

A Young Economist's Perspective on World Issues

Delving Into Social Justice, Poverty, and More

Book Review: Ruby Payne's A Framework for Understanding Poverty

March 29, 2013

~~Found this book (Understanding Poverty) by Ruby Payne at Amazon.com~~ Process, Inc., 2005

Finally returning to monthly book reviews (sorry about that!), I am delighted to share *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

As its title indicates, this book *is* a framework for understanding poverty, but, more than that, this book is so eye-opening in its ability to explain the behaviors and barriers of the three social classes: wealth, middle class, and poverty.

Beyond poverty, it is a logical breakdown of the elements of each social class and its 'hidden rules.' Payne stresses that hidden rules are not taught in schools or businesses – which function on the hidden rules of the middle class.

Hidden rules are not exactly intrinsic, they *are* learned, as one grows up in a particular class with its particular rules. Payne lists all the hidden rules in each class, and the differences are striking. For instance, a particular difference is money's purpose. The middle class view money as security to be managed. In poverty, money is meant to be spent – on relationships and entertainment.

Neither group understands the other.

A Framework for Understanding Poverty does a good job at putting you in the shoes of someone in poverty. There are scenarios, stories, and quizzes, along the lines of "what would you do?" in this situation, etc.

I would say that Payne walks a thin line on stereotyping the social classes and getting them right. There is – undeniably – a huge grey area of the social classes that is not addressed in this book.

More than anything, this book reads like a way to understand another culture or another language. It is fascinating in how something that would seem so obvious is so foreign, but it is. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* provides the necessary translations to bridge those barriers.

I highly recommend reading this book.

**Notes about Purchasing: I bought this book for my Kindle at Amazon for \$9.99. I am a Kindle-fan, but sometimes books don't translate well to Kindles. This one does, though; it's a great Kindle read.

***I read the fourth edition, but there now is a brand new fifth edition to choose! (Thanks, J.C.!)

- <http://bit.ly/12KIK2u>

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4 Responses to “Book Review: Ruby Payne’s A Framework for Understanding Poverty”

Rita Baumann Says:

[April 4, 2013 at 8:22 pm](#)

Hi Elizabeth!

Our entire school staff read this book for staff development. It has been very helpful – and we even refer back to it from time to time – when we need to understand our student population. I am so glad you enjoyed it. Rita

elizabethbalderrama Says:

[April 4, 2013 at 10:02 pm](#)

Thank you for your comment, Rita! I did really enjoy it, and I'm glad to hear an account of how it's been so helpful for teachers. I was introduced to the book in a class at Notre Dame, and it really has helped me delve further into my understanding of poverty.

J. C. Says:

[April 4, 2013 at 10:47 pm](#)

Thanks for your support! Just wanted to let you and your readers know that the brand new fifth

edition is now available. http://www.ahaprocess.com/store/products/book_aframework5.html

elizabethalderrama Says:

April 5, 2013 at 1:16 pm

Thank you for your comment! And no problem! It's a wonderful book. I updated the review to include the fifth edition as a purchasing choice. Thanks!

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