



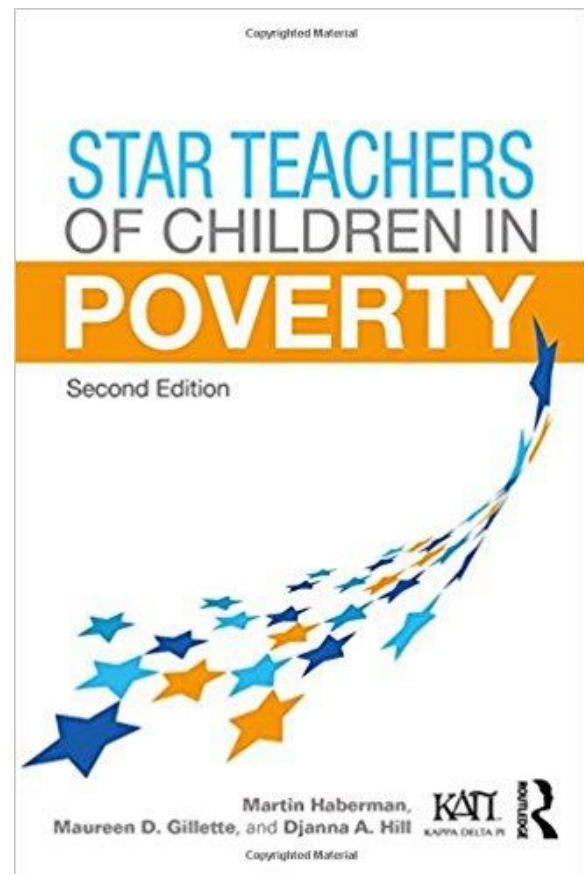
Haberman, M., Gillette, M. D., & Hill, D. A. (2018). *Star teachers of children in poverty*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Pp. 182

ISBN: 1138722979

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This second edition of *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty* is an important and thought-provoking read for pre-service teachers, veteran teachers, and school administrators to better understand the beliefs and practices of star teachers who work successfully with historically underserved children. A star teacher, as described by Haberman, is a teacher who seeks to inspire children into learning because of internal commitment rather than external motivation. Specifically, the star teachers discussed are those who have dedicated themselves to the high-stakes work of making significant positive impacts on children and youth in poverty from diverse cultural backgrounds who attend urban schools. The book is organized into three parts. The first part delves into the beliefs and resulting actions of star teachers in their student interactions, exploring themes including growth mindset, social justice, and student-driven learning. The second part is broken into three sections, each revolving around themes of identity, privilege, and personal bias relative to students, schools and



classrooms, and society. The third part is a discussion on attributes of “decency” reflected in star teachers, visiting concepts such as power, moralism, and personal prejudice. An updated edition of Haberman’s 1995 seminal text, this version by Gillette and Hill is an expansion of the original work, alternating between Haberman’s chapters with new chapters that incorporate additional discussion on the interconnected societal, psychological, cultural, and physical influences on learning, current research and statistics, as well as end-of-chapter reflection questions for the reader.

First, Haberman encapsulates commonalities among star teachers’ actions and beliefs about their students, classroom practice, and administration. Using real-world examples, Haberman examines what star teachers don’t do, and what they think they are doing. Haberman discusses the approach of star teachers on discipline, punishment, homework, parent bashing, tests and grading, time-on-task, and rewards and reinforcements, supporting the discussion by including stimulating morsels of conversations between Haberman and star teachers. In one such exchange, Haberman presents to a star teacher the dual issues of a parent’s refusal to turn down the television set during a home visit, and not making sure her son brought his glasses to school. The star teacher responds, “I would ask the parent to turn down the set and might even do so myself. More importantly, I would keep the child’s glasses in school and let the parent worry about his having a pair at home” (pg. 24).

Gillette and Hill revisit these reflections and analyses on students’ lived conditions, restorative justice, and parents as partners. These explanations illuminate star teacher mindsets such as “not being very concerned with discipline” (g. 17). In response to Haberman’s chapter on learning vs. job training, and goals for schooling, Gillette and Hill examine alternate routes to teaching, traditional teacher education, community-

based education, federal and state standards and assessments, and efficacy.

