Chapter 5

The concept and measurement of social exclusion

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Introduction

The concepts of social exclusion and inclusion are now firmly entrenched in both British and European government policy, as well as having increasingly wide currency outside the European Union (EU) in international agencies such as the International Labour Office (ILO), United Nations, UNESCO and the World Bank (Gore and Figueiredo, 1997; Estivill, 2003). This chapter focuses primarily on the deployment of 'social exclusion' in the United Kingdom, in the context of EU policy, although many of the issues have wider application. The first part of the chapter addresses the development of definitions and indicators of social exclusion at UK national and at EU levels, showing that the distinctively *social* aspects of social exclusion have not been at the centre of these debates. The second part of the chapter outlines the findings of the Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) Survey itself, whose unique feature is its direct attention to exclusion from social relations and patterns of sociability. Two key points emerge. First, poverty has a profound effect on some, though not all, aspects of social participation. An objective relationship can be demonstrated here, casting doubt on the significance of the distinction between chosen and enforced non-participation. Second, although paid work is correlated with increased social participation on some measures, there is tentative evidence that this is principally an indirect effect mediated by poverty, and that paid work itself may in some cases limit social inclusion. 'Economic inactivity' does not, in itself, necessarily lead to exclusion from social relations. These findings cast doubt on the emphasis on work that is central to both European and UK policy.

Defining exclusion

Since the Lisbon Summit in 2000, the promotion of social inclusion and social cohesion have been central strategic goals of the EU. Member states are now required to produce biennial National Action Plans for Social Inclusion[2], addressing four key objectives specified at the Nice summit in December 2000, although allowing considerable scope for member states to interpret these in different ways through the 'open method of coordination'. This method means that common objectives are set at European level, while member states design nationally appropriate policies and report on these and on their outcomes, thus both monitoring progress and sharing best practice. The Nice objectives are:

- facilitating participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services;
- preventing the risks of exclusion;
- helping the most vulnerable; and
- mobilising all relevant bodies in overcoming exclusion.

Monitoring the progress of such a policy requires the development of appropriate modes of measurement. Thus under the Belgian presidency in 2001, moves were made towards establishing common indicators across the EU, while incorporating the national variation endorsed by the open method of coordination. Debates over indicators involve both issues of definition and pragmatic considerations about the availability of appropriate data. These are discussed below in relation to Britain and Europe, showing how the PSE approach to social exclusion at its inception differs both in theory and in practice from many other approaches, although aspects of it have subsequently been adopted elsewhere.

Despite its current prevalence within and beyond the EU, the terminology of social exclusion and inclusion is of relatively recent origin. In France, it originated with the publication of *Les exclus* (Lenoir, 1974), drawing attention to those excluded from social protection, and it is largely from these origins that it entered the European agenda. In Britain, 'social exclusion' has a separate origin in critical social policy in the 1980s. This draws on the work of Peter Townsend, who argued in 1979 that a proper understanding of poverty should not be limited to questions of subsistence, but should incorporate people's inability to participate in the customary life of society: "Individuals, families and groups can be said to be in poverty when … their resources

are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities" (Townsend, 1979, p 32). Social exclusion was increasingly used to capture this consequence of poverty, together with its multi-faceted and processual character. It also gained currency in a political climate where Conservative politicians from 1979-97 denied the existence of poverty. There are therefore different national traditions in thinking about exclusion. Hilary Silver (1995) explored national interpretations of social exclusion in relation to Esping-Andersen's model of welfare regimes. Analysis of British public discourse and policy in the 1990s, with some reference to Europe, identified different understandings within as well as between nation states, and offered a model for tracking alternative, shifting and contested meanings (Levitas, 1996, 1998, 2005). This model distinguishes three discourses, with different embedded meanings of social exclusion, its causes, and appropriate policy responses. In the first, RED or redistributive discourse, which is exemplified by British critical social policy, the central problem is that the poor lack resources – not just money, but also access to collectively provided services; poverty remains at the core. Dominant in European discourse in the mid-nineties was a different model, concerned with social integration (hence SID), in which social exclusion was primarily construed as labour market exclusion or lack of paid work, either at an individual or household level. Long-term unemployment and the consequences of economic restructuring were key concerns of the European Observatory on social exclusion in the 1990s (Room, 1995), and this concern with work remains central to the National Inclusion Plans across the EU. In Britain, SID became increasingly visible in New Labour's Welfare to Work programmes and their concerns about 'workless households'. But also detectable was a third discourse, MUD or moral underclass discourse, focusing on the imputed behavioural or moral deficiencies of 'problem' groups. This model was initially used to trace shifts and contradictions in public policy in the 1990s, but also constitutes an analytic device through which the significance of particular indicators can be illuminated.

Discourse and policy have to be excavated in this way to work out what is meant by social exclusion because it is so rarely clearly defined, despite the fact that such definition would seem to be a necessary precursor to effective measurement. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), set up in 1997 in the wake of New Labour's first electoral victory, defines it as "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" (SEU, 1997) – although this fails to identify what it is that happens. Walker and Walker (1997, p 8), from a British critical social policy tradition, offer "the dynamic process of being shut out … from any of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society". The Economic and Social Research Council, in making social exclusion a thematic priority for research funding in the UK, glossed it as "the processes by which individuals and their communities become polarised, socially differentiated and unequal". In a European context, Duffy (1995) suggests "inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life, alienation and distance from the mainstream society". Estivill, exploring the transferability of the concept beyond Europe, offers a less individualised but more abstract definition: "Social exclusion may be understood as an accumulation of confluent processes with successive ruptures arising from the heart of the economy, politics and society, which gradually distances and places persons, groups, communities and territories in a position of inferiority in relation to centres of power, resources and prevailing values" (Estivill 2003, p 19).

There is, however, a difficulty in distinguishing 'social exclusion' from 'poverty' – sometimes masked by references to 'poverty and social exclusion' as an inseparable dyad. Walker and Walker (1997, p 8) regard them as analytically distinct, reserving 'poverty' for a "lack of material resources, especially income, needed to participate in British society". But some definitions of poverty incorporate aspects of social exclusion. Thus the definition of overall poverty adopted by the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development involves:

> lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterised by lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life. (United Nations, 1995, p 57)

Elements of exclusion from social participation, were, as we have seen, part of Townsend's conceptualisation of poverty in the 1970s. The PSE Survey is a direct descendant of this tradition, with the original

Living in Britain Survey (published as *Poor Britain* (Mack and Lansley, 1985)) addressing criticisms of Townsend's approach by using a consensual definition of poverty, and asking whether lack of necessities was 'chosen' or imposed by lack of resources. Seven of the items in the original list of 35 (potential) necessities could be described as aspects of social exclusion, including a hobby or leisure activity, a holiday away from home once a year, celebrations and gifts for special occasions, and having friends and family – or children's friends – round for a meal. The subsequent Breadline Britain Surveys used the same approach. Consequently, the Breadline Britain/PSE definition of poverty and deprivation in terms of lack of necessities has always incorporated aspects of what is now termed social exclusion.

Indicators of exclusion

If disentangling poverty and social exclusion is conceptually difficult, establishing appropriate measures and indicators is even more challenging. Since both are multi-faceted, they require sets of indicators rather than single ones. Which indicators are chosen, and which are seen as the most important, depends on views of both the nature of social exclusion and its causal connection to poverty, which frequently remain implicit rather than explicit. But the necessity of multiple indicators means that it is possible to draw up a provisional set without clarifying underlying definitions and relationships, and without any statement of priorities. Pragmatic considerations also encourage the use of existing data sets; these are not only relatively cheap and convenient, but permit projection back in time. The effect of this is that rather than moving, as social research ideally should, from definition to operationalisation to data collection, the process is reversed. This has been true of most of the attempts to derive indicators of social exclusion in a British context, a problem that began to be addressed some years before it became a central question for the EU.

