POLICY RESPONSES TO

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

TOWARDS INCLUSION?

Edited by

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1 INTRODUCTION: THE CONTOURS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Janie Percy-Smith

Introduction

This introductory chapter provides a context for the discussion of policy responses to social exclusion in the subsequent chapters. It begins with an overview of the origins and development of social exclusion as a concept and discusses the ways in which social exclusion is defined. From this discussion of definitions I then derive a series of dimensions of social exclusion which are related to the subject matter of the subsequent chapters. In the final section I begin the discussion of policy responses to social exclusion by drawing out the cross-cutting themes and issues which characterize and inform the policy initiatives discussed in the later chapters of this book.

The origins and development of social exclusion as a concept

The term 'social exclusion' originated in the social policy of the French social-ist governments of the 1980s and was used to refer to a disparate group of people living on the margins of society and, in particular, without access to the system of social insurance (Room 1995; Jordan 1997; Burchardt *et al.* 1999). However, when the term began to be used in the European context it referred more to the European Union (EU) objective of achieving social and economic cohesion. Economic cohesion has been a key goal for the EU since the early treaties establishing the European Economic Community, but social cohesion really came to the fore with the negotiations around the Maastricht Treaty. The term social cohesion refers to the 'reconciliation of a system of organisation based on market forces, freedom of opportunity and enterprise with a commitment to the values of internal solidarity and mutual support

which ensures open access to benefit and protection for all members of society'
(Geddes 1998: 20). Social cohesion therefore requires improvement in the
living conditions of those regions or groups within the EU that are worst off
so that they are closer to those of the regions that are better off (European
Commission 1997).

Social exclusion is now written into the Maastricht Treaty and is an objective
for the European structural funds (Room 1995: 1). Some writers have com-
mented that the term social exclusion was preferred to the term poverty in
European circles because of the difficulties on the part of some member
states at that time to apply the term poverty to their own countries (see Lee
and Murie 1999: 3). Indeed the EU poverty programmes which had been
in existence since 1974 were brought to an abrupt halt in 1994 when the
Council of Europe rejected a new poverty programme. Since then, it has
been argued, social exclusion rather than poverty has been the main focus
of EU social policy and, furthermore, the approach to social exclusion has,
in practice, reflected a more limited concern with labour market exclusion
(Geyer 1999: 161).

The Social Exclusion Unit

In the UK the concept of social exclusion came to the fore with the setting
up by the government in 1997 of the interdepartmental Social Exclusion Unit.
The Social Exclusion Unit only encompasses England: social exclusion and
poverty are devolved responsibilities and, in Scotland, there is a separate
'Scottish Social Inclusion Strategy'; in Wales, 'Building an Inclusive Wales';
and in Northern Ireland, 'Targeting Social Need in Northern Ireland' (see
Northern Ireland Office 1998; Scottish Office 1999; Welsh Office 1999). The
Social Exclusion Unit was charged with reporting to the prime minister on
how to 'develop integrated and sustainable approaches to the problems of the
worst housing estates, including crime, drugs, unemployment, community
breakdown, and bad schools etc.' (Social Exclusion Unit 1997: 2). Since then
a range of policy initiatives have been developed by the Social Exclusion Unit
and other policies have been redirected towards the social exclusion agenda.

The Social Exclusion Unit (1998: 9), in developing new policy responses
to social exclusion, noted the failure of previous attempts to deal with the
problems and identified the reasons for failure as follows:

- The lack of effective national policies to address 'the structural causes of
  decline'.
- A failure to effectively engage local communities.
- Too great an emphasis on physical regeneration at the expense of creating
  opportunities for people.
- The failure to develop a 'joined up' approach to the issues.

The Social Exclusion Unit's report identifies three 'strands' to its response
to social exclusion. The first strand comprises the 'New Deals' for the unem-
ployed, lone parents and the disabled together with actions to address failing
schools, crime and public health. The second strand comprises new funding
programmes to support the regeneration of poor neighbourhoods, in particular

the New Deal for communities, but also the latest round of the Single Regeneration Budget and Sure Start. The third strand is aimed at ensuring coherence and a 'joined-up' approach and involves the work of 18 cross-cutting Policy Action Teams involving cross-departmental groupings and outside experts. The work of the teams falls under five broad themes:

1 Getting the people to work: focusing on maximizing the contribution of the New Deal in the poorest areas; addressing barriers to employment; and developing innovative ways of assisting re-entry into the labour market.
2 Getting the place to work: focusing on effective neighbourhood and housing management so that issues such as crime and antisocial behaviour are addressed.
3 Building a future for young people: focusing on Sure Start to provide more integrated help for children at risk and other measures to motivate children and young people in relation to education.
4 Access to services: focusing on ensuring access to services in the poorest areas.
5 Making the government work better: focusing on improving the way government at all levels responds to social exclusion.

The government's strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion is summed up in its first annual report on poverty and social exclusion, *Opportunity for All*, using the language of universalism: 'Our strategy is based in the principle that everybody has the right to participate in society, and the opportunity to achieve their full potential' (Department of Social Security 1999: 30). This statement raises issues around how social exclusion is defined, to which we now turn.

