

Poverty Porn



(Image 1: The Conversation, 2015)



(Image 2: The meteor, 2017)

Poverty= An absence of basic security and unable to provide the essentials and enjoy fundamental rights (Lister, 2009).

However, the definition of poverty is very different in different societies, people's individual lives, skills and values can affect their meaning on poverty (Lister, 2009).

Poverty Porn= Television programmes that exploit people living in poverty and on welfare benefits (De Benedicts, Allen & Jenson, 2017).

Relative Poverty

- When you compare yourself to other individuals?
- Your living standards.

POVERTY

(Lister, 2009)

Absolute Poverty

- Poverty at its lowest.
- Lack of Resources
- Effects the entire country.
- Life threatening.
- Difficult to live day to day.

Television programmes like Benefit street, Benefit Britain, Skint and the Scheme have been branded 'poverty porn' (Brooker *et al*, 2015 and Feltwel *et al*, 2017).

Feltwel *et al*, (2017) Mentions that, through using social media, activists could help balance matters relating to poverty porn.

Social media has become an important tool for organisations and the government to utilize (Feltwel *et al*, 2017).



(Image 3: Highway England, 2019)

Food Banks

Shildrick (2018), suggests that the speedy increase of food banks has become the face of poverty through the public's eyes.



Maslows Hierarchy of needs, five tier model (Image 4: McLead, 2008)

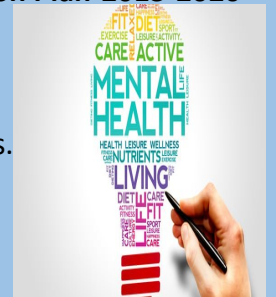
- The needs of an individual must be met before being able to move up the hierarchy.
- Life challenges can cause an individual to move up and down the hierarchy depending on what they are experiencing (McLead, 2008).

A loss of employment means an individual will be unable to pay bills and buy food, which in turn would affect their needs and they would fluctuate between levels (McLead, 2008).

World Health Organisation (WHO) Mental Health Action Plan-2013-2020

- More effective leadership and decision making.
- Promote and prevent strategies.
- Extensive Mental Health and Social care services.
- Reinforced investigation and evidence.

(Elliot, 2016).



(Image 5: Downey, 2019)

Mental Health Act 2007

- Legislation to ensure the correct assessment and treatment of an individual with a mental health disorder.
(National Health Service (NHS), 2019).

Child Poverty Act 2010

- This imposed upon governments to produce strategies to reduce child poverty by 2020. This was later replaced by the Welfare and Reform Act 2016 (Child Poverty Action Group, 2019).

Welfare and Reform Act 2016

Report to parliament on the progress of:

- Families in need
- Full employment
- Social mobility
- The Benefit Cap
- Tax Credits



(Local Government Association, 2019) (Image 6: One Parent Families, 2017)

Social Justice: Transforming Lives

Governments plans to support individuals who are experiencing disadvantages in life. These are:

- Helping and supporting families who need the extra support.
- Improve Mental Health.
- Decrease child poverty and make sure children are properly supported.
- Help individuals to find employment and become independent.

(Department for Education, Work and Pensions, 2015)

People who live in poverty can also suffer with Mental Health Disabilities and because of this they can be quite vulnerable within society. Quite often on a daily basis they will be subjected to victimisation and discrimination, in turn their Human Rights are violated (WHO, 2019). 'Poverty itself can also be an experience which scars the mind' (Feuerstein, 1997, p.64).

OfCom (2014) cited in (DeBenedicts, Allen & Jenson, 2017) suggests that, Emergence of Factual Welfare Television (FWT) plays an important role in educating the public around state benefits. However, critics have labelled FWT as 'exploitative, in accurate and entrenching damaging myths about those in poverty' (DeBenedicts, Allen & Jenson, 2017).

