

# Poverty as a social phenomenon

Sociology



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Sociology

Poverty

Thesis Statement

Poverty

Poverty is rather typical for the lower class and is the main feature of the underclass in the US. The main measure for poverty in the US is the so called “poverty threshold” which marks lack of goods commonly taken for granted (Schwarz).

There are two approaches to the evaluation of poverty. The first one is measuring in terms of absolute poverty. Absolute poverty is shortage of the most elementary resources necessary for biological surviving: food, clothes and housing. As it was mentioned in the video, absolutely poor people might starve to death. So this is the criteria that help define the poverty beyond any doubt. The second approach is measuring relative poverty. This way of evaluation is generally connected with inequality in the society within one certain country. Relatively poor people do not follow the commonly accepted standards of living.

Poverty as a social phenomenon is viewed from two points with two types of explanations suggested for it. The first explanation is defining personal features of people as the main factor for poverty. That means that poverty in America is triggered by the culture of pauperism i. e. a special moral defect that prevents people from building better future. Such characteristics as submission, laziness and fatalism are typical for this culture. In fact, this opinion was common even in the nineteenth century (Townsend). In brief, this explanation of poverty implies the idea that poor people somehow deserve the low standard of living and their lack of purposefulness is not to

<https://assignbuster.com/poverty-as-a-social-phenomenon/>

be compensated by the government in the shape of welfare programs.

The second explanation provides a “ structural failing” as the main cause for poverty in the US. This theory is based on the structural peculiarities, stratification of society and economical inequality. According to this view, poverty is not what depends on the traits of the separate individuals. It is the phenomenon caused by the general state of the society. For example, there are some situations that work as factors for poverty increase. They are economical crises, wars, general economical regression. In these conditions poverty comes as a result of uneven distribution of wealth. To tackle the problem it is desirable to create social security programs. There is another aspect inside this theory. Development of international economy and changes in the labor market influence poverty as multinational companies seek to find the cheapest labor force and – as a result, many countries restrain the growth of wages in order to attract such companies.

As for me I would rather support the second theory because it looks more objective. While the influence of personal traits of people might be debatable, influence of outer economical processes looks very reasonable. For example, poverty is understood as restriction of opportunities for certain members of society. It cannot be justified by “ laziness” or pauperism culture as in such conditions poor people tend to be walking round in circles. A person with a strong desire to work but with no proper education (as a result of financial incapability) cannot obtain professional training to acquire a job. To my mind, it would be helpful for the state to introduce free professional training courses and establish welfare programs for those who need a job but cannot get it due to absence of proper skills.

Works Cited:

<https://assignbuster.com/poverty-as-a-social-phenomenon/>

Schwartz, J. E. (2005). Freedom reclaimed: Rediscovering the American vision. Baltimore: G-University Press.

Townsend P. Theories of poverty, from: [http://www. poverty. ac. uk/system/files/townsend-book-pdfs/PIUK/piuk-chapter02. pdf](http://www.poverty.ac.uk/system/files/townsend-book-pdfs/PIUK/piuk-chapter02.pdf)