

**Social Exclusion and Changes to Citizenship:  
Women and Children, Minorities and Migrants in Britain**

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# Social Exclusion and Changes to Citizenship: Women and Children, Minorities and Migrants in Britain

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The aim of this paper is to analyze the current state of citizenship in Britain in light of the rise of political discourses and practices that seek to remedy social exclusion. Citizenship involves relationships that encompass social, economic, and cultural positions, legal and institutional forms as well as identity and senses of belonging (Jenson and Phillips 1996; Werbner and Yuval Davis 1999; Jenson 2001; Hobson and Lister 2002; Lister 2003a; Dobrowolsky and Jenson 2004). It consists of multiple dimensions affecting politics, broadly conceived, and policy at various levels. However, here we will limit our purview to citizenship concerns arising out of new efforts to combat 'social exclusion' on the part of the Labour government of Tony Blair. More specifically, we unpack the implications of social exclusion in light of two highly contested areas: i) recent welfare restructuring and ii) im/migration and asylum. Herein lies the irony: while New Labour's concern with social exclusion is explicit in the former, it is less than apparent in the latter. In this respect, and in others, we expose the limited ways the Blair government deals with social exclusion and citizenship. We consider the repercussions of changing emphases, *vis-à-vis* social exclusion and citizenship, when it comes to women, racial and ethnic minorities, im/migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and their children. Indeed, we contend that broader readings of social exclusion and citizenship would embrace, and should respond to, both the plight of outsiders and insiders who do not enjoy full substantive citizenship rights. Social inclusion, then, would not only address issues like poverty, but also, lack of power, discrimination and prejudice, as well as foster full participation in society and more robust senses of belonging. Sadly, this has not been the reality in contemporary Britain.

## An Overview of the Issues

On one hand, the Blair government has adopted discourses of social exclusion and practices to counteract it. Along with these efforts, New Labour has pushed for active citizenship in different realms, including welfare and social policies. As we shall see, here citizenship becomes highly instrumentalised. Responsibilities and obligations are promoted over rights (Lister 1998; Lund 1999). Broader notions of citizenship succumb to over-arching economic objectives and increasingly narrow notions of citizenship become interlaced with moral undertones. Put simply, what makes the good citizen, becomes what produces the good worker, the good consumer, and to a certain extent, the good neighbour, as the community plays an increasingly important role (Lawson and Leighton, 2004).

At the same time, the Labour government has paid an unprecedented amount of attention to 'the child' and the links between social exclusion and children are made manifest. The child is the focal point in recent pledges, policies and programmes, as well as in new spending priorities

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(Pinkney 2000; Ridge 2003). For instance, Prime Minister Tony Blair delivered an historic promise to eradicate child poverty by the year 2020 and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, has made achieving this goal a prime objective. For both, the child becomes a sound investment, as New Labour banks on the child as a citizen-*in-becoming*, and the future citizen-worker (Dobrowolsky 2002; Lister 2003b).

On the other hand, the Blair government has not comprehensively applied the concept of social exclusion to racial and ethnic minorities, or to im/migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, nor has it followed a broader, substantive citizenship agenda when it comes to these typically marginalized groups. Granted, the essence of citizenship is about membership in specific communities and the boundaries which get drawn that both bestow inclusion and give rise to exclusion of non-members. And so, the likely argument here would be that, in order to promote social inclusion within nation state borders, there needs to be clear boundaries set up against 'outsiders' (Wolfe and Klausen 2000). Nevertheless, precisely because this is a government that has made social exclusion -as well as global poverty and conflict- a priority, one would expect that exclusion at nation state borders, and especially the political, economic, cultural, psychological exclusion faced by minority groups and migrants within Britain, would be addressed more concertedly and effectively.

Instead, New Labour has directed social exclusion resources primarily towards priorities like children and young people as well as towards communities with the objective of 'neighbourhood renewal'. Yet some children find themselves completely on the margins, literally and metaphorically. Moreover, while social exclusion efforts are geared towards communities, they nonetheless fail to acknowledge that British communities 'are not necessarily inclusive or tolerant of outsiders such as asylum seekers' (MacGregor 2003: 71).

As a result, what becomes apparent is that new insiders have come to the fore and particular sets of outsiders are produced and perpetuated. Children and youth are a focal point, both rhetorically and in terms of policies and programs, in the push to counter social exclusion and when it comes to recent welfare restructuring. However, the children that are invoked, in general, tend not to have a gender, race or ethnicity (although increasingly disability vis-à-vis the child is becoming more of an issue) (Dobrowolsky 2002; Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin 2005). In reality, not all children are being *included* and we stress the fact that the children of racial and ethnic minorities and im/migrants, especially asylum seekers, are graphically *excluded*.

