

THE BROWNING SCHOOL
IBSC Action Research 2015-16: Global Citizenship



The Working Poor in America

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WHY “THE WORKING POOR”?

Browning:

- Location
- Student Body
- Form VI Boys
- Knowledge of global poverty vs. understanding poverty in the United States

MISSION

Founded in 1888 as a college preparatory school for boys, the Browning School continues in its commitment to the goals of John A. Browning:
the pursuit of academic excellence and a lifelong love of learning,
the belief in the dignity of the individual,
and the development of personal integrity and responsibility to the broader community.
The Browning boy develops amid these values.
The Browning alumnus is a good citizen, sensitive to the needs of others, and respectful of divergent yet informed opinions.
He is, in the best sense of the word, a gentleman.

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RESEARCH QUESTION

*How can participation in the
Working Poor Project
develop the awareness of
poverty in Form VI boys?*

LITERATURE REVIEW: GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

A global citizen is one who is “**aware** of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen, **respects** and **values** diversity, has an **understanding** of how the world works, is **outraged** by social injustice, **participates** in the community at a range of levels from the local to the global, is **willing to act** to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place, [and] takes responsibility for their actions.” — Oxfam (2006)

LITERATURE REVIEW: ACTION RESEARCH (STRINGER, 2014)

- A “systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront”
- Stringer also describes the process of action research as involving both the participants and the researcher as *stakeholders*.
- “Enables researchers to extend their understanding of the experience of stakeholders... in order to work toward a viable solution in which people will invest their time and energies.”

LITERATURE REVIEW: POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES

“If problems are interlocking, then so must solutions be. ...There is no single variable that can be altered to help working people move away from the edge of poverty. **Only where the full array of factors is attacked can America fulfill its promise.**”

— Shipler (2005)

THE ACTION

- Preconceived Notions of Poverty
- Minimum Wage
- Living Wage
- David K. Shipler's *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*
- The Working Poor Project
 - Family Profile
 - Budget
 - Housing
 - Food
 - Future Opportunities
 - Exit Interviews



BRYAN STEVENSON

- Author of *Just mercy: A story of justice and redemption*
- Common Book 2015-16
- Four Points:
 1. Gain Proximity
 2. Change The Narrative
 3. Protect Our Hope
 4. Be Willing To Do Uncomfortable Things

“The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor.”



PROXIMITY

- Visit to the Henry Street Settlement
- Senior Projects



PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: DEFINING POVERTY

- People need to work harder
- Having children is “financially ruinous” (Boy “E”)
- Better education is a panacea for poverty
- “I don’t think anyone living in America can be poor.” (Boy “Z”)
- “One thing that rubs me the wrong way is that people who are [uses air quotes] poor have a lot of self-pity.” (Boy “V”)

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can participation in the Working Poor Project develop the awareness of poverty in Form VI boys?

REFLECTIONS:

CHANGES IN BOYS' NOTIONS OF POVERTY

“When you have to live making sure that no dollar is put to waste must be a very stressful way of living.” (Boy “J”)

“Having a job doesn’t always mean that the individual can sufficiently sustain a healthy lifestyle for themselves and the people they provide for.” (Boy “G”)

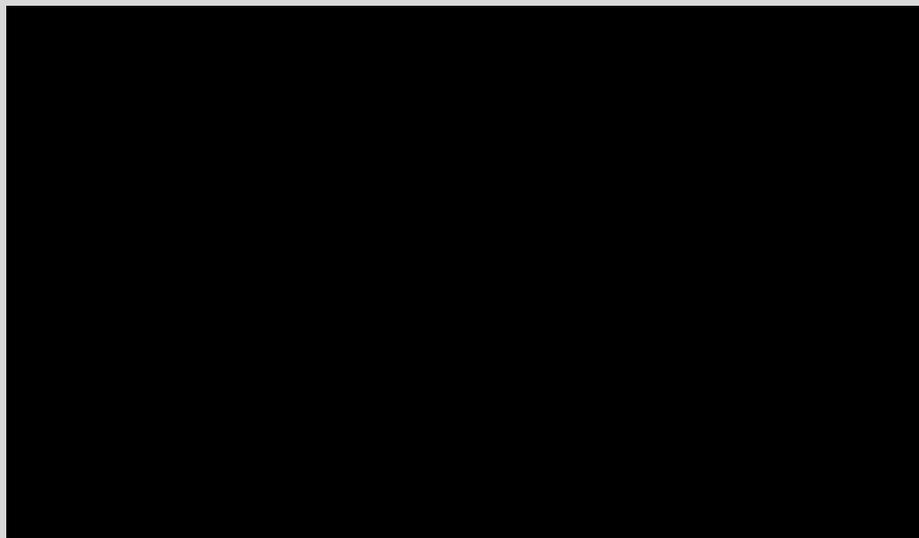
“I didn’t really realize that it was so prevalent in America, and I also didn’t realize that sometimes how hard you work doesn’t always affect poverty, like, **sometimes people just can’t get out.** It’s something that the working poor project helped me realize... that sometimes you just can’t do anything about it.” (Boy “V”)

REFLECTIONS:

POVERTY AS A CONSTELLATION OF PROBLEMS AND
NOTIONS OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

“The first (and most important) step that one must take to combat poverty is to **attain an understanding of the problems** that underprivileged people face. In other words, one must be able to **place himself (or herself) in the shoes** of the individuals he is trying to help before he can help them. **Global citizenship education classes are one forum where students can realize the scope of the problems that those in poverty face, as well as their role in bringing about solutions.**” (Boy “Z”)

REFLECTIONS



CONCLUSION & FUTURE RESEARCH

- Global Citizenship Class Next Year
- Expanding the Working Poor project: all Upper School
- Expanding the conversation with younger students

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