Defining social exclusion

Social exclusion has been defined in a number of different ways which may include all or some of the following elements: disadvantage in relation to certain norms of social, economic or political activity pertaining to individuals, households, spatial areas or population groups; the social, economic and institutional processes through which disadvantage comes about; and the outcomes or consequences for individuals, groups or communities. The following, quite comprehensive, definition comes from the European Commission:

Social exclusion refers to the multiple and changing factors resulting in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society. Poverty is one of the most obvious factors, but social exclusion also refers to inadequate rights in housing, education, health and access to services. It affects individuals and groups, particularly in urban and rural areas, who are in some way subject to discrimination or segregation; and it emphasises the weaknesses in the social infrastructure and the risk of allowing a two-tier society to become established by default. The Commission believes that a fatalistic acceptance of social exclusion must be rejected, and that all Community citizens have a right to the respect of human dignity.
(Commission of the European Communities 1993: 1)

This definition is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it emphasizes the multiple factors associated with social exclusion; second, it refers to the dynamic nature of exclusionary processes; third, it includes within its scope policy failure to adequately address social exclusion and its consequences; and finally it endorses the view that citizens within the EU have 'the right to a certain basic standard of living and to participate in the major social and occupational institutions of the society' (Room 1995: 6). Thus, social exclusion occurs when citizens are denied these social rights or they are not fully realized and, furthermore, in such circumstances citizens are likely to experience more generalized disadvantage.

Burchardt *et al.* (1999: 230) offer the following, more restricted, definition of social exclusion: 'An individual is socially excluded if (a) he or she is geographically resident in a society and (b) he or she does not participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society'. In developing this definition they consider including a condition relating to the issue of 'agency' – that is, whether or not the exclusion is self-imposed or voluntary. Ultimately they decide not to do so because of the difficulties associated with deciding when self-exclusion is really voluntary. For example, individuals may decide to exclude themselves as a result of a history or previous experience of exclusion or discrimination. Can this, then, really be deemed self-exclusion? Burchardt *et al.* then raise the question of whether individual choice should in any case be paramount, especially when self-exclusion has negative consequences or is problematic for society more generally. Examples here might include those who decide to 'opt out' of paid work and are dependent on state benefits or those who choose alternative lifestyles which are regarded as problematic by mainstream society. This issue relates to the moral agenda which is widely perceived as underpinning policies to address social exclusion (see below).

The way in which the Social Exclusion Unit has defined social exclusion does not refer to citizenship rights, rather it utilizes a definition that is much closer to the concept of disadvantage: 'Social exclusion is a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown' (Social Exclusion Unit 1997: 1). This definition is very much focused on outcomes and makes no reference to the processes that create the problems identified in the definition.

The term 'social exclusion' is sometimes taken as being more or less synonymous with poverty or disadvantage. However there are important differences. The concept of poverty is, as noted by Burden in Chapter 3, primarily concerned with the distribution of resources: a poor household is one in which the resources available, especially income, fall below a particular level. Policies to alleviate poverty are typically focused on the redistribution of resources to individuals or households in need. The concept of disadvantage is arguably more complex, focusing on the interaction between lack of material resources and the provision of social services and supports. Thus, policies to address disadvantage are typically concerned with the distribution of a range of goods and services as well as resources (Oppenheim 1998: 12).

By contrast, social exclusion is generally defined in such a way as to include a number of characteristics which are not usually referred to in definitions of
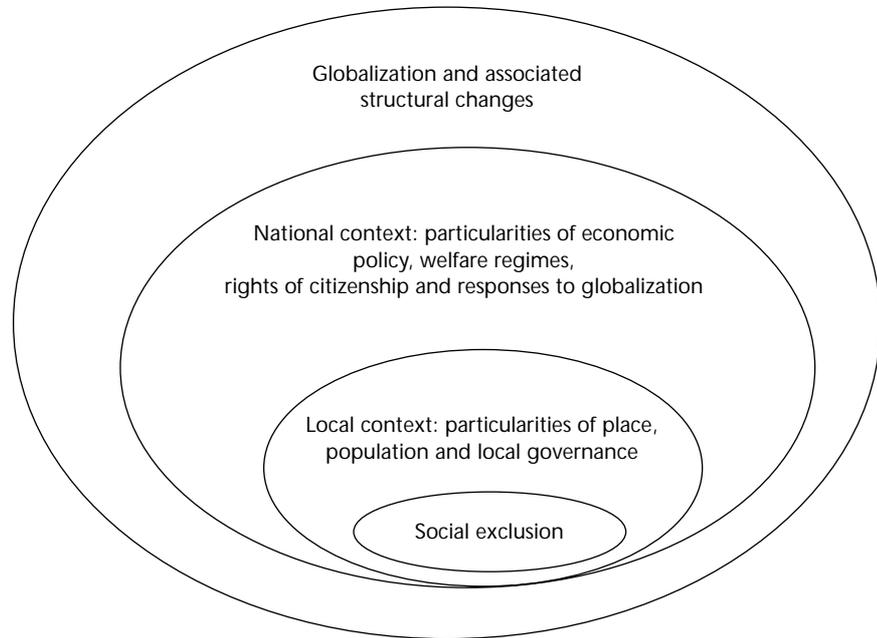
Figure 1.1   Social exclusion in context

poverty or disadvantage. The first is that social exclusion is seen in a wider context. In particular it is seen in the context of globalization and the structural changes brought about by globalization. Parkinson (1998: 1) describes these processes in the following terms:

> Rapid changes in the economic environment caused by internationalisation and industrial and corporate restructuring have transformed the character of local economies. They have brought a more fragmented labour market, a decline in manufacturing and a rise in the service sector, high levels of structural unemployment, an increase in part time, insecure and low paid employment, a shift in the balance of male and female employment and a growing gap between the highest and lowest household incomes. These changes are not only found in cities where the economy is in decline or during periods of recession. They are also a feature of booming economies.

