

The parameters of social inclusion in Australia: on social exclusion, social justice, homelessness, family violence and sexual assault

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Structure of the talk

- Social exclusion and social justice
 - Family violence, sexual assault and social exclusion
 - The hidden contributors
 - Homelessness, family violence, ongoing violence, and mental health issues
 - Trauma and exclusion
 - Implications for policy and practice
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Social exclusion and social justice

□ 'Social exclusion'

- European and U.K. origins
 - 'Joined up solutions to joined up problems'
 - Defined as: *'a short hand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown'*
 - A flexible term with multiple meanings
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The components of social exclusion

□ Social exclusion as social injustice

■ **Economic injustice**

- Rooted in political economic structures of society
- Exploitation, economic marginalization, deprivation, poverty

■ **Cultural injustice**

- Rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication
- Misrecognition - being excluded from full participation in society due to patterns of cultural value that constitute certain people as comparatively unworthy of respect and esteem
- Disrespect - being maligned or disparaged in stereotype public cultural representation and/or everyday life interactions

- Issues of social injustice are never 'just economic' or 'just cultural' - they are mutually constituted and inextricably connected
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Family violence and sexual assault

- ❑ Emerged as issues of public concern in the 1970s
 - ❑ Have remained mostly the concern of the women's sector
 - ❑ An historical separation between 'social justice issues' and 'violence against women' issues
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Family violence and sexual assault

□ Prevalence

- At least one in five women and one in twenty men in Australia have experienced sexual violence (ABS, 2005)
- Over half of all women (57%) have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence over their lifetime, and more than a third of women (34%) have experienced this from a former or current partner (AIC, 2002)
- Perpetrators of sexual assault and family violence are mostly men
- Children: before the age of 15, more than 1 in 10 (12.4%) of women and 4.5% of men had been sexually assaulted (ABS, 2005)

□ Risk factors

- For sexual assault when other variables taken into account: gender, age (women under 24 at highest risk), marital status, childhood sexual abuse, prior adult violence
 - *'While the results are inconclusive, it is likely that education, employment and income interact with other risk factors, such as age and an active social lifestyle'* (Lievore, 2003, 24)
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Family violence and sexual assault

□ Effects:

- Long-term health issues, profound disruption to an individual's work life, personal relationships, and community life.
 - *'Domestic violence is the leading contributor of death, disability and illness in women in Victoria aged 15 to 44, contributing more to the burden of disease than other preventable risk factors including high blood pressure, smoking and obesity. Poor mental health accounts for almost two thirds (60%) of this burden of disease'* (VicHealth, 2004).
 - Ripple effects (ACSSA, 2007): impacts on other women, children, families, society overall, and the economy.
 - These issues contribute to social exclusion - and are socially exclusive forces within themselves.
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The hidden contributors

□ Socio-economic status and gendered violence

- Overall, people with the lowest socio-economic status are at greatest risk of violence, including intimate partner violence (WHO 2002)
 - Social disadvantage has been implicated in higher rates of intimate partner violence
 - NSW: women living in poverty more than 7 times more likely to be killed by a partner/ex-partner than women from higher socio-economic areas (Devery, 1992)
 - Women who experienced sexual assault from a child more likely to come from lower socio-economic families, and long term effects include further decline in socio-economic status (Mullen and Fleming, 1998)
 - Statistically significant number of children had lived in a home with domestic violence situated in disadvantaged suburbs
 - Indigenous Australians: rate of sexual assault approximately 3 times higher than non-indigenous (AIC, 2007)
 - Vic: Indigenous Victorians 8 times more likely to experience family violence than non-Indigenous Victorians (Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce, 2003)
 - US: those with a household income under \$7500 were twice as likely as the general population to be victims of a sexual assault (US Department of Justice, 1996)
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The hidden contributors

□ Exceptions

- Eg: some contradictory results from crime surveys
- Eg: US college women
- Also – there are data issues (ie lack of inclusion in research of the most vulnerable populations)
- *Remains a contested and under-researched area*

