

## **Social Exclusion and Children: Background and Context**

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## **PREFACE**

The Columbia University Institute for Child and Family Policy convened a conference on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001 at the University, on “Social Exclusion and Children”. It was designed to help re-frame the current child poverty debate and to stimulate a new and broader discussion of child well-being. The Conference was targeted on U.S. child and family policy issues but drew on the European concept of “social exclusion” as a new, different, and perhaps more valid way of framing the issues. The meeting covered two days and included much discussion of European developments; but the primary focus was on the U.S. — the possible policy, program, and research implications of the use of the social exclusion concept.

The meeting involved policy makers, public administrators, policy scholars, practitioners, community leaders, communications researchers, advocates, and other opinion leaders. Papers and panel presentations by experts from several countries analyzed “social exclusion and children” and the advantages and disadvantages of employing the concept as an alternative or supplement to “child poverty”. Issues of measurement were discussed and what the communications, policy, program, and research implications would be if the concept of “social exclusion” were applied to the situation of particularly vulnerable, or severely deprived, children in the U.S..

The conference was designed to make the concept more visible in the U.S. child development research and child and family policy discussions. Among the specific objectives that it was hoped the Conference would achieve were:

- to offer an alternative (or a supplement) to the conventional measure of income poverty used in the U.S.;
- to broaden the terms of the debate regarding poverty and vulnerability as it affects children and their families;
- to help re-frame the current child poverty debate into one that goes well beyond a focus on income to include attention to social and emotional aspects of deprivation and vulnerability;
- to analyze the potential of this re-framing for the generation of greater public will to tackle the problems of child poverty and deprivation and social exclusion.;
- to contribute to a broader conceptualization of interventions aimed at enhancing the well-being of children;
- to explore the implications for policy, program development, and research if the concept of social exclusion were to be applied to the situation of vulnerable and deprived children.

The Conference began with two papers by European policy scholars on the social exclusion concept, the rationale for its development, and how it has been implemented in one or another country. These were followed by a paper on social exclusion and children at risk, a panel session with presenters from Britain, Canada, and France

discussing the concept as it relates to their own countries, a paper on the central issue of whether “poverty” or “social exclusion” adds more to the policy-political-public debates about improving child well-being, and a paper on childhood social indicators and the issue of how one could measure social exclusion among children in the United States. Each presentation was followed by comments by U.S. policy scholars and/or practitioners who raised questions and launched the general discussion. The Conference ended with presentations by a diverse panel whose members reacted to the whole discussion and with both panelists and participants suggesting next steps.

In offering these papers and a report, the Institute for Child and Family Policy expresses its appreciation to the Ford Foundation, the Conference funder, and particularly to a supportive program officer, Helen Neugeborn. We thank paper authors, panelists, discussants, chairs, and all participants for creative and lively contributions to what we define as a significant debate.

### **SOCIAL EXCLUSION: A BETTER WAY TO THINK ABOUT CHILDHOOD DEPRIVATION?**

“Social exclusion “ is a multi-dimensional concept, involving economic, social, political, cultural, and special aspects of disadvantage and deprivation (Lenoir, 1974; Room, 1995; Magrab, 1998; Klasen, 1998). It is often described as the process by which individuals and groups are wholly or partly closed out from participation in their society, as a consequence of low income and constricted access to employment, social benefits and services, and to various aspects of cultural and community life. A key component is the framing of the issue as social and community exclusion, rather than individual and personal culpability. While some policy scholars use the term interchangeably with income poverty - or income poverty and unemployment — it is increasingly distinguished from financial poverty and focused rather on constricted access to civil, political, and social rights and opportunities. Social exclusion is particularly devastating for children because if encountered when very young, they are deprived of the experiences they need to start right — access to health care and to preschool education (Bradbury and Jantii. 1999).

Developed first in France in the mid-1970s (Lenoir, 1974), the concept of social exclusion has been used increasingly in the international social policy literature, in studies carried out by the Unicef Innocenti Research Centre in Italy, in reports of the European Union ( Commission of the European Communities, 1994; Eurostat 2000 and 2001), and recently in work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), both through the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) and at a high level ministerial conference held in London on October 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000. It is a concept that goes beyond the limitations of income poverty as a measure of economic well-being to include several additional social, political, and cultural dimensions and could re-frame the discussion of child and family well-being from an emphasis primarily on the individual or personal responsibility of parents to that of societal — or social and community — responsibility.

