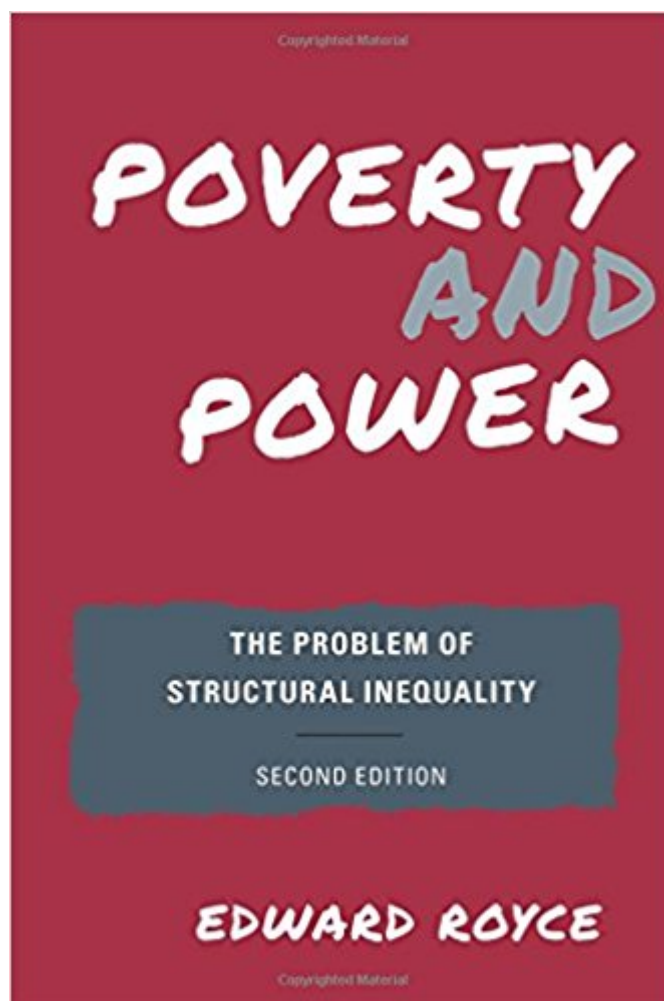


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# Poverty And Power: The Problem Of Structural Inequality



## Synopsis

Poverty and Power asserts that American poverty is a structural problem resulting from failings in our social system rather than individual failings of the poor. Contrary to the popular belief that poverty results from individual deficiencies—that poor people lack intelligence, determination, or skills—author Edward Royce introduces students to the very real structural issues that stack the balance of power in the United States. The book introduces four systems that contribute to inequality in the U.S.—economic, political, cultural, and structural—then discusses ten institutional problems that make life difficult for the poor and contribute to the persistence of poverty. Throughout the book, the author compares individualistic and structural approaches to poverty to assess strengths and limitations of each view. The second edition of this provocative book has been revised throughout with new statistical information, as well as analysis of the recent recession, the Obama presidency, increasing political polarization, the rise of the Tea Party and appearance of the Occupy Movement, new anti-poverty movements, and more.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Edward Royce's *Poverty and Power* provides a comprehensive look at the reasons why poverty persists in the United States and why it is so often taken for granted by many Americans.

Royce's compelling argument identifies the cause of poverty as rooted in inequalities in power and politics and shows the inadequacies of individualistic, cultural, and human capital theories of poverty. (Ellen Reese, University of California, Riverside) This updated edition of *Poverty and Power*

remains the single most comprehensive exploration of structural inequality I have ever read. The book brilliantly excoriates our prevailing belief that poverty and inequality result from individuals' poor decisions or bad personal attributes. In speaking with colleagues, *Poverty and Power* has become the "go to book" for undergraduate and graduate classes that want to examine the economic, cultural, political, and social layers of systemic inequality. (Rick Eckstein, Villanova University)

*Poverty and Power*, second edition, is a tour de force treatment of competing perspectives on poverty in America and of the compelling case for understanding poverty as a structurally-generated social problem. This lively and current volume is essential reading for students and citizens interested in developing a more complete understanding of discussions and debates on the nature of poverty and on social policies designed to deal with poverty as a social problem. (Earl Wysong, Indiana University Kokomo)

