Homelessness, Social Policy and Difference

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ABSTRACT

In the context of market globalisation and the restructuring of welfare states in the industrialised West, social exclusion has become a central concept in articulating social disadvantage over the last 30 years. The project of social inclusion has assumed a predominant position in policy frameworks to progress the values of social democracy. In Australia and internationally, homelessness has been identified as both a core outcome and cause of social exclusion. Using the South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative to address homelessness as a case in point, I argue that conceptually and operationally the discourse of social exclusion and social inclusion used by government policy bodies and service providers in the homeless sector has been largely informed by an uncritical acceptance of existing and normative social relations. However, social inclusion discourses have been an outcome of specific social, economic and political processes. I conclude that this has significant implications for social and welfare education regarding the development of critical skills in social policy analysis and critical social work. Findings from this recent study help theorise contemporary policy responses in the homeless sector and profile the nuanced issues of voice and emotion, as important new frontiers policy debates regarding the vexed questions of redistribution and recognition.

Keywords: *Homelessness; social inclusion; problem definition; redistribution; voice*

INTRODUCTION

This article reports on current research being undertaken as part of a PhD on social inclusion and homelessness. Using the South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative on homelessness as a case study, the research explores how social policy constructs difference and while seeking to address inequality, is also implicated in the constitution of inequality. In the article I suggest that the dominant rhetoric and practice of social inclusion is based on normative views about participation and 'belonging', in a predefined mainstream. I argue that in the South Australian context, the Social Inclusion Initiative does little to address issues of either redistribution or recognition, which are central to a more informed social policy response to the diverse experiences of people who are categorised as homeless. In the final part of the paper I consider the implication of these finding for social and welfare education.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION/ INCLUSION

Since the late 1990s, the idea of social exclusion has been used to legitimate new approaches to government service delivery. Political proponents claim such approaches deliver more holistic solutions to complex problems. As British scholar Ruth Levitas (2005) notes social exclusion is a highly contested concept, however the definition provided by the Social Exclusion Unit in the United Kingdom provides some flavour as to how the term has been used in policy settings. Here, social exclusion has been defined as

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 1997, p.1).

In Australia, the social exclusion/social inclusion discourse had little credence in academic social policy contexts until the turn of the twenty first century. Within the Australian context, Arthurson and Jacobs (2004) explored the utility of social exclusion for policy analysis and implementation in public housing, and note that the social exclusion discourse has been used to augment policy around the spatial dimensions of exclusion, particularly with respect to public housing estates. As Madanipour (1998, p. 80) noted, differential forms of access to social networks and supports, resources, democratic decision-making and common cultural practices are key aspects of social exclusion in the spatial concentration of social disadvantage.

When used to describe groups such as homeless persons or areas such as housing estates, Arthurson and Jacobs (2004, p. 28) noted that from an analytical point of view social exclusion does little to add value to any understanding of the processes that lead to social disadvantage, and in many cases, only works to further stigmatise and stereotype minority and already marginalised groups. They do suggest however that given the adoption of a social exclusion framework by governments, its strength lies in endorsing policies that adopt a ' joined up approach' to policy implementation by governments (Arthurson and Jacobs 2004, p.37). Nonetheless, numerous writers (Pleace 1998; Somerville 1998; Kennett 1999; Robinson 2003) have sought to analyse the adequacy of social exclusion as a framework

for analysing what Forrest (1999, pp.19-37) has described as the 'new landscape of precariousness' of homelessness.

Pleace (1998, p.38) for example argued that attempts to describe homelessness as either structural/individual or welfare/housing issues are simplistic. In his analysis of the discourses informing the work of the Social Exclusion Unit in Britain, Pleace argues that in the United Kingdom under Tony Blair's New Labour Party, traditional concepts of social disadvantage, merged with European discourses about social exclusion to replace poverty as the singular concept to analyse social disengagement.

Somerville (1998) similarly located homelessness within a broader series of exclusionary practices, arising from a variety of distinct, but overlapping processes in contemporary changes in labour markets, social institutions and the broader moral and ideological sphere. In this context, social exclusion excludes through housing when housing practices deny certain groups control over their lives and reduces access to wider citizenship rights.

Kennett (1999) located the links made between homelessness and social exclusion in the context of an increasingly productivist approach to urban policy and local economic development and a rhetoric around the need for the entrepreneurial city to compete on the international stage. In her analysis, Kennett points to the need to understand the processes which contribute to circumstances such that individuals' resources can be so depleted, so as to leave people without a place to stay.