Poverty and social exclusion do not arise from any single cause. Persistently low incomes, lack of job opportunities, lack of access to education, to health care, and to other public services combine to trap particular groups in a situation of severe disadvantage. Although income and financial assets are still considered key elements in achieving positive outcomes for children, social exclusion is not primarily concerned with them (nor even with disability) but rather with the broader range of capabilities people enjoy or fail to enjoy. In this sense, the concept is closely linked to the capability approach developed by the Nobel Laureate economist, Amartya Sen (1992), which calls for efforts to ensure that people have equal access to basic capacities including integration into the community, participation in community and public life, self respect, human rights — in addition to the capacity to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, and to have the resources needed for a decent standard of living.

There are several compelling reasons for exploring an alternative concept for assessing child-well being. One, is the fast-growing dissatisfaction with the limitations of the conventional measure of income poverty used in this country. A second is that the “poverty” frame has apparent limits in rallying public will to mount the policies needed to lift families and their children out of poverty.

Earlier efforts in the U.S. to go beyond the limitations of a financial measure employed the concept of the “underclass” (Jencks and Peterson, 1991; Jencks, 1992; Katz, 1993). This concept stressed individual involvement in a series of pathologies and, in the view of some scholars, carried Social Darwinist innuendo. In contrast, although “social exclusion” includes attention to some of the same problems, it also reflects concern with racism and discrimination as among the causes — and a concern that socially excluded children will pose a threat to the future well-being of society as they grow up with little stake in the existing order.

### **SOCIAL EXCLUSION: CONCEPT AND RATIONALE**

Phipps and Curtis (2001, p. 1) point out that “almost everyone who writes a paper about social exclusion begins from the idea that it is hard to explain what social exclusion is!” But the key point, as noted by Atkinson and referred to by Phipps and Curtis, is that social exclusion is something which happens to you rather than something you choose for yourself.

It seemed clear throughout the meeting that the European concept of “social exclusion” does not offer Americans a well-defined concept for acceptance or rejection. Chiara Saraceno, the first author, as both a rigorous sociologist and as a high level participant in governmental policy-making, notes that social exclusion has become in European international organizations, especially the European Union (EU), a paradigm for focusing on dysfunction as an improvement over “underclass” or “marginalized”. Clearly, as noted already, European scholars and policy makers have adopted it as an effort to go beyond poverty or perhaps, to incorporate poverty approaches such as that of Peter Townsend (1979), who sees in poverty not only the lack of resources but

also an inability because of such lack to participate in one's own society. We might prefer Adam Smith's (1776) poverty definition: Poverty is to be without "whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for a credible person, even of the lowest order, to be without."

But an important duality persists. Does one not need to differentiate between "poverty and material deprivation... reviewed in the light of social rights thinking" and "social disintegration, marginality, unbelonging, up-rootedness." The social exclusion analysis seems interested in both, but both are not always addressed or indeed present. The discussion seeks to go beyond income poverty, recognizing causation at the "macro" level, for example, as a consequence of unemployment or migration as well as at the "micro" level (e.g. personal experiences involving lack of opportunity).

Thus Saraceno reports a concept that is popular despite lack of agreement as to what social exclusion is or how it is caused. She also notes Amartya Sen's challenge to an over-emphasis on either poverty or social exclusion since "neither the offering of resources nor the granting of rights is sufficient to avoid social exclusion if the specific capabilities and functioning of the individuals are not addressed".

Saraceno sums up her understanding of the patterns of discourse in an essay on three traditions- the French "solidarity", the Anglo-American liberal interest in exclusion mechanisms and the involvement of actors in their rights; and the economic analysis of inequality and economic exploitation. Each tradition generates its own correctives. The EU discussion is in part not definitive because it fluctuates among them.

She concludes that "Community membership without individual rights may be as . . . . exclusionary as access to social rights without access to community membership". Social exclusion to her is more developed as discourse than as concept. She illustrates with regard to unemployment (how much context shapes differential consequences) and to time (poverty as a dynamic phenomenon; there are "temporarily", "repeatedly" and "long-term" or "persistently" poor-people with diverse consequences for exclusion).

Saraceno ends by noting that efforts to cope with the theoretical and methodological issues in using the social exclusion concept (or metaphor) are replete with risks. Perhaps, she suggest, social exclusion is more a social policy concept than a theoretical and research one. "It is a way in which a society assesses its performance and its risks with regard to social cohesion and individuals' well being".

In her paper, Janet Gornick notes that for many Europeans the essence of social exclusion is related to access to economic and social rights, whereas U.S. culture and politics tend to reject the notion of positive rights — implying a right to have needs met by the state. (Look at all of our rejections of international covenants). We in the U.S. do, however, recognize the other dimension — belongingness or institutional disconnects-but (look at the poverty data) seem to set the bar very low.

