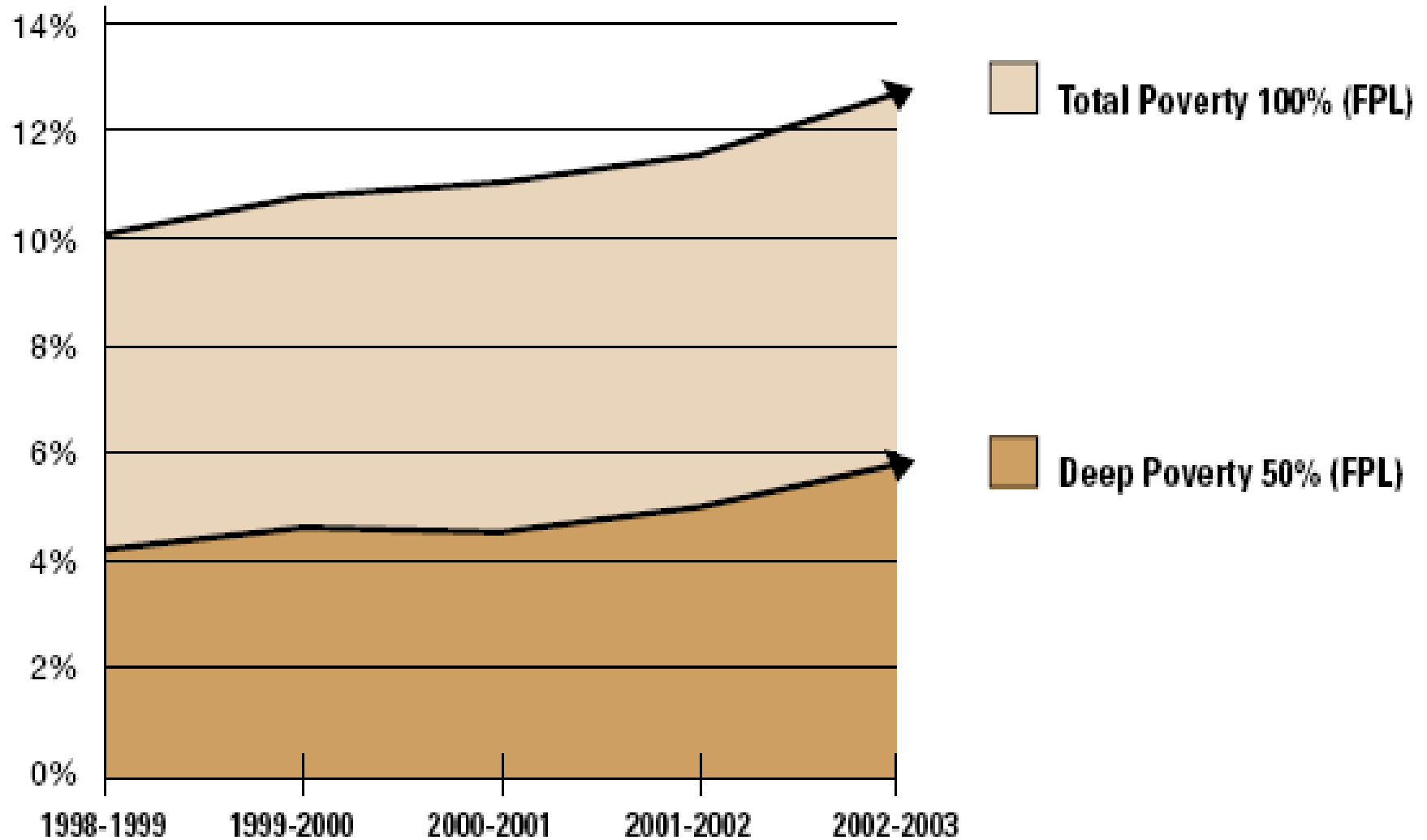# Changing Perceptions of Poverty in a Large-Lecture Setting