The problem was first posed when the SEU was set up in 1997. Its initial remit was to provide 'joined-up solutions to joined-up problems' through reports and recommendations relating to intractable problems crossing departmental boundaries; but it was also charged with the responsibility for deriving appropriate indicators for monitoring progress in reducing exclusion. The general approach of the SEU was – in keeping with its remit – to focus on specific problems. Its first five reports addressed truancy and school exclusions, rough sleeping, poor neighbourhoods, teenage pregnancy and 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment, or training, giving rise to the acronym NEET

(SEU, 1998a; 1998b; 1998c; 1999a; 1999b). More recently, it has looked at reducing reoffending, at young runaways, and looked-after children (SEU, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a), as well as at the role of transport in effecting access to services (SEU, 2003b)[3]. Much of the rhetoric around the SEU reports was characterised by the moral underclass discourse, and indeed the truancy and teenage pregnancy reports focused on the traditional demons of the 'dangerous classes' (Morris, 1994) – idle criminal young men and sexually/reproductively delinquent young women (Murray, 1993). There is, of course, a necessary normativity in the definition and measurement of both poverty and social exclusion, in so far as they refer to exclusion from minimally acceptable standards of living, or from common socially sanctioned forms of participation. But the normative judgements implicit in social indicators need to be explicit and interrogated, rather than taken for granted.

By February 1999, however, the responsibility for defining the indicators had been removed from the SEU as the question of social exclusion became more central to government policy and Alistair Darling (in his capacity as Secretary of State for Social Security) announced a commitment to an annual audit of poverty and social exclusion. At that point, the SEU's advice was to consult the recent independent report from the New Policy Institute (NPI), *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion: Labour's inheritance* (Howarth et al, 1998). This was intended to form the basis of an annual audit of poverty and social exclusion, and is indeed sustained as an annual series, offering a battery of 50 indicators. It was only one contribution to the debate taking place in think-tanks and among overlapping groups of academics and policy advisers, including an earlier report from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (Robinson and Oppenheim, 1998; see also Howarth et al, 1998; Lessof and Jowell, 2000). The following month, Blair made a further commitment to the abolition of child poverty over a 20-year period (Walker, 1999), reiterated in his 1999 speech to the Labour Party Conference. In October 1999, the Department for Social Security published *Opportunity for All: Tackling poverty and social exclusion* (DSS, 1999). Among other things, this set out the 40 indicators on which the assessment of the government's progress in tackling poverty and social exclusion would be based. Some would be collected for the whole of the UK, while others covered areas of devolved responsibility and thus might differ for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In none of these reports is there a clear definition of social exclusion and how it might be seen as distinct from poverty. The NPI elides them: "Poverty and social exclusion are concerned with a lack of

possessions, or an inability to do things, that are in some sense considered normal by society as a whole" (Howarth et al, 1998, p 18). Indeed, they appear to be treated as synonymous, since "the notion of poverty that has guided the ... report is that where many people lack the opportunities that are available to the average citizen. ... This broad concept of poverty coincides with the emerging concept of social exclusion" (Howarth et al, 1998, p 13). The first *Opportunity for All* (OFA) report similarly fails to distinguish adequately between the two, although it manages also to redefine poverty in terms of lack of opportunity rather than lack of resources. Again, poverty is seen as multi-dimensional: "Lack of income, access to good-quality health, education and housing, and the quality of the local environment all affect people's well-being. Our view of poverty covers all these aspects" (DSS, 1999). But the emphasis shifts to opportunity: "Poverty ... [exists] when people are denied opportunities to work, to learn, to live healthy and secure lives, and to live out their retirement years in security"; "Poverty exists when those on low incomes lack opportunities to improve their position" (DSS, 1999). Low income may be "an important aspect of poverty", but the strategy is focused on those who "are, or are at risk of becoming trapped on low incomes for long periods, especially those who have limited opportunities to escape" (DSS, 1999, p 23). Although the report says that "there are some further dimensions to the concept of social exclusion" they are not clearly defined. The report reiterates the SEU definition, cited above: 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" (my emphasis). It goes on to say that 'social exclusion *occurs where* different factors combine to trap individuals and areas in a spiral of disadvantage" (DSS, 1999, p 23, my emphasis). Both these formulations actually fail to specify *what* 'happens' or 'occurs', and therefore what constitutes social exclusion.

There are both general problems about the use of such large batteries of indicators, and specific difficulties about the indicators chosen. The general issues include: the distinction between measures, indicators, and risk factors; the quality of individual indicators; their individual relevance; their relative importance or priority; the danger of stigmatising certain groups in defining their behaviour or situation as socially excluded; and the implied causal processes involved in choosing indicators (Levitas and Guy, 1996; Dorling and Simpson, 2000; Levitas, 2000; Watt and Jacobs, 2000). For example, 'worklessness' may be included because where a household has no-one in paid work this

typically (although not always) results in poverty, although this is an artefact of the wage and benefit system, not a 'natural' process. It reflects a moral value placed on paid work, which stigmatises those outside it and ignores the high proportion of socially necessary labour that takes place outside the labour market. The depth of this assumption is picked up by the NPI, which identifies "a lack of clarity about what social exclusion might mean" for older people, "because neither inclusion within education and training nor inclusion within paid work will be central to overcoming any problem" (Howarth et al, 1998, p 14) – embodying additional assumptions about the significance of age. Many of the indicators in both the NPI and OFA reports relate to low income and labour-market status. The OFA reports also contain indicators relating to the SEU priorities, such as rough sleeping, teenage pregnancy and truancy, as well as drug use, smoking and suicide. The NPI indicators have a broader focus on quality of life, including financial exclusion (Kempson and Whyley, 1999), fear of crime, anxiety and depression, but also include (for children) having divorced parents. There are some striking differences as a result of indicators chosen: the NPI reports show that homelessness has been rising steadily since 1997, while the OFA reports celebrate the fall in rough sleeping over the same period[4].

European indicators

The OFA reports effectively metamorphosed into the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. Like most member states, for the 2001 'NAPincl', Britain simply reorganised its existing policy and statistics under the Nice headings, emphasising the Sure Start programme as its main example of good practice. However, in December 2001, the Social Protection Committee endorsed a first set of 18 harmonised indicators of social exclusion and poverty, organised in two tiers of 10 primary and eight secondary measures. As can be seen from Table 5.1, the understanding of exclusion implied by these indicators is very much a RED/SID model. Most of the indicators relate either to income or to labour-market position, with data to be derived from the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) Survey and the European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS). The indicators were slightly revised in 2003, dividing the indicator of persons in jobless households into two to separate children and persons of working age, and adding a new secondary indicator, incidence of in-work poverty risk. The terminology used to describe what is being measured changed from 'low income' to 'at risk of poverty', and strong emphasis is placed on

Table 5.1: Harmonised indicators of social exclusion adopted by the European Union in 2001

Primary indicators

1. Low income rate after transfers with low-income threshold set at 60% median income, with breakdowns by gender, age, activity status, household type and housing tenure
2. Distribution of income, using income quintile ratio
3. Persistence of low income
4. Median low income gap
5. Regional cohesion (measured by variation of employment rates)
6. Long-term unemployment rate
7. Persons living in jobless households
8. Early school leavers not in education or training
9. Life expectancy at birth
10. Self-defined health status by income level

Secondary indicators

1. Dispersion around the low income threshold using 40%, 50% and 70% median national income
2. Low income rate anchored at a fixed time-point
3. Low income rate before transfers
4. Gini coefficient
5. Persistent low income (below 50% median income)
6. Long-term (over 12 months) unemployment share
7. Very long-term (over 24 months) unemployment share
8. Persons with low educational attainment

Source: Social Protection Committee (2001)

the need to disaggregate statistics by age and gender. Besides the primary and secondary indicators, member states are expected to use tertiary indicators that would not need to be comparable at supra-national level but would reflect the special circumstances and priorities of different countries.