Gornick introduces yet another issue: the link between women's exclusion (as children's caretakers in child care, as teachers, or as single mothers) and the exclusion of children. She would pick up from Saraceno's paper the suggestion that we consider the effects on children of the "deeply gendered nature of child caregiving".

Nonetheless, from the initial discussion and despite the lack of agreement regarding the definition, it seemed clear that people are seeking a way to go beyond poverty. A measure of income poverty, by itself, even if a better measure than that currently used in the U.S., would not be adequate. Nor were many satisfied with a construct that focused on bringing income up to the poverty threshold rather than to some concept of a decent standard of living or well-being.

The initial consensus was that social exclusion would not be a satisfactory organizing concept if used merely as a variant on poverty and material deprivation. It could be a useful supplement to the existing measure but not a substitute. There was dissatisfaction, as well, with viewing social exclusion as a counterpart to the concept of "the underclass". There was agreement that it was closely linked to the construct of "social rights" and that Americans were not yet comfortable with this concept (but it recurred at several points and in the final session). Left for subsequent discussion was the concept of linking social exclusion and children with women's status and the value placed on caregiving. And there was disagreement regarding possible measures — whether one could develop measures of social exclusion as such or only in relation to particular domains (health, education, employment, housing, social protection) — or whether measures of "child well being", as a positive construct, might not be preferable.

John Micklewright, from his perspective as a leading U.K. policy scholar, who has done research and taught in a number of countries and currently heads Unicef's center for research on children in the industrial world, offers a view of the concern with social exclusion in international bodies (especially the E.U.) and U.K. and of the effort to introduce social indicators into the discussion. He also stresses concern with children and social exclusion.

He does not dispute Saraceno's account. He quotes a U.K. definition from a government unit (the Social Exclusion Unit): Social Exclusion is "a short-hand term for what can happen (emphasis added) when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environment bad health and family breakdown". "Can" happen does not always means "does" and the fate that "can happen" is not actually described, so what we are left with is a description of examples of circumstances that may lead to exclusion rather than a definition of exclusion itself. Yet the fate described clearly in some sense means "shut out from society".

So Micklewright, too, argues that exclusion is a concept defying clear definition and measurement, making it a difficult policy target. His paper documents this well,

deferring to the EU's task force reports and data. The data are in many ways useful and used (note the Blair administration's explicit goal of eliminating child poverty in 20 years) but is the "exclusion" concept Micklewright asks, essential to these uses? Indeed some still argue for a poverty focus, others respond that this concept creates sensitivity to a broader agenda.

If we wish to highlight children, Micklewright would emphasize the Atkinson core elements in discussion of social exclusion: (a) relativity — the proper contrast population (we need data on consumption and living standards and the proper contrast place (e.g. locality, nation, region?); (b) agency – who is doing the excluding? (where children are concerned, the key actors are parents and the society) and (c) dynamics – a concern with future prospects and the impact of the experience on children's development. The complexity of these issues and their importance are richly illustrated out of the author's Unicef experience.

He emphasizes the question of who excludes children and how: parents, schools, employment and governments. He notes that parents have enormous influence on their children's well-being, and perhaps their own lack of skills and resources contributes to exclusion of their children. Schools can exclude through expulsion or by failing to achieve adequate standards. Employers may exclude by barring youth from labor markets. Governments, both local and national, can exclude by providing inadequate public services (health, education, housing, etc) and interventions.

He suggests that many questions are raised in the U.S. as to the usefulness of the concept. In a final section, however, Micklewright argues that perhaps the introduction of social exclusion into the U.S. debate could usefully stress "disadvantage" and attract policy makers who will not tackle "poverty". Our poverty measurements are shamefully inadequate but U.S. panel studies and work on well-being indicators are much envied by scholars in other countries. Moreover, there are good signs of potential progress on state level indicators and of using the "welfare to work" research platform.

Micklewright offers several conclusions, but his first builds on Saraceno—"Don't look to exclusion as a substitute for poverty". If it has value added, it is as a complement or supplement and that is how it is used most of the time in Europe. Be prepared for the fact that the concept may mean all things to all people. Explore what a particular focus on child social exclusion means in the U.S. (emphasis in the original). Do Americans want a more inclusive society where children are concerned? Do parents who are "included" (employed?) rear children who demonstrate more positive outcomes? And, finally, reflect on the past – would the concept have helped in the War on Poverty, or in the welfare reform debate?

The caveats remain, however: Are Americans willing to relinquish their adherence to an absolute measure of income poverty? Would they be willing to abandon this for a far more relative measure such as social exclusion when they have not been willing to accept the relative measure of income poverty that is used in almost all the other

advanced industrialized countries? If Americans are not prepared to confront the continuing problem of child poverty will they be interested in a concept that goes beyond income poverty? A concept that goes beyond negative behavioral indicators? Does the U.S. have the political will to confront the notions of inequality and injustice inherent in the definitions of social exclusion?