At the same time, whereas (some) children are hot, women are not. Women are more 'out' than 'in', in the sense that gender inequality and its implications for citizenship and social exclusion are not a burning concern for New Labour. Although gender is a critical determinant of poverty, and women disproportionately rely on social services, they are not central to the Blair government's welfare reform agenda. Where policies have focused on women, they deal with particular problems, such as teenage pregnancies, or, for example, due to feminist activism, respond to specific issues like violence against women. And more to the point, the main preoccupation for New Labour appears to be that of 'activating' *certain* women, i.e., getting them into paid work. Thus, some women factor in when it comes to welfare reform, but only to the extent that they become part of the Labour government's 'employability' drive. Here, lone mothers have attracted significant attention (Bashevkin 2002).

The fact that children are a top priority and women are not is more than a little ironic given that women are the majority of carers of children (paid and unpaid). What is more, women's paid work patterns are often managed around their unpaid care work. Granted, there have been Blair government initiatives in relation to child care (notably stemming from the work of key Labour women Ministers) that have a positive impact on women, but still the emphasis has been on getting women into paid work. Essentially, the child care agenda has been captured by the issue of

enabling women to become paid workers. Work/life balance concerns are now increasingly debated, but again, the intent is easing women into the paid work world, rather than dealing with women's growing work loads in the home and outside it. In short, the Blair government clearly shows a preference for the 'universal breadwinner model', fostering gender equity by promoting women's employment (Fraser 1997:43).

For im/migrant women and racial and ethnic minority women, many of whom have engaged in paid work more (i.e., longer, historically, and more hours, i.e., more full-time work) than white women, their double and triple burdens continue to remain under-appreciated (Krieger 1999:104). Perhaps given the male breadwinner stereotypes that still prevail in the realm of im/migration, but also due to the general exclusion of minority children and the offspring of im/migrants and asylum seekers, im/migrant women, especially of African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bagladeshi descent, are even more out of the picture than British born, white women.

For all women, because the good citizen becomes the good, paid worker, unpaid work mostly done by women in the home is devalued. As Becker suggests:

Labour will need to engage in a meaningful debate as to the *nature and value* of work. Labour's equating of work as being synonymous with *paid* employment, and its implicit denigration of other forms of unpaid work in the home and community...serve to *undervalue those people engaged in unpaid work* and to downgrade their contribution to both society and the economy...Many of the people who provide unpaid work- such as caring and childcare- are women and many are also clients (or potential clients) of social services and would be priorities for their support services (2003: 118).

In these ways, citizenship's roots in the private are obscured, and New Labour fails to grasp the fact that gendered citizenship bridges the public/private divide.

In sum, through the lens of social exclusion we will underscore that although the Labour government is promoting citizenship, it is doing so in limited and highly circumscribed ways. The paper consists of four parts. In Part I, we study the origins and manifestations of social exclusion, as well as its links to citizenship. We then, in Part II, examine the centerpiece of New Labour's social exclusion agenda and welfare reform strategy: the figure of 'the child' and how this new child/youth-focus suggests a changing citizenship regime.<sup>2</sup> Since not all children are included, we move onto an exploration of who else is excluded. In Part III we look at the repercussions for women in general, racial and ethnic minority women as well as im/migrant women in particular. We contextualize this in Part IV by reviewing past and present developments in Britain relating to race and ethnicity, im/migration and asylum. In Part V we conclude by underscoring the repercussions for citizenship.

## Part I: The Concept of Social Exclusion, Its Origins and Its Manifestations in Britain

Social exclusion as a concept originated in France. The idea of *les exclus* can be found first, formally, in French social policy (Pierson 2002:4) in the 1970's and early 1980's. Mary Daly and Chiara Saraceno point to its affinities with aspects of social democratic as well as social Catholic thought, and provide a useful overview of the development and spread of this concept. They show

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Jenson developed the notion of a changing citizenship regime and has applied it extensively in the Canadian case (Jenson and Phillips 1996; Jenson 2001; Dobrowolsky and Jenson 2003).

how from France social exclusion 'entered both the European Community and EU policy discourse' and by 1994 'social exclusion was so important that it was to replace poverty in the nomenclature of the EU program targeted at the most disadvantaged' (Daly and Saraceno 2002: 86). While, the term was adopted by the European Commission, partly to deal with the reluctance of some member governments to use the word poverty, 'Social exclusion gradually became the keyword not only in what was previously named poverty research but in relation to all kinds of deprivation and inequalities' (ibid). There was one large exception here and that was gender. If addressing the notion of poverty directly was seen to be problematic, then confronting contentious, complex issues such as the feminization of poverty would be highly unlikely.