The indicators eventually adopted by the Social Protection Committee charged with developing them differ from those proposed in a major report to the committee. While the principle of primary, secondary and tertiary indicators is central to the Atkinson report (Atkinson et al, 2002), the scope of the indicators proposed is wider (Table 5.2). They additionally include a number of indicators relating to education, housing and health, thus moving in the direction of a battery of indicators of multiple deprivation. The report also identifies eight areas where significant investment needs to be made in developing appropriate indicators. Most of these relate to aspects of deprivation and inequality, with particular emphasis on educational inequality, but two do reflect on more social aspects of social exclusion: access to public and private services (which is part of the first Nice criterion); and social participation. Any proposal must, of course, be constrained by pragmatic considerations of the kind of data that might practically be collected on a comparable basis. Interpretation of its significance

Table 5.2: Proposed European indicators of social exclusion

Level one
1. The risk of financial poverty as measured by 50% and 60% of national median income
2. Income inequality as measured by the quintile share ratio, ie the ratio of the share of national income received by the top 20% of households relative to the bottom 20% of households
3. The proportion of those aged 18-24 with only lower secondary education (and not in education or training)
4. Overall and long-term unemployment rates measured on ILO basis.
5. Proportion of population living in jobless households
6. Proportion of population dying before the age of 65, or the ratio of those in bottom and top income quintile groups who classify their health as bad or very bad on the WHO definition
7. Proportion of people living in households lacking specified amenities or with specified housing faults

Level two
1. Proportion of persons in households below 40% and below 70% of median income, and proportion below 60% of the median fixed in real terms at a particular date
2. Value of 60% of median threshold in purchasing power standards for one- and four-person households
3. Proportion of the population living in households permanently at risk of financial poverty
4. Mean and median equivalised poverty gap for a poverty line set at 60% median income. (This measures depth of poverty by calculating the extent to which those in poverty fall below the poverty line.)
5. Income inequality as measured by the decile ratio and the Gini coefficient
6. Proportion of the population aged 18-59 (64) with only lower secondary education or less
7. Proportion of discouraged workers, proportion non-employed and proportion in involuntary part-time work, as a percentage of total 18-64 population excluding those in full-time education
8. Proportion of people living in jobless households with current income below 60% median
9. Proportion of employees living in households at risk of poverty (60% median)
10. Proportion of employees who are low paid
11. Proportion of people unable to obtain medical treatment for financial reasons or because of waiting lists
12. Proportion of the population living in overcrowded housing
13. Proportion of people who have been in arrears on rent or mortgage payments
14. Proportion of people living in households unable in an emergency to raise a specified sum

Indicators to be developed
1. Non-monetary indicators of deprivation
2. Differential access to education
3. Housing of poor environmental quality
4. Housing cost
5. Homelessness and precarious housing
6. Literacy and numeracy
7. Access to public and essential private services
8. Social participation and access to internet

Source: Atkinson et al (2002)

must also bear in mind that these are explicitly indicators, not measures, of social exclusion. Nevertheless, while the Atkinson proposals do extend the implicit notion of 'social exclusion' somewhat beyond that of multiple deprivation, there is still a very limited focus on the social.

Alternative approaches

The difficulties of prioritising indicators from the long lists provided by the NPI and the OFA reports, and the slight attention to more social aspects of social exclusion, are partly addressed by two other models, from the IPPR (Robinson and Oppenheim, 1998) and the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) (Burchardt, 2000; Hills et al, 2002). The IPPR suggests a more compact index with one lead indicator and some supplementary ones in each of four areas – income poverty, (un)employment, education and health. These four areas are reduced from an initial seven drawn from the SEU definition: unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. The final shortlist of indicators is seen as a first step:

> In the future, we hope further indicators will be developed to assess disadvantage from poor housing, high crime environments, family breakdown, and social and political exclusion, omitted from this report as they are difficult to extract from existing data sources. It is essential to develop indicators of social capital at a later date. Initial suggestions include the proportion of population who are members of a civic organisation and the extent of social support networks. (Robinson and Oppenheim, 1998, p ii)

They note the "genuine difficulties in quantifying ... less tangible aspects of social exclusion" (Robinson and Oppenheim, 1998, p 26), and argue that "it is as yet unclear how one would define, measure and track social and political exclusion". They suggest the possibility of using the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) to measure 'social capital' by looking at data on social support networks and membership of civic organisations.

The definition of social exclusion later deployed by CASE is rather different, although its empirical data is drawn, as the IPPR suggests, from the BHPS. Burchardt (2002) suggests that there are two distinct ways of thinking about exclusion, one of which is to focus, as the SEU does, on relatively small groups whose problems are seen as

extreme or intractable, and the other which is to think in terms of detachment from the core activities of society. The initial definition adopted by CASE is a tripartite one: "an individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in key activities of the society in which he or she lives; … the individual is not participating for reasons beyond his/her control; and he or she would like to participate" (Burchardt et al, 2002, p 30, p 32). The operational model is limited to the first of these clauses – "an individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in key activities of the society in which he or she lives" – the issue of choice, discussed further below, being side-stepped for pragmatic reasons. The key activities are defined as: consumption, or the capacity to purchase goods and services; production, or the participation in economically or socially valuable activities; political engagement, or involvement in local or national decision making; and social interaction, or integration with family, friends and community. This model is used to explore empirical data drawn from the BHPS, and therefore has to select indicators from the data contained in that survey.

The CASE model does include some limited attention to social and political engagement, but there are both problems about the definition of 'key activities', and severe limitations deriving from the need to operationalise these dimensions in terms of the data available in the BHPS. The merit of the model is that it is conceptually clear, simple, and capable of retrospective application to the data set. The problem is that the indicators do not map very well on to the definition, or do so only by glossing over problematic hidden assumptions. The indicator for consumption is a proxy indicator of equivalised net household income of less than half mean income, which, unlike the PSE Survey, does not directly address questions of material deprivation. Moreover, access to goods and services is not only dependent on the capacity to purchase them, but on their availability (for example, a functioning public transport system). Participation in economically or socially valuable activities (production) is measured using the now prevalent 'NEET' formula (not in employment, education or training) plus 'looking after family'. The inclusion of the last clause gives a welcome recognition to some unpaid work. However, since those defined as excluded are the unemployed, long-term sick or disabled, early retired, or 'other', the indicator reflects a further embedded assumption: the situation of non-employment for women over 60 and men over 65 does not constitute social exclusion, whereas for those under 'normal' retirement age, it does. The difference, of course, is that prevailing social norms make non-employment legitimate at

some ages and not at others. This indicator thus embeds age and gender assumptions (even though from 2006 age discrimination, like gender discrimination, will become illegal across the EU) and is essentially normative rather than descriptive.

Paid work is also prioritised as socially useful whatever its character. However, 'production', especially where this chiefly means participation in the formal economy, and the 'participation in economically or socially valuable activities' are not necessarily the same thing: some forms of production (including cosmetic surgery, cigarettes and arms manufacture) may be considered damaging to individuals, society or the environment, while other economically or socially valuable activities do not constitute production in any meaningful sense. Political engagement is measured simply by voting behaviour and membership of a campaigning organisation. Exclusion in terms of social interaction is assessed by whether an individual lacks support in one of five respects: someone to listen, comfort, help in a crisis, relax with, or who really appreciates them. These, of course, while giving some indication of perceived support, do not directly address the question of social interaction, or integration with friends, family and community.

