

COMM1000 Course Notes

Module 1: Social Inequality

- 'The idea of social inequality refers to differences between groups of people that are hierarchical in nature. At its most basic, it refers to the hierarchical distribution of social, political, economic and cultural resources' Habibis and Walter 2015, p.3.
- Problem all around the world
- The effect of social inequality globally: Credit Suisse Research Institute, Global Wealth Report
 - 71% of the worlds adults own under \$10,000 in wealth
 - Group holds only 3% of global wealth
 - World's wealthiest individuals those owning over \$100,000 in assets, total only 8.6% of global population but own 85.6% of global wealth with the top 1% owning just over 50% of the world household wealth (large range).
- Impact of disparity: human rights violations, wars, terrorism and extremists, refugee crises, poverty, preventable diseases
- OECD have chosen to target inequality on a global scale, applying the Gini coefficient measure of income inequality, and promoting inclusive growth
- IMF found in a 2017 report; although a small amount of inequality spurred a growth in low Gini-coefficient index countries (below 27). Most developed and OECD countries like Aus. or the USA are well above that ratio where inequality becomes harmful to growth
- What this means is that even in a relatively wealthy country such as Australia, inequality is impacting individuals, communities and growth

Social Issues in Australia:

- Primary issue when seeing inequality
- In the most disadvantaged 3% of Australia's localities (68 places have):
 - 2x the rate of unemployment
 - 2.5x rate of long term unemployment
 - 2x the rate of disability support and psychiatric admissions
 - 2x rate of criminal convictions
 - 3x rate of imprisonment
- Even though there is increasing funding in areas experiencing disadvantage not seeing much improvement – ABS
- ABS map this based on Australian census
 - Impact compounded by rural remoteness in disadvantaged areas
 - ABS uses measures of health, education, employment, financial security, crime, family and community to map disadvantage

The Indigenous Experience:

- Disadvantaged areas include remote Aboriginal communities in QLD.
- Lower life expectancy and complex factors of decreased values for health and education, access to employment and housing

Social Disadvantage:

- Complex

- Many kinds of disadvantage impact other areas of disadvantage = **multiple disadvantage**
- Social disadvantage is a relative measure
- Social disadvantage leads to social inequality

Homelessness:

- Many factors that come together in experience of homeless person
- Suffered trauma and can be enduring mental and physical health conditions

Affordable Housing:

- Impacts urban areas and extreme remote rural areas
- Much more difficult for people with lower incomes to afford housing – not just about entering housing market

Mental Health:

- Increase in mental health needs and therefore costs are increasing for society

Obesity:

- Biggest issue Australia is facing and will continue to face
- Growing at a rapid rate
- Related to complex raft of health issues and mental health issues

Aging Society:

- Important issue
- Have huge impact on social sector, health and budget

Social Sector in Australia:

- Looks at direct social welfare expenditure, largely in the domain of the public sector
- Also covers health and education involving for profit and not for profit in delivery of its services
- Every year Aus. federal government spends over \$175b on direct social welfare alone and add costs for health and education is another \$110b+
 - Budget expenses don't include state and local government contributions and issues such as housing or other social services
 - Also contributions of not for profit \$103b overall
 - A lot of unknown areas in the for profit area
- In 2050 it is estimated that half of government expenditure will be spent on health, age pensions and aged care

Social Purpose Sector in Australia:

- Public sector has the greatest responsibility for the social welfare of Australians
- The social sector of Not For Profits, and Charities comprises of central and significant stakeholders and contributors
- The private sector of for profit businesses is increasingly involved in social welfare through health, education, work training and other services

Social Change in Australia:

- Substantial expenditure going on to social welfare from direct government payments in excess of \$285b/yr. and then including the social purpose sector of not for profits and for profits sector in health and education we are talking about 1/3 of GDP at about \$500b in 2017
- Why such serious issues continuing giving this expenditure?, why no improvement?
- Things aren't changing (mental health), things aren't changing fast enough (Indigenous), things are getting worse (housing)

Social Inequality:

- Habibis and Walter (2015) present sources to support the argument that inequality impacts on all members of a society
- They also indicate the ways in which that impact reaches people through unexpected consequences, connecting economic concerns with humanitarian issues.
- This is why social inequality needs to be everyone's problem

Inequality in Australia Video:

- Divides community, locking people out of opportunity to improve their lives
- Rising trend
- Gap is widening
- Not inevitable
- Must strengthen tax and social security systems and reduce inequality
 - Education and health care for all
 - Affordable housing and decent jobs
 - A strong social safety net
 - Everyone paying their fair share of tax

Module 2: Wicked Problems and Types of Change

- Wicked = Complex
- A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve for as many as four reasons: incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden and the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems. (Kolko, J. 2012)

What is a wicked problem?

- Problem has no definitive formulation (e.g. 2 types of poverty aren't the same)
- The problem involves many stakeholders with different values and priorities
- There is no 'stopping rule' for the problem: the search for solutions never stops and the problem never ends
- The problem's roots are complex and tangled
- The problem is unprecedented and constantly changing

E.G. Climate Change, Terrorism, Poverty

'they aren't just tough or persistent – they're wicked' (Camillus, 2008)

Recognising the Problem: The Cynefin Framework: (Kun-iv-in)

- Conceptual Framework developed in the early 2000's by the company IBM
- A decision-making framework that recognises the casual differences that exist between system types and proposes new approaches to decision making in complex social environments
- Welsh word for habitat/place of your actual belongings