

# Social divisions: social exclusion and social inclusion

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



This essay will discuss social divisions; social exclusion and social inclusion, of which there are many definitions and interpretations. Social divisions and Social exclusion has been around for many years. Social exclusion was first noticed in France in 1970s in relation to people who fell outside the range of the social insurance system, such as disabled people, lone parents and the young unemployed (Townsend and Kennedy, 2004). Before 1997 Social exclusion was referred to as 'poverty', which means where people lack many of the opportunities that are available to the average person (Palmer; 2010). However for the purpose of this assignment, it will focus on homelessness as a social division, the relationship between exclusion and inclusion, and how this relates to social work practice. Everybody in society is part of a social division. Thompson (2010) states that social divisions are complex and people are not only part of one group they are often part of other groups, for a example a asylum seekers can be linked with social divisions such as poverty, unemployment and homelessness. Asylum seekers can also be marginalised by language barriers. Supporting Thompson (2010) is Armstrong (2006) who stated in 1997, 4. 8 million adults suffered from five or more disadvantages of exclusion. Social divisions are: class, race, disability, identify, gender and geographical environment, they are often problematic to individuals, groups and communities. Each Government which has come into power has tried to eradicate poverty, poor health, poor communities, discrimination and prejudice towards certain individuals and groups (Alcock, 2008). Social exclusion, which excludes people from society, can be categorised into people who are, ex offenders, homeless, elderly, youths, children, single parents, people with a disability, and/ or mental

health issues, asylum seekers, communities and neighbourhoods. One interpretation of social exclusion comes from the European Commission's recent Joint Report, which states 'social exclusion is a process where individuals are made to feel pushed out and prevented from participating in society, due to poverty or lack of education. This may result in discrimination, resulting in exclusion from jobs, an income, limited education, lack of social and community opportunities and possibly feeling powerless' (Europa, 2003). A structural view from Field (1989) and Dahrendorf (1987) who believe it is the structures in society that exclude people. Another, interpretation from the Social Exclusion Unit London (SEU) states 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' (SEU 1997). Pierson (2010) suggests that poverty, low income, lack of access to the job market, low or non-existent social support, the effect of the area and the exclusion from services are all ways to socially exclude people from society. Thompson (2010) believes that social location affects people's life chances, due to where people are born and where they live, arguing that people have no choice/control over what position they are within society and depending on their location within the structure there are advantages and disadvantages. Payne (2006) believes that individual's behaviour is structured through dominant cultural beliefs and stereotypes and social divisions can be operated through powerful institutions. Social inclusion is seen as the opposite of social exclusion, where the person feels as though they have a sense of inclusion in society, by being

able to participate rather than be excluded. Participation in society allows the individual to be able to access finance, welfare benefits, employment, health services, secure housing, resources and social networks. Therefore, participation is about achieving citizenship, enabling people to make choices and have opportunities within society (Bates, 2002). Askonas and Stewart, (2000) argue that as a society, individuals should wholly partake and be able to participate fully and that no individual should be excluded, whether this is due to lack of political or civil rights, employment or lack of income or education or through illness. However, it is important to consider that inclusion in society does not necessarily result in happiness for every individual and that it cures all social problems (O'Brien et al, 2010). Some individuals decide to exclude themselves as they do not want to feel included in society, therefore presenting the importance of individual choice in this matter (Barry, 2002). Inclusion is part of the Governments and social services remit, in practice Social workers need to follow the General Social Care Council Code of Conduct, the Social Task Force, National Occupational Standards, and work within laws such as the Equality Act 2010. Social workers should also be aware of reports which act as guidance, i. e. Opportunity for All (1999) which sets out tactics for tackling poverty and social exclusion; No one written off: Reforming welfare to reward responsibility; Working Together UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (Purnell, J & Milliband E, 2008); Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2010 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010) all give ways in which Government is openly trying to combat social exclusion and promote social inclusion through the work of Social Workers. Poverty is often linked to

exclusion, as far back as 1946 William Beveridge completed a report with the aims to achieve and improve basic living conditions, help reduce poverty, inequality and bring societies together as one. Beveridge looked at the five grants of illness, ignorance, disease, squalor, and want and recognised that poverty and social exclusion were a concern, so suggested a system of social security which would be organised by the state. Beveridge's idea on eradicating poverty was to introduce a free health service which is now the National Health Service. Families struggling to live within standards set by the Government were then entitled to a family allowance (Alcock, 2008). Which shows the need for help of the state. In 2007 MP Ian Smith stated 'poverty is a major concern for Government as people are living longer and the working-age welfare budget has had to be increased by 45 per cent over the last decade. Poverty for working-age adults has increased also and social mobility has reduced. The Government has spent vast sums of money, but the poor have become relatively poorer' (Smith, 2007). Taylor (1999) argues that people may also experience social exclusion as a result of being born into poverty due to a cycle of deprivation, where a child follows that cycle and often do not have the resources to break the cycle. For social workers to be able engage and help people who are socially excluded such as homeless people, they have to have an understanding that homelessness is a 'multiple exclusion'. Homelessness is just one dimension of social exclusion; it may also include poverty, unemployment, mental health problems and drug/alcohol misuse. This could be due to an array of reasons, such as being poorly skilled, leading to exclusion from the world of employment, or having a low paid job, which may mean a low quality of life. A way in which

Government excludes homeless people is the way they measure poverty. Generally, the measurement of poverty is by household income, anything that is 60% or less of the average household income a year is seen as living in poverty (Alcock, 2008). However, homeless people are entitled to Employment and Support Allowance which shows Government are including them in society. In November 2010 a new benefit is being suggested to replace this called Universal Credit (Department of Working Pension, 2010) which means homeless people can collect their benefits from a local department of Working Pensions, (Homeless Link 2010) despite the fact they do not have a fixed postal address. Local charities like the YMCA allow homeless people to use their address, demonstrating inclusion, partnership working and community spirit. Homeless people may have difficulties accessing services that others take for granted (Ritchie, 2007), like access to community groups, activities, education or health services. Social workers may signpost the homeless person to these agencies for help and advice and possibly act as an advocate. For social workers to achieve what is best for homeless people they need to build a sound relationship and work in a holistic way, by listening and communicating effectively, this means giving good eye contact and demonstrating positive body language, showing the person respect, having empathy and actively challenge discrimination. Following the General Social Care Council Code of Practice (GSCC, 2010) they need to promote the rights of service users, which this is important when working with homeless people as they may be unaware of rights they have. Social workers, have to work in partnership by allowing the homeless person involvement in decisions about their life, they need to work

collaboratively with other agencies by sharing information. Social workers must also work in an anti-oppressive way by using their power correctly and empowering the homeless person to overcome the barriers they face, such as finding a person somewhere safe to live and explaining procedures such as the benefit system to them (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006). Homeless people as already stated may have a number of disadvantages, one maybe a language barrier, English may not be their first language, therefore the social worker would find it useful to use an interpreter, which shows they value their cultural and want to help and support them. In conclusion the role of a social worker is increasingly significant when working with people who are socially excluded, due to multiple factors such as, poverty, homelessness, race, mental health and sexual orientation. The essay has shown how people are effected by how Government oversee the country and how they encourage social workers to follow laws and polices, they need to believe in social justice and have an understanding of social divisions, social exclusion and how it informs their practice and then how people's lives are impacted.