Social exclusion and gender

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Structure of the talk

- Understanding ‘social exclusion’
- Social exclusion and social justice - conceptualising the social (and cultural) dimensions
- Gender and social exclusion
  - workforce participation
  - violence
- Gendering social inclusion down under: some suggestions for the Australian agenda
Social exclusion and social justice

- ‘Social exclusion’
  - European and U.K. origins
  - Defined as:
    - ‘a short hand term for what can happen when people 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)
    - ‘Joined up solutions to joined up problems’
  - Multidimensional:
    - ‘as much about lack of power, lack of social integration, and inadequate social participation, as it is about lack of access to resources’ (Edwards, 2001)
Social exclusion and social justice

- Social exclusion as social injustice
  - ‘Economic injustice’
    - Rooted in political economic structures of society
    - Exploitation, economic marginalization, deprivation, poverty
  - ‘Cultural injustice’ [the social dimensions]
    - Rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication
    - Misrecognition - being excluded from full participation in society due to patterns of cultural value that constitute certain people as comparatively unworthy of respect and esteem
    - Disrespect - being maligned or disparaged in stereotype public cultural representation and/or everyday life interactions
  - Issues of social injustice are never ‘just economic’ or ‘just cultural/social’ - they are mutually constituted and inextricably connected
Gender and social exclusion

- Relatively little explicit analysis of social exclusion from a gendered perspective (exception of poverty research)

1. Gender can heighten the experience of well-recognised factors of ‘social exclusion’
   - Feminisation of poverty: particular groups of women are over-represented among those in poverty in Australia: sole female parents and single elderly women

2. Gender can prompt a stretching and changing of the existing parameters of ‘social exclusion’
   - To what extent must ‘social exclusion’ ‘include poverty?’
   - Eg political participation: ‘A person with high income but no opportunity of political participation is not poor in the usual sense, but does lack an important freedom’ (Sen, 1997)

   ‘But the Australian story of social exclusion does not start or end with postcodes. It can also result from being the person alienated by race or disability.’ (Gillard, 2007)
Workforce participation as the ‘foundation’ of social inclusion in Australia

‘Labor believes that work, along with family and community, gives meaning to life. Workforce participation is a foundation of social inclusion; it creates opportunities for financial independence and personal fulfillment.’ (Gillard, 2007)

Social exclusion discourse critiqued for drawing a dividing line between ‘the included’ and ‘the excluded’ - an us vs. them typology of society, reducing community difference to two homogenous groups (Levitas, 1998), which ultimately requires a great deal more of the powerless than the powerful (Benn, 2002). Eg in paid workforce vs not in paid workforce

Gender complexifies and indeed questions the relationship between workforce participation and social inclusion
Gender and social exclusion: workforce participation

- Women over-represented among the low-wage earners: ‘the working poor’
  - Women’s earnings are 66.8% of men’s - women take home more than $200 a week less than their male counterparts
  - ‘At all levels of the occupational hierarchy, women are predominantly located at the lower end of the wages spectrum’ (ACTU, 2004)

- Gendering of ‘pink collar’ and ‘white collar’ professions, workplace management, business leadership etc

- Women are concentrated in part-time and casual work
  - Part-time and casual work comprises almost half of all paid work undertaken by women – impacts on overall pay, entitlements etc

- Part-time/casual jobs and interruptions in paid work significantly compromises savings for retirement
  - E.g. of those women contemplating retirement by 2010 approx. 10% will have accumulated less than $27,300 by the time they retire – leaves many women vulnerable to poverty in old age, particularly in the event of the breakdown of relationships. (Commonwealth, 2004)
Gender and social exclusion: workforce participation

- Women make the major accommodations our society demands to combine paid work and family responsibilities.
  - Children have a significant impact on labour force participation and earnings capacity

- This has implications for women’s heightened vulnerability to poverty
  - When poverty is measured on a household basis many of low-paid women workers disappear – this is viewed as unproblematic because of overall household income. Yet this predicated on women’s economic dependence.
  - Doesn’t take into account a low income worker’s vulnerability to immediate poverty with household change (e.g. divorce) when dependent on other people’s incomes in the household to lift out of poverty
  - No coincidence that single mothers and single elderly women over-represented in those in poverty
  - This also has implications for autonomy, freedom, safety etc.
Gender and social exclusion: workforce participation