□ Lievore: strongest risk factor for intimate partner violence is male partner behaviour (violent outside the family, gets drunk a couple of times a month or more)

□ **Even if some people who are more disadvantaged don't experience dv and s/a at higher rates, they are still more likely to be more adversely affected by them**

- *'Those who are already disempowered or disconnected from others are most at risk [or experience post-traumatic stress disorder]'*
(Herman, 1992) (more on this point later...)
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Homelessness and family violence

- ***‘Women escaping from family violence, along with children who live with or witness such violence, are the prevailing face of homelessness in Australia today’ (MacDonald, 2007)***
 - 33% of total clients who accessed the SAAP program were women feeling domestic and family violence (AIHW, 2005)
 - Emergency accommodation doesn’t accurately reflect the actual number of homeless women and children not part of the service system (DVCH, 2007)

 - ***‘The largest single cause of homelessness...is domestic violence. More than one in five people seeking emergency accommodation are escaping domestic violence. Most victims bring children with them which means they share in the disruption and trauma of being displaced from their homes’ (Rudd, 2008)***

 - *Yet solutions to family violence not yet part of the homelessness solution (more on this later...)*
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Homelessness and ongoing violence

- ***‘The focus on domestic violence and homelessness is too narrow... Women who have experienced ongoing violence and abuse throughout their lives are a significant presence in the population of homeless women’*** (Griggs and Johnson, 2007)

 - A history of family violence as both a child or an adult is positively correlated with homelessness
 - ***‘Our female subjects reported sexual assault by parents, step-parents and siblings....’*** (Buhrich et al.)
 - Childhood violence: Lack of care and either physical or sexual abuse in childhood are associated with a dramatically elevated risk of adult homelessness in both men and women (Herman et al, 1996)
 - Ongoing violence: The women who had experienced ongoing violence tended to have longer-term, episodic experiences of homelessness, many had developed other problems (eg substance abuse) and most were entrenched in the homeless subculture. They have different and ongoing needs to remain out of homelessness.
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Homelessness and ongoing violence

Sexual assault and abuse

- ❑ US: Homeless women reported childhood physical/sexual abuse, rape and physical assault most frequently - even when compared with groups in which victimization rates are known to be high (poor housed single women or single mothers) –...Each type of victimization, taken separately, proved a good predictor of homelessness (Browne, 1993)
 - ❑ Aus: 100% women and over 90% of men reported at least one event of trauma in their life. 50% of women and 10% of men had been raped (Buhrich et al, 2000)
 - ❑ Homeless women at particular risk of lifetime physical assault, physical threats, witness a trauma event, sexual molestation, rape
 - ❑ Homeless men at particular risk of lifetime physical assault and rape
 - ❑ Youth : high percentage of homeless youth have been sexually abused prior to being homeless. Once they are homeless, they become vulnerable to further sexual exploitation, rape and sexual assault (WCSAP, 2004).
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Violence and mental health

The connection between mental health issues and family violence and sexual assault

- Intimate partner violence is the leading cause of death, disability and illness in women aged 15-44 (Vichealth, 2004)
 - Poor mental health accounts for 60% of this burden of disease
 - Close relationship between mental ill-health and sexual assault
 - US study: 68% of women with a severe mental illness had been sexually assaulted in their life time (Goodman et al., 2001)
 - PTSD as a result of rape
 - High representation of people with a disability as victims of sexual assault
 - 26.5% of victims reporting rape to the police had a disability (60% with a mental illness or psychiatric disability) (OWP, 2007)
 - Compounded difficulty of re-victimisation by the justice system
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Homelessness, violence and mental health

