

Measuring Equality

ECED7009

Session 2a

Measurement Questions?

- Can Equality be measured?
- How could this be achieved?
- Would it be an accurate assessment?
- What might effect measurement of Equality?
- Why would we want to measure Equality?
- Once measurements have been taken, what use are they?
- How would you use this information?
- What, in real terms, would you do to enforce Equality, and how would you ensure that this 'Equalising' is fair?

Welfare

- Should the choices made by beneficiaries matter?
- Is there a meaningful differences between:
 - Being poor as a result of bad luck?
 - Being poor as a result of bad choices?
- Outside the debate of supporting disabled or children, is it a matter of simply meeting need?
- Should welfare provision only support those actively seeking work or working in low-paid employment?
- Should any system penalise those who choose not to?

Egalitarian Philosophy

- Should we treat those in need due to:
 - Circumstances beyond their control in the same way as;
 - Those seen as contributing to their own hardship (irresponsible/negligence)?
- Should we then adopt a more limited view of 'Equality' then
 - Instead of seeking merely to 'Equalising' material circumstances?
- Egalitarian Proposal is to distinguish between:
 - Qualities with which we are naturally endowed
 - Our ambitions to make use of those qualities?
 - (links here to Liberty

Emphasising Liberty

- Asserting that individuals should be bound by the consequences of their 'FREE CHOICES' made in respect of their
 - Talents and resources
- Dworkin (2000, p1) offers a solution based on:
 - 'Correcting' disadvantages in terms of natural talents
 - But not in terms of ambition or hard work
 - During any 'Redistributions'
- That is 'LUCK EGALITARIANISM' (Anderson, 1999)
- Supporting need due to bad luck and not due to bad choices!

Distinctions

- Dworkin (2000, p1) identifies two forms of bad luck:
 - 'Brute' bad luck
 - Where we do not contribute to the bad luck
 - 'Option' bad luck
 - As a result of our bad choices
- Are our 'benefits' in life derived from our choices and luck?
- Or
- Are they a product of our 'Shared Membership' and 'Cooperation' on society?
- (see also Rawls, 1971)

Distribution of Wealth

- Defined by Dworkin, 2000, cited in Smits 2016, p35:
- ‘the distribution of wealth is the product of legal order; a citizens wealth massively depends on which laws the community has enacted-not only its laws concerning ownership, theft, contract and tort, but it’s welfare law, tax law, labour law, environmental regulation law and laws of practically everything else’

Ethical Individualism

- Two basic principles:
 1. Human lives should be successful rather than wasted.
 - (justifying state redistribution of resources via welfare policies)
 2. Responsibility for the success of each life lies with the person living it.
 - (emphasising individual responsibility-links to conservative views regarding welfare provision. Consider that this might also be linked to Liberal standpoints where People are more actively involved in their lives, as opposed to 'passive beneficiaries of assistance')

(Dworkin, 2000, p5)

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- What is 'Welfare'?
- Is it achieving 'outcomes which are good for citizens'?
- If yes, then who decides what is 'good' for each citizen?

Equalising Welfare

- Dworkin points out... 'equalising welfare has an immediate appeal' as it focusses on the ends rather than the means, recognising that:
 - People have differing needs
 - Need different amounts and kinds of resources to achieve
 - 'Equal Welfare'
- Needs Based Welfare then, attempt to bring about equality in terms of outcomes.
- What are the problems associated with this type of system?

Outcomes

- How do we define ‘Welfare outcomes’?
- When...
 - ‘peoples level of happiness or overall success in life varies so widely’
- How would you begin to measure this?
- Consider how large and intrusive such a measurement system of beauracracy would have to be in order to achieve this accurately!