Emphasis on social inclusion as workforce participation doesn’t ‘recognise’ or ‘respect’ the un-paid care work that women mostly do

- This work is of great value to our society
  - ‘Women’s unpaid work…makes a huge, unrecognised contribution to economic life…at least half of all Australian economic production came from unpaid work within households’ (Manne, 2008)
  - ABS: value of unpaid work between 48 and 65% of GDP (in Manne, 2008)

- Yet there are penalties - financial, social and cultural - for ‘caring’
  - ‘…the earnings foregone; the opportunities lost; the poverty in old age in the event of divorce; even the loss of esteem in the eyes of the world – is harsher than ever…[These] sacrifices on behalf of others go unrewarded – making them vulnerable to exploitation and poverty in the event of divorce.’ (Manne, 2008)

- Positioning paid work as the source of ‘personal fulfilment’: disregards the drudgery of many paid jobs; doesn’t recognise the significance and fulfilment for many of other social participation; doesn’t recognise the impossibility for some of workforce participation.
Gender and social exclusion: workforce participation

Some implications for social inclusion policy:

1. If we look at social inclusion and work-place participation from a gendered perspective, efforts to simply increase work-place participation may not be the only answer – and they may even reinforce some of the problems.

2. Social inclusion policy also needs to recognise, respect and re-value care work:
   - ‘We must distribute responsibilities for care more equally and reward caring more generously…and show how we might do this – in practice as well as theory.’
   - Doesn’t mean the glorification of domestic drudgery, but a more nuanced recognition of the role of care work in society
   - ‘If you offered the average parent eighty hours free, top quality child-care a week, they wouldn’t take it…we want time with our families’ (Plibersek, quoted in Manne, 2008)

3. It prompts us to think again about what constitutes a socially inclusive Australia and what ‘personal fulfillment’ means for Australians - ie what we value
Gender and social exclusion: violence

- Domestic and family violence and sexual assault emerged as issues of public policy concern in the 1970s
- Have remained mostly the concern of the women’s sector
  - An historical separation between ‘social justice issues’ and ‘violence against women’ issues
- Yet, family violence and sexual assault have profound impacts on a person’s ability to be included within society, and they create social exclusion in several ways.
Gender and social exclusion: violence

- Violence as a gender issue:
  - Women and girls are over-represented among the victim/survivors of family violence and sexual assault
  - Perpetrators of sexual assault and family violence are mostly men
  - The effects of family violence and sexual assault are profound:
    - Individual level: can lead to long-term health issues, profound disruption to an individual’s work life, personal relationships, and community life.
    - ‘Domestic violence is the leading contributor of death, disability and illness in women in Victoria aged 15 to 44, contributing more to the burden of disease than other preventable risk factors including high blood pressure, smoking and obesity. Poor mental health accounts for almost two thirds (60%) of this burden of disease’ (VicHealth, 2004).
  - Violence has ‘ripple effects’ on children, families, the economy and society overall (Morrison et al, 2007)
Gender and social exclusion: violence

- Violence as a socio-economic as well as gender issue:
  - Overall, people with the lowest socio-economic status are at greatest risk of violence, including intimate partner violence (WHO 2002)
    - Socio-economic disadvantage has been implicated in higher rates of intimate partner violence, and people living in households with low incomes are more likely to be victim/survivors of sexual assault (US Department of Justice, 1996)
  - There are some important exceptions to this
    - eg: some contradictory results from crime surveys; vulnerability of particularly high income population groups to violence; strongest risk factor for intimate partner violence relation to male partner behaviour (Lievore)
  - However, even if some people who are more disadvantaged don’t experience violence at higher rates, they are still more likely to be more adversely affected by them
    - ‘Those who are already disempowered or disconnected from others are most at risk [or experience post-traumatic stress disorder]’ (Herman, 1992)
Gender and social exclusion: violence

- Homelessness and domestic and family violence:
  - Women escaping from family violence, along with children who live with or witness such violence, are the prevailing face of homelessness in Australia today (MacDonald, 2007)
  - ‘The largest single cause of homelessness…is domestic violence. More than one in five people seeking emergency accommodation are escaping domestic violence. Most victims bring children with them which means they share in the disruption and trauma of being displaced from their homes’ (Rudd, 2008)