Peter Evans brings the special perspective of his various OECD studies of children at risk, children with disabilities, and disadvantaged children to social exclusion. He stresses the importance of cross-national comparability. He adopts Sen's "capabilities" approach, social exclusion as lacking the capabilities to participate in and be recognized by society for children. The participation must be on the basis of equality and equal opportunity.

His U.K. and U.S. case illustrations of constructive projects and his chart of childhood risk factors are of special interest. The precursors of adult social exclusion are found in childhood. The OECD is trying to gather international comparisons of children at risk and the policy/program responses to these risks. Three categories of children at risk are identified:

- those who are disabled;
- those with learning difficulties for no apparent reason;
- those with learning difficulties because of disadvantage.

Evans cites the "rights" in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and questions recognizing the special rights of physically and mentally disabled children while not acknowledging similar rights for those disadvantaged by birth, background, or circumstance. Why should all children not enjoy the same rights? This is not a utilitarian interest in maximizing wealth or consumption by creating human capital, but rather a concern with a rights-based approach that would maximize the potential of each child whether or not it promotes economic growth, development, or global competition.

Evans observed that it seems to be accepted that children will be disadvantaged as a result of disability. On the other hand, it does not seem to be accepted that children will be disadvantaged as a result of being born into a poor family. The argument continued in the Conference sessions: We cannot reach consensus on a definition of social exclusion within our own very diverse country, let alone with other countries. We agree that it is multi-dimensional. We can talk about social exclusion in terms of employment, health care, housing, education, voting, and poverty. There are a broad range of topical dimensions, and within each dimension we have a choice about equality of opportunity vs. equality of outcomes. If social exclusion is multi-dimensional, however, are the dimensions connected with an "and" or an "or"? This makes a big difference. If the connection is with an "or", and you are excluded because you have no job or you have low income or you never finished high school, you are

always going to be socially excluded from something. If the connect is with an “and” – if you have both this and that – multiple barrier or risk factors, then one ends up with such a small group it may not be very useful for social policy discussion. Several argued that in the real world the “ands” are inevitable and the “ors” cluster and overlap, like the old discussions regarding multi-problem families. Families may come to attention because of one factor but others emerge over time.

Another special population it was said, is welfare recipients. To what extent was U.S. welfare reform designed for social inclusion or reduction of exclusion? It was not necessarily directed to move children out of income poverty, but rather at some of the social correlates of poverty and welfare dependency. There was the sense that even if income didn’t improve, children would be better off if their mothers were in the paid labor force. Does this mean we are ready to pay attention to social exclusion? Perhaps more important, how does mother’s employment relate to child social inclusion? Welfare reform studies of impacts on children show that school-aged children whose mothers are working are more likely to be involved in social activities. But what about preschool-aged children? (And there is some evidence that older children who may not be supervised may be getting into delinquent activity.) Seventy years ago women were excluded if they had to work and couldn’t take care of their children. Today, we are telling poor mothers that inclusion means having a job and not staying home. When thinking about disabled, vulnerable, children – children with special needs — what would help them to be included? By defining inclusion as parents working what does that say about people who just can’t? What does it say about inclusion for their children, if parents work and if they don’t work? Why is caring work not viewed as productive work or as facilitating social inclusion? Is paid work the only thing that gives identity, legitimacy, and social inclusion? (Why is it that non-participation in the labor force does not define social exclusion for millionaires or retired people in the U.S.– but it does for single moms?)

### **THREE COUNTRY CASES: SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND CHILDREN IN BRITAIN, CANADA, AND FRANCE**

In Britain, according to John Hill and turning to a report from the government’s Social Exclusion Unit, “social exclusion is a short-hand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a concentration of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, high crime, bad health, and family breakdown.” It is more than income poverty and joblessness and includes, in particular, being cut off from the social and economic life of their community.

The U.K. has focused on the high rate of child poverty and on the large increase in child poverty from the early 1970s to the late 1990s. Unemployment rates (as of the meeting date) are high, and currently 15 percent of children live in workless households. An advantage of the concept of social exclusion is its consistency with the multi-dimensional nature of child well-being.

In many ways social exclusion has been a code word for poverty, thus allowing policy-makers to do something about poverty without having to use the “poverty” word. It moved the agenda to a multi-dimensional approach. The U.K. has embraced the concept and by doing so seems to have moved to a much more comprehensive policy menu.