The issues of mental health in homeless populations

- ❑ US: study of episodically homeless women diagnosed with a major mental illness: 97% reported some form of abuse over the life span. Most described histories of severe and ongoing abuse at the hands of multiple perpetrators, usually beginning in childhood and extending into adulthood (Goodman et al, 1997).
 - ❑ Aus: '*These childhood experiences [of rape] may be part of the explanation for the high rates of depressive disorders among the homeless in Sydney...*'
 - ❑ All but one of the measures of psychiatric disturbance and recent psychological status were significantly correlated with a history of physical and/or sexual abuse among homeless women
 - ❑ Possible gender differences: females diagnosed with PTSD, males more often diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder
 - ❑ While the experience of trauma is multiple, each new trauma is important: multiply traumatized women do not become desensitized to the impact of new violence (Goodman et al, 1997)
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Homelessness, violence and mental health

- These characteristics and behaviours may create problems in maintaining housing relationships, indicating the importance of ongoing support

'...The characteristics noted in these women may be due in part to the long-term effects of past traumas (Browne, 1993).'
 - Already noted reactions to trauma, for example: fear, anger, guilt, shame, feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, sense of failure, sense of worthlessness, etc
 - Lack of supportive networks due to early violence by intimates increases risks of homelessness
 - All these issues must be explicitly recognised, named and addressed (*more on this later...*)
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Iterative homelessness, cumulative trauma

- A cycle of long-term vulnerability and trauma
Individuals are made vulnerable to persistent episodes of homelessness because of the range of traumas they experience and the cumulative, embodied effects these traumas have (Robinson, 2006)
 - Compounded social exclusion translates into individual biographies of extreme vulnerability and cumulative trauma
 - For example, once young people become homeless they are at high risk of further victimisation
 - Long-term and episodic experience of homelessness leads to the development of other problems
 - Eg over 2/3rds of those who had a lifetime of ongoing violence and episodic homelessness also had substance abuse problems (Griggs and Johnson, 2007)
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Iterative homelessness, cumulative trauma

Issues of 'causation' of homelessness

'Not all women who become homeless have experience sexual abuse in childhood...Most survivors of child sexual abuse do not become homeless.'

- Structural factors and trauma
 - Housing (access and affordability), workforce participation, education, skills etc are all major contributors: some argue trauma 'causes' homelessness only within broad social context that allows for the existence of widespread homelessness (Herman, 1997)
 - Others argue structural explanations cannot account for the crucial role of trauma which impacts negatively on the capacity to maintain housing and housing relationships
 - Being traumatised/experiencing trauma – including the trauma of homelessness itself – becomes the key driving factor of persistent homelessness
 - *'What was important in the loss of accommodation/or more to another wasn't necessarily a housing crisis, but being vulnerable to a range of crisis events including sexual abuse, assault and family violence...'*
 - Perhaps important to also recognise those structural relationships which create the prevalence of violent trauma in the first place...
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The hidden contributor of trauma

□ Trauma as social exclusion:

- Trauma involves the destruction of the basic organising principle by which we come to know self, others and the environment
 - Victimization is different from bereavement:
‘The bereaved feels loss. The victim feels like a loser’.
(Ochberger 1988, in Atkinson 2002)
 - Victim/survivors, particularly women and children, will usually experience victimisation by medical, legal, welfare and political responses
 - After victimisation people are likely to enter a downward socio-economic spiral because of psychological, social and vocational impairment from the abuse...(Atkinson, 2002)
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The hidden contributor of trauma

□ Trauma – the individual – and society

The victim/survivor may feel...

- *Diminished, defiled, self loathing, shame, self-blame, hatred towards themselves and others*
- *No clear sense of themselves as worthwhile people*
- *Depression, rage, fear, anxiety*
- *Feel they can no longer trust the world they know*
- *Feel profoundly isolated from others*
- *Feel powerless, helpless and hopeless in the face of forces they feel are out of their control*
- *Come to believe they are unable to change their life circumstances*
- *Feel they cannot describe their feelings and experiences to others*
- *Feel no one wants to hear when they do try and articulate*

(Atkinson, 2002)

The hidden contributor of trauma

- ❑ Multiple, inter-generational trauma: Aboriginal Australians
 - *‘The psychological impact of the experiences of dispossession, denigration and degradation are beyond description. They strike at the very core of our sense of identity and being.’ (O’Shane 1995 in Atkinson, 2002)*
- ❑ Trauma may be transmitted across generations, with effects on extended family parenting patterns and communal disorder
 - *‘Trauma disrupts and restructures relationships between people. In particular this has been so for Aboriginal men and women and for the various Aboriginal groups across Australia.’ (Atkinson, 2002)*