The concept of social exclusion gained notoriety in Britain with the Labour party's landslide election win in May 1997.<sup>3</sup> The new government lost little time in adopting a social exclusion strategy, one that was, in many ways, ambitious. For example, it came as a direct response to the inequities arising out of the previous Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. In his Preface to a 2001 document entitled 'Preventing Social Exclusion' Prime Minister Blair explained:

We came into office determined to tackle a deep social crisis...The result was sharp income inequality, a third of children growing up in poverty, a host of social problems such as homelessness and drug abuse, and divisions in society typified by deprived neighbourhoods...All of us bore the cost of social breakdown directly.  
(Blair2001:2,in [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/seu/2001/pse/PSE%20HTML/foreward.htm](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/seu/2001/pse/PSE%20HTML/foreward.htm)).

Thatcher had advanced depoliticized notions of citizens and infamously would not even acknowledge the existence of 'society', let alone poverty. Yet, under Conservative rule, Britain experienced growing levels of poverty. Child poverty, in particular, became untenable as child poverty levels had trebled under Thatcher/Major (Bradshaw 2003:213; SEU 2004:2). The incoming Labour government had little choice but to deal with the socio-economic repercussions.

To some extent, then, with social exclusion, the new government was attempting to respond to the inability of the worst off to achieve full citizenship. However, it did not articulate its aims in these terms. Initially, there was no talk of tackling poverty and the Prime Minister did not make his child poverty pledge until 1999.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Blair's embrace of social exclusion was not without its limitations. For a start, the discourse of social exclusion/inclusion supplanted more traditional Labour goals. It steered the party away from concerns of equality and social rights, towards the priorities of an opportunity culture. New Labour's emphasis on social exclusion represented a break from the party's longstanding socialist and social democratic principles, in that the stress was on inclusion, rather than on equality (Lister 1998, 2001). While the Blair government attempted to

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<sup>3</sup> The term social exclusion was used earlier in the Labour Party's 1994 Commission on Social Justice (CSJ). The party commissioned this independent review as a catalyst for new ideas and policy prescriptions. The CSJ advocated a middle way between the Old Left, the more radical, left wing elements of the party, what the CSJ dubbed the 'levelers' and the those more predisposed to the Thatcher's New Right solutions, termed the 'deregulators' by the CSJ (Alcock 2002:14). To be sure, the CSJ did contain some more traditional Labour messages, but these were largely ignored in favour of plotting a course through the middle, what would soon be famously referred to as the Third Way. This marked the ascendancy of Labour modernizers, who would re-brand the party 'New Labour'. The changes were already apparent under Labour leaders Neil Kinnock and John Smith, but they crystallized under Tony Blair.

<sup>4</sup> Since 1999, the Labour government has done considerably more than expected, given its initial silence on these matters.

improve the incomes of at least some groups in poverty, unlike Old Labour, New Labour became less keen on stressing the connections between social inclusion and the 'offer of a secure, guaranteed and adequate income, at a reasonable level, relative to the income of the wealthy' (Miller 2004:39-40) for all.

The Labour government's social exclusion agenda would also echo certain Conservative takes on citizenship, the 'active citizenship' of Douglas Hurd, for example. Left-right convergence on active citizenship was evident in a cross-party Commission on Citizenship that called for 'education on citizenship and voluntary service as an avenue for the practice of citizenship' (Meehan 1999: 235).

For Conservatives 'the welfare state had engendered a 'passive citizenship', entitlements having become more important than the achievement of personal independence or autonomy' (ibid: 234). This rationale was used to justify welfare state retrenchment. Prime Minister Blair identified similar problems with the welfare state, and believed that meaningful citizenship came about via active citizens. However, his approach was to establish an 'enabling' state, one that efficiently and effectively invested in the future (Blair 1996; Dobrowolsky 2000; Dobrowolsky and Saint Martin 2005). And, while there were social conservatives who had a 'top down' view of citizenship, where those who were better off would help the less fortunate, New Labour has worked on more 'bottom up' considerations. This is evident in its concern with the active citizenship of those who live in deprived communities. Former Labour Home Secretary, David Blunkett, for instance, promoted 'active citizenship' as a form of 'civil renewal' and set up a virtual Centre for Active Citizenship.

