would remind psychologists of the positive attitudes and behaviors they have toward ameliorating deep poverty.

As the working group began meeting to determine its process, content, and outputs, President Rosie Phillips Davis started taking the message "Bringing Psychologists to the Fight Against Deep Poverty" to the membership through numerous speaking engagements. These talks began in January 2018 and carried through until February 2020. In total, she spoke to more than 20 international, national, state, and local psychological associations and other groups of psychologists on campuses like the University of Georgia and the University of Memphis. These talks were aimed at changing attitudes and perceptions by weaving together President Rosie Phillips Davis's personal story with statistics on the prevalence and impact of deep poverty. They concluded by raising awareness of the working group's forthcoming outputs (e.g., the Deep Poverty Challenge and Deep Poverty Toolkit) and by directly encouraging psychologists to bring their skills to bear on ameliorating deep poverty by engaging with and in their communities.

Although there were no direct measures of the impact of the talks, at every event, either during the discussion period or in private communications with Rosie Phillips Davis, psychologists shared their own stories of living in poverty and their plans for committing to some action to impact deep poverty. Some of those commitments included participating in activities of the DPI like the Deep Poverty Challenge or becoming a liaison to the DPI (described below). They also discussed initiating their own personal actions like contacting politicians to advo-

cate for change or participating in feeding the homeless on a weekly basis. Perhaps most rewarding was the number of psychologists who committed to rejoining the APA because they believed it was moving in a direction consistent with their personal values.

National Conversation on Deep Poverty

One of the most significant national events to launch the DPI was the National Conversation on Deep Poverty held on March 1, 2019, at the National Press Club. Although psychology has a unique contribution to studying deep poverty, in order to change attitudes and perceptions, policy, and practice, it is important to engage as many psychologists and partners as possible. As others have noted, if psychologists are to have a lasting impact on poverty, they must partner with other disciplines and agencies to make significant change (Hostinar & Miller, 2019) and to give psychology away for the benefit of society (Slavich, 2009). The National Press Club presented an excellent opportunity for the APA to involve journalists and the media in the conversation on deep poverty. Such exposure would also allow the conversation to live well past the year of the active presidential initiative.

The National Conversation on Deep Poverty event brought together representatives from both inside and outside psychology, including the APA; the National League of Cities; the Urban Institute; and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, and it was moderated by a well-known journalist with over 40 years of experience. Together, the panel explored challenges faced by those living in deep poverty and discussed potential solutions, thereby demonstrating one of the guiding principles of the DPI: to blend psychological science with action to make a difference in moving the needle on deep poverty. The event is archived on the APA's YouTube channel, and it has been viewed over 3,000 times to date (APA, 2019f).

Continuing Education Magazine Story in the *Monitor on Psychology*

To further amplify President Rosie Phillips Davis's message and the work of the DPI to first change attitudes and perceptions among psychologists, the *Monitor on Psychology* published a continuing education magazine story on addressing deep poverty (Greenbaum, 2019). Specifically, the article aimed to (a) define deep poverty and discuss research on its psychological impacts, (b) discuss classism in clinical settings and ways to counteract it, and (c) describe possible interventions to help lift people out of deep poverty. Individuals can earn one continuing education (CE) credit for completing a Commitment-to-Change exer-

cise designed to help facilitate the translation of learning into practice. A copy of the issue with the CE article was also provided in every 2019 APA convention registration packet or bag. Because the story and CE credit are archived on the APA website, this allows individuals to engage in the activity whenever they wish, thereby furthering the goal of changing attitudes, even after the end of the DPI.³

Recruitment of DPI Liaisons

Recognizing that there was a desire on the part of psychologists to get started, additional expertise among members beyond the working group, and a need to have lines of communication from the working group to the membership, we recruited liaisons for bidirectional communication to achieve the DPI goals. Among the tasks liaisons were asked to do were to remain informed about the DPI, provide information and resources from the DPI to their organization, and attend advocacy and training events. Over 100 individuals, including representatives from APA divisions and state psychology associations, responded to the recruitment call. These liaisons attended convention sessions, provided helpful resources for inclusion in the DPI outputs, and distributed announcements about both the Deep Poverty Challenge and Deep Poverty Toolkit (described below). The liaison recruitment represented yet another step in the DPI's goals for mobilizing psychologists to begin to act.

2019 APA Convention Programming

President Rosie Phillips Davis dedicated a block of sessions at 2019 APA convention to helping psychologists learn strategies to better include low-income people in their professional practices and to take actions with local impact to change the practice of psychology. Topics included an intergenerational approach to reducing poverty; a business model for seeing poor people in one's practice; and a community-based effort for reducing food insecurity, social isolation, and poverty among seniors in a Black community. In addition to providing an update on the DPI working group's outputs, a fourth session included recruiting audience members to participate in a "Hands Off SNAP" postcard campaign when the program was being threatened with reductions. This action aimed to get psychologists involved in policy change directly by demonstrating how easy advocacy can be. Finally, a fifth session highlighted newly completed practice guidelines for working with low-income and economically marginalized individuals. A multiyear project of the Committee on Socioeconomic Status, the guidelines were not an outcome of the DPI. Nevertheless, President Rosie Phillips Davis helped bring attention to guidelines because of their consistency with the DPI's work; they provide comprehensive guidance regarding training and education, health disparities, treatment consid-

erations, career concerns, and unemployment (APA, 2019a). Together, the sessions collectively met all three goals of the DPI by challenging psychologists to change their own attitudes and the attitudes of others, as well as change policy and practice.