Most important, the U.K. has made a huge commitment to eliminating child poverty, with the Blair administration announcing that child poverty (income below 60 percent of the median) would be reduced by 25 percent within 5 years and completely eliminated within 20 years. The new initiatives are multi-dimensional, comprehensive, and include a variety of strategies. These include: the Working Families Tax Credit, an increase in Income Support (social assistance) benefits for families with children under age 11, an increase in the maternity allowance – a cash benefit for new mothers, an increase in the universal child benefit, an increase in the child tax credit, the offering of baby bonds, a national child-care strategy, a national minimum wage, and early intervention program called Sure Start, a program for early school leavers called Connexions, the implementation of Education Action Zones, and the development of the Social Exclusion Unit within the government which focuses on youth problems such as teen pregnancy and homelessness. The U.K. is following a work-based policy which is in harmony with the public consensus and the political will. While “social exclusion” is not a substitute for “poverty”, the social exclusion framework may help researchers and policy-makers to examine linkages, child-to-adult trajectories, and long-run effects.

According to Christa Freiler, social exclusion and inclusion are not yet widely used in Canadian social policy discussions, except in discrete ways. For example, social inclusion is a goal within the disability movement, particularly with respect to children. Child and family poverty has become a priority for government. Nevertheless, one in five children is living in poverty, an increase of 43 percent since 1989 when the government promised to end child poverty by the year 2000. There is a growing concern with child development and early childhood learning and a renewed interest in such universal programs as child allowances

Currently, the concept is being advanced by a Canadian foundation, the Laidlaw Foundation, which is stressing the concept of social “inclusion” as suggesting a future vision for achievement, and such elements as equal opportunities, belonging, power and participation, reducing social and economic inequalities. Key questions have to do with: exclusion from what and why and inclusion into what and how. Inclusion into what is being answered by the recommendation of a universal approach to bring people into the larger community and society.

Jeanne Fagnani began by speaking about the roles of government and family in France and how French social institutions complement family roles. The focus of her remarks were on the low-income family in France and social exclusion. Her argument is that in France, being in a poor family does not necessarily lead to children being socially

excluded. Families take many forms and poor families are the beneficiaries of generous social policies. France has once of the best records in the European Union with regard to child poverty, following right after the Scandinavian countries and Belgium. Infant mortality rates are among the lowest in the world thanks to the child health program begun right after WW II. The proportion of children living in income poverty in France has remained stable over the last two decades.

There is strong public support for child and family policy in France, with particular emphasis on in-kind benefits over cash benefits. The French early childhood education and care policies are particularly generous and particularly important in preventing social exclusion of children. Numerous studies have shown that it is very beneficial for all children, particularly those from poor and/or immigrant families, to attend preschool – which includes all children aged 3-5 and almost half the 2-year olds – regardless of parents' income and/or employment situation. The National Ministry of Education encourages participation of children in early childhood education programs because it reinforces learning, provides for social, emotional, and physical development, compensates for deficits at home, and enhances cognitive development. The integrated settings of both the crèche (nursery) and the école maternelle (preschool) are publicly funded and widely supported and viewed positively by the society. This integration at young ages supports social inclusion.

In France, children are a public good. The government is seen as having a duty to protect and provide for all children. There is a sense of reciprocity in France. Families receive benefits (family allowances, housing subsidies, health care, etc). In exchange, parents must comply with the full responsibility of raising children.

## **EFFORTS AT MEASUREMENT**

Two of the U.S. author-teams rose to the challenge of going beyond poverty with concepts of social exclusion that are measurable. Robert Haveman of the University of Wisconsin joined with Andrew Bershadker of the U.S. Department of the Treasury begin their paper by explaining their dissatisfaction with the concept of social exclusion. They point out that if it means a process that prevents people from full participation in the society, it begs a number of questions: What is “society”? Is it the person's immediate community or some form of the majority —or something else entirely? What is “exclusion”? If a person has many work-related contacts but lacks personal ones (lives alone shops alone, plays alone, bowls alone) is that person “socially excluded”? Is the relevant measure the quantity of contacts, the quality of contacts, or some combination? What dimensions of inclusion (labor market, consumption, recreation) determine whether a person is included or excluded? If a person is receiving public assistance – welfare – is she – and her children — included or excluded? How do we account for the subjective aspects of social exclusion – given differences in individuals' perceptions of their status? What measures are available to assess social exclusion and are there available data?

Going beyond the limitations of the concept of social exclusion, they present a sophisticated critique of resource-based concepts of poverty and offer the alternative (clearly influenced by Sen) of “a concept of poverty that rests on individual capabilities of the adults in the family” – “self-reliant poverty”. Their measure identifies those families lacking the ability to generate a minimum need level of income from their efforts: Individuals and children living in such families are called “Self-reliant Poor”. In addition to formalizing the concept and highlighting its assumptions, they then, in a *tour de force*, apply this new measure to the population of children under 6 years of age and examine trends in self-reliant poverty for those children and for various demographic sub-groups for the period 1975-1997. They also compare the trends and population of the young-self-reliant poor population to the population of children who are officially (income) poor.