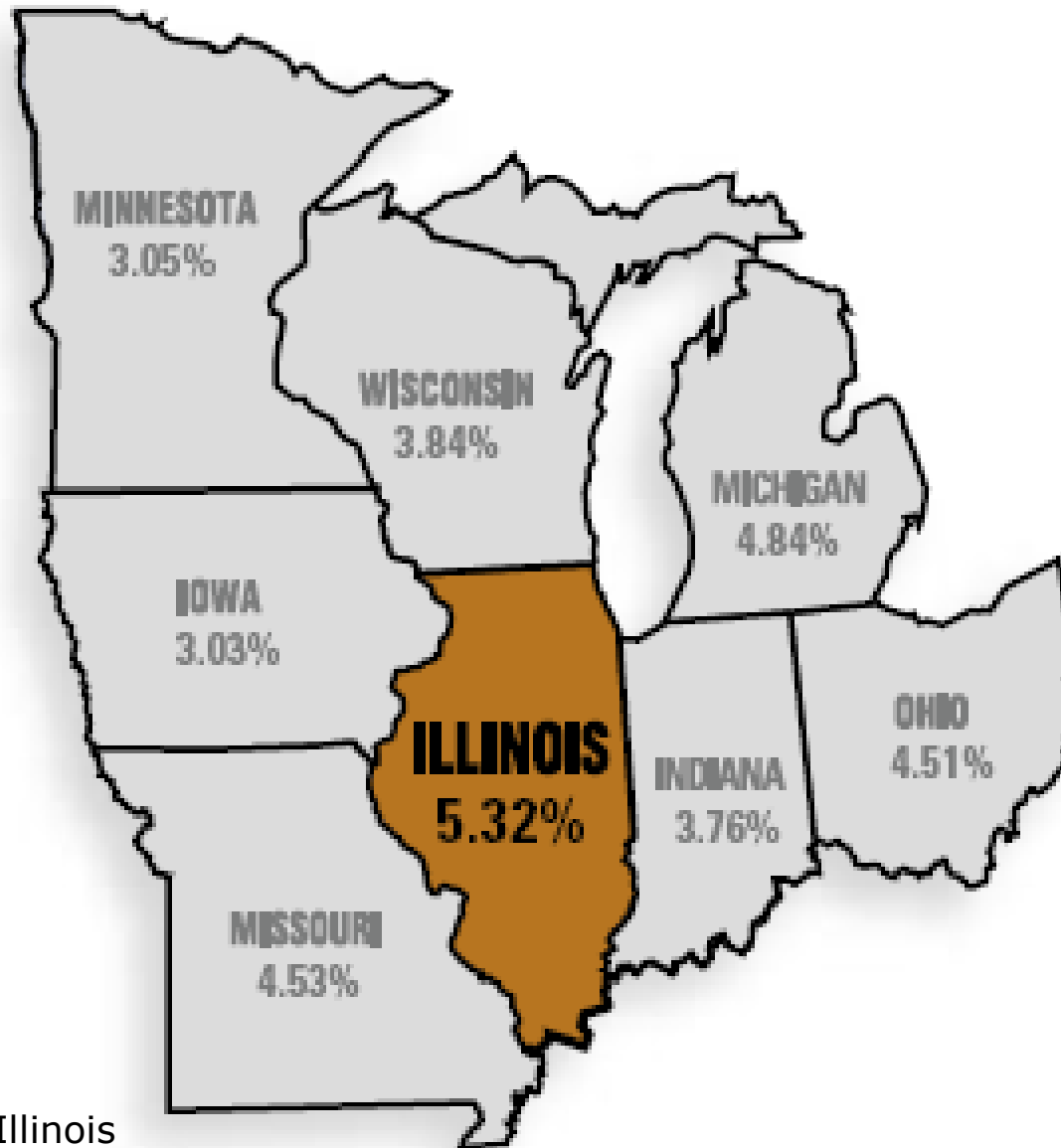
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Trends in Illinois Poverty[2]

