

Does BC's Neglect of Poverty Constitute a Eugenics Plan?

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Wednesday, April 23, 2014

<https://politicsrespun.org/2014/04/does-bcs-neglect-of-poverty-constitute-a-eugenics-plan/>

There has been a great deal of talk in recent decades about the cycle of poverty, how it's a vicious circle that children have difficulty getting out of.

Human chromosomes with telomeres stained fluorescent red. Copyright [Nakamura et al.](#)

It makes sense. If parents are short on economic resources, have to work multiple jobs, have little free time to nurture their children, it can impede children's growth.

What if poverty actually harmed children physiologically, not just impeding socio-economic opportunities? Wouldn't that then constitute a plan to ensure the poor really, really, really stay poor?

An underclass?

It wouldn't be a eugenics plan, however, unless we actually knew that poverty stunted children physiologically and we set up greedy, self-serving, 1%-worshiping policy that kept the poor down.

It's not like poverty can harm a child's growth and development like cigarettes or nuclear waste.

But then I read this:

<https://twitter.com/cbcradio/status/455016441017024512>

And it turns out that poverty, and other stressors like violence and family instability, harm chromosomes of children as young as 9 years old. Read more on the science below.

So I don't think BC is a petri dish of poverty eugenics. After all, who knew that poverty harms the growth of our children.

But actually, now that we know, if we fail to act by continuing to ignore the creation of a provincial [poverty reduction strategy](#) and other interventions to alleviate stressors in children, wouldn't that neglect be a casual, inadvertent eugenics plan to biologically disenfranchise those who happen to be growing up in poverty, violence or family instability. And don't forget, the former is often a cause or an exacerbator of the latter two.

Poverty Erodes DNA in Children

Saturday, April 12, 2014

9-year-old children raised in disadvantaged circumstances show signs of damage to their DNA.

Human chromosomes with telomeres stained fluorescent red. Copyright [Nakamura et al.](#)

Growing up in socially stressful environments that include poverty, violence and unstable family

relationships can affect the DNA of children as young as 9 years old. Dr. [Daniel Notterman](#), a physician and Molecular Biologist with Pennsylvania State University and Princeton University, led a study that has showed that 9-year-old boys from socially disadvantaged households had shorter telomeres than those from relatively advantaged backgrounds. Telomeres are sequences of protective DNA at the end of chromosomes that erode with age and stress. Shorter telomeres are correlated with accelerated aging, and increased risk of disease and death. Dr. Notterman suggests that this may argue for early intervention programs for disadvantaged children, to avoid the biological risks of deprivation.

Related Links

- [Paper](#) in PNAS
- Penn State [release](#)
- Nature [news](#)
- The Scientist [article](#)

This item appeared on [Quirks & Quarks](#) on [April 12, 2014](#)

- from [Poverty Erodes DNA in Children | Quirks & Quarks with Bob McDonald | CBC Radio](#).