*Poverty and Power* is a well-documented account of the political and economic roots of the exceptionally high rates of poverty in the United States and a systematic critique of explanations that blame the so-called deficiencies of the poor. Its clearly laid out argument and highly readable prose make it an excellent resource for classroom use and for all who are interested in understanding why economic hardship is so widespread in a country of such celebrated wealth. (Alice O'Connor, University of California Santa Barbara)

In the area of economic inequality, there is no book I would adopt before *Poverty and Power*. Royce analyzes and synthesizes an astonishing amount of material. I challenge anyone to find a scholar more steeped in the literature on poverty than this author. *Poverty and Power* will broaden and deepen the knowledge base of any professor (let alone student) but without excessive disciplinary jargon. The result of Royce's painstakingly thorough research and elegant writing is a highly informative yet engaging and readable text. The first edition proved a hit with students in my senior seminar; we eagerly await this second edition! (Lisa M. Tillmann, Rollins College)

*Poverty and Power* persuasively demonstrates the force of social structures in generating and perpetuating poverty. Challenging conventional arguments about the poor being poor as a result of their own choices, Royce clearly details how the exercise of power by actors in structurally advantaged positions—such as corporate lobbyists, employers, and the media—necessitates the existence of poverty. This important work should be required reading for students, scholars, and policy makers. (Monica McDermott, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

The United States has a serious poverty problem. As Edward Royce argues with admirable clarity, the causes lie deep in our social structure. *Poverty and Power* provides a lucid overview of contending theories and a wealth of empirical data. It is an essential antidote to the complacent, blame-the-poor rhetoric that has hamstrung progress toward the elimination of poverty in this country. (Matthew Nichter, Rollins

College)

Edward Royce is professor emeritus of sociology at Rollins College where he was a recipient of the Cornell Distinguished Faculty Award. He is the author of *The Origins of Southern Sharecropping*.

Great introduction to the truth of our society. It's a pretty big wake up call to everyone that has seen the world through someone else's scam than their own eyes.

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Amazing book!

This book totally dimensions the various aspects that impact poverty. It explains the social, cultural, economic, and political forces that ultimately affect poverty and the complicated interrelations of all the variables involved. This book is excellent for an undergraduate college student studying medicine, sociology, political science, psychology, etc as it gives much material and references for papers and dissertations. It is also excellent reading for everyone interested in why poverty exists.

Lots of good information and a very interesting perspective on the issue of poverty. There is better information to be found through outside research but this is a great introduction to the material and gives you a lens for understanding more complex arguments. The main drawback is that certain chapters display a significant bias lending little or no credence to current anti-poverty measures, even where they have worked.

If you read only one book about poverty in America, it should be "Poverty and Power." I have been teaching a college course about poverty for 20 years, and this is the best all-around book I have seen on this subject. It is comprehensive and insightful and it sheds valuable light on why we have such a high level of poverty in this country and what we could be doing to more effectively reduce it. The main thrust of Royce's analysis is to examine and contrast the two main perspectives on poverty - what he calls the "individualistic perspective" and the "structural perspective." The individualistic theory is the dominant one in the U.S. and it argues that poverty is caused by individual weaknesses and failings. This tendency to blame the poor for their own situation is one of the main reasons why we do so much less to help the poor in this country than they do in other

Western democracies. Royce devotes a number of chapters to describing and critiquing several popular versions of this individualistic theory, such as the idea that the poor are lazy and lack a sense of responsibility, or the notion that people are poor because they have failed to develop the skills necessary to succeed in a modern economy. He relentlessly and systematically demolishes these misleading explanations of poverty. Royce argues that a structural understanding of poverty gives us a much better explanation for why this problem persists. He identifies a number of flaws and shortcomings in the structure of our economy and our political system that are responsible for the high level of poverty in this country. For example, the persistent lack of adequate paying jobs virtually guarantees that some people will have to be poor - no matter how hard they try. And the poor funding of our social safety net - welfare, unemployment insurance, etc. - means that government policy is usually ineffective in reducing poverty. Royce then traces these structural problems to the mal-distribution of economic and political power in this country. The poor are poor in large part because they lack the economic power to bargain for higher wages and benefits, and the political power to enact legislation that would raise the minimum wage, make it easier to unionize, and create a more extensive social safety net. I will be using this book in my course and I think others who teach this topic would also greatly benefit from using it. It is provocative and highly readable. Beyond students, anyone interested in really understanding the causes and possible solutions to the problem of poverty in this country will find this a fascinating and invaluable book

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