Source: 2005 Report on Illinois Poverty, Illinois Poverty Summit

Illinois has the highest rate of deep poverty in the Midwest region.[4]

MINNESOTA
3.05%

WISCONSIN
3.84%

MICHIGAN
4.84%

IOWA
3.03%

**ILLINOIS
5.32%**

INDIANA
3.76%

OHIO
4.51%

MISSOURI
4.53%

Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS)

- The Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) is an interactive and sensitizing experience where the participants have an opportunity to actively discover the realities and effects of living in poverty.

- Facilitated by University of Illinois Extension Service

Methods

- SOA 240: People in Places: Understanding and Developing Community
  - General Education course, average enrollment 190 students
- Students completed a questionnaire at two points in time:
  - Time one (one week prior to CAPS simulation)
  - Time two (one week following CAPS simulation)
- Quantitative measures:
  - Perceptions of poverty in U.S. and McLean County
  - Rating causes of poverty
  - Rating agents responsible for alleviating poverty
  - Rating agents effectiveness for alleviating poverty

Findings - Demographics

- **Class Standing**
  - Freshmen   5%   Sophomore   31.3%
  - Junior   42.5%   Senior   21.3%
- **Majors:**
  - Education   20%
  - Sociology   19%
  - Psychology   7.6%
  - Recreation Management 7.6%
  - Mass Communication   6.3%

- **Age:**
  - 19-22   88.6%
- **Sex:**
  - Male   27.5%   Female   72.5%

(N = 133)

Changes in Poverty Perceptions

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation		
Pair 1	Perception U.S. Poverty T1 vs T2	-.425	.725	-5.242	.000
Pair 2	Perception McLean County Poverty T1 vs. T2	-.481	.830	-5.152	.000

1= not at all a problem; 5= major problem

Changes in Perceptions of Poverty Causes

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences				Sig.
	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	(2-tailed)
Drug abuse	-.463	1.414	-2.926	79	.004
Medical bills	.400	1.249	2.865	79	.005
Part-time/low-wage jobs	.300	1.344	1.996	79	.049
Too many single parent families	.338	1.211	2.492	79	.015
Job shortages	.263	1.099	2.136	79	.036
Welfare system	.188	1.148	1.460	79	.148
Too many immigrants	-.088	1.105	-.709	79	.481
Lack of motivation	-.388	1.278	-2.712	79	.008
Decline in moral values	-.250	1.196	-1.870	79	.065
Poor quality public schools	.038	1.364	.246	79	.806
Cause - Lack of comm support - Cause - Lack of comm support	.152	1.178	1.146	78	.255
Lack of social capital, networks, social connections	.563	1.271	3.957	79	.000
Lack of human capital, education, skills	.519	1.218	3.787	78	.000

Personal Concern with Helping People to Make Ends Meet

- "Of all personal concerns about community, how would you rate your concern with helping people struggling to make ends meet"
- 1= top concern; 5 = not a concern at all
- Mean(T1): 2.72
- Mean (T2): 2.44
    - (sig .021)

Community Effectiveness

- "How often do you believe that your own community can do something effective about the problem of poverty"?
- 1 = always; 5 = never
- Mean (T1) 2.46
- Mean (T2) 2.25
  - (sig .001)

Perceptions of Poverty: Who is Responsible for Alleviating Poverty?

- No statistically significant change in perceptions about who is responsible for alleviating poverty
- Variables:
  - Poor people individually
  - Poor people in groups
  - Civic/community organizations
  - Private charity
  - Private enterprise
  - Local government
  - State government
  - National government

Perceptions of Poverty: What is most Effective at reducing poverty?

- Same variables as responsible measure.
- (1= not at all effective; 5= completely effective)
- Statistically Significant Change:
  - Civic/community organizations (.040)
  - Poor people in groups (.006)

Discussion

- Common theme:
  - reduction in blame towards individuals, increased blame towards forces outside of poor people's control
- Role of institutional forces/structural forces
- Increased awareness of the importance of social networks/social capital
- Poverty is not an individual problem, but a societal problem

Discussion

- Significant impact in General Education classroom
- Application of class concepts in real world setting
- Barrier: cost and time