

“Romanticizing Poverty” Provides Legitimacy to Social Inequality

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Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

by Claire Quiney

How pop culture and Hollywood portray a working poor life as uncomplicated, void of stress, pure, and moral.

Working poor is not a lifestyle choice:

...

Romanticizing POVERTY

How pop culture portrays a working poor life as uncomplicated, void of stress, pure, and moral.

WE'RE OVERSIMPLIFYING Movie Portrayals of Poverty

deeply moralistic and contented

BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD

slumdog millionaire

THE SON

GOOD WILL HUNTING

in need of assistance from wealthy

often white, character from higher socioeconomic status

the Help

SOLOIST

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

REALITY

very few working poor actually fit one or another of these stereotypes

$\Gamma^m(p_i \rightarrow p_j, z) = \sum_{i=1}^m \sum_{j=1}^m (i \rightarrow j) z^{\frac{\text{dist}(i, j) - \text{dist}(i, i)}{3 \cdot \text{dist}(i, i) - 1}}$

in pop-culture and fashion

Bohemian [BOHO]

pushes aside capitalist framework and stability for what they are passionate about.

Bourgeois-Bohemian [BOBO]

mimic the daily "simplicity of working poor, without giving up financial stability."

Urban Outfitters is for the "upscale homeless."

— Dick Haynes, President and Founder, Urban Outfitters

"Bitching & Junkfood Algardi Velvet Swing Dress" by Urban Outfitters

\$144

Oh, "homeless" right

live below the line

The "live below the line" campaign challenged participants to live below Canada's poverty line

\$1.75 a day FOR 5 DAYS...

With the knowledge they can return to overblown savings accounts.

we think of working poor as a destination

it's exotic, but that stage wears off

poverty shrinks your brain from chronic stress

Long term stress shrinks the prefrontal cortex, insular cortex, and subgenual anterior cingulate regions. All of which affect reasoning, decision making, emotions, and self-control.

poverty has the highest correlations to substance abuse, broken homes, violence, and health problems

For every 1 child abused in a house making >\$30,000

22 are abused in houses making <\$15,000

Those with only a high school education are 12% **likelier** to commit violent crimes.

For every one child who is stunted, or in the hospital, **twice as many** impoverished children suffer from the same conditions.

those living in poverty die earlier

of years left to live at age 60

Year of Birth	Top Half Earners	Bottom Half Earners
1912	18.9yrs	17.7yrs
1917	20yrs	18yrs
1922	21.0yrs	18.4yrs
1927	22.2yrs	18.7yrs
1932	23.3yrs	18yrs
1937	24.5yrs	18.3yrs
1941	25.4yrs	18.8yrs

for many it never ends

71% of children whose parents were born in the lower half of income distribution are upwardly mobile, but not by much.

Only 38% of people born into the lower half of income distribution make it to the upper half.

Romanticizing poverty makes people think it doesn't need to change.

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Romanticizing Poverty

How pop culture portrays a working poor life as uncomplicated, void of stress, pure, and moral.

Working poor is not a lifestyle choice:

Job promotions and performance reviews[1]

Or

Simple routine and morality

We're oversimplifying.

Movie Portrayals of Poverty:

1.) Deeply moralistic and contented:

Beasts of the Southern Wild, Slumdog Millionaire, The Son, Good Will Hunting[1]

2.) In need of assistance from a wealthy—often white—character from higher socioeconomic status:

The Help, The Soloist, The Dark Knight Rises

In pop-culture and fashion:

Bohemian: pushes aside capitalist framework and stability for what they are passionate about.[1]

Bourgeois-Bohemian: mimic the daily “simplicity of working poor, without giving up financial stability.

Dick Haynes, President and Founder, Urban Outfitters:[1]

Urban Outfitters is for the “upscale homeless.”

Nothing says homeless like the \$144 “Bitching & Junkfood Algardi Velvet Swing Dress”[2]

The “live below the line” campaign challenged participants to live below Canada’s poverty line (\$1.75 a day)[1]

FOR 5 DAYS...

With the knowledge they can return to overblown savings accounts.

We think of working poor as a destination. It’s exotic. But that stage wears off.

1.) Poverty shrinks your brain from chronic stress:

Long term stress shrinks the prefrontal cortex[8], insular cortex, and subgenual anterior cingulate[9] regions.[7]

All of which affect reasoning, decision making, emotions, and self-control.

So... you’re deeper in the hole.

2.) It has the highest correlations to substance abuse, broken homes, violence, and health problems

For every 1 child abused in a house making >\$30,000:[5]
22 are abused in houses making <\$15,000

Those with only a high school education 12% likelier to commit violent crimes.[6]

For every one child who is stunted, or in the hospital, twice as many impoverished children suffer from the same conditions.[10]

3.) Those living in poverty die earlier.

4.) And for many it never ends (it's cyclical):

71% of children whose parents were born in the lower half of income distribution are upwardly mobile, but by much.[4]

Only 38% of people born into the lower half of income distribution make it to the upper half.[4]

Romanticizing poverty makes people think it doesn't need to change. Don't romanticize poverty.

Citations:

1. <https://medium.com/editors-picks/a29bf287ba17>
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9. http://dericbownds.net/uploaded_images/Sub_gen.gif
10. http://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/docs/07_02_03.pdf (Table 1)



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