Choices: Welfare Dependencies

- Preferences linked to
 - Illegitimate
 - Irrational
 - Denigration of others
- Preferences
 - Might be regarded as essential to individual's lives
 - But the state cannot satisfy these preferences
 - (E.G. ending global warming or preventing deaths from cancer)

A Better Egalitarian Strategy

- Dworkin, 2000 argues that a better strategy is to...
 - ‘aim at equality of resources, rather than welfare’
- Choice
 - In use of ‘Equal Resources’
- Choice to be
 - More or less happy with those resources
- Are these then ‘more personal choices within which the state should have no interest or authority/right to be involved in?’

Focus: Equality of Resources

- Re-emphasises the principles of
 - Individual responsibility
 - And
 - Links to the very practical critiques (liberty and autonomy) and the effects of welfare provision by the state

Thought Experiment

- Imagine that you as part of a group of castaways land on a desert island and had to work out a scheme for sharing resources.
- How would you achieve this?
- Individually consider your views then discuss in groups of your choice the implications of your system and benefits of a system proposed by others in your group.
- Take your time we have 30 minutes to develop and agree a system before reporting back to the wider class.

Penalising: Lack of Abilities?

- Should people with a lack of abilities be penalised for lacking abilities?
- Should people receive unregulated rewards because they have socially valued talents?
- (see here also Capitals Theory)

Dworkin's 'Option Luck'

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- What part does 'Risk' play in this situation?

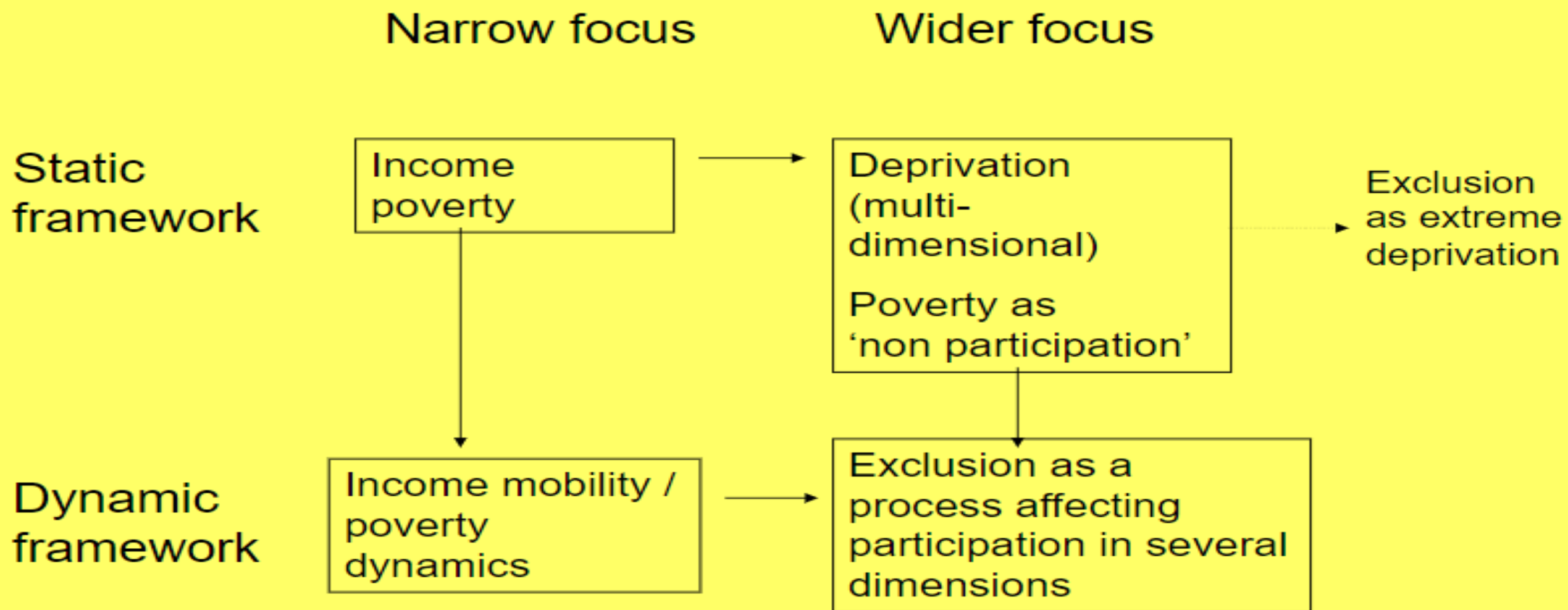
Dworkin's 'Option Luck'

