

Social Inequality in Australia

Lecture Notes

- Wealth Inequality
- A. Leigh (2013) "Battlers and Billionaires"; distribution of wealth in Australia from poorest to richest, wherein the sum total of wealth in Australia is disproportionately shared by the rich (graphs)
- Differences between groups of people that are hierarchical in nature – lecturer wants to argue that social inequality comes from financial inequality in a way that creates a stratified society
- Distributional inequality – extent to which people receive unequal access to resources (income, education, healthcare, housing, culture etc.)
- Inequality of opportunity – extent to which opportunities and life chances to achieve or improve access to resources are unequal
- Marx (1818 - 1883)
 - historical materialism; progression is driven by developments in the mode of production i.e. the way in which economic production is organized – he sees history as a linear productive progression with a communist utopia the end point of progressive society
 - history is defined by society's relationship to material production and the economy that surrounds it
 - his schema of history: primitive society, slave society, feudal society, capitalist/bourgeois society, and then communist social (socialism is usually understood as the period of transition between capitalist and communist stages)
 - class struggle and revolution are the mechanisms for transition from one stage to the next
 - analysis of capitalist system was such that capitalism is based on a small minority (bourgeoisie) expropriating surplus value produced by the labour of the majority (the working class, or the proleteriat) i.e. profiting on the product and selling it for more than the laborer is paid
 - economic determinism; economic relations form the base of society, political and social relationships are the superstructure determined by the economic base i.e. if the economic base is changed then the nature of society will change
 - as such, consciousness is altered by your status within your economic superstructure e.g. if you are a slave in a slave society then you have a slave mentality
 - as such, within capitalism, workers gain consciousness of their position within a society that is becoming more advanced, capitalist and expansive – the working class grows in size

Week Four, 21st of March – 27th of March

J. Baxter, B. Hewitt and M. Western (2005). "Post-Familial Families and the Domestic Division of Labour", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 36(4): 583-600.

- "our lives are no longer set by class, religion, tradition, family and kin relations, according to Beck-Gernsheim, but rather by new institutions such as the labour market, the welfare states, and the educational system" p. 583
- Increase in de facto cohabitation before marriage, as well as increase in age at first marriage, Australia has lowest fertility rates of all OECD nations (1.8 births per woman), and consistently shows people only getting married once p. 585
- Sharp increase in divorces following the Family Law Act 1975 no-fault divorce policy, following this the rates remained higher but steady p. 586
- "most women work part-time for a significant proportion of their working lives, particularly when there are young children in the household, while the majority of men work full-time for the duration of their working lives" p. 587
- "the dominant pattern then is for men to enter full-time employment after they complete their education and to remain in full-time employment until retirement. For women, the dominant pattern is to enter full-time employment after education and to remain there until the birth of their first child" p. 587