Social exclusion in the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey

The PSE Survey has considerable similarities at a conceptual level with the approach of CASE. It is concerned with several dimensions of potential exclusion, and with social, as well as economic (production and consumption), issues. As well as collecting data on impoverishment, labour market exclusion and service exclusion, it operationalises social exclusion in terms of exclusion from social relations, thus offering a much wider range of data than the CASE model draws from the BHPS. Most importantly, unlike the CASE model, it addresses the question of social exclusion directly, rather than drawing on batteries of existing indicators. The focus on social relations pioneered by the PSE Survey has been very influential, and has been subsequently incorporated into regular surveys at both national and European levels. For example, the new 'social capital' section of the General Household Survey 2000/1 now asks questions about civic engagement, social networks, social support and views of the local area, though not participation in common social activities (GHS, 2000/1; ONS, 2001). However, the conceptual background and political implications of 'exclusion from social relations' and 'social capital' are not the same. As Burchardt et al (2002) point out, social exclusion may be considered

a problem either from the point of view of the individual or the state. The language of social capital is closely linked to that of social cohesion, and is often primarily concerned with social order and stability. The PSE approach is more explicitly concerned with people's quality of life and the place of social relations in this – and at the impact of poverty and (lack of) paid work on these social relationships. It distinguishes between four dimensions of social exclusion. The first of these, discussed in Chapter Two, is impoverishment, or exclusion from adequate resources or income. The other three are labour market exclusion, service exclusion and exclusion from social relations. Both labour-market participation and access to services are dealt with at greater length in Chapters Six and Eight respectively, but brief general results are set out here, together with an overview of the findings on the main indicators of exclusion from social relations.

Labour market exclusion

Chapter Six considers exclusion from the labour market for both individuals and households. Individual labour-market activity is frequently promoted for its intrinsic benefits in providing an arena of social contact and interaction and as the basis of self-esteem and social recognition, as well as the instrumental benefit of affording a (potential) route to an adequate income. It has therefore both a normative and a practical significance – even though particular jobs may afford neither social satisfaction nor an income sufficient to lift workers out of poverty, or out of dependence on benefits. Linking social inclusion to labour-market activity can imply that adults of any age not in paid work are to be considered socially excluded, whether or not they live with other adults who are in paid work, and whether or not they are poor. Both UK and European indicators of exclusion look at levels of labour-market participation, but also at 'workless' or 'jobless' households, although generally only for those below normal retirement age[5]. Jobless households are at risk of poverty, and possibly other forms of social exclusion.

What the PSE Survey data suggest is that treating either labour market exclusion, or living in a jobless household, as *in themselves* indicative of social exclusion is problematic: a very high proportion of the population constituting 'society' are in these situations. Both, of course, may still work as *indicators* of exclusion, where they correlate with exclusion from social relations. Similarly, both may constitute *risk factors* because of their impact on household incomes, but that makes poverty the real problem. Overall, in 1999 when the survey

was carried out, 43% of all adults (50% of women and 36% of men) were not in paid work, and 34% (30% of men and 38% of women) lived in a jobless household. With such high levels of non-participation in paid work, treating this as *constitutive* of social exclusion becomes problematic. The figures do not simply represent those over the statutory 'retirement' or pension age. In the 55-64 age group, nearly two thirds (62%) are not in paid work. A substantial proportion of that age group describe themselves as sick or disabled (15%) or engaged in domestic and caring activities (8%) rather than as retired (33%). Overall, caring responsibilities are six times as likely to take women out of paid employment as men. Those with a long-standing illness are more than twice as likely to be labour-market inactive, and half as likely to be in paid work, compared with those who are well. Similarly, 44% of the 55-64 age group live in a household where no-one is in paid work, as do about one in eight of adults aged between 16 and 24, one in 10 of those aged between 35 and 54, and over half of those with a long-standing illness.

Service exclusion

Exclusion from a range of public and private services is discussed in Chapter Eight. Here Tania Fisher and Glen Bramley show that there are constraints on the use of services of availability, suitability and cost – described in the original PSE report (Gordon et al, 2000) as 'collective' exclusion where the service is unavailable or unsuitable, and 'individual' exclusion where it is unaffordable. The services most affected by these constraints are play facilities, school meals, youth clubs and public transport for children, but as many as one in four of all households are constrained in their use of public transport by inadequate service delivery. Overall, Fisher and Bramley find a strong relationship between service exclusion and poverty, arguing that "poor households face poorer quality services and/or that poverty reinforces constraints on service usage" (p 227). They also find a similar relationship between living in a working-age jobless household and service exclusion, which does not hold for retired households. There does not seem to be a similar correlation between service exclusion and exclusion from common social activities.

An additional aspect of the PSE's conceptualisation of service exclusion is lack of access to basic services inside the home. Utility disconnections can be seen as an exclusion from basic services (gas, electricity, water, telephone) that most people take for granted. In addition, many people who are not disconnected restrict their

consumption. Six per cent of respondents have experienced disconnection of one or more services, but 11% have used less than they needed because of cost. Younger respondents are more likely to have been disconnected. One in five of those unemployed have been disconnected, and one in three have restricted consumption; the figures for those in working-age jobless households are slightly lower. One in six of those with a long-standing illness have also used less than they needed because of cost, and the same is true for a similar proportion of households with children.

Exclusion from social relations

Direct exploration of exclusion from social relations was pioneered by the PSE Survey. Five different sets of information address aspects of social participation and sociability:

- non-participation in common activities, some of which have always been included in the Breadline Britain Surveys, but are here given separate and more extended treatment;
- the extent and quality of social networks and the extent to which individuals are socially isolated;
- the support available to individuals on a routine basis and in times of crisis;
- disengagement from political and civic activity; and
- confinement, resulting from fear of crime, disability or other factors.

Confinement resulting from fear of crime is covered in Chapter Nine, although Pantazis argues that fear of crime is more likely to result in risk-avoidance strategies than lead to confinement. Thus the emphasis in this chapter is predominantly on the first four dimensions[6]. Besides a general descriptive overview of the findings, two key issues are addressed: whether work necessarily generates social inclusion in this sense; and the question of voluntary self-exclusion.

Common social activities

The method of enquiry about participation in common social activities is identical to that for the (non)possession of material necessities (Chapter Two). The initial Omnibus survey asked a cross-section of the population what activities they regarded as essential options for all (Chapter Four). The main sample was presented with a shuffle-card question asking, in relation to a range of activities, whether they

participate in them; whether they don't do them because they cannot afford them; or whether they don't do them because they don't wish to do so. There is a follow-up question, in which respondents who 'don't do' each specified activity are asked which of a wider list of reasons are important in preventing them. The PSE annotated questionnaire (www.bris.ac.uk/poverty/pse/welcome.htm) lists the activities and the proportion of the population participating in each, and Table 4.1 in Chapter Four details the proportion of the Omnibus sample regarding each activity as a necessity. Some key aspects of social participation regarded by the Omnibus sample as essential were not a regular part of the lives of many of our sample:

- 33% of the population do not have a week's annual holiday away from home;
- 41% do not have an evening out once a fortnight;
- 41% do not have a meal out in a pub or restaurant once a month;
- 22% have no hobby or leisure activity; and
- 18% rarely have friends or family round for a meal, snack or drink[7].

In fact, only a small minority (5%) engages in all the listed activities; 45% are non-participants in one to three activities, and a further 30% in four to six. Nearly a fifth (19%) of the population are participants in half or less of the listed activities, with 6% showing very low participation[8].

There are demographic variations in levels of participation (see Table 5.3). Categories where the risk of non-participation is highest are young adults aged between 16 and 34, and those aged over 65, especially single pensioners; women; single people with children; those who are outside the labour market or (especially) unemployed, or in a jobless household; those with long-standing illness; and those who are poor. Participation is highest among non-pensioner couples and single people without children, and those with a worker in the household. The relationship between paid work and participation is, however, far from straightforward: non-pensioner jobless households show lower participation than those in retirement, with the participation of pensioner couples only just below that for the sample as a whole. And in some categories there is a marked polarisation: women who are labour-market-inactive and/or in jobless households are more likely than average to participate in all activities *and* more likely to be non-participant in seven or more.