- Homelessness and ongoing violence:
  - The focus on domestic violence and homelessness is too narrow… Women who have experienced ongoing violence and abuse throughout their lives are a significant presence in the population of homeless women (Griggs and Johnson, 2007)
Gender and social exclusion: violence

- **Homelessness, sexual assault and sexual abuse**

- **US:** Homeless women reported childhood physical or sexual abuse, rape of physical assault most frequently, even when compared with poor housed single women or single mothers – groups in which victimization rates are known to be high… Each type of victimization, taken separately, proved a good predictor of homelessness (Browne, 1993)

- **Aus:** 100% homeless women and over 90% of homeless men reported at least one event of trauma in their life. 50% of women and 10% of men had been raped (Buhrich et al, 2000)

- **Youth:** high percentage of homeless youth have been sexually abused prior to being homeless. Once they are homeless, they become vulnerable to further sexual exploitation, rape and sexual assault (WCSAP, 2004).
Gender and social exclusion: violence

- **Trauma as social exclusion:**
  - Trauma involves the destruction of the basic organising principle by which we come to know self, others and the environment.
  - Victimisation is different from bereavement: ‘The bereaved feels loss. The victim feels like a loser’. (Ochberger 1988, in Atkinson 2002)
  - Victim/survivors, particularly women and children, will usually experience victimisation by medical, legal, welfare and political responses.
  - After victimisation people are likely to enter a downward socio-economic spiral because of psychological, social and vocational impairment from the abuse…(Atkinson, 2002)
Gender and social exclusion: violence

Trauma as an embodiment of social exclusion

The victim/survivor may feel…

- Diminished, defiled, self loathing, shame, self-blame, hatred towards themselves and others
- No clear sense of themselves as worthwhile people
- Depression, rage, fear, anxiety
- Feel they can no longer trust the world they know
- Feel profoundly isolated from others
- Feel powerless, helpless and hopeless in the face of forces they feel are out of their control
- Come to believe they are unable to change their life circumstances
- Feel they cannot describe their feelings and experiences to others
- Feel no one wants to hear when they do try and articulate

(Atkinson, 2002)
Social exclusion, gender and violence

- Multiple, inter-generational trauma: Aboriginal Australians
  - ‘The psychological impact of the experiences of dispossession, denigration and degradation are beyond description. They strike at the very core of our sense of identity and being.’ (O’Shane 1995 in Atkinson, 2002)

- Trauma may be transmitted across generations, with effects on extended family parenting patterns and communal disorder
  - ‘Trauma disrupts and restructures relationships between people. In particular this has been so for Aboriginal men and women and for the various Aboriginal groups across Australia.’ (Atkinson, 2002)
Some implications for social inclusion policy:

1. Gender asks that the parameters of ‘social exclusion’ be expanded: family violence and sexual assault need to be included in definitions of social exclusion.

2. Implications for service delivery: the experience of – and recovery from - violence must be taken into account when working with socially excluded groups e.g. ‘job-readiness’ for the homeless, people with a disability etc.

3. Again, this emphasises ‘big picture’ questions about what sort of society are we aiming for.
Gendering social inclusion downunder

Gender and ‘the social dimensions’
- A gender analysis has illustrated how addressing social exclusion - poverty, low paid, lack of work-force participation, lack of autonomy and freedom, homelessness, the experience of violence – is about getting the economy right – but also must be about getting our society right – in relation to issues of equality, and recognising and respecting difference, and working out what our fundamental values are.
Gendering social inclusion down under

- Gender asks us to think again what a socially inclusive Australia would look like
  - Gender complexifies the obvious, it stretches the parameters of social exclusion and inclusion
  - Gender analysis prompts questions like:
    - *If social inclusion is all about work-place participation, who will do the ‘other’ work, and will they be included while they do it?*
    - *If a socially inclusive Australia is one free of violence, how do we get to there? How do we link social inclusion efforts with violence prevention?*
    - *What are we aiming for anyway as Australians? A life centered on paid work - or something broader than this?*
  - Social exclusion analysis and policy need to include gendered processes of exclusion - with violence a key aspect.
  - Ultimately, attention to gender issues means an enhanced concept and understanding of social exclusion and inclusion.