Implications for practice and policy

- The importance of explicitly recognising and responding to (violent) trauma
 - ***'These issues are often collapsed in a simplistic category of mental health issues, which can sideline the effects of abuse being addressed... '(Tully, 2003)***
 - If behavior is to be seen as an appropriate reaction to trauma, the trauma must be known. Recognition of the severity of the events external to the individual validates the victim's responses to those events.
 - ***'When service providers fail to recognise women's abuse histories and their potential relationship to symptom severity, their intervention strategies have little chance of success. Too great a part of these women's every day lives are left out.'***
 - *'What is required is a fundamental shift in approach to working with young people that integrates responding to sexual violence. The consequences of not approaching these issues means that service delivery is often likely to be ineffectual or limited and may have dire consequences for young people.'* (Tully, 2003)
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Implications for practice and policy- homelessness

- ❑ Recommendations might include:
 - ❑ Identifying the presence and nature of present and past abuse in homeless populations (ie being explicit about it)
 - *'Most people who have been subjected to sexual abuse wish they had opportunity to disclose at a younger age...'*
 - ❑ Establish of on-site counselling and advice services specific to family and sexual violence - ie formalise and establish greater connections between the sexual violence and homelessness fields
 - ❑ Early recognition and support for children raised in vulnerable situations
 - ❑ Support for adolescents and young people in vulnerable situations (eg incarcerated or about to be discharged from institutional care)
 - ❑ Prevention: ultimately, preventing child abuse, neglect, family violence and adult sexual assault will directly impact on the issue of homelessness
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Implications for policy - homelessness

□ Formal policy recognition

- While the inter-connection between family violence and homelessness is officially recognised in the SAAP Act (1994), and more recently in the 'New Approach to Homelessness' (Rudd, 2008) - preventing family violence and sexual assault not yet part of the homelessness solution.

- *'Describing women and children's experiences of domestic violence as homelessness without providing the contextualised reasons for the homelessness (ie domestic violence) is a subjugating and silencing discourse. The naming and framing of domestic violence experiences as homelessness serves to ensure that abuse, assault, rape, bashing, flogging, hitting pushing, yelling and torture get swept under the carpet of descriptions of 'homeless'' (Martin, 2003)*

- ***The homelessness solution needs to specifically include – and 'join up' to - prevention measures to stop family violence, sexual assault, sexual abuse and other child abuse***
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Implications for approaches to social exclusion policy overall

- Re-conceptualise 'social exclusion' to include these issues
 - Given the prevalence of family violence and sexual assault to social exclusion, how best to respond and prevent them needs to be part of social exclusion policy
 - 'deliberately flexible' 'multiple meanings'
 - Attention needs to be given to 'cultural justice' and how this is done, given they may be used to further stigmatise and shame already stigmatised and shamed communities
 - Address a taboo topic in non-further-stigmatising and non-shaming ways
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Implications for approaches to social exclusion policy overall

'Cultural justice'

- Tackling the structural causes of violence
 - Recognise these issues in a way that is not shaming
 - De-shame the experience of victimisation
 - Emphasis aspects of being a survivor
 - Locate shame with the perpetrator
 - Educate the broader community and families on how to appropriate respond
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Implications for approaches to social exclusion policy overall

Framing these as 'social exclusion' issues: Whole of government approaches to violence response and prevention.

- ❑ A work-force participation and productivity issue
 - ❑ Costs of violence to economy
 - ❑ Short-term production costs
 - ❑ Long-term production costs
 - ❑ A child well-being issue
 - ❑ Impact on children of witnessing family violence profound
 - ❑ Implications can involved a whole range of long-term disadvantage
 - ❑ A 'stronger communities' issue
 - ❑ A family well-being issue
 - ❑ As a social exclusion issue overall
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