They find that the prevalence of self-reliant poverty has grown more rapidly than official poverty and there are some unexpected “intertemporal patterns of self-reliant poverty” for various population groups. The paper concludes with a comparison of self-reliant and official poverty as indicators of social exclusion. For family structure, race, and connection to the public support system (E.U. dimensions), the self-reliant poverty measure is a superior indicator of social exclusion. Both measures are equally effective on educational dimensions.

According to the authors, while the measurement of income poverty is a difficult and daunting task, the measurement of social exclusion poverty confronts even more serious and severe difficulties. A concept of “self-reliant poverty” reflects social exclusion better than a measure of income poverty. While both the official and self-reliant children's poverty rates have increased over the period from 1975 to 1997, self-reliant child poverty has grown even more rapidly and more steadily. The highest self-reliant child poverty rates are concentrated among the population groups that are generally recognized as among the nation's most vulnerable: Blacks, Hispanics, single-mother families with children, and those with low levels of education. Over most of these years the concentration of children in these groups who are poor by the self-reliant criterion exceeds their concentration in official poverty. If these characteristics are also measures of “social exclusion”, the population of children in self-reliant poverty seem to be more outside the society's mainstream than is the population of children in income poverty.

Also testing for the possible adoption of a social exclusion framework in the U.S., Aber, Gershoff, and Brooks-Gunn, explore alternative definitions of social exclusion of children drawn from the European literature. They note that the big gap in the research agenda laid out thus far has to do with the need to link the concept of social exclusion to existing measures of child well-being or to new measures yet to be developed. They point out that the concept is really only relevant to countries with robust economies — to countries that have already confronted and addressed the problem of income poverty and successfully eliminated child poverty or achieved low rates. This is not yet the case in the U.S., but the potential is there.

Social exclusion is an important concept because it does go beyond income poverty and can provide new information and insights regarding causes and solutions to a wider range of problems and dimensions of disadvantage. How we label a problem – how we frame it — does have significant implications. Calling a problem “social exclusion” may make a difference. They admit that for most people social exclusion of children is largely associated with social exclusion of their parents. Obviously, we cannot fully separate the social exclusion of children from that of their parents, especially with regard to very young children. However, we know that where youth (adolescents) are concerned, their own characteristics and abilities help shape their experience of inclusion/exclusion and the experience of social exclusion can have significant impact on young children’s development. In addition, there are risk factors linked to social exclusion, not social exclusion itself and still separate from measures of child well-being, such as minority racial and ethnic status. The authors emphasize the need to capture the multi-dimensional aspects of social exclusion and the values that are implicit in such a construct in order to provide new insights into causes and solutions and new strategies for the development of effective policy interventions.

Aber, et al. identify eight relevant domains (basic living; family economic participation; housing; health; education; public space; social participation; and the subjective experience of social exclusion). They suggest possible measures of each (rather than a generic category of social exclusion), identify the major available U.S. data sources (Kids Count, America’s Children; Trends in the Well-Being of Children and Youth), European data sources (Eurostat and the European Community Household Panel (ECHP)), and dimensions for which they found no identifiable data sources. They note the need for different types of indicators: necessary indicators; normative indicators; and desirable indicators. They introduce a research agenda involving the potential uses of available indicators and further indicator development. They conclude by pointing out that we must direct attention to both exclusion “from what” as well as exclusion “by what”. (And who is excluded, by whom). We must determine what are the forces, processes, institutions, and groups that are causing or leading children to be socially excluded

In commenting on this paper, Maria Cancian noted the importance of identifying how social exclusion differs from poverty, what the advantages and disadvantages are of employing either concept, and what measures could be used to assess the extent to which the objectives are achieved. The official poverty measure has as its advantages:

- some agreement on definition (This is key.)
- relative ease and agreement with regard to measurement
- identification of a problem that can be directly addressed by policy (e.g. reducing poverty by means of cash transfers)

Its disadvantages include:

- some problems with regard to how it is measured

- substantial variation in the consequences of poverty for different individuals and groups
- the existence of deprivation among the non-poor, not just the poor
- a “blaming the victim” focus.

The advantages of social exclusion include the development of a strategy growing out of a reframing of the problem, a potentially more sympathetic response, and possibly improved analysis of causes and solutions. Social exclusion creates a context for a more comprehensive and multi-disciplinary perspective that may lead to improved policies.