However, although social exclusion can be seen as a consequence of global phenomena, it is nevertheless affected by the *national* context, notably the particularities of national economic policies, welfare regimes and rights of citizenship, and indeed the *local* context – particularities of place, population and local governance (see Figure 1.1). Madanipour *et al.* write:

> Welfare regimes in each country reflect different principles of social organisation and normative bases. Different cities are differentially placed within the European economic and social space, some experiencing growth

and others in long-term decline. Urban socio-spatial structures vary. In some, social exclusion and spatial segregation are virtually synonymous. Others exhibit a more fine-grained pattern of differentiation. In some places, ethnicity and race form fundamental dividing lines in socio-spatial struc- tures. In other places, cultural and kinship networks are more significant. Finally, specific patterns of local governance and welfare state provision affect local patterns of social exclusion.

(Madanipour *et al.* 1998: 9; see also Cousins 1998: 130–1)

While the causes of social exclusion may be structural, its effects can be ameliorated or exacerbated by the attitudes, activities and policies of govern- mental bodies. For example, despite the increasing importance of combating social exclusion within the EU and the focus on unemployment as a key part of the overall strategy, at the same time the push towards economic cohesion is resulting in some member states reducing social expenditure and thereby increasing the risk of poverty and exclusion.

The second key feature of social exclusion is that it can be seen as a process or set of processes rather than a static condition and, moreover, a set of processes largely outside the control of the individual. This avoids the 'trap', typical of at least some policies aimed at addressing poverty, of blaming the individual for their own plight. This has important implications both for the analysis of social exclusion and also for policy development.

The third key feature of social exclusion is that it is necessarily a 'relational' concept. Groups and individuals are socially excluded from other groups and individuals, and society as a whole. Thus:

structural processes affect the whole of society in ways which create barriers which prevent particular groups from forming those kinds of social relation- ships with other groups which are essential to realising a full human potential. It is not that some groups 'exclude' other groups, but that pro- cesses affecting the whole of society mean that some groups experience social boundaries as barriers preventing their full participation in the economic, political and cultural life of the society within which they live.

(Madanipour *et al.* 1998: 17)

This has the advantage of allowing a broader focus, not only on those who are excluded, but also on the systems that they are excluded from (Oppenheim 1998: 14). In particular it allows for policy responses which seek to change institutions and institutional processes rather than solely seeking to change socially excluded individuals, groups and communities.

Social exclusion can also be defined in terms of a lack of 'social capital' and, increasingly, the idea of developing social capital is being incorporated into policies and programmes to address social exclusion. Putnam (1993, 1995) defines social capital in terms of four features of communities: the existence of community networks; civic engagement or participation in com- munity networks; a sense of community identity, solidarity and equality with other community members; and norms of trust and reciprocal help and support. There is increasing interest in, and research evidence relating to, social capital as an 'antidote' to social exclusion. In other words, there is evid- ence linking the extent and strength of community networks, the degree of

community and civic participation and norms of trust and reciprocity with good health (see, for example, Gillies 1997; Kawachi *et al.* 1997; Campbell *et al.* 1999), effective and responsive public services and strong political institutions (see, for example, Boix and Posner 1998) and local economic development and economic prosperity (see, for example, Putnam 1993; Wilson 1997). Thus, developing social capital can create the conditions in which it is easier to address other aspects of social exclusion. This might be achieved by devoting resources to community development or by managers of public services considering how their activities in particular localities contribute to or negatively impact on social capital (Corrigan and King 1999: 15). However, Boix and Posner (1998: 687), in an article discussing the origins of social capital, note that 'a community's co-operative capacity is a function of the degree of social and political inequality that the community has experienced over the course of its historical development'. The implication is the obvious, but nevertheless important, point that social capital is more difficult to develop in those communities where there is little tradition of trust or reciprocity.

The growth in the use of the term social exclusion has not been universally welcomed. In particular Levitas (1996) has argued that the social exclusion discourse treats as abnormal the social divisions which are endemic to capitalist society, since the aim of policy is reintegration, primarily, to the labour market. As a result, Levitas argues, unpaid work is devalued and inequalities between paid workers are obscured. She goes on to identify three different approaches to social exclusion: the 'integrationist' approach which focuses on reintegrating those without work into the labour market; the 'poverty' approach which links the causes of exclusion primarily to low income and lack of resources; and the 'underclass' approach which blames the excluded themselves for their situation and goes on to link this to individual moral failings. Aspects of all these approaches can be found in various strands of UK policy towards social exclusion.

Towards an analytical framework

A framework for analysing social exclusion needs, therefore, to take account of these key features: that social exclusion occurs as a result of structural change but is played out through and affected by the specificity of local circumstances, policy frameworks and welfare regimes; that it connotes a process or set of processes rather than an 'end-state'; and that it is a relational concept. In addition, social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon and, furthermore, the various 'dimensions' of social exclusion are typically mutually reinforcing. Thus an individual or group is more likely to be vulnerable to exclusionary processes when they experience difficulties in relation to more than one of the dimensions of social exclusion.

Dimensions of social exclusion

In the first annual report on poverty and social exclusion (Department of Social Security 1999: 24–6), the 'key features of poverty and social exclusion' are identified. These are as follows:

- lack of opportunities to work;
- lack of opportunities to acquire education and skills;
- childhood deprivation;
- disrupted families;
- barriers to older people living active, fulfilling and healthy lives;
- inequalities in health;
- poor housing;
- poor neighbourhoods;
- fear of crime;
- disadvantaged groups.