Table 5.3: Percentage of respondents not participating in common social activities, by key social and economic variables

	Number of common social activities not participated in			
	1	**2**	**3-4**	**5+**
Age group				
16-34	16	20	23	41
35-54	14	20	30	37
55-64	14	15	32	39
65+	10	10	29	52
Sex				
Male	17	20	24	38
Female	10	14	31	45
Family type				
Pensioner couple	10	14	31	45
Single pensioner	8	8	23	60
Couple with children	10	16	28	46
Couple without children	16	24	31	28
Single adult with children	9	4	21	66
Single adult without children	19	23	27	31
Other	18	16	25	41
Economic status of respondent				
Working	18	21	29	33
Unemployed	20	5	26	50
Economically inactive	7	13	26	54
Workers in household				
No workers	7	11	28	55
Workers	17	20	28	35
Retired	9	11	28	53
Long-standing illness				
Yes	12	15	25	48
No	14	18	30	38
*Below 60% median income**				
Below	8	6	21	65
Above	16	20	30	35
PSE poor				
Yes	3	4	15	78
No	18	22	32	28
Generally poor				
Yes	8	9	21	63
No	17	20	30	34
Social class				
Higher manager and professional	26	28	25	22
Lower manager and professional	16	14	36	34
Intermediate occupations	15	22	33	30
Small employers and own workers	9	23	26	42
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	12	14	35	38
Semi-routine occupations	13	15	21	52
Routine occupations	10	9	22	59
Total	**14**	**17**	**28**	**42**

* Based on the OECD equivalisation scale.

The association between poverty and reduced social participation is clear. The PSE Survey deploys three different measures of poverty (see Chapter Two): income poverty (below 60% median income); general poverty (subjective poverty)[9]; and the PSE index (low income plus material and social deprivation)[10]. Whichever measure is chosen, those who are poor are far more likely not to engage in a wide range of social activities, and all three measures show poverty to be a severe risk factor (Tables 5.4 and 5.5). The income measure alone shows that those below the 60% threshold are three times as likely as those above it to be non-participant in seven or more activities. The pattern is

Table 5.4: Lack of participation in common social activities, by different measures of poverty[11]

	Percentage of respondents		
	Lacks participation in at least one activity	'Can't afford' participation in at least one activity	'Doesn't want' participation in at least one activity
PSE poor			
Yes	99	85	89
No	93	21	93
*Below 60% median income**			
Below 60%	97	60	90
Above 60%	95	30	93
General poverty			
Yes	98	59	93
No	96	30	95

* Based on the OECD equivalisation scale.

Table 5.5: Mean number of common social activities not participated in, by different measures of poverty

	Number of activities		
	Mean number of activities not participated in	Mean number 'can't afford'	Mean number 'don't want'
PSE poor			
Yes	6.4	3.7	2.6
No	3.2	0.4	2.8
*Below 60% median income**			
Below	5.4	2.3	3.1
Above	3.6	0.9	2.7
General poverty			
Yes	5.4	2.5	2.9
No	3.6	1	2.7

* Based on the OECD equivalisation scale.

similar for general poverty. The complex relationship between work and participation is discussed further below, but there is no doubt that it has an indirect effect, since non-participation in paid work at the level of the household often results in poverty.

Social isolation and social networks

Indicators of social isolation include both living alone and the degree of contact with friends and family outside the household. In the PSE sample, 18% live alone. In the younger age groups (16-34, 35-54) men are more likely to live alone than women. The probability of men living alone rises slightly with age, while for women it increases sharply, so that overall women are more likely than men to live alone. One in four of the population over 65 are women living alone, as are one in 10 of the 55-64 age group.

Respondents were asked about the numbers of relatives and friends outside their immediate household whom they saw or spoke to on a daily, weekly or annual basis, including both face-to-face and telephone contact. The key findings here are:

- Only 59% of the sample has at least one relative outside the household whom they see or speak to on a daily basis but 91% have at least one family member they see at least weekly;
- Nine per cent of the population have no family member outside the household whom they see or speak to at least weekly; and
- One per cent has no effective family contact outside the household (that is, no family member they see or speak to at least once a year).

Most respondents have active friendships. However:

- 7% have no friend they see or speak to at least weekly;
- 3% have no friend they see or speak to at least yearly; and
- Just over 1% of respondents have neither a family member nor a friend with whom they are in contact at least weekly. All of these are men. Although this is a tiny percentage, 1% of the population is in excess of half a million people, equivalent to a city the size of Bristol.

In contrast with the pattern of participation in common social activities, there are not large differences between the poor and non-poor using any of the three measures of poverty. There is some evidence of minor differences in network mix. Contacts are biased towards family for the

poor and friends for the non-poor. 'Economic inactivity', both for individuals and households, is associated with networks more focused on family than friends, but unemployed individuals are more likely to have regular contact only with friends rather than family. Whereas much policy has focused on the alleged social exclusion of lone parents, the PSE Survey suggests that adults living alone with children are among the least likely to be socially isolated, and the most likely to have both family members and friends with whom they are in regular contact[12]. Poverty also affects the extent of social networks, and here the PSE measure is the best discriminator, with the PSE poor being more likely to have smaller combined networks.

Social support

One of the important aspects of social networks is the support they offer in times of need. Respondents were asked how much support would be available to them in a range of situations:

- needing help around the home if in bed with flu/illness;
- needing help with heavy household or gardening jobs;
- needing someone to look after their home or possessions while away;
- needing someone to look after children or an adult dependant;
- needing advice about an important life change;
- being upset because of problems with spouse/partner; and
- feeling depressed and wanting someone to talk to.

The first four items relate to practical support, the following three to emotional support. Such questions are, of course, partly speculative, and reflect a mixture of people's expectations and experience. They therefore generate data that say as much about the sense of social integration people have as about the practical realities of their lives – and both of these are vital to a proper understanding of inclusion and belonging. The results (Table 5.6) show unequivocally that those who are PSE poor have weaker support than the non-poor, on both practical and emotional indicators[13]. Those in working-age jobless households have support profiles very similar to those in pensioner households, and both groups have much poorer support than those in households with at least one person in paid work. Although the pattern of anticipated support varies slightly, both the 'economically inactive' and the unemployed have relatively poor support. But those most vulnerable to social exclusion on the social support indicators are

Table 5.6: Levels of practical and emotional support, by key social and economic variables

	Practical support			Emotional support			Practical/ emotional support		
	Good	**Reasonable**	**Poor**	**Good**	**Reasonable**	**Poor**	**Good**	**Reasonable**	**Poor**
Age group									
16-34	69	27	4	78	20	2	61	31	8
35-54	65	31	4	71	24	5	54	39	8
55-64	60	37	3	64	32	4	46	49	5
65+	54	37	9	35	26	9	48	37	16
Sex									
Male	64	32	4	66	30	4	51	40	9
Female	61	33	6	76	19	6	56	35	9
Family type									
Pensioner couple	64	32	5	74	20	5	57	32	11
Single pensioner	47	39	14	54	34	12	40	41	19
Couple with children	74	23	3	77	20	3	60	36	4
Couple without children	60	35	5	71	24	5	51	41	8
Single adult with children	67	26	7	80	15	5	60	33	7
Single adult without children	46	44	10	65	29	7	43	42	15
Other	67	32	1	71	27	3	57	36	8
Economic status of respondent									
Working	68	29	3	75	21	3	58	36	6
Unemployed	51	38	11	58	36	5	45	43	11
Economically inactive	56	36	8	65	27	7	48	39	13
Workers in the household									
No workers	55	35	10	64	28	8	47	41	12
Workers	67	31	3	74	23	3	56	37	6
Retired	55	36	9	64	27	9	49	36	15