Continuing the conversation on star teachers, Haberman explores issues of teacher identity, privilege, and personal bias. On working with students, Haberman describes philosophies and scenarios that emphasize star teachers’ persistence in protecting authentic individual learning experiences for children. Striking quotes from conversations with star teachers such as, “There may be 30 kids in this class, but if I find an especially vital activity for one or two children today, I can reach everyone as an individual several times a month” (p. 60) give pause for thought. This depicts the persistent attitude of the star teacher, and the star teacher’s belief that the daily work of teaching includes constant reflection and creativity in facilitating student-driven learning. Within a discussion on the ability of star teachers to reflect on their experiences and grow from them, Haberman states, “Some teachers have a single year of experience, 30 times” (p. 77). Building on these themes, Gillette and Hill discuss topics including relationship-building, trust, and open-mindedness that bolster Haberman’s assertions about the growth mindset of star teachers. They offer more recent examples of star teacher and student relationships, such as one star teacher who had washers and dryers donated to her school in 2016. This example demonstrates that star teachers are not judgmental, but rather understanding of their students’ contexts. Star teachers use this understanding to build relationships, use community resources, and protect their students’ learning.

Following the same vein, the chapters on star teachers in schools and classrooms feature Haberman’s critique of top-heavy bureaucracies and depictions of how star teachers respond to administrative requests. Haberman discusses the stamina and expert managerial skills of star teachers in relation to their unwavering protection of engaging learning activities without compromising

students' perception of school as a trustworthy institution. Gillette and Hill reinforce these ideas through discussion of using compelling materials and community networks to effectively teach children in poverty. One example is a star teacher who used the book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot (2010) to empower her seventh and eighth grade students from a Latino community to think about social issues in healthcare. As a result of the star teacher's engaging learning activities, the students collaborated with local agency representatives, their principal, and the school district to write a successful grant, resulting in a healthcare station at their school.

The reality of violence and poverty heightens the need for teachers to play a significant social role in the lives of their urban students. Haberman cites lack of trust, urban violence, hopelessness, bureaucracy, and culture of authoritarianism as major influences on children and youth in poverty, and provides "gentle teaching strategies" (p. 139) designed to empower students who live in violent conditions. Examples include putting students ahead of subject matter, using frequent cooperative learning, and teaching students the skill of peer mediation. Gillette and Hill then emphasize the need for teachers to face the reality of their own lives as well as the reality of their students' lives. Acknowledging the difficulties faced by star teachers, Gillette and Hill provide ways to sustain oneself as a star teacher, including self-analysis and joining community action groups (pp. 150-151).

Focusing on themes including power, moralism, and personal prejudice, the final section forwards the concept of a star teacher as an agent of change for social justice. Haberman's discussion on the decency of star teachers ends with the suggestion that teacher licensure should not be based solely on examination of grades and test scores, but include analysis of teacher ideology for a more


in-depth licensing process. Gillette and Hill build upon Haberman's suggestions with an important call to action: for teacher preparation programs to recognize the need for increased teacher diversity, and for teachers and future teachers to persist in empowering all students amidst social structural inequality. To close the loop on the conversation about the responsibility of teacher preparation programs, further practical guidance and examples of application for college and university administrators would have been a helpful addition. Similarly, providing professional development resources to assist current teachers and develop star teacher leaders would have been useful for readers working on the school district level.

*Star Teachers of Children in Poverty: Second Edition* is a worthwhile revisit to Haberman's original groundbreaking text. Gillette and Hill's helpful augmentations and updated research place Haberman's fundamental ideas into a 21<sup>st</sup> century context, challenging current practitioners to examine their teaching ideologies, and how they relate to students and the communities in which they live. Although the initial text was written with the high-poverty urban student population in mind, the fundamental concepts of continual self-reflection and evolving practice, relationship-building with students and stakeholders, and awareness of social context apply to excellent teaching of any student population. In the face of ever-shifting federal and state education reforms, Haberman's words that "star teachers are confident in what and how they teach" (p. 49) highlight the need for support and mentorship among teachers in the field. Broadening the discussion from one's local context to asking oneself what it means to be a 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher in the United States provides the backbone for the work of social justice. For the aspiring star teacher, this book is an invaluable exercise in personal and professional reflection, and a powerful tool in answering the call to action.

## About the Reviewer

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