A rather different approach is adopted by Burchardt *et al.* (1999: 231) who identify five dimensions of social exclusion in terms of the 'normal activities' in which it is important that citizens participate. These dimensions are as follows:

1 Consumption activity: relates to traditional measures of poverty.
2 Savings activity: includes pensions, savings, home ownership.
3 Production activity: defined in terms of 'engaging in an economically or socially valued activity, such as paid work, education or training, retirement . . . or looking after a family'.
4 Political activity: defined as 'engaging in some collective effort to improve or protect the immediate or wider social or physical environment'.
5 Social activity: defined as 'engaging in significant social interaction with family, or friends, and identifying with a cultural group or community'.

Burchardt *et al.* go on to note that an individual's ability to participate in these activities will be affected by a range of interconnected factors including: their own personal characteristics and life histories; the characteristics of the area in which they live; and the social, civil and political institutions with which they have to interact. Furthermore, they recognise that participation or non-participation on any one of these dimensions is likely to have implications for participation on the others (Burchardt *et al.* 1999: 232).

In Table 1.1 I identify a number of 'dimensions' of social exclusion which are similar to those discussed above but incorporate other aspects which I consider to be important. These dimensions are discussed briefly below but are elaborated on in the subsequent chapters of this book.

The economic dimension

While social exclusion cannot be reduced to economic factors, economic factors are undoubtedly a key aspect of social exclusion. Economic factors are taken as encompassing not only poverty, defined in terms of lack of an adequate income, but also exclusion from the labour market. This, in turn, has a number of different aspects to it that go beyond unemployment. It will certainly include length of unemployment and households in which no working-age adults are in employment. But it might also include other changes affecting the labour market such as casualization, decreasing job security and fragile attachment to the labour market. The chapters by Campbell (Chapter 2) and Burden (Chapter 3) in this volume address the issues of labour market exclusion and poverty respectively.

Table 1.1 Dimensions of social exclusion

Dimension	Indicators
Economic	Long-term unemployment
	Casualization and job insecurity
	Workless households
	Income poverty
Social	Breakdown of traditional households
	Unwanted teenage pregnancies
	Homelessness
	Crime
	Disaffected youth
Political	Disempowerment
	Lack of political rights
	Low registration of voters
	Low voter turnout
	Low levels of community activity
	Alienation/lack of confidence in political processes
	Social disturbance/disorder
Neighbourhood	Environmental degradation
	Decaying housing stock
	Withdrawal of local services
	Collapse of support networks
Individual	Mental and physical ill health
	Educational underachievement/low skills
	Loss of self-esteem/confidence
Spatial	Concentration/marginalization of vulnerable groups
Group	Concentration of above characteristics in particular groups: elderly, disabled, ethnic minorities

The social dimension

It is along the social dimension of social exclusion that the Social Exclusion Unit has, thus far, largely focused its attention. This dimension can be taken to include: the breakdown of traditional households, the rise in the numbers of unwanted teenage pregnancies, homelessness, crime and disaffected youth. One of the interesting questions here is the relationship of these social variables to the economic ones identified above. The issue of housing and homelessness is addressed by Hawtin and Kettle (Chapter 6) and other social aspects are addressed in the chapter on health by Moran and Simpkins (Chapter 5) and the chapter on socially excluded groups by Burden and Hamm (Chapter 10).

The political dimension

The main issue here is individuals' ability to participate in or influence decision making which affects their lives. This may happen in a number of

different ways. Individuals may be excluded from having political rights because of their immigration status. They may exclude themselves from formal processes by not registering to vote. This may be due to inertia, apathy, transience or the wish to evade officialdom. Of those who are registered a significant proportion fail to vote in local and national elections. However, formal political processes do not encapsulate political activity in its entirety. Other forms of political activity include participation in community fora of various kinds such as tenants' organizations, school governing bodies, pressure groups, service user groups and so on. All of these bodies will have some impact on decision making and the quality of local life. Non-participation contributes to disempowerment. Disengagement from socially acceptable forms of political participation and distrust of formal channels of communication can combine with a sense of frustration and anger to create the potential, if not the actuality, of social disorder. The issue of political exclusion is addressed by Percy-Smith in Chapter 8 and community activity is discussed by Chanan in Chapter 11.

The neighbourhood dimension
Analysis of the neighbourhood dimension of social exclusion is clearly related to both the social and spatial aspects. At the level of the neighbourhood the indicators of social exclusion might include environmental degradation, a decaying housing stock, the withdrawal of local services (e.g. shops, public transport), increasingly overstretched public services and the collapse of local support networks (related to the political aspects of social exclusion, namely low levels of participation in community and voluntary activities). The neighbourhood dimension of social exclusion is addressed by Sanderson (Chapter 7) in relation to access to services on the part of excluded communities, by Hawtin and Kettle (Chapter 6) in relation to housing, and by Percy-Smith (Chapter 8) and Chanan (Chapter 11) in relation to community involvement.

The individual dimension
All of the aspects of social exclusion discussed so far impact upon the individual. The form that this impact typically takes is in terms of increasing levels of physical and mental ill health, educational underachievement and failure to acquire or update skills, and low self-esteem. Walton (Chapter 4) discusses educational underachievement and low levels of skills, and Moran and Simpkins (Chapter 5) analyse the relationship between health status and social exclusion.