The discussion which ensued raised a variety of questions: How would one understand exclusion? The study of social indicators is a revived, major, cross-national enterprise — seen as basic, preliminary — and perhaps deferring the demand for conceptual consensus. The list of indicators said to be available for cross-national comparison tells us where the discussion is and is not:

- Income Distribution
- (Income) Poverty (pre- and post-transfer)
- Jobless Household
- Regional Cohesion
- Early School leavers (school drop-outs) not employed or in training
- Long-term Unemployment

The indicators work is now also including: health care; housing; access to caring services; training, education, and conditions of work (Duffy, 1998). Eurostat (2001) now reports non-monetary indicators such as the percentage of households that cannot afford:

- to eat meat/chicken/fish every second day
- to keep home adequately warm
- to buy new rather than second-hand clothes
- (for those aged 16 and over) participation in social, cultural and political activities
- talking to neighbors.

A British report (2001) on Preventing Social Exclusion identified a series of negative indicators (terms used to reflect usage in the U.S.) in addition to low income:

- workless households
- teen out-of-wedlock pregnancy
- drug use among youth
- high rates of adult illiteracy
- school drop outs
- homelessness.

We note that these seem very close to the earlier U.S listing of the characteristics of the “underclass”. However, John Hill uses a broader definition: not only a short-hand label for a concentration of linked problems but a term to describe being cut-off from the social and economic life of their community.

In the U.S., racial discrimination, and in the U.S. and elsewhere, immigrant status would be added as well.

Inevitably all the issues raised with regard to the concept of social exclusion become very obvious as one seeks measures at the nation, state, community, group, family and individual levels. At least one cited framework links absence of social rights to a lack or distribution of patterns of belonging.

Ultimately, the question seems to be whether indicators of child well-being are any different than indicators of social exclusion and to what extent the social exclusion concept does go beyond material deprivation. The European participants noted how far ahead the U.S. is in the development and use of childhood social indicators, raising this question even more concretely by asking: What does adding “social exclusion” do that goes beyond what can be found in America’s Children?

## CONCLUSION

One goal of the Conference was to explore the implications of the social exclusion concept for data and research. If there was consensus on the meaning of the concept, we could then move towards identifying relevant measures. As a result, the basic question addressed repeatedly during the Conference was: What is “social exclusion”? There was agreement that it is more than lack of income and thus signifies something more than income poverty. The agreement went further: It is a multi-dimensional concept and affects current adults and thus adults who are parents – and their children; and it can lead to negative outcomes and trajectories for children. Although it is possible to compensate the children of socially excluded parents, many children are affected negatively when their parents are socially excluded; and some are impacted directly themselves when they experience social exclusion. In short, as noted by Irwin Garfinkel, the concept of social exclusion seems to have two important aspects:

- (1) Material inequality. If you are very far from the norm in material resources your ability to participate in society is compromised. The concept of income poverty clearly addresses this problem and social exclusion adds nothing to it.
- (2) Participation: employment, voting, volunteering, and more. This is where the concept of social exclusion seems to go beyond inadequate resources and poverty, but the problems of measurement become more complex. How does this relate to children and what is necessary so that children will not be left behind?

With some basic agreement regarding such a conceptualization, another question that received a great deal of attention was: How can the social exclusion of children be

measured? What are the values that should be included in measuring social exclusion? It was agreed that not only is social exclusion different than poverty — and that a measure of poverty would not be equal to a measure of social exclusion — but that social exclusion is not the same as child well-being either and should not be. Instead, social exclusion should be viewed as supplementary to income poverty and complementary to lack of child well-being. Some participants remained convinced that even if we agreed on the definition we are not ready to measure it primarily because there is no consensus on whether social exclusion is or could be an overall, integrated construct or a series of discrete domain measures.

Another question that received a good deal of attention in the discussion, was: Is there more value in having a multi-dimensional construct, like the UN Human Development Index or the UN Human Poverty Index, or a series of one dimensional measures that can track the situation/condition of children separately, as, for example, in the eight (six?) domains suggested in the Aber et al. paper (e.g., basic living, family economic participation, health, education, housing, public space, social participation, subjective experience of exclusion)? Some would argue that indicators in these multiple domains would lead to a clearer focus on the most effective policy interventions while others were convinced that these are already too many domains, and the multiple indicators in each domain are even more of a problem.