Active citizens are those who are responsible, and there are those in the Tory and Labour ranks who conflate being responsible with being gainfully employed. What is more, in both camps, active citizenship can also signify 'appropriate and inappropriate behaviour' which can provide 'a rationale for the exclusion from benefits and services...or the imposition of some other penalty' for those who engage in what is considered inappropriate behaviour (Miller 2004: 41). Here and elsewhere, New Labour, departs from more collectivist, Marshallian views of citizenship rights, and adopts a communitarian appeal that, at best, promotes mutual obligation and, at worst, involves compliance and compulsion (Krieger 1999:27).

The contradictions involved in the Blair government's social exclusion strategy can be highlighted by drawing on Ruth Levitas' systematic analysis of the competing discourses and dimensions of social exclusion (1998). She identifies three discourses of social exclusion with the following acronyms: RED, MUD, and SID. RED refers to a redistributionist, egalitarian discourse. Here social exclusion is concerned about extreme forms of inequality and the way to address them through redistributing wealth. It is a more egalitarian approach that includes notions of citizenship, social rights and social justice. In sharp contrast, MUD stands for a 'moral underclass discourse' which is a stigmatizing and divisive discourse reminiscent of disparaging American assessments regarding a 'dependency culture' (Bashevkin 1998; 2002). MUD stresses individual values and behaviour and considers social cohesion is at risk due to a series of problematic behaviours and forms of social and moral decay epitomized by rising crime, or drug addiction, and even having children out of wedlock. SID points to a 'social integrationist discourse' which has gained ascendancy both in Europe and the UK. Here exclusion is associated with being excluded from paid work. The idea is that with paid work and enhanced employability, social inclusion and social cohesion will be achieved. Whereas RED veers to the left, with more of a social democratic approach, and MUD entails a sharp turn to the right, with a more neo-conservative orientation, SID, while alluding to a more European sense of the term, in fact, epitomizes third way concerns.

When Labour came to power in 1997, although it occasionally made use of the MUD 'underclass' discourse, it was most keen on SID. Then, across its first and second terms (the Blair government was re-elected in 2001), we can see elements of all three. To illustrate, in 1999, the Department of Social Security, DSS (the DSS is now, notably reflecting SID-like concerns, called the Department for Work and Pensions, DWP) in a document entitled *Opportunity for All* made the links between social exclusion and 'insufficient work opportunities' and 'insufficient opportunities in terms of education and training' (DSS 1999, Pierson 2002:16-17). There are hints of RED since 1999 with, more of a poverty focus (DSS 1999, Pierson 2002:16-17), especially with increased efforts at redistribution geared towards children. From the outset, New Labour also has lapsed into MUD type approaches. Efforts to counteract 'children having children', i.e., teenage pregnancies; the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998 (where the aim was to lower crime rates in local areas, with close attention to youth, using highly punitive measures); and more recent Anti-Social Behaviour Orders highlight its MUD-like proclivities.

Nonetheless, SID has been the over-arching third way priority, where social exclusion results from a shortfall in education and employment opportunities. The remedy becomes one of expanding opportunities to make Britain competitive in the global economy through activation: i.e., getting the citizenry into the paid labour market. The SID emphasis is evident in a series of 'New Deals' meant to enhance employability. The first flagship New Deal, New Deal for Young People, was directed towards youth, but then the deals were extended to various others including lone parents, long-term unemployed and people with disabilities. At first blush, policies that subscribe to SID may seem less harsh and directive than MUD ones, but the former can also be punitive, and used to justify a range of measures such as the abolition of lone parent benefits.

These different dimensions are apparent in the activities of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), a body that was expeditiously established by the new Labour government (plans were laid in August of 1997, and the Unit was up and running by December). As one of the Blair government's first innovations, the SEU's remit was broad: to combat social exclusion; but it clearly worked on certain priorities set out by the Prime Minister. These were groups considered to be most vulnerable: children and youth, especially those growing up in low income households, runaways, those who were in care, did not attend or left school, became unemployed or were teenaged parents. Thus, the SEU began coordinating policies that would deal with issues that ranged from truancy, and problems arising from particularly deprived estates and districts, to homelessness and teenage pregnancy. In its operation, the Unit was also meant to epitomize what New Labour would call 'joined up government'. In other words, the SEU was to work across departments and ensure that they co-ordinated their efforts on social exclusion. The SEU also reflected other New Labour priorities, such as promoting partnerships between the state and both the private and third sectors, as well as encouraging the involvement of 'active citizens'.

