

(a) Australia is a mosaic of people from different social & cultural backgrounds, all with very unique experiences. Australia has traditionally been perceived as an egalitarian society, ~~with~~ relatively classless with fluid movement between the classes that do exist. However this is far from an accurate representation of Australian society. Great disparity is clearly evident between <sup>the</sup> various social groups within Australia, particularly in relation to their access to socially valued resources. This access is affected by discrimination, socio economic status & technology. Overwhelmingly it is seen that the minorities of Australian society, such as the homeless youth, are restricted in their access to society's resources.

The minorities of society, particularly the homeless youth, are discriminated against & this adversely affects their access to socially valued resources. Wider society often views such groups with great negativity & is thus unwilling to help them improve their situation. By their very predicament the homeless youth already have a diminished access to society's resources, yet the discrimination they face only worsens this. Some members of society have been known to comment that welfare organisations should cease assisting the homeless as it

only makes the matter worse or attracts them to their area. From this it is evident that the discrimination imposed on this social group adversely affects their access to resources. They are also discriminated against by institutions, even those designed to help them. Centrelink provides financial assistance to those unable to attain an adequate income, yet homeless people by their very situation are often unable to receive such payments. To receive these payments recipients are required to have a bank account & to set up a bank account they are required to provide an address. Thus they are unable to access the financial resources of society, which are required to access so many more, such as housing. The young homeless particularly face discrimination in attempting to access society's resources. There is an increasing youth unemployment rate, as the youth labour market contracts, this restricts their access to employment, diminishing access to financial resources. Those who do have a job are paid lower rates. For those unable to obtain a job, financial payments from welfare authorities are less substantial than those available for adults, thus discriminating against the young in access to financial resources. Access to shelter for the homeless youth is also difficult to secure, thus often trapping them in a state of chronic homelessness. They face discrimination in the private

rental market because of their age & are unable to obtain public  
grants because of their age. Overall, the discrimination faced by  
the homeless youth, & similarly other minorities of society, greatly  
institutionalised their lack of access to valued resources, including  
income & shelter.

Socio-economic status is the main determinant in accessing resources in  
society. A cycle can also be seen in socio economic status &  
access to resources. One who has a higher socio economic status  
has a greater access to society's resources since they have greater  
power to attract these resources towards them. On the other hand  
one without socio economic status has a diminished access to society's  
resources & also to the ability to improve their socio economic  
status. Thus they can become trapped in a cycle of disadvantage  
& restricted access to resources. For example, occupation is a  
key determinant in socio-economic status, which in turn is influenced  
greatly by educational attainment, which is also highly contributed to  
by socio economic status, as the determines the quality & length of  
one's education. Thus socio economic status can also institutionalise  
the disadvantaged's access to society's resources.

In Australia socioeconomic status is reliant on ascribed attributes & not achieved attributes. Thus those already in possession of access to socially valued resources, while those without encounter many barriers in achieving the attributes necessary to acquire these resources.

For the homeless, technology has both a positive & negative impact on their access to resources. Technology, such as the telephone, allows the homeless to access assistance & locate shelter in refuges. However the effectiveness of this technology in allowing the homeless access to socially valued resources can be diminished by their lack of access to a phone or to money to use a phone. Technology can also have a negative impact as it is increasingly integrated into society. For example, without technology, such as a computer, individuals may have limited access to socially valued resources, such as networking. Again one's lack of technology affects their lack of resources, so thus the disadvantaged become trapped in a cycle caused by their own situation.

In conclusion, technology, discrimination & socio-economic status all have a significant effect on one's access to socially valued resources. For those who are disadvantaged this signifies a continued lack of access

to the socially valued resources simply by virtue of their own situation. This demonstrates the seriousness of the extent of inequality in Australia today, by continually denying those in need access to the resources vital for improving their situation. While those less fortunate are continually denied access to resources by technology, discrimination and socio-economic status, the wealthy continue to be able to access these resources in abundance with no barriers, and at the same time restrict the access of others to these rich resources.