(continued)

Table 5.6: Levels of practical and emotional support, by key social and economic variables (continued)

	Practical support			Emotional support			Practical/ emotional support		
	Good	**Reasonable**	**Poor**	**Good**	**Reasonable**	**Poor**	**Good**	**Reasonable**	**Poor**
Long-standing illness									
Yes	62	31	7	67	27	6	52	37	10
No	63	33	4	73	23	5	54	38	8
*Below 60% median income**									
Below 60%	60	31	9	65	28	7	50	39	11
Above 60%	35	32	3	74	22	4	56	38	6
PSE poor									
Poor	52	37	11	59	32	10	41	41	18
Not poor	66	31	3	75	22	3	58	37	6
General poverty									
In general poverty	60	30	10	66	29	6	50	41	9
Not in general poverty	67	30	3	74	23	3	56	37	6
Social class									
Higher manager and professional	71	24	4	74	25	1	57	39	4
Lower manager and professional	57	39	4	70	25	5	52	41	8
Intermediate occupations	65	30	5	79	12	9	60	30	10
Small employers and own workers	58	39	3	62	34	4	46	40	15
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	67	30	3	71	26	3	53	42	5
Semi-routine occupations	64	29	7	75	20	6	58	33	9
Routine occupations	61	34	5	66	30	4	48	42	11
Total	**63**	**32**	**5**	**71**	**24**	**5**	**54**	**38**	**9**

* Based on the OECD equivalisation scale.

those living alone, whether pensioners or working-age adults. Less than half the solo non-pensioners have good expectations of practical support, and 10% have poor support; just over half have good emotional support. In contrast, lone parents have relatively good support, only marginally less than the most-supported groups, couples with children, and slightly better than the sample as a whole. Indeed, although they have slightly lower levels of practical support than couples with children, lone parents are the most likely of any group in the sample to report good emotional support (80%). Generally, lone parents are more like other families with children in terms of anticipated support than like other households with only one adult (see also Chapter Fourteen). Living alone leaves people uncertain of access to social support at times of need. Those living with others (even if those others are children) anticipate better support. Among those who live alone, women in fact fare rather worse than men on both practical and emotional support as well as on the combined indicators.

Civic participation

The PSE Survey collected two sets of information on civic engagement, sometimes referred to as active citizenship. Respondents were asked about a list of activities in which they might have participated in the past three years, ranging from voting to taking part in a political campaign or standing for civic office. Some 73% claimed to have voted in the last general election (1997). While this is not inconsistent with the turn-out, 65% claimed to have voted in the last local election, which by far exceeds the level of voting in these. About 17% had taken none of the listed actions. Respondents were also asked about current active involvement in civic organisations such as sports clubs, parents associations, trade unions and community groups. Here, 44% have no active involvement, with sports clubs claiming the highest number of participants at 18%. Combining the activities and organisations from both questions, 88% of respondents are engaged in some way, leaving only 12% disengaged. However, if voting is excluded, some 30% of the population are disengaged. Analyses of the data, both for the separate and combined variables, show that young people, those not in paid work, and those who are poor have lower levels of participation (Gordon et al, 2000; Bradshaw and Williams, 2000).

Lack of work or lack of money?

For both participation in common social activities and the availability of social support, it is worth exploring a little further whether work in itself has a protective effect in relation to inclusion in social relations, or whether any such effect is indirect, through the relief of poverty. This is an important question in policy terms, for the current dominant assumption is that paid work always promotes inclusion. The PSE Survey suggests that greater scepticism is needed about this, as well as more targeted, probably qualitative, research. There are difficulties in extrapolating from the PSE sample because the numbers in some sub-groups are very small, so the discussion below must be treated as tentative and exploratory. But in looking at the reasons people give for reduced participation, there is some cause to think that paid work can have an inhibiting impact on inclusion in social relations.

One of the limitations of the main shuffle-card question about necessities in the PSE Survey is that it forces a choice between 'don't want' and 'can't afford' as the two alternative reasons for non-participation in common social activities. The forced choice, however, excludes other possible constraints on participation. A secondary question, however, invites respondents to specify a range of reasons that are important in preventing participation, including lack of interest, lack of money, pressure on time from paid and unpaid work, illness and confinement. The 'don't want' category turns out to mask a range of reasons, including lack of interest, but also including sickness and disability, and lack of time. For no activity do these factors compete in importance with lack of money, but significant minorities are affected. For example, for 15% of the whole sample, lack of money is an important factor in not having an evening out once a fortnight, while lack of time resulting from childcare commitments is important for 5% of the whole sample, lack of time due to paid work for 4%, and illness or disability for 3%. For 6% of the whole sample lack of money is important in preventing a hobby or leisure activity, but 3% of the whole sample cite lack of time because of childcare, 3% lack of time because of paid work, and 1% lack of time because of other caring responsibilities. Although these numbers and percentages are small, they indicate substantial numbers in the population whose social participation is squeezed by the time constraints of paid and unpaid work. Pressures on time as a result of paid work ranked in the top five reasons for non-participation for all but two of the listed activities, as did confinement through age, illness or disability. Both men and women, principally in the 16-54 age groups, report time pressures, and those

in paid work are most likely to cite both the paid work itself and childcare as important constraints on the time available for social participation.

In relation to social networks, respondents were also asked if they had as much contact with family and friends as they would like, and if not, for the reasons for this. These responses also suggest that paid work is not an unequivocally positive factor in promoting social inclusion. Only 7% of respondents directly cite money as an inhibiting factor, although distance (27%), lack of a car (6%) and poor public transport (4%) might also involve questions of cost. Much more prevalent are claims of pressure of time: 27% cite lack of time due to paid work, 9% lack of time due to childcare responsibilities, and 4% lack of time due to caring responsibilities. For more than one in four of the adult population as a whole (and thus for a significantly higher proportion of those in paid work), employment is a brake on social contact and integration. Indeed, 42% of respondents in paid work, and 38% of all those in households with paid workers, said that work prevents them from seeing friends and family. The time pressures of work get in the way of building and sustaining relationships with families and friends – and 'economic inactivity' does not necessarily result in social exclusion in this regard.

Where social support is concerned, the relationship with work and poverty is again complex. We divided the working-age population into four groups – those not in paid work and in poor households; those in work and in poor households; those in work and not poor; and those not in paid work and not poor (Table 5.7). Those not in

Table 5.7: Levels of practical and emotional support among working and poor households (%)

	In paid work and in poor households (n=70)	Not in work and in poor households (n=36)	In work and not in poor households (n=707)	Not in work and not in poor households (n=11)
Practical support				
Good	70	50	70	73
Reasonable	23	47	29	27
Poor	7	3	2	0
Emotional support				
Good	73	53	78	91
Reasonable	25	42	20	9
Poor	3	6	3	0
Total support				
Good	54	42	60	73
Reasonable	41	56	36	27
Poor	4	3	4	0

work and in poor households have weaker practical and emotional support than the working poor, and the working poor are less likely to have good support than workers in non-poor households. But the very small group not in paid work but not living in a poor household has both the best practical support and by far the best emotional support in the sample. The small size of this group means that it is essential to be cautious about the result. But its implication, if confirmed by further research, would be that non-participation in paid work, when not accompanied by poverty, does not produce social exclusion. It may indeed provide the basis for greater social participation and integration, because of the freeing up of time to invest in social relationships.

