

HOMELESSNESS SOCIAL POLICY AND DIFFERENCE

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SOCIAL EXCLUSION



SOCIAL EXCLUSION A Contested Term

- Social exclusion is a contested term often with multiple discourses operating at one time (e.g. social integration, moral underclass, redistributionist)
- Considerable political and moral appeal – increasingly the goals of social policy are framed in language about inclusion rather than rights and social justice

What is Social Exclusion?

- Social exclusion is “ what can happen when people or areas face a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing and can create a vicious cycle in people’s lives” (SEU 2004:7)

SOCIAL EXCLUSION (Cont)

- Multiple Factors
- Dynamic nature
- Views about participation
- Need for multi faceted response
- Spatial dimension

SOCIAL INCLUSION UNIT SA

- The South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative was set up in 2002 strong links with the British Social Exclusion Unit set up in 1997 under Tony Blair's New Labour
- In a sense this was an ideal society to be achieved by strategies that incorporated the whole of government and the community.
- *Without investment in inclusion-investment to reduce social dislocation and ill health, and to increase the capacity of socially disadvantaged areas to improve their situation-our future will be economically as well as socially burdened. To shape the future we want for ourselves and our children, South Australia must create a strong and cohesive community and use its social, economic and environmental resources in a sustainable fashion. (Social Inclusion Unit, 2003)*
- Economic sustainability and a clearly signalled self help approach to addressing social disadvantage (i.e. increase the capacity of socially disadvantaged areas to improve their situation) were key features

SOCIAL EXCLUSION/SOCIAL INCLUSION AS POLITICAL TOOL re Homelessness

- Homelessness is seen in both Britain and Australia as both cause and result of SE
- Social Exclusion Unit 1997 under Tony Blair's New Labour
- South Australia Social Inclusion Unit 2002
"Reduce homelessness by 50%" with strong links to references re school retention and substance use
- Australian Government Social Inclusion Unit 2007
- SE/SI Linked up problems to be solved by linked up solutions

The Research (1)

Overall aim

- The aim of the research was to explore how service providers and policy makers viewed social inclusion and homelessness.

Research Questions

- Under what conditions has the discourse of social exclusion/ social inclusion assumed an increasing prominence as an analytical tool in explaining and responding to homelessness in Australia?
- How different from previous discourses on homelessness is that of social exclusion and social inclusion?
- What contribution do supporters of the social exclusion/social inclusion discourse think it can offer in both explaining and responding to homelessness?
- How has social inclusion as a policy discourse been used to respond to homelessness in South Australia?
- Are there other policy discourses, for example the welfare based principles proffered by Fiona Williams that might respond more effectively to homelessness and if so what might these look like in practice?

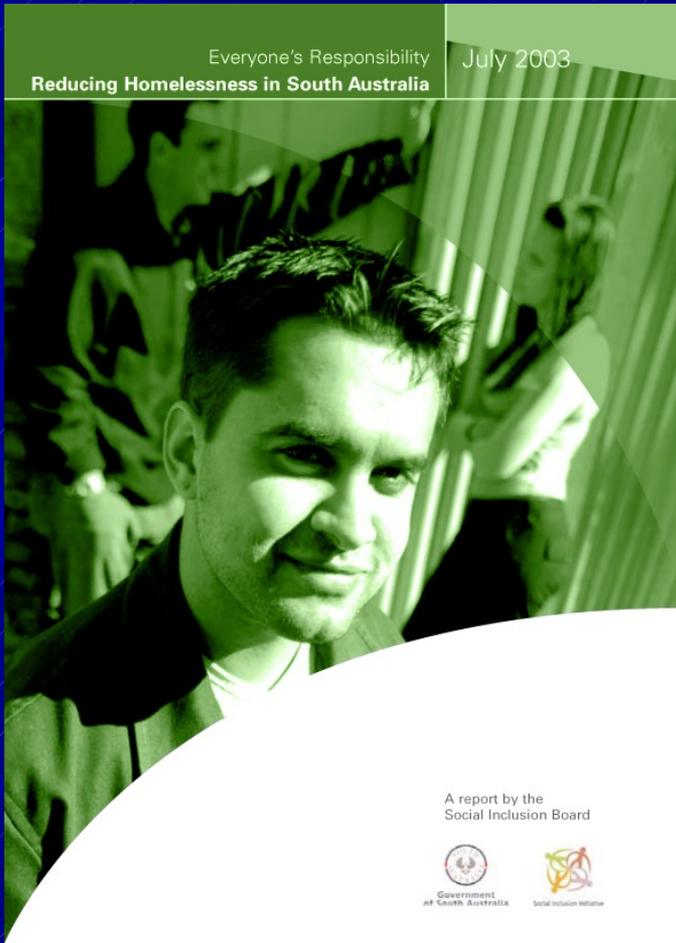
The Research (2)