Just as Saraceno argued that social exclusion is a concept but not a scientific construct, others argued that it is also a political and philosophical tool, permitting closer examination of values, but not readily turned into a quantifiable measure or measures. And, it is not a substitute for other values such as equality of opportunity, safety or reducing poverty. Certain issues that were raised earlier in the discussion emerged again in the final summation. For example, the “and/or question”, that is, to be identified as socially excluded must you suffer from all the negative indicators or just one? Frequency, intensity, duration, cut-off points, optimal levels, all must be addressed. For at least a few of those present, the fact that this was a concept that originated in Europe was enough to label it as probably politically unacceptable in the U.S.

Periodically, people brought the discussion back to children. Thus, still another repeated question was: How does all this relate to children? It is not clear. If parents re socially excluded are outcomes for children always negative? There is some evidence that former welfare recipient-mothers working in paid employment (achieving social inclusion) and obtaining higher income, leads to positive outcomes for school-aged children, but negative outcomes have emerged for adolescents and the consequences are unknown for infants and toddlers (Morris, Duncan, Chase-Lansdale, 2001). Moreover, although most of our discussion was on how parents’ exclusion has negative effects on their children, we know that early childhood education and care (ECEC) has direct positive affects on children. Swedish, Danish, and French ECEC programs are excellent examples of social inclusion but it is not clear how the concept of inclusion would advance that agenda.

In some respects, the concept is certainly not new. There is a long history in the U.S. dealing with the equivalent of social exclusion. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, acculturation was a major function of the settlement houses. In addition, there were immigrant clubs and ward heelers who assisted with acculturation. In the 1960s and the War on Poverty there was concern about people being left behind and the response involved the active participation of the poor, community action, empowerment, civil rights, welfare rights, and voting rights. In the 1980s and 1990s there was the Americans With Disabilities Act and issues of mainstreaming children vs. responding to their special needs. In the 1990s, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act excluded legal immigrants from the most important forms of social protection for poor children. Race, by itself, remains a major factor in social exclusion in the U.S. since the country was first established and incarceration by definition clearly is equated with exclusion. One could argue that in Europe, in some sense, there has always been social exclusion of some groups. There were no immigrants permitted in many countries until very recently and immigrants still cannot earn citizenship rights in some countries.

The final question raised was: Given all of these considerations, would this concept in fact be useful in policy terms?

Is it, as John Hill suggested is the case in Britain, a code word, letting politicians deal with poverty without using the word? Is it another term for what previously was described as “the underclass”? In discussing Britain, Hill thought it might be a way of diverting attention from expensive cash benefits to cheaper services. (But if we look at the Swedish and Danish situations, where no one would question policy generosity, they spend more on services than on their generous cash benefits!) However, Hill did note that embracing both an anti-poverty stance and a social exclusion stance has led the British government to a more generous position in relation to children. Ultimately, our concern is with what are the conditions under which children flourish – and what does it take to achieve these. How far does social exclusion go beyond material deprivation and what would it take to obtain strong popular and political support for progress in that direction? What does social exclusion add to the discussion of child well-being or could either term be used with the same results? Where do we want to go as a society with regard to children—not how do we measure where we are.

Each of the final panelists (Nancy Folbre, Tom Corbett, Kristin Moore, Irwin Garfinkle) enriched the discussion in a number of ways, but no one thought the group ready for consensus or closure.

Nancy Folbre stressed the need to redefine work as it relates to exclusion (what about elder care, child care, volunteering?). She urged looking at the exclusion process, noting that to focus only on measuring outcomes is to miss what is here distinctive. Americans, too, should stress rights, perhaps using obligations as the concept.

Tom Corbett reminded participants, as he had throughout the meeting, that there is a long U.S. social policy history of dealing with exclusion (by other names): Efforts in

recent decades to empower neighborhood service, self-help, and advocacy groups; the immigrant clubs of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the poverty war’s community action; current delivery systems under welfare reform.

Kristin Moore talked about the need for conceptual clarity as a precursor to accurate measurement. She reminded participants that social inclusion is not the same thing as child well-being and she questioned the value of one multidimensional construct, in contrast to examining the domains separately in policy work: health, income, poverty, participation, etc.

Irwin Garfinkel, like Tom Corbett, referred to a longstanding U.S. history of some social exclusion, based on race or immigration status (Chinese exclusion). On the other hand, the U.S. can be proud of long periods of open immigration and its international leadership in offering public elementary education as a device to unify the society.

There was no formulation of a consensus but what did emerge was some agreement that we in the U.S. do need to think more broadly than about an absolute poverty line. How can we best think about a richer concept? “Social exclusion” has apparently galvanized the EU and several European governments. Could it be of use here as we consider the closing out or lack of opportunity or the obstacles encountered by children with handicaps, minority children of color, ethnic minorities, immigrants, children in specified demographic groups (single parent families?), the residentially segregated in impoverished neighborhoods). If not social exclusion, then what?

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