Poverty, non-participation and choice

The question of choice has been the topic of debate in social policy for over 20 years. Townsend's (1979) original deprivation index was criticised for not distinguishing between those who chose not to have certain items, and those whose deprivation was enforced. This is why the question of choice is embedded in the CASE definition, discussed above. It is also one reason why the original Breadline Britain methodology was initially devised (Mack and Lansley, 1985) and continued in the PSE Survey itself. On the initial shuffle-card question, for all items except having a week's holiday and having holidays abroad, the proportion saying the activity is unwanted exceeds the proportion saying they cannot afford it. While the poor are three to four times as likely as the non-poor to claim exclusion from at least one activity on the grounds of cost, there is very little difference between poor and non-poor in the extent to which they claim non-participation in at least one activity out of lack of interest. These might be taken as the self-aware responses of rational actors, indicating that a great deal of non-participation even by the poor is chosen. And if we are talking about voluntary self-exclusion, then perhaps this is not a matter for tremendous concern.

However, the shuffle-card and the follow-up questions on individual activities produce different results. The forced choice between 'don't want' and 'can't afford' in the shuffle-card question privileges 'don't want'. The follow-up question, in contrast, allows a wider range of responses. Although lack of interest remains an important expressed reason for non-participation, on this question lack of money rather than lack of interest emerges as the most important inhibiting factor for most of the listed activities. Forcing a choice between 'don't want' and 'can't afford' not only excludes alternative constraints, but conflates

the three quite different phenomena of objective, experienced and expressed financial constraint, and suggests that the reasons people give for their (in)actions cannot straightforwardly be treated as causes. Shame is also a likely factor in responses to this question. In a society where identity is increasingly defined in terms of consumption and choice (Bauman 2004), (admission to) the lack of either carries an increased burden of shame. The response 'don't want' preserves individual dignity above 'can't afford'.

The demographic pattern of expressed financial constraint embodied in the 'don't do/can't afford' responses differs from the general pattern of non-participation (Table 5.8, and compare Table 5.3). Generally, the presence of children in the household is associated with a strong sense of financial constraint, with lone parents reporting the greatest financial restriction to social participation. Only 26% of lone parents report no exclusion on grounds of cost, compared with 63% overall; and 31% are excluded by cost from five or more activities, compared with 10% overall and 5% of over those aged over 65. The PSE poor experience levels of exclusion higher than any other group in the sample: 37% are excluded by cost from five or more activities, and 62% from three or more. They are more than three times as likely as the population as a whole to experience exclusion from common social activities because they cannot afford them[14]. But if the impact of poverty is clear, the PSE Survey provides additional evidence for the now established point that people learn to be poor, that is, that the habit of limited consumption and/or participation results in people learning not to want what they cannot afford. Younger people are far more likely than older age groups to attribute their lack of participation to lack of money, bearing out the hypothesis that older people have brought their expectations and aspirations in line with their resources.

These factors led us to expect that the reported pattern of financial constraint understated its objective impact. We therefore looked directly at the relationship between income and non-participation, irrespective of the professed reasons. We plotted the number of activities not participated in against mean equivalised household income (Figure 5.1), which shows declining participation with declining income. Below about £260 equivalised OECD income, social participation is increasingly severely curtailed.

What this suggests is that whatever people say about not wanting to participate in, or not being interested in, particular activities, low income restricts participation, and does so progressively. Of course, no correlation can in itself establish a causal link, but in the absence of any other plausible account of causation at work here, it seems

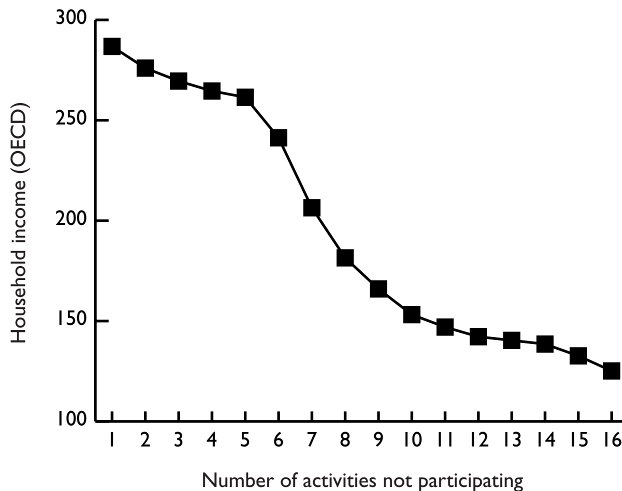
Table 5.8: Percentage of respondents not participating in common social activities because unable to afford them, by key social and economic variables

	Number of common social activities				
	Can afford all	Can't afford 1	Can't afford 2	Can't afford 3-4	Can't afford 5+
Age group					
16-34	51	13	9	11	16
35-54	65	10	4	11	10
55-64	72	9	4	9	7
65+	70	10	7	8	5
Sex					
Male	65	11	6	9	9
Female	61	10	6	11	12
Family type					
Pensioner couple	72	7	9	8	4
Single pensioner	64	12	6	11	8
Couple with children	47	14	10	13	17
Couple without children	74	10	4	6	7
Single adult with children	26	8	12	24	31
Single person	68	8	4	8	12
Other family type	66	10	4	11	9
Economic status of respondent					
Working	67	12	6	8	8
Unemployed	36	6	5	21	32
Economically inactive	60	9	7	12	12
Workers in the household					
No workers	40	10	9	15	27
Workers	66	11	5	9	8
Retired	69	9	7	9	6
Long-standing illness					
Yes	62	8	7	11	13
No	64	12	6	9	9
*Below 60% median**					
Below 60%	40	12	10	17	21
Above 60%	70	10	5	8	6
PSE index					
Poor	15	11	11	25	37
Not poor	79	10	4	5	1
General poverty					
In general poverty	41	9	8	17	25
Not in general poverty	70	10	6	9	6
Total	**63**	**11**	**6**	**10**	**10**

* Based on the OECD equivalisation scale.

reasonable to conclude that poverty has a direct impact on levels of social participation. This is a somewhat different conclusion from that drawn by Mack and Lansley, who argue that "overall the relationship

Figure 5.1: Household income, by participation (smoothed results)



between income and lack of necessities because of lack of desire suggests that … people are, indeed, choosing to go without rather than being forced into this situation" (1985, p 94). Mack and Lansley, however, also acknowledge that there is a serious problem about expressed 'choice' reflecting low expectations, and that "deprivation among those on low incomes may be more extensive than that suggested by people's own judgements of what they can afford and what they want" (1985, p 117).

The implications of this analysis of the PSE results also run directly counter to McKay's (2004) arguments, discussed in Chapter Four. McKay's position is essentially a recapitulation of traditional claims about 'secondary poverty': people are unable to afford 'necessities' because they (mis)spend their money on non-essentials[15]. While he argues that many of the PSE poor are really not poor, since they could afford items they say they cannot afford, this analysis shows, at least in relation to social necessities, that the reverse is the case. Low income restricts participation, even for those who do not give this as a reason.

How much social exclusion?