- Case Study-South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative Reference on Homelessness

Data

- *Everyone's Responsibility: Reducing Homelessness in South Australia (2003)*
- Interview material with 17 service providers
- Foucauldian 'tool kit' and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough) used as a lense for looking at key policy documents and interview material

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND HOMELESSNESS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Address particular groups

School students who are homeless while attending school

'rough sleepers

Boarding houses

State wards

People with disabilities

Prisoners/offenders

High needs

At risk tenancies

Spatial disadvantage eg Playford urban regeneration

Everyone's Responsibility

- SIU *Everyone's Responsibility, Reducing Homelessness in South Australia 2003.*
- SA homelessness strategy has 4 key elements
 - Integrated multi agency approach
 - Focus on indigenous homelessness
 - Interventions that have maximum impact
 - Interventions across the continuum of homelessness
- 37 Recommendations, Immediate Action Plan,
- Links with State Housing Plan to ensure housing affordability

SIU SA

- Social Inclusion Board Reports and Social Inclusion Initiative Newsletters show that a total of 12,130 people have been assisted in some way by the SII Homelessness Reference including
 - 1494 people being assisted into housing and accommodation
 - 1589 people being receiving assistance to avert homelessness
 - 2193 people among risk populations receiving support to build resilience against issues such as homelessness and
 - 5216 people receiving advice, information referral and advocacy to prevent homelessness (Newman, Bierdrzycki, Patterson and Baum, 2007, p41).

ISSUES RE SOCIAL INCLUSION INITIATIVE (SII) RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS IN SA

Tensions between rhetoric and 'reality'

- SII SE/SI discourse accords with cultural/normative definition of homelessness as exclusion from level of housing provision deemed necessary to effectively participate in society.

Issue: Use of normative definition of homelessness leading to 'normative' solutions – problem re cultural diversity, gender.

- SII-Strong emphasis on consultation.

Issue: Consultation often perceived to be piecemeal, tokenistic and not ongoing. Raises question re knowledge production about homelessness.

- SII Structural explanation of homelessness given high profile

Issue: Predominantly integrationist/behavioural solutions

Implications

- Major issue seems to be How do include the “excluded” in social relations that exclude them in the first place?
- What are the grounds of inclusion?
- For practitioners: How has work improved the situation of the least well off and avoided excluding others?
- For Researcher: Does the concept lead to new knowledge or questions that is useful to workers, citizens and policy makers?
- For Policy Makers: Does the concept provide the context for arguments that convince others to acknowledge diversity, subjectivities and voice while also a move towards fairness in the distribution of wealth, resources etc?

POLICY FRONTIERS

Principles of Welfare and Homelessness

- *Interdependency*
- *Care*
- *Intimacy*
- *Bodily Integrity*
- *Identity.*
- *Transnational Welfare*
- *Voice*

VOICE

- *You're like an onion and gradually very skin is peeled off you and there is nothing left. All your self esteem and how you feel about yourself is gone (Conference participant National Homelessness Conference Melbourne 1996)*
- *If social justice is a response to poverty, they argued, it must be a response to poverty's psychological and emotional wounds, not just its financial consequences (Peel, 2003,p167)*
- Social Justice as redistribution, recognition or both?
- Issues of identity
- Issues or respectful treatment imply service users perspectives informing the development of policy and practice
- Social workers role