An analysis of exclusionary housing practices provides a paradigm through which homelessness is framed but Robinson (2003) argues that this focus fails to consider the range of barriers that many people may face in sustaining tenancies despite their availability. Highlighting the broad scope of social exclusion, in particular the emphasis on isolation and marginalisation, Robinson concludes her analysis of the usefulness of the concept as being the

multiple focus on deprivation, poverty, structural inequality and critical issues of belonging, support and integration (Robinson 2003, p.27).

More recently Hulse, Jacobs, Arthurson and Jacobs (2011) have argued that the concept of social inclusion is a useful concept in 'whole of government' approaches to improved housing service delivery.

Social exclusion has come to prominence in political and academic debates about social disadvantage and has been utilised to articulate issues associated with housing and homelessness, however it is a point of contention as to whether it adds value to understanding these issues. While the attention given to process in some social exclusion discourses highlights relational factors between some domains of social disadvantage, the lack of clarity and multiple meanings attached to the term may in fact conflate what are conceptually different ideas and themes. Further to this, such obtuseness can lead to contradictory policy implications concerning inclusion. On the one hand, structural causes are cited as important from an analytical perspective but individualist solutions are focused on implementation. Further to this, as an attempt to account for the multi-dimensional nature of homelessness,

it is not clear that as a tool, it effectively captures the relationship between the ideological construction of homelessness, and the subjective experience of those people who are homeless. Bauman (2000, p. 41) names this as 'recognition', in which people would be seen as who they are, rather than what they are. Within jurisdictional contexts where political responses to social exclusion are underpinned by a 'distinctive moral philosophy' (Crowther 2000 p.204) or what Levitas (1998, p.7) has called a moral and social integrationist discourse, it is important, from a research perspective, to critically analyse the criteria brought to bear on the terms of inclusion underpinning recommendations and proposals in Government decision making and policy.

In the international academic literature on social exclusion, some commentators note that social exclusion provides significant analytical purchase when analysing social disadvantage, in that it goes beyond the primarily material concerns of the concept of poverty and incorporates a broader range of issues relating to social inequality (Walker 1990, pp.102- 129; Whelan and Whelan, 1995, pp. 10 - 29; Burchardt, LeGrand and Piachaud, 2002, pp.1-13; 30-44; Barry 2002, pp.13-30; Room 2002, pp. 1-10).

The focus then is not just on lack of material resources but a lack of opportunity to participate in society, in terms of mainstream consumption, production and social interaction (Bradshaw 2003). Social inclusion/exclusion discourse according to this perspective, addresses the key dimensions of rights, resources and relationships. This is not dissimilar to the concept of 'capabilities', as outlined by Sen (1985, 1992, 1999, 2005) and Nuss-baum (2000, 2011).

However, social exclusion is very much a contested concept. Ruth Levitas (1996, 1998, 2004, 2005) has provided an extensive analysis of the conflicting ideological assumptions and the major theoretical ideas underpinning the concept of social exclusion in the United Kingdom. Levitas argues that in the United Kingdom there were three main discourses informing debate about social exclusion which she calls redistributive (RED) which is concerned with poverty and the redistribution of resources; an underclass discourse which focuses on addressing the behavioural characteristics of the excluded themselves (MUD); and a social integrationist discourse (SID) which centres on paid work. Levitas' work is pertinent in understanding the multiple meanings and political malleability of the concept of social exclusion, as it emerged in policy initiatives in the United Kingdom. Such flexibility she argues had a political purpose in that different, often contradictory meanings of the term were used to inform policy (e.g. the combination of a moral underclass discourse with that of social integration) or to effectively undermine a redistributive policy. While Levitas analysis was of the United Kingdom her schema provides a useful road map in understanding the implementation of the paired social exclusion/inclusion concept in South Australia.

SOCIAL INCLUSION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In the 1990s in a climate of economic rationalism South Australia had become increasingly recognised as facing very particular problems in terms of economic progress. In particular the downturn in local industries, coupled with a rise in youth unemployment and a

population drain out of the state (Thomson 2002) combined to present serious social and economic challenges. The South Australian Labor Party was quick to note that previous Liberal Party Governments had not addressed the structural context of social problems (South Australian Labor Party 2001, p.3), and sought to address social inequities through a social inclusion that ensured economic and social policy were integrated. What this meant in practice was to:

rebuild a South Australian community which is fairer and more secure in which everyone at least has the opportunity to share in the benefits instead of just the burdens (South Australian Labor Party 2001, p.8).