Five-Week Deep Poverty Challenge

Launched on September 10, 2019, in concurrence with the U.S. Census Bureau's annual release of the national poverty indicators, and ending on World Poverty Day on October 17, 2019, this Five-Week Deep Poverty Challenge asked psychologists to recognize and examine their biases and attitudes toward those in deep poverty while empowering them to seek solutions at the individual, community, and societal levels to end deep poverty (APA, 2019b). Using the themes *examine, engage, empower, everyone*, the challenge laid the groundwork for psychologists to recognize the reality of deep poverty and to incorporate this knowledge into their work by repurposing their training and education to contribute locally to antipoverty efforts. The Five-Week Deep Poverty Challenge included learning goals and more than 120 activities and resources and encouraged individuals to do as much or as little as they have time for. Ultimately, the goal was not to provide a one-size-fits-all solution for how psychologists can act to end deep poverty but rather to provide them with the tools to determine the best psychology-based solutions for their communities. As such, the activities were aimed at changing attitudes, policy, and practice both directly and indirectly. Over 1,500 participants signed up for the challenge.

Deep Poverty Toolkit

To further the aims of the Deep Poverty Challenge and the DPI overall, the working group produced a Deep Poverty Toolkit. The Deep Poverty Toolkit was designed to provide practical ideas and tools to further help psychologists use psychological science to explain factors that lead to and perpetuate poverty and to effectively share this knowledge with others (APA, 2019c). Fully online and downloadable, the Deep Poverty Toolkit was released at the end of the Deep Poverty Challenge.

The introduction lays out key differences in psychological knowledge between poverty and deep poverty while incorporating the voices of those living in deep poverty through interspersed quotations pertinent to the themes. Psychologists are then encouraged to download separate guides for how to take action in research, education, and practice. To help mobilize psychologists in changing policy, the toolkit also provides more detailed guidance for writing op-eds,

³ For more information on continuing education credits and a link to the story "Pathways for Addressing Deep Poverty," see <https://www.apa.org/ed/ce/resources/ce-corner>

conducting in-district congressional visits, and organizing roundtable discussions and town hall meetings with local social service providers and antipoverty serving organizations. Together, the Deep Poverty Initiative, Five-Week Deep Poverty Challenge, and Deep Poverty Toolkit web pages have received over 7,200 views to date.

Congressional Resolution on Deep Poverty

Although the working group encouraged psychologists to change policy through the Five-Week Deep Poverty Challenge and Deep Poverty Toolkit, they also wanted to encourage the APA as an organization to act directly. As a result, the working group collaborated with the APA's Government Relations Office to bring the topic of deep poverty onto the national stage via a congressional resolution. The resolution sought to build on the products of the working group to articulate what a national, comprehensive plan for addressing deep poverty would need to encompass. On Thursday, December 12, 2019, Rep. Jose Serrano (D-NY-15), with four cosponsors, introduced the resolution Expressing Support for the Development of a National Strategic Plan to End Deep Poverty (H. R. 763, 2019) into the U.S. House of Representatives.⁴ Although it has not been passed by the House, the legislation provides an important Congressional record for psychologists to use with legislators when advocating for policies regarding deep poverty.

What Work Remains?

Although we are very pleased with the outputs of the DPI, significant work still remains. In terms of lessons learned, one of the main challenges the working group faced was parsing the poverty literature from the deep poverty literature. As noted by the APA Committee on Socioeconomic Status's "Stop Skipping Class" campaign (APA, 2020), psychologists still have a long way to go in consistently reporting SES in their samples. This critique extends to researchers who are appropriately reporting SES but are not reporting statistics for people who are poor or deeply poor separately (i.e., reporting the average income of the sample but not what percentage are in poverty vs. in deep poverty). Additionally, even though psychologists have significantly contributed to the current understanding of deep poverty, there has been even less work done on the topic than on poverty generally—particularly when compared to the amount of research on racism, sexism, and other social problems. Many of the findings described above are supplemented by research in sociology, education, political science, and related fields. We hope that by drawing attention to the topic, more psychologists are inspired to examine not just poverty but deep poverty.

The feedback the DPI members have received encourages us that we may have taken important steps toward that goal

in 1 short year. Although we would have liked to have even higher numbers of individuals participating in the Deep Poverty Challenge, more hits and downloads to the many resources of the Deep Poverty Toolkit, or better utilization of the DPI liaisons, every talk that Rosie Phillips Davis gave and every in-person or e-mail exchange both Rosie Phillips Davis and Wendy R. Williams had with individuals interested in and excited about the DPI provided evidence that this is a topic that psychologists have not only the skills to tackle but a real passion for engaging in the work.

In conclusion, the United States is a nation of great wealth, but far too many Americans live in deep poverty. We believe that psychologists can do something to make a difference, to move the needle on deep poverty, whether their actions are small and sporadic or large and sustained, including advocating for system change through a federal strategic plan or similar state- and community-based structural solutions. In doing so, psychologists will bring the power of psychology to the fight against deep poverty.

⁴ Text of the bill is available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/763/>

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