

Foucault, social policy and homelessness

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Abstract

Foucault's work provides fertile ground for an analysis of areas of significant concern to students of social policy through his development of the ideas of discourse, power/knowledge, surveillance and the metaphor of the panopticon. His development of these concepts allows an insight into the function of policy not always apparent in traditional policy analysis. In this paper the author explores why these concepts are pertinent to understanding how homeless populations are constructed as objects of policy, particularly with respect to contemporary discourses of inclusion and exclusion. The author argues that the use of these ideas challenges some of the less obvious assumptions permeating current developments in policy and service provision to people experiencing homelessness, while also enabling an ability to respond more contextually to shifting frameworks of power.

Biography

Chris Horsell is currently a PhD candidate at Flinders University's School of Social Work. His area of study is homelessness and social exclusion in Australia, with a particular emphasis on a critical analysis of the South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative. Chris is currently employed as a Senior Project Officer with the Department of Families and Communities (SA). horsell.chris@dfc.sa.gov.au