This was to be no redistributive agenda, but one which equipped excluded citizens and groups with the skills to participate effectively in an environment furnished by economic growth and change. In the outline of Labor's Social Inclusion Initiative the South Australian Rann Government explicitly took up the New Labour narrative.

Based on former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's vision for a whole-of-government approach and on his government's innovative Social Exclusion Unit, we devised our Social Inclusion Unit to be unlike any other (South Inclusion Unit, 2011, p.1).

The South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative (SII), set up in 2002, aimed to facilitate inclusivity at all levels of a society and it revolved around the idea of creating a fair, prosperous and inclusive society (Social Inclusion Unit 2003b). This was 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, 2003b, p.12).

The two features of economic sustainability and a clearly signalled self help approach to address social disadvantage (i.e. increase the capacity of socially disadvantaged areas to improve their situation) drew upon the social exclusion approach adopted in the U.K. informed by ideas of the 'Third Way', which provided:

a framework and mechanisms of support... to enable and empower individuals and groups to improve things for themselves (Bagley, Ackerley and Rattray, 2004, p.597)

While the South Australian initiative was strongly based on the British example of the Social Exclusion Unit, the language promoting the initiative focused on social inclusion. Nonetheless, the South Australian initiative is predicated on particular views about social exclusion which is defined as:

The process of being shut out of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person into the community… [and]… is created by harsh

and unjust economic conditions and compounded by difficult social environments and made worse by insensitive government policies and government neglect. Social exclusion is experienced by individuals, families and communities when they are denied access to the opportunities they need to live rewarding and secure lives (Rann SALP 2002, p.2).

Much of the language promoting the SII sought to address social exclusion by strategies aimed at promoting improved social cohesion in spite of the continuing markers of social disadvantage such as poverty, gender, disability and race. In articulating the aims of the SII, Mike Rann, the then South Australian Premier, argued that improvements in the educational, health and financial status of identified groups, together with a strong law and order agenda aimed at reducing crime rates, would facilitate greater participation in mainstream society.

In outlining the initial work of the SII Mike Rann stated:

Initial references are: to increase school retention rates and to reduce the incidence of homelessness. The unit will also develop the management of an action plan on outcomes from the Drug Summit. Other priorities identified by the government which will be referred to the Board from mid-2003 include: rates of Aboriginal morbidity and mortality and rates of youth suicide (Hansard South Australian Parliamentary Debates, House of Assembly-Estimates Committee, 29 July 2002, p.8).

SOCIAL EXCLUSION / INCLUSION AND HOMELESSNESS

In both Britain and South Australia, homelessness is profiled as an extreme form of social exclusion, requiring specific and targeted responses. With respect to Britain:

One of the social exclusion initiatives in Britain was the sleeping rough campaign. Sleeping rough means that people are homeless but sleeping out on the streets rather than just people who are in hostels or temporary or transitional accommodation. Sleeping rough was the first reference to Britain's social inclusion initiative (Hansard, South Australian Parliamentary Debates, Estimates Committee a 29 July 2002, p.7).

To this end, the SA Social Inclusion Board identified homelessness as a key reference with the initial targets of intervention being those who experienced the most extreme forms of homelessness in the form of rough sleeping.

The early focus of the Social Inclusion Unit's work on homelessness was:

Defining the problem, reviewing existing programs and policies, and identifying innovative ways of combating homelessness. The Unit is required to report within one year on how homelessness will be reduced. This will be in the form of an action plan. It is envisaged that the process for developing the action plan and the recommendations of the action plan itself will capitalise and build upon current work to reduce homelessness in South Australia (Hansard, South Australian Parliamentary Debates -Legislative Council, Monday 8 July 2002, p.393).

David Waterford, Executive Director of the Social Inclusion Unit from 2004-2009 notes that the use of the social exclusion paradigm in South Australia enabled a shift away from thinking about homelessness as a simple housing problem to consider broader social and economic factors. He argued that the South Australian government adopted a social exclusion/inclusion framework to:

broaden thinking and force policy makers to think more about homelessness and our responses to the needs of homeless people (Waterford 2005, p.14).