- Making wealth based on choices made (e.g. investment or hard work)
- Should they be entitled to the profits of their decisions?
- What part does 'Risk' play in this situation?
- What if things go wrong, should they be entitled to welfare because of 'Bad Luck' or 'Option luck'?
- If our choices incur risk, should the state (i.e. other contributions towards the state purse) pay for their poor/bad choices?

MUD – RED – SID

- MUD – Moral Underclass Discourse:
 - Code for ‘the underclass’
- SID – Social Integrationist Discourse:
 - Focus on participation in paid work.
 - Ignores importance of unpaid work and poverty of non-workers
- RED – The Redistribution Discourse:
 - Poverty is the central issue, but goes beyond material poverty and focuses on processes that produce inequality

Concepts of Social Exclusion



Assessing Compensation

- Redistribution of resources
- (see here also MUD, RED & SID)
- An agreed 'Insurance System'
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- Should this insurance be funded by a system of taxation?
- Should such a system be extended to 'include natural or physical handicaps'?
- (Smits, 2016)

Central Concerns

- Distinctions between
- Economic hardship caused by 'Choice'
- And
- Economic hardship caused by 'Choice' caused by 'Bad luck'
- Critique...
- Rawls, 1971: Focus on worst-off groups, in terms of income and wealth.
- Dworkin, 2000: Recognises a range of hardships, including bad luck, including in this physical/mental disabilities.

Consensus: Rawls & Dworkin

- A concern that people should be prevented from benefiting
- from unearned talents or resources
- where they are not deserved

Arguing

- A periodic 'Redistribution of Wealth'
- Via a 'System of Taxation'
- Linked to the mandatory contribution and redistribution via an 'Insurance System'
- I.E. A System of Taxation
- People Insuring themselves against having few or no 'Marketable Talents' (links here to Capitalism's value based paradigms)

An Ideal Scheme

- The challenge being the
- Implementation of agreed policies
- Which are ‘Defensible Egalitarian Redistributions’
- That is the underlying rationale of such a system of beliefs

Equalising Resources

- Assumptions and distinctions:
 - Demands placed on the system are the result of choices
 - Demands placed on the system resultant from circumstances we did not chose
- Should we rely on the state to compensate us for our expensive tastes/preferences?
- (see also Gerald Cohen, 1989: we might not necessarily chose our expensive tastes)

Redistribution by ‘Other Means’

- Should we then equalise ‘Advantage’ rather than resources?
- Or
- Should we then equalise access to ‘Advantage’ rather than resources?
- (links here to Karl Marx’s proposition that Redistribution of Wealth should be distributed
- ‘to each, according to his need’
- How would YOU address the problems of applying this theory to ‘real world problems?’
- (Cohen, 1989)

Suggested Further/Wider Reading

- How do we measure equality Available at <https://newint.org/features/2004/02/01/equality-facts>
- How do we measure equality and human rights Available at <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/how-do-we-measure-equality-and-human-rights>
- How do we measure equality or inequality between humans? Available at <https://www.quora.com/How-do-we-measure-equality-or-inequality-between-humans>

Reference List

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Dworkin, A. (1986) A Matter of Principle. Oxford, UK: Caledonian Press.

Rawls, J. (1971) A Theory of Justice. Cambridge, USA: Belknap Press.

Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1978) Manifesto of the Communist Party. Available at

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf> Accessed on 17.06.2018