The multi-dimensional character of social exclusion makes it difficult to give a headline figure for its overall extent as can, with qualifications, be done for poverty. This would be somewhat easier if the different dimensions of social exclusion were more closely associated. Not only

Table 5.9: Percentage of poor people experiencing social exclusion

	PSE poor (26%)	Income poor[6] (24%)	Generally poor (24%)	Total (%)
Not in paid work	57	79	67	44
In jobless household	47	69	61	34
Service exclusion[1]	22	22	20	13
Non-participation in social activities[2]	77	63	62	10
Socially isolated[3]	14	12	11	15
Poor social support[4]	18	11	9	9
Disengaged[5]	20	9	16	12

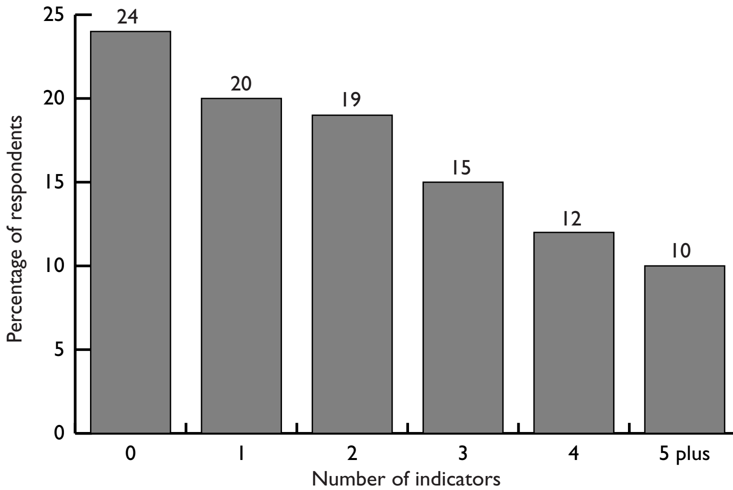
Notes: 1= excluded from 3 plus services because unaffordable or unavailable/unsuitable; 2 = does not participate in 5 plus social activities for any reason; 3 = no daily contact with either friends or family; 4 = poor support on 4 plus indicators; 5 = not currently involved or involved in the past three years (includes voting); 6 = 60% median income (OECD).

do the proportions of the population excluded on different dimension vary, as Table 5.9 shows, but the relationships between the dimensions are complex, and different indicators of poverty give startlingly different results.

All measures of poverty are associated with an increased risk of detachment from the labour market at both individual and household level. Yet although similar proportions of the population are poor on each poverty measure, it is income poverty rather than deprivation as measured by the PSE Survey that shows the closest association. Poverty is also associated with service exclusion, but has the strongest association with exclusion from common social activities. As we have already seen, poverty does have a strong causal effect on participation in common social activities, and intensity of poverty is associated with intensity of social exclusion on the PSE measures (Bradshaw et al, 2000). Those who are poor have between six and eight times the risk of non-participation in five or more social activities. However, the social isolation dimension, if the cut-off is taken as having no daily contact with either friends or family, is if anything negatively associated with poverty. Contradictory results are obtained for social support and disengagement depending on the poverty measure selected. Among the implications of this finding is that using social support (as the GHS does) or social networks/social capital will produce a rosier picture of inclusion in social relations than the 'common social activities' element of the PSE.

Figure 5.2 looks at social exclusion across eight dimensions, including a single dimension of poverty made up of those defined as poor on any one of the three measures, plus the remaining seven dimensions from Table 5.9: not in paid work; in jobless household; service exclusion;

Figure 5.2: Number of indicators of social exclusion and poverty reported by respondents, out of a possible eight



Note: Respondent is poor if counted as poor on any one poverty measure (that is PSE poor, below 60% median income, in general poverty).

non-participation in social activities; socially isolated; poor social support; disengaged. Roughly three quarters (76%) of the population is socially excluded on one or more indicators, but less than a quarter (22%) on four or more out of a possible eight. Even the indicators of exclusion from social relations turn out not to cohere into a single dimension.

The question might therefore be posed as to whether social exclusion is a coherent or useful concept. Given that much of what social exclusion covers, even in the extended form operationalised in the PSE Survey, is either integral to or consequent on the concept of overall poverty (see Chapter Three), it might be seen as dispensable. On the other hand, social exclusion does draw attention to the social aspects and consequences of poverty, which, despite being incorporated into the definition of overall poverty, are not necessarily at the forefront of people's minds.

Conclusion

The key issues that emerge from the PSE's data on exclusion from social relations are these:

- Levels of social participation are affected by age, gender, household type and employment status as well as poverty.
- Poverty has the strongest (negative) effect on social relationships and participation of any of these variables.
- About 9% of the population have low levels of expectation around the amount of social support that might be available to them in times of need or personal crisis.
- Although those in paid work are less likely to be poor, employment does not necessarily promote social inclusion. Pressures on time, both from paid work and informal caring, inhibit social participation for significant numbers of the population.
- People of working age not in paid work and not poor do not appear to suffer exclusion from social relations. This suggests that it is poverty rather than joblessness that is the key problem in terms of the social element of social exclusion.
- Older people in particular may report less exclusion on the grounds of cost because they 'learn to be poor' (see Chapter Fifteen).
- The objective effect of poverty is stronger than would appear from asking people whether they can afford particular activities, suggesting that the long-running question of 'choice' is methodologically problematic.

In some cases, these results are tentative. Three broad conclusions can, however, be drawn. The first is that indicators of social inclusion need routinely to include some that directly address the fabric of social life. The agreed indicators at both UK and European level are overly concentrated on employment and poverty. Without appropriate indicators, the complex relationships between different dimensions of social exclusion cannot be explored. Second, there is a need for more research, probably of a qualitative kind, to explore the impact of poverty and worklessness on social relations. This would facilitate the refinement and development of the indicators used in the PSE Survey. Third, the policy emphasis on paid work as a mechanism for delivering social inclusion is a double-edged sword. Paid work may reduce poverty (although that depends on the level of income it generates) but it simultaneously can create acute problems of work–life balance, reducing the time necessary for social participation and social support.

Notes

[1] The latter part of this chapter draws substantially on Levitas et al (2004). Thanks also to Christina Pantazis for additional analysis for this chapter.

[2] The National Action Plans for the UK can be found at the websites of the Department for Work and Pensions (www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2003/nap/index.asp) and the Department of Social Security (www.dss.gov.uk/publications/dss/2001/uknapsi/uknap2001_03.pdf).

[3] For a full discussion of the work of the SEU up to the end of 2004, see Levitas (2005).

[4] For a detailed examination of the IPPR, NPI and OFA indicators, see Levitas (2000).

[5] 'Jobless' is to be preferred to 'workless', since the latter neglects the unpaid work that takes place in all households, especially those with children, as well as any unpaid work outside the home.

[6] A more detailed description of the results may be found in Levitas et al (2004).

[7] These figures include the very small percentages, shown separately in Table 4.1, for whom the recorded reply was 'not applicable'.

[8] In making this calculation, the items relating to schools are included for relevant households, that is, those with school-aged children, only. The total number of relevant items for this group is 15, for the rest of the sample 13.

[9] Respondents in general poverty have been defined as having a net weekly household income that is less than the income estimated by respondents as necessary to need to keep their household out of general poverty.

[10] The closer association between PSE poverty and participation in common social activities is partly generated by an overlap between these two variables.

[11] See note 10.

[12] Throughout this section, since the numbers in each group without significant contact are small, the results must be treated with caution.

[13] We defined 'good', 'reasonable' and 'poor' levels of support on practical and emotional sets of indicators, and for both combined. In all cases, 'good' support means lacking support on *none* of the listed items. 'Reasonable' support means lacking support on one or two items, and 'poor' support means lacking support on three or more items. On the practical items, 63%

of the sample had good support, 32% reasonable and 5% poor support. On the emotional items, 71% had good support, 24% reasonable and 5% poor support. On the combined measure, 54% had good support, 38% reasonable and 9% poor support.

[14] See note 10.

[15] Rowntree defined two types of poverty: primary and secondary poverty. Those in primary poverty were those "whose earnings were insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency" and those in secondary poverty were those 'whose total earnings would have been sufficient for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency were it not that some portion of them was absorbed by other expenditure". Rowntree rejected the argument of his critics that those in secondary poverty were not 'really' poor. In December 1901 he wrote to the *Times:*

> With regard to what I have called 'secondary poverty', I include in this class all those families which proved upon observation and enquiry to be living in obvious want and squalor, but whose poverty was not due solely to insufficiency of income. Your reviewer suggests that these families should not have been returned as living 'in poverty', because their condition was in part due to wasteful and ignorant expenditure. But from the statistical standpoint I was concerned with conditions as they were, and families which were living in 'obvious want and squalor' – i.e. under conditions which rendered them economically inefficient – could surely not be counted as being above the poverty line, whatever the cause of their condition. (Rowntree 1902, quoted in Harris, 2000)

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