The Social Inclusion Unit's stated concern was to involve as many interested parties as practicable and to this effect undertook a consultation process outlined in the Final Report, Everyone's Responsibility: Reducing Homelessness in South Australia (2003).

This Report has been developed on the basis of an extensive consultation process. Stakeholder engagement began with a series of meetings between members of the Social Inclusion Unit and over 90 organisations. During this phase, relevant literature in the area, including South Australian reports, was identified and analysed. In October and November 2002, a series of consultation workshops involved over 400 service providers from the community, non-government and public sectors across regional and metropolitan South Australia.…Consultations with Aboriginal stakeholders were a vitally important element of the consultation process.… In addition to agency and service provider consultations three public forums on homelessness were held in metropolitan Adelaide in early 2003. This was followed by a state-wide Homelessness Hotline operated for the last week of January 2003. This afforded a wide range of community members, including current and former homeless people, the opportunity to participate in the development of this Report and Action Plan (Social Inclusion Board, 2003a, pp.6-7).

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The aim of the research reported here was to explore how service providers and policy makers viewed social inclusion and homelessness. There are a wide range of sites in which the construction of homelessness takes place, in policy documents, criteria of access and entry to services, workers' perceptions and interventions, and media articles. I undertook a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as outlined by Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2000) of the 2003 South Australian Social Inclusion Board Report Everyone's Responsibility: Reducing Homelessness in South Australia. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with service providers and local government planners, to explore themes of identity construction, ideological contestation and policy contestation. I had intended to interview key members of the Social Inclusion Board and the Social Inclusion Unit but despite the required formal approaches they declined the offer. As Saunders and Walter note:

The relationship between researchers and policy practitioners is an uneasy fit between complementary but divergent interests making for a creative but unpredictable dynamic (Saunders and Walter 2005, p. 3).

In this case the political sensitivity of the issues at the time provided the justification for the Board and the Unit's reluctance to be involved; such justification does however raises

significant questions concerning the relationship between public and private knowledge in the political arena.

This research was approved by the research ethics committee of Flinders University, South Australia. Seventeen semi-structured, face to face interviews were conducted in Adelaide from July-November 2005. The participants in this study were employed in non-government, local and state government services responding to homelessness, as managers, direct service providers and project officers. Six of the participants were women and eleven were men. The participants were recruited by sending a letter of invitation to relevant organisations, then following this up by email and telephone calls. No incentives were provided to the participants to be involved in the study, they contacted the researcher directly to express their interest in being involved and a time was then negotiated for the interviews. All interviews took place in their place of work and lasted 30 minutes to one hour. Once data was transcribed and collected, I used the six stages of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Summarily, these are: familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the thesis. Key themes then were collated into dominant discourses about social inclusion/exclusion and homelessness. Respondents were asked a series of questions on a range of topics including; their understanding of social exclusion and social inclusion; groups in society they considered socially excluded and why they considered them so. Other areas that I explored included respondents' views concerning the activities of the Social Inclusion Unit in addressing homelessness and the level of consultation the Unit had engaged in with agencies. Respondents were also invited to provide an assessment of the impact of the Social Inclusion Initiative on the work of the agencies they worked for and in providing an innovative and useful response to homelessness in South Australia.

This study uses a social constructivist framework informed by Foucauldian concepts of discourse, power, knowledge and surveillance, to examine how social policy and service provision are conceptualised as both constitutive of and constituted by a series of intersecting and unequal social relations. Central to this notion is the idea that language and discourse mediate social realities (Weedon 1987; Burgmann 2003). The utilisation of these perspectives relates to the linguistic turn in policy analysis which suggests that policy making proceeds by way of shared understandings of problems and invokes the need to understand how selective accounts of what constitutes a problem are legitimated (Fischer 2003).

This study contributes to the array of studies in housing that have drawn upon social constructionist perspectives, many of which have drawn upon some form of discourse analysis (Jacobs, Kemeny and Manzi 2004; Hastings 2000). From this perspective discourses are contingent upon and inform material practices, linguistically and practically, as articulated through particular power techniques (visible in social institutions such as prisons, hospitals, schools, factories, and so on) that produce particular forms of subjectivity (Foucault 1979, 1980).