Because social exclusion can be read as either limited or all-encompassing, it has the potential to be operationalized in wide-ranging ways. New Labour's use of the social exclusion concept is, in some respects, ambiguously deployed, but in others, used in a precise problem-oriented way. The latter tendency is reflected in the following SEU definition of social exclusion. Social exclusion is:

a shorthand 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, bad health and family breakdown (SEU 2001:Chapter 1, 1).

However, increasingly 'lifting children out of poverty' became a prime SEU objective (Blair 2001:2). The titles of recent SEU documents epitomize the strategic choices that have been made:

'A Better Education for Children in Care'; 'Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment, or Training'; 'Consultation on Young Runaways'; 'The Impact of Government Policy on Social Exclusion Among Children Aged 0-13 and Their Families'; 'The Impact of Government Policy on Social Exclusion Among Young People'; 'Truancy and Social Exclusion Report' (see <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk>).

As the Prime Minister contends, 'lifting children out of poverty' is a priority not only because it addresses 'the costs to society' but also, because it serves to limit the costs 'to public finance' (Blair 2001:2). The financial burden of social exclusion:

came in paying for crime, school exclusions, drug misuse and unemployment, and in lost tax revenue. Business suffered too from a less skilled workforce, lost customers and markets, and ...had to pay the tax bills for social failure. It followed that it would benefit everyone in society if social exclusion could be reduced and made less likely in the future (SEU 2001:2)

Blair added, Britain was 'never going to have a successful economy while we continued to waste thetalentsofsomany'(Blair2001:2in<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/seu/2001/pse/PSE%20HTML/forward.htm>). Thus, there were progressive societal and more market-driven, economic justifications for rooting out social exclusion and investing in children.

In sum, while the first response to the social exclusion problem was to provide opportunities to gain skills and enter paid work, soon innumerable policy initiatives and review documents began emphasizing how the state would reform and modernize the welfare state in general and tackle child poverty in particular. Thus, an association between social exclusion/inclusion policies and children and youth became more and more apparent. Let us turn to this issue in more detail and see the impact this has had on citizenship in Britain.

## **Part II: Social Exclusion, Citizenship and the Ubiquitous Child?**

For Margaret Thatcher, children were a responsibility of parents not the state. While the Conservatives did establish a few child and youth focused reforms in the late 1980's to mid 1990's (e.g., Youth Training Scheme in 1988), the main objective was to get young people off the welfare rolls and limit benefit to those most in need. In contrast, for the Blair government, the child has become a central figure in a range of New Labour ideas, institutions, and policy initiatives.

As we have seen, New Labour is concerned with social exclusion, and while this goes hand in hand with poverty in general, the Blair government has focused on child poverty in particular. While the social exclusion agenda is not entirely confined to children, children and youth do become a preoccupation because they:

are especially vulnerable to the effects of social exclusion. They may be exposed to crime as victims, or drawn into early offending. They may skip important stages of their education and face illiteracy and unemployment. And their long-term prospects may include homelessness, mental health problems and chronic debt...Early preventative action is critical. (<http://www.social exclusionunit.gov.uk/page.asp?id=2>)



Thus, the SEU targeted childhood deprivation, and the effects of family breakdown along with shortfalls in terms of education, training and work. Again, addressing the exclusion of children and youth now is a good investment for the future for they will be tomorrow's productive citizen-workers.<sup>5</sup>

Soon the SEU began reporting on its 'action to prevent social exclusion' and how it was 'delivering results' by ensuring that, for example, children were 'ready to learn by the time they reach primary school'; or by showing that 'school exclusions had fallen by 18 per cent between 1997-1999' (SEU 2001:4). It also proudly pronounced that 'since 1997 more than 27,000 young unemployed people have moved into work' (ibid). By 2004, the SEU claimed: 'A reduction in child poverty has been one of the most notable achievements so far. In 2002/03 there were 700,000 fewer children living in poverty than 1996/97. It is estimated that by 2004/05, if the Government had taken no action, 1.5 million more children would be in poverty' (SEU 2004:4).

These 'results' reflect the fact that, over the course of its two mandates, Labour increased the Child Benefit rate (once, for the first child), and established a whole host