

Paper on the exploration of Poverty and Social Class

(Part I or Part II = 1 point;
Part I and Part II = 2 points)

The fundamental nature of social work practice is to provide services, resources and advocacy for disadvantaged and underrepresented populations. The recipients of social work services are disproportionately represented by low income and oppressed persons. It is imperative that social workers understand, from a historical and multigenerational perspective, how persons affected by poverty are challenged in ways that are different from those who come from middle class or privileged backgrounds.

Poverty must be understood from an economic, political, and legal perspective. Social workers must learn how the dynamics of many aspects of our society are dependent on the maintenance of a permanent underclass. This dynamic sustains many of our social problems that are inherent in the current social justice issues we are challenged with today.

The essence of this assignment is to present a perspective or intervention that would focus on changing this dynamic. Part I focuses on *micro-system change*, that is changes to be made on the **individual, family, agency or community level**. Part II focuses on *macro-level of change* to address poverty at state and national *public policy* levels.

Part I – Micro-System Change

This assignment is designed to assist the student in developing a better understanding of the extensive and far reaching effects of chronic poverty on family systems.

1. Focus on a client or family who is receiving services from the agency. Review the family history by either reading the client file or by completing a comprehensive social history.
2. Once the background information is gathered, look at inter-generational patterns of poverty and their debilitating affects on health, education, employment, housing stability, mental health, substance abuse, legal issues, and parenting styles. Mitigating factors, such as institutional racism and oppression, should be explored as to their effect on the perpetuation of poverty in family and community systems.
3. Propose intervention strategies at the family, agency and local community level to address the obstacles and patterns that individuals and families face that perpetuate poverty.

Part II - Macro System Change

This assignment is designed to assist the student in understanding the complex and interwoven and strategic nature of poverty and social class issues on a local, state, and national level.

1. To approach this assignment, students should research the historical origins of social services related to a specific client group. Special attention should be paid to current national economic policies and political dynamics.
2. The student should consider the economic and political benefits of maintaining a permanent underclass. Discuss the national benefits of a major social policy shift to address this national dilemma. Consider the economic costs associated with this major social change as well as the political and legislative issues which would need to be addressed.
3. Lastly, address possible public opposition to your proposal and strategies for addressing this opposition.