However, while language and discourse is important, this is not to deny the material, affective and cognitive dimension of the experience of homelessness. For example, this research found that service providers and policy actors talk about homelessness as having very real emotional and material effects upon social life. As numerous writers have argued,

related issues such as class, gender and race are not solely constructed discursively (Bryson 1992; Leonard 1997; Walby 2000). Fairclough (1995, p.97) argues that discourse is a language text as well as a practice embedded within socio-cultural contexts that function at individual, institutional and societal levels.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings discussed in this section were the result of the analysis of the 2003 South Australian Social Inclusion Board Report, Everyone's Responsibility: Reducing Homelessness in South Australia and interviews undertaken with service providers and government planners. The main themes identified included: the perception that the Social Inclusion Unit excluded key workers in the non-government sector from their consultations; the focus on providing solutions for particular stigmatised population groups contradicted the more generalised structural analysis of homelessness; and finally, the discourse on risk assessment individualised issues in a way that appears to contradict the inclusionist intent of the Social Inclusion Initiative.

The problematisation of homelessness by the South Australian Social Inclusion Unit is embedded in the cultural definition of homelessness developed by Chamberlain and Mackenzie (2008). Homelessness here is defined as any form of accommodation that falls below a generally accepted standard of accommodation; the minimum community standard according to Chamberlain and Mackenzie being a small, self contained rental flat which includes a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom and some degree of security of tenure. For Chamberlain and Mackenzie there are three levels of homelessness as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Definitions of Homelessness- Australian Census

LEVEL OF HOMELESSNESS	DESCRIPTION OF ACCOMMODATION
Primary: Improvised homes, tents and rough sleepers	Living on streets, sleeping in parks, squatting, using cars etc for temporary shelter
Secondary: People who move from one form of temporary accommodation to another.	Emergency/ transitional accommodation provided under SAAP; hostels for homeless people, night shelters, refuges and short term (12 weeks) or less) boarding house accommodation. Also included as secondary homelessness- staying with other household
Tertiary: People in accommodation less than minimum community standard	People renting caravans with no member of the household in full time employment and with the caravan as the usual address.

Source: Chamberlain and Mackenzie 2008, vii

This definition is premised on normative understandings of home that places significant limitations on the capacity of any policy response to acknowledge and respond to issues of diversity and difference, particularly relating to gender and ethnicity. While Indigenous homelessness was a significant focus of the Initiative (at least in the analysis and experience of social exclusion for Indigenous people), gender was mentioned primarily in relation to children at risk. This highlights the failure in the Social Inclusion Board's Report Everyone's Responsibility: Reducing Homelessness in South Australia (2003) to significantly address the growing problem of women's homelessness as a result of domestic violence identified by feminist researchers (Chung et al. 2000; Watson 2000, p.165).

These insights are significant in the context of this discussion about objective definitions of homelessness. While not only assuming normative standards of housing against which homelessness is then defined, objective definitions are characterised by a binary of homed and homeless that is potentially insensitive to the nuanced experiences of those categorised and enumerated as homeless. As highlighted by Robinson's (2002) study of young people, and studies of homeless identities (Venness 1993, Parsell 2010; 2011; Zufferey 2002, 2004; Zufferey and Kerr 2004), the understanding of 'home' that those officially or objectively defined as homeless attach to their spatial location are multiple and diverse. This underlines the significant shortcomings of objective measures in understanding the subjective experiences of those represented as 'homeless' in policy, research and the media. The case for attending solely to the cultural definition rests on the view that the very diversity and variability of definition engendered by subjectivist positions make it very difficult, from a government's perspective, to develop systematic programmatic responses to homelessness, which does not allow any benchmark alongside which success or failure can be measured. As Chamberlain and Johnson (2001) suggest, if the problem cannot be 'defined', how and why should any program be funded?

In the Social Inclusion Board Final Report Everyone's Responsibility: Reducing Homelessness in South Australia (Social Inclusion Board, 2003, p.6) it is argued that the recommendations were informed by a comprehensive consultation process with relevant stakeholders. Findings from my research signalled an alternative view, that there was minimal consultation and very little ongoing involvement of non-government organisations in the development of recommendations. A perception that the everyday knowledge base of practitioners working with homeless people was largely ignored is reflected in comments from respondents from non-government organisations interviewed as part of this research, such as:

We've had very little contact with the Social Inclusion Unit even as an organisation... certainly as an individual service there has been no actual contact which has been quite interesting in terms of the broad scheme of things in terms of how they operate… [and]...I don't think they have spoken to any grass roots workers.

Another non-government respondent states that:

…one of the things that happened was that the negotiations as to where the money should go did not involve key people who were delivering services... I mean they were involved in a few

forums... They should have been talking to people who know what the problems are with the result being that money and ideas came totally out of the blue.

While this can, in part, be explained by an historic disjuncture between non- government organisations and government, the limited engagement of non- government organisations also was acknowledged by government workers. This raises questions not only about the nature of consultative processes but also the way in which particular 'expert knowledge' relating to homelessness is privileged.

The Social Inclusion Board Report profiles a structural explanation of homelessness, which addresses the issues of social division and structural dimensions to homelessness. This would correspond to what Levitas (2005, p. 9–14) would describe as components of a redistributionist discourse.

In this Report, the Social Inclusion Board identifies a range of economic and social factors as the primary, or structural, causes of homelessness. Key among these are unemployment, a low level of income (including low wages and salaries as well as inadequate income support payments), and lack of access to affordable and appropriate housing, most significantly because of undersupply. The immediate impact of these structural factors is poverty, which in turn is a significant factor leading to and compounding both the experience and risk of homelessness (Social Inclusion Board 2003a, p.v).

Homelessness is also situated within a human rights discourse:

The basic human right to access adequate and suitable housing for every person in South Australia must be a goal not only of government but of the whole community (Social Inclusion Board 2003a, p. iii).

Everyone's Responsibility draws upon a wide range of research that recognises the specific nature of Aboriginal homelessness and thus articulates an explicit understanding of the structurally located context of social disadvantage for culturally marginalised groups. In doing so, it would be seen to be prioritising the needs of Aboriginal people that result from the significant structural disadvantage endured since the early days of colonisation:

The South Australian Government include specific actions targeting the needs of Aboriginal people in the development and implementation of strategies to reduce homelessness (Social Inclusion Board 2003a, p.2).

Not only is there an invocation that there are structural causes of homelessness but these are considered primary when compared with individual factors:

Many individual factors and events are important considerations, both in terms of their effect on the incidence of homelessness and in informing the targeting of interventions; however, they are of secondary significance when compared with these structural factors (Social Inclusion Board 2003a, p.v).

However, the solutions posed in the recommendations at the end of the report are both general in nature and tend towards a focus on individual change. Most of the 32 recommendations were strongly underpinned by normative views about participation and mainstream housing and interventions at a behavioral level, assuming an individual pathology corresponding to Levitas' Social Integration and Moral Underclass Discourses (Levitas 1998, 2005). Risk factors identified are highly individualised and mediate the experiences and causes of homelessness by being defined in individual not social terms, such as:

…limited education/ life skills, intergenerational disadvantage, drug and alcohol abuse, poor mental health, problem gambling, history of housing failure…. Events likely to trigger high risk individuals into homelessness include leaving home after an argument, relationship breakdown, eviction and leaving care.. (Social Inclusion Board 2003a, p.11).

It is the relationship between individual factors and trigger events which is profiled as instrumental in leading people into homelessness:

The major economic and social factors identified as likely to affect the level of homelessness include lack of access to affordable and appropriate housing, unemployment, low levels of income, and trends in relationship breakdown and family restructuring. The individual factors linked to an increased risk of homelessness include people with limited employment and life skills, sexual or physical abuse, family breakdown, intergenerational disadvantage, non-completion of schooling, school exclusion, poor mental health, drug and alcohol misuse, problem gambling, experience of being under the care of the State, and having been in a correctional facility. These pathways (emphasis mine) have been confirmed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2003).
(Social Inclusion Board 2003a, p.iii).

When structural factors are acknowledged, what is recommended is vague and often inconsequential, but where individual factors are discussed, there are quite specific remedies focusing on individual agency. Risk assessment then becomes part of an overall strategy of surveillance to individualise issues that are embedded in structural inequalities.

Furthermore, rhetoric about the structural context and spiritual significance of particular locations for Aboriginal people is evident in the Report as suggested by an

appreciation of and consideration for culturally specific forms of gathering and the use of public spaces by Aboriginal people (Social Inclusion Board 2003a, p.15).