The spatial dimension
The spatial dimension of exclusion is important since it typically results in large numbers of disadvantaged people living together in a decaying area. This can lead to the area itself being defined as disadvantaged irrespective of the characteristics of the individuals who live there, and becoming subject to further exclusionary process (e.g. withdrawal of local services) as a result. It also results in the area becoming highly visible which can be double-edged – on the one hand resulting (perhaps) in the area becoming the focus for policy initiatives, and on the other resulting in 'place discrimination' by employers. A focus on place also results in the large numbers of socially excluded individuals scattered throughout the rest of the population becoming

largely invisible. However, social exclusion might also affect localities not because of the concentration of socially excluded individuals and households within the population but because of the nature of the area itself. For example, geographically isolated rural areas might fall into this category, or areas traditionally dependent on a single industry which is now in decline. The effectiveness of area-based responses to social exclusion is a central theme developed by Hutchinson (Chapter 9) and is also addressed by Sanderson (Chapter 7) in relation to access to services.

The group dimension

Certain groups are arguably at greater risk of social exclusion either because they differ in some way from the dominant population or because of their position within society. In the first case individuals or groups who, to some degree, do not accept the values, norms or lifestyle of mainstream society are more vulnerable if they are also affected by one or more of the other dimensions of social exclusion. Nationality, ethnicity, language and religion are obvious aspects of group difference. Less obvious aspects might include lifestyle, personal and social values or characteristics. In all of these cases there is the risk that 'difference' leads to discrimination and unequal access to the labour market. In the second case we might include groups who, because of their circumstances, are particularly vulnerable. Examples of such groups include elderly people dependent on state benefits, lone parents and young people not in education or training and without a job.

An important aspect of social exclusion is its complex nature. Thus, one cannot simply 'read off' social exclusion from the presence or absence of any one of these characteristics. It is the way in which they interrelate and reinforce each other that accelerates the process of social exclusion. So to assume that, because a young person from an ethnic minority group is unemployed, she or he is also socially excluded is to grossly oversimplify. He or she may have had a good education and be supported by strong social and kinship support networks which overcome the disadvantage of being unemployed. Similarly, having a low income does not mean that a person is necessarily outside the mainstream of society. A good example here is students in higher education, many of whom are lacking in financial resources but who, in no sense, could be considered to be socially excluded. This has important implications for both the analysis of social exclusion and the development of effective strategies to combat it. The situation of groups that are widely viewed as being vulnerable is addressed in many of the chapters in this volume, as is the impact of policy on such groups. However, the complex issues relating to socially excluded groups more generally is addressed specifically by Burden and Hamm in Chapter 10.

Indicators of social exclusion

In order to develop effective policies to respond to social exclusion it is necessary to first identify the individuals, groups or areas that are affected. In most cases this involves developing 'indicators' which act as proxies for the condition of social exclusion. This facilitates the identification of *groups* or *individuals* within the population (e.g. lone parents, disabled people) who

are, on the basis of the available evidence, thought to be more likely to be at risk of social exclusion, or of *geographical areas* which exhibit certain characteristics which are correlated with disadvantage and social exclusion. Furthermore, indicators are necessary in order to establish baselines against which progress can then be measured (see Chapter 12).

However, the development of indicators is not unproblematic. Most indicators of poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion represent 'snapshots' at a particular point in time. And, as we have seen, two of the distinctive aspects of the concept of social exclusion (in contrast to poverty and disadvantage) are that first it is taken to refer to a dynamic process and second it emphasizes the interconnectedness of the various dimensions and characteristics of social exclusion. This makes social exclusion considerably harder to measure than poverty and disadvantage. It requires longitudinal data to capture the effect of time on exclusionary processes and it requires sophisticated data that demonstrates the way in which different aspects of exclusion work together to reinforce each other and exacerbate the situation of individuals, households and areas.

Most data that is available can give us an indication of groups who are at risk from social exclusion, or can be used to define spatial areas which exhibit the characteristics associated with various aspects of deprivation and disadvantage. In addition, existing data can give us a picture of particular dimensions of social exclusion. However, Robinson and Oppenheim (1998: 5–6) argue that indicators should also conform to certain criteria. They should:

• be easily understood by the public and congruent with their concerns;
• be relatively easy to quantify;
• follow international conventions;
• have a 'dynamic' dimension;
• be able to be operationalized at the local area level.

Based on these principles, Robinson and Oppenheim propose indicators for income poverty, exclusion from the labour market, exclusion in education and health.

Opportunity for All (Department of Social Security 1999) reviews progress in relation to policy initiatives aimed at addressing poverty and social exclusion in relation to three population groups: children and young people, people of working age and older people. The indicators against which progress is being measured are summarized in Table 1.2. Not surprisingly these indicators are all ones which are relatively easy to measure in quantifiable terms. However, some aspects of social exclusion as I have defined it above are no so amenable to measurement in this way. For example, I have argued that multidimensionality and interconnectedness are two key aspects of social exclusion; it is difficult to measure or assess these. Similarly I have argued that social exclusion has implications for community and political participation and is related to the concept of social capital. However, once again it is rather more difficult to identify meaningful indicators for these facets of social exclusion. Sanderson (Chapter 12) develops this theme further and proposes a possible framework for evaluating the impact of policy responses to social exclusion which takes account of these and other issues.