The welfare state has benefited those people in poverty (the working class), however it can be seen to have controlled them. Poverty and inequality continued while public consumption and living standards increased (Alcock, May, Wright, 2012).

The problem with programmes that represent poverty porn is that it gives a misrepresentation on poverty porn, they make poverty look unusual. However, the truth is anyone can experience poverty throughout their life, this could be through job loss, illness, disability and even relationship breakdown (Burrell, 2013).

Paradigms

Structural Functionalism

- Focuses on how Macro structures fit together.
- Emile Durkheim- Different parts of society work together to keep it well and in good health.
- Cultures and how individuals live and interact with each other in society shape the most basic level to reproduce (Calhoun, 2002).

Conflict Theory

- Leading paradigm in society.
- How society defines source of inequality and conflict.
- Composed of different groups.
- Karl Marx-Class theory

(Richard, 2016)

Karl Marx and Max Weber *cited in* (Alcock, May & Wright, 2012, p176), claims that, 'The main argument is that societies are stratified, with clear divisions between different social classes. Who have largely separate and conflicting interests', Marx believes that change within societies would be driven by social classes, however Weber accepts this idea and includes his view that, employment classification would regulate one's position within society (Alcock, May & Wright, 2012).

Symbolic Interactionism

How people react to social situations, through their actions and behaviours. An individual will make decisions based on how they see others in the same situation and they will then change their behaviour (Hughes, 2016).

Rationale

This leaflet is to educate the reader on Poverty Porn using areas of Theory and Policy to support the positive outcomes for the people affected. There will also be a brief description of what issues individuals face in today's society and a brief look into sociological paradigms. There will be a focus on Legislation and strategies that has been put into place to help individuals that are at risk of poverty and mental health problems, and on how poverty affects an individual's mental health and well-being (Department for work and pensions, 2015).

There will be definitions on what poverty is (Lister, 2009), and what poverty porn means in society (De Benedictis, Allen & Jenson, 2017). However, the definition of poverty is very different in different societies and cultures (Lister, 2009). It would have been useful to dive more deeply into what other societies define poverty to be and how their policies support positive outcomes to help prevent and tackle poverty in today's society.

There has been a brief discussion on how Maslow's hierarchy of needs show that an individual can move up or down the hierarchy depending on what challenges they are experiencing and that this can change many times throughout someone's life (McLeod, 2008).

Throughout this leaflet there has been a focus on the positive outcomes for people affected by poverty through policy and theories, however there is literature that contradicts and critiques these policies (Alcock, May & Wright, 2012), which would be beneficial to share with the reader, which hasn't fully been included within this leaflet.

It has been useful to learn that the increase of television programmes aimed primarily to educate the public about the welfare state and individuals who are struggling in society have actually been duped poverty

porn and has received many critiques on how it represents an individual struggling within society (DeBenedictis, Allen & Jenson, 2017). The use of social media to promote poverty porn could have been included to illustrate what the public's views on these issues are.

This leaflet has focussed on television programmes like Benefit Street, Benefit Britain, Skint and the Scheme (Feltwell *et al*, 2015), However there is a lot more information regarding poverty porn through the use of charities, the pop culture and famous people. One critique about this leaflet and how to make it better is including all aspects of poverty porn to achieve a greater understanding.

It has been useful in gaining an understanding on the three major paradigms in society and seeing how each have their own ideas and theories. Structural functionalism focuses on how societies, structures fit and work together (Calhoun, 2002). Conflict theory is composed of different groups and focuses on how society defines inequality and conflict (Richard, 2016) and lastly symbolic interactionism concentrates on how individuals react in social situations in their everyday lives (Hughes, 2016). It would have been useful to have linked these paradigms with poverty porn to have gained a better understanding of these issues through a sociological theoretical lens.

This leaflet has provided a lot of information on tackling and dealing with poverty and what policies and theories promote positive outcomes it has also highlighted what else could be researched to gain a broader understanding and to be able to criticize the many topics that have been mentioned throughout.

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