This policy seems inconsistent with the individualist solutions and responses to the material reality of the ongoing support by the State government of the Dry Zone in the Inner City of Adelaide, which was implemented in 2001, endorsing a zero tolerance policy towards drinking in public spaces that were predominantly meeting grounds for Aboriginal people.[1]

[1] The Adelaide City Council voted the park and areas of the Central Business District of the City of Adelaide alcohol free zones on April 2, 2001. Initially it was to be a trial but has continued to be enacted in City by-laws. The State Government has continued to support the move which has incurred considerable critique from some welfare groups who have called the law racist. In 2011 Monsignor Cappo criticised the initiative as ineffective (Advertiser, March 01, 2011)

In terms of solutions to Aboriginal homelessness, the emphasis throughout Everyone's Responsibility is on addressing issues of alcohol/substance misuse, family disintegration and educational disadvantage. The discursive power implicit in white policy makers and professionals defining the problems of Aboriginal people and developing relevant solutions reflects an unspoken hegemony of race that potentially further marginalises Aboriginal people who use the parklands as a 'meeting place' (Walter, Taylor and Habibus 2011, p.11). The lack of success in achieving any significant systemic change for Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness is highlighted in the Rapid Appraisal of the South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative commissioned in 2007 (Newman et al. 2007, pp. 41, 51, 59).

As I noted in the beginning of this paper, the social inclusion agenda was not intended to challenge existing socio-economic relations but was based rather on expanding opportunities within existing arrangements. I would argue this is central to the problem of the social exclusion/ inclusion concept, that is, how does one go about including people in a set of structured relationships that are responsible for excluding them in the first place? With respect to homelessness, recommendations aimed at behavioural change, whether that is facilitating opportunities for participation in mainstream activities or accessing supported housing options, requiring a high degree of compliance to normative assumptions exemplify this dilemma.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL AND WELFARE WORK EDUCATION

Throughout Australia, social inclusion has become a preferred method of understanding poverty and disadvantage and increasingly a way of promoting a new social policy paradigm. One prominent social policy academic has proposed the current Federal Government's social inclusion agenda could possibly evolve into a new Social Contract for Australia (Smyth 2010, p. 33).

Findings from this research suggest that conceptually and operationally the discourse of social exclusion and social inclusion used by government policy bodies and service providers in the homeless sector in Australia has been largely informed by an uncritical acceptance of existing and normative social relations. This has meant that policy narratives reinforcing unequal social relations have dominated the discussion, while others that encourage an investigation of the moral foundation of discourses of homelessness remain dormant. As Marston (2008, p. 178) notes, public housing in Australia is largely problematised and stigmatised. It has been the subject of a range of urban regeneration projects, ironically under the banner of social inclusion, while normative housing practices, including home ownership, provide the benchmark for accompanying benefits that have assumed the status of a right.

When teaching skills in social policy analysis and critical social work, findings from this thesis may help to understand and provide a mobilising and analytical tool for theorising contemporary policy responses in the homeless sector. Within this context, such theorising calls for an understanding of the 'voice' of homeless persons in the development of policy. The context of broader social movements calls for both recognition and redistribution as a challenge to existing 'everyday relationships', signalling a particular emphasis in the type

of social policy analysis that I have pursued in this paper. This analysis invites in particular, an analysis of those spaces where policy constitutes and engages with human subjects and a consideration of the technologies of citizenship that are used by policy actors to both govern and promote certain types of subjects – in this case the homeless subject.

How an issue such as homelessness comes to be discursively constructed and what values are marshalled to assign meaning about this social issue are of considerable importance in social policy analysis. To prioritise these concerns presupposes a sensibility to welfare subjects and a healthy scepticism to dominant policy metaphors, while also inviting a critique of the unproblematic acceptance of problem definition by policy makers. This is demonstrated in my consideration of the various discourses informing the problematisation of homelessness, the importance of incorporating issues of subjectivity into policy processes and deconstruction of dominant discourses of social exclusion. In developing this critique I argued that policy approaches which emphasise the social integration of marginalised and vulnerable people, such as those labelled homeless and socially excluded, often results in a politics of displacement, accompanied by sensitivity to the space and resources required to accommodate difference.

Social workers and welfare workers work within policy frameworks that provide the context for practice. They can be co-opted to engage in reproducing exclusionary discourses but also can occupy a unique position in facilitating and promoting alternatives. Given the dominance of social exclusion/social inclusion discourses in contemporary policy settings in Australia, it would seem critical that social and welfare work education engages with these concepts as part of grappling with fundamental social work issues of political agency and citizenship.

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