

What social problem  
do you find most  
compelling and why

Sociology



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Poverty in U. S The prevailing poverty problem is further fuelled by the economic and political structures of the society. For example, the U. S economy is primarily based on capitalism. This means that private firms, corporations, organizations, and multinational businesses own and run the economy. The economy favors the wealthy in the society by giving avenues for economic development, access to investment opportunities, access to capital and most importantly, access to cheap labor from the poor. This is highlighted by Iceland in the claim that, “ economic growth determines the size of the pie, while inequality affects the size of each slice” (2006: 72).

Whereas capitalism is good for provision of essential services to the people, it is a great disadvantage to the poor people. Capitalism promotes poverty in several ways. First, employers seek to maximize their earnings by paying low wages to workers. Poor people take on these lowly paying jobs to survive thereby fuelling poverty further. Additionally, profits from capitalistic economy go to the pockets of the few whereas the poor get nothing.

More notably, the policies concerning political economy only work for the benefit of the rich. For instance, the rich can afford to lobby for reforms and policies that favor them as opposed to the poor who do not have anyone to fight for them. The poor people in the American society are largely sidelined from the political arena by the rich and the larger political forces swallow the few who manage to get representative positions to fight for their fellow poor people. O’Connor argues, “ The issue of poverty at precisely the moment when the politics of class, race, and genders were growing more visible in electoral coalitions” (O’Connor 2002: 215). Interestingly, the governmental policies that determine the poor and the rich in the American society seem

to be biased in its operations. Poverty index does not correlate with the gap between the poor and the rich in the society since the gap is widening as time goes by. Therefore, the poor continue to remain poor despite their contribution in economic development.

#### References

OConnor, A. 2002. *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U. S. History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Iceland, J. 2006. *Poverty in America: A Handbook*. California, Berkeley: University of California Press.