Table 1.2 Poverty and social exclusion indicators

Theme	Indicators
Children and young people	1 An increase in the proportion of 7-year-old Sure Start children achieving Level 1 or above in KS1 (Key Stage 1) English and maths.
	2 Health outcomes in Sure Start areas: • reduction in the proportion of low birth-weight babies; • reduction in the rate of hospital admissions as a result of serious injury.
	3 Increase in the proportion of those aged 11 achieving Level 4 or above in KS2 (Key Stage 2) tests for literacy and numeracy.
	4 Reduction in the proportion of truancies and exclusions from school.
	5 Increase in the proportion of 19-year-olds with at least a Level 2 qualification or equivalent.
	6 Reduction in the proportion of children living in workless households.
	7 Low income indicators: • reduction in the proportion of children in households with relatively low incomes; • reduction in the proportion of children in households with low incomes in an absolute sense; • reduction in the proportion of children with persistently low incomes.
	8 Reduction in the proportion of children living in poor housing.
	9 Reduction in the proportion of households with children experiencing fuel poverty.
	10 Reduction in the rate at which children are admitted to hospital as a result of unintentional injury resulting in a hospital stay of no longer than three days.
	11 Reduction in the proportion of 16–18-year-olds not in education or training.
	12 Improvement in the educational attainment of children looked after by local authorities.
	13 Reduction in the rate of conceptions for those aged under 18 and an increase in the proportion of teenage parents in education, employment or training.
People of working age	14 Increase in the proportion of working-age people in employment over the economic cycle.
	15 Reduction in the proportion of working-age people living in workless households, for households of a given size, over the economic cycle.
	16 Reduction in the number of working-age people living in families claiming Income Support or income-based Job-Seekers' Allowance who have been claiming these benefits for long periods of time.

Table 1.2 (*cont'd*)

Theme	Indicators
	17 Increase in the employment rates of disadvantaged groups – people with disabilities, lone parents, ethnic minorities and the over 50s – and a reduction in the difference between their employment rates and the overall rate.
	18 Low income indicators: • reduction in the proportion of working-age people in households with relatively low incomes; • reduction in the proportion of working-age people in households with low incomes in an absolute sense; • reduction in the proportion of people of working age with persistently low incomes.
	19 Increase in the proportion of working-age people with a qualification.
	20 Reduction in the number of people sleeping rough.
	21 Reduction in cocaine and heroin use by young people.
	22 Reduction in adult smoking rates in all social classes.
	23 Reduction in the death rates from suicide and undetermined injury.
Older people	24 Increase in the proportion of working-age people contributing to a non-state pension.
	25 Increase in the amount contributed to non-state pensions.
	26 Increase in the proportion of working-age individuals who have contributed to a non-state pension in at least three years out of the last four.
	27 Low income indicators: • reduction in the proportion of older people in households with relatively low incomes; • reduction in the proportion of older people in households with low incomes in an absolute sense; • reduction in the proportion of older people with persistently low incomes.
	28 Reduction in the proportion of elderly households experiencing fuel poverty.
	29 Reduction in the proportion of older people whose lives are affected by fear of crime.
	30 Increase in healthy life expectancy at age 65.
	31 Reduction in the proportion of households containing at least one person aged 75 or more living in poor housing.
	32 Increase in the proportion of older people being helped to live independently.

Source: Department of Social Security (1999: 5–7)

Policy responses to social exclusion: themes and issues

The chapters in this book are concerned with the dimensions and aspects of social exclusion identified above. Each presents the context within which policy is being developed, discusses the evidence relating to the particular aspect of social exclusion under scrutiny, outlines current policy developments and provides an assessment of the effectiveness of those interventions. Despite important differences between policy areas, there are a number of themes and issues which run through many of the chapters. It is these themes that are the subject of this final section.

Definitions

The first of these themes is the importance of definitions: how social exclusion is defined can determine the scope of the policy response – what issues are to be addressed, which groups or areas are to be targeted? Furthermore, how social exclusion is defined inevitably has a political or ideological element. For example, Burden (Chapter 3) discusses the relationship between social exclusion, poverty and inequality and argues that the current emphasis on social exclusion effectively rules out policies designed to achieve greater equality through redistribution. Similarly, Moran and Simpkins (Chapter 5) note the change in emphasis implied by the shift in terminology from health *inequalities* to health *variations*.

The concept social exclusion implies exclusion *from* something – typically participation in those activities that are considered to be 'normal' or 'desirable'. This clearly has a normative element. While most people would probably agree that citizens *should* have access to adequate housing, a reasonable level of income, health care services and so on, there may be less agreement on the *level* of provision or the *terms and conditions* governing the provision of certain goods and services. This is particularly apparent in relation to labour market exclusion – undoubtedly an important element in most definitions of social exclusion but arguably given undue prominence in terms of policy responses (see Chapter 11). The prominence given to labour market reintegration is partly due to arguments relating unemployment to other aspects of social exclusion, but is also strongly linked to the importance assigned to the idea of individual independence. However, it can be argued that the primacy given to independence and labour market reintegration in policy terms has deleterious effects for those groups who are unable to be fully independent or participate fully in the labour market, and diverts attention from other aspects of social exclusion such as political exclusion (see Chapter 8).

Multidimensionality is a key element in the definition of social exclusion; it is the fact that disadvantage in relation to one aspect of life is linked to disadvantage in other areas that predisposes individuals, households and neighbourhoods to become socially excluded. The chapters in this volume document numerous examples of these linkages. For example, Campbell (Chapter 2) and Walton (Chapter 4) highlight the relationship between educational underachievement and lack of skills and long-term unemployment; Moran and Simpkins (Chapter 5) discuss the relationship between health

status and socioeconomic group and note the link between suicide and unemployment; Hawtin and Kettle (Chapter 6) discuss the relationship between poverty and bad housing and also between residualized estates and high levels of crime. However, while it is relatively easy to correlate different dimensions of social exclusion it is much more difficult to analyse the nature of the relationships between variables and the psychosocial processes that underpin them. Social exclusion is, necessarily, a complex phenomenon that requires complex policy interventions.

Developing effective policy

A further theme that emerges from the following chapters is the way in which past policy interventions have created or contributed to current problems. This is particularly evident in relation to social housing (see Chapter 6). As Hawtin and Kettle demonstrate, current residualization of local authority housing can be viewed as a direct result of past housing allocations policy and the 'Right to Buy' legislation. Sanderson (Chapter 7) discusses the impact on disadvantaged localities of the marketization and deregulation of certain key public services (such as education, housing, health and transport) that was a feature of policy in the 1980s and early 1990s. And Walton (Chapter 4) discusses the way in which the introduction of school league tables has intensified the pressure on schools to exclude pupils who are unlikely to make a positive contribution to their Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) results.

What this demonstrates is the need for current policy interventions to be 'evidence based' – that is, developed in the light of a clear understanding of the nature and causes of the problem and an assessment of the likely impact of particular kinds of policy intervention. Campbell (Chapter 2) highlights this as an issue in his discussion of long-term unemployment which can be seen both as a primary economic *cause* of social exclusion and as an important *consequence* of social exclusion. He concludes: 'Problem mis-specification leads to policy mis-specification and thus to failure'. Similarly Moran and Simpkins (Chapter 5), in their discussion of the connection between health and social exclusion, note that the nature of the connection is not always clear. This gives added importance, as Sanderson argues (Chapter 12), to evaluation and assessment of what works in what circumstances. The complexity of social exclusion as a phenomenon requires complex interventions and therefore complex evaluation frameworks which take account of the need to examine outcomes not only for individuals, but also for households, communities, localities and regions. Furthermore, complex policy interventions entail multiple 'stakeholders' who may hold different views as to what would constitute a successful outcome of a policy intervention.

In seeking to develop our understanding of social exclusion we should not neglect the importance of locality in determining its precise nature and characteristics and, indeed, what might be possible or appropriate in policy terms, while at the same time recognizing the limits to what local action can achieve given the wider context and causes of social exclusion (see Chapters 7 and 11). Chanan (Chapter 11) notes that social exclusion is a 'multi-layered phenomenon' involving interaction between people and places, and Sanderson (Chapter 7) argues that locality has an important influence on

whether individuals or groups can gain access to certain resources such as public welfare services. He notes the connection between 'poor services' and 'poor places'.

Joined-up working

Social exclusion is multidimensional and therefore has implications for a wide range of agencies and organizations. The need for holistic, 'joined-up' partnership and multi-agency responses to social exclusion is an important thread running through the discussion of policy in the following chapters. The partnership approach is also intended to open the way for 'policy innovation', to 'overcome the compartmentalisation of policy issues inside the domains of separate agencies' and to 'facilitate new alliances and ways of understanding and reacting to problems' (Geddes 1998: 22). Partnership is a feature of many if not most of the initiatives discussed including local Learning Partnerships, local Learning and Skills Councils, Education Action Zones, Education Business Partnerships and New Start (discussed in Chapter 4), Health Action Zones (discussed in Chapter 5), the Single Regeneration Budget and the New Deal for communities (discussed in Chapter 9). The Policy Action Teams set up by the Social Exclusion Unit to examine a wide range of 'cross-cutting' issues are likely to be important catalysts for the development of 'joined-up' thinking and policy solutions. Indeed without this there is a risk that the huge range of current policy initiatives will exacerbate fragmentation. It could be argued, as Sanderson notes (Chapter 7) that the need for partnership working arises in part as a direct result of the policy of fragmenting powers and responsibilities between agencies and the corresponding erosion of power and responsibility of local authorities that has occurred since the 1970s.

Individuals and institutions

In policy terms there is increasing recognition that the 'silo' mentality of local and central government can frustrate effective implementation of policy, and that policies need to be delivered appropriately. However, for many people in the poorest areas their interaction with public services continues to be problematic and exacerbates the powerlessness that is concomitant with their disadvantage. As Chanan observes (Chapter 11) disadvantaged people are 'pinned down' by their locality and are dependent on local services. By contrast he argues that 'included people can engage with their locality to a variable, freely chosen degree'. In the poorest areas public services are frequently overstretched and inadequate. Marketization of public services and social disinvestment contribute to a decline in social capital, exacerbating social exclusion and the marginalization of poor communities (see Sanderson, Chapter 7).

Walton (Chapter 4) also highlights the relationship between institutional factors and individuals' characteristics in her discussion of the reasons for the relatively high proportion of black boys who are excluded from schools. In this case institutional racism results in low expectations of black boys on

the part of teachers, contributing to a downward spiral of low aspirations and eventual disaffection. This point is reinforced by Burden and Hamm (Chapter 10) who emphasize the importance of institutional processes in the creation of unnecessary barriers to full participation on the part of people with disabilities. Hawtin and Kettle (Chapter 6) make the point in relation to social housing that the way in which housing is provided may be as important as the provision itself. As a result they emphasize the importance of participatory approaches to housing management. In Chapter 8, Percy-Smith identifies disaffection with and lack of confidence in political organizations and processes as an important cause of non-participation, social disorder and disturbance.

Targeting

Many of the policy responses discussed in this book involve targeting particular individuals, groups or areas. The various 'zone' initiatives, which are spatially targeted, have already been mentioned and Hutchinson (Chapter 9) discusses the spatial aspects of regeneration policies. In addition, Campbell (Chapter 2) notes the targeting of labour market policies on young people, lone parents, disabled people and the long-term unemployed, and Walton (Chapter 4) notes the targeting of education and training initiatives particularly on lone parents and disaffected youth. However, both spatial targeting and targeting of groups are problematic.

First, it is very difficult to identify individuals, groups or areas who should be the focus of targeted actions. Spatial targeting, especially, is dependent on the use of indicators of deprivation and disadvantage which are combined to provide a composite deprivation 'score'. However, there are various indicators which might be chosen and ways in which they might be combined, producing significantly different outcomes. Indicators are proxies for social exclusion, not the 'real thing'.

Second, social exclusion is not an 'all or nothing' phenomenon; targeting a particular group or area will inevitably result in needy people being missed. Furthermore, as we have already seen, social exclusion is a dynamic process and, as Burden notes (Chapter 3), many people living on the margins of disadvantage fall in and out of poverty as a result of small changes in their circumstances. This suggests that risk or insecurity might usefully be included in indicators of social exclusion.

Third, targeting can exacerbate negative perceptions of particular areas or groups. For example, Campbell (Chapter 2) and Hutchinson (Chapter 9) discuss 'post-code discrimination' on the part of employers; Hawtin and Kettle (Chapter 6) discuss the possible stigmatization of people living on 'the worst estates' and of disabled people living in 'special needs housing'; and Burden (Chapter 3) discusses the stigmatizing effect of claiming means-tested benefits.

Fourth, targeting of groups in effect assumes a degree of homogeneity among members of that group. Burden and Hamm (Chapter 10) highlight the dangers of assuming homogeneity among minority ethnic groups. There are significant differences in the experiences of people from different ethnic groups which have important implications for policy. A number of other

contributors to this volume stress the importance of differentiating within groups in order to meet needs effectively (see Chapters 2, 4 and 5).

Finally, targeting can conflict with the principle of universalism which is embedded in certain aspects of welfare policy (see Chapter 5 in relation to health care and Chapter 3 in relation to benefits).

Status zero

Walton (Chapter 4) questions whether current policy interventions aimed at young people are likely to reach those individuals who are most disaffected – the 'status zero' group who are not in education, training, employment or involved in any of the targeted initiatives. She notes the tendency to focus policy on those groups where the possibilities for a successful outcome are greatest. Similarly, Campbell (Chapter 2) relates the possibility of success in relation to labour market policies to the characteristics of the local economy: successful policy is more difficult in areas where there is little employment growth. Hutchinson (Chapter 9) draws attention to the tension in regeneration policy between targeting resources on those areas in greatest need and targeting resources on those areas which put forward the most competitive bid in terms of the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes. Percy-Smith (Chapter 8) notes the difficulties of involving in policy and decision making those groups who are probably most in need of an effective voice.

This issue also relates to the timescales allowed for effective intervention. Typically the problems and policies discussed in this book require long-term intervention. In relation to health, Moran and Simpkins (Chapter 5) argue that there are 'no quick fixes' for reducing health inequalities; intervention needs to be linked to long-term community development. As a result, as Sanderson argues (Chapter 12), outcomes need to be assessed over the long term. However, it may also be the case (as Chanan notes in Chapter 11) that some of the processes involved in tackling social exclusion (for example, building up community activity and networks) should be seen as an end in themselves not just as a means of delivering a specific policy outcome.

Moral agenda

The final theme that runs through this book is the moral agenda that seems to underpin many of the policy interventions discussed. This has a number of different aspects to it. First there is the importance attached to independence as a primary requirement of social inclusion. This is most evident in relation to labour market policy and is epitomized in the slogan 'welfare to work' which might be recast in terms of 'dependence to independence'. This has important implications for the status of, and attitudes towards, those who may be unable to achieve full independence – for example, people with disabilities or those who do not want 'independence' on the terms that it is being offered to them. An important example here is lone parents who are subject to enormous pressure to enter the labour market, a pressure that is not generally applied to mothers in two-parent households.

A second aspect to this moral agenda is the intolerant attitudes towards and punitive treatment of those who are considered to be deviant or non-conforming. There are clear echoes here, as Burden (Chapter 3) notes, of the Victorian notion of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. Those who wilfully refuse to conform to the activities and behaviour considered to be 'normal' or desirable may be subject to punitive interventions or interventions that are in some way conditional on 'good behaviour' (see Chapter 10). This can be seen as a threat to diversity. However, as Burden and Hamm note, there are contradictory aspects to New Labour's approach: on the one hand there is evidence of liberalization in relation to some aspects of the law relating to homosexual activity, while at the same time there is increasing emphasis on the two-parent, heterosexual nuclear family as the 'first choice' for bringing up children.

This normative element to policy raises important questions in relation to how to address those who are deemed to have voluntarily excluded themselves. There is a strand in New Labour thinking which suggests that such voluntary self-exclusion itself constitutes a social problem and as such is the legitimate target for possibly punitive action. A good example of this is the policies aimed at 'clearing the streets' of rough sleepers and beggars.

This final question – whether, how and on what terms policy interventions can reach the most excluded groups – brings us back to the definitional and normative issues raised earlier. If policy interventions are successful in integrating *some* of those who are currently excluded into the norms and activities of mainstream society, what then is the situation of those who are left behind? Will it be the case that the definitions and parameters of social exclusion will simply have been shifted in such a way that such people are constituted as a more or less permanently excluded group, an 'underclass' which is deemed to be outside the scope of effective policy interventions? This remains a question which is largely not addressed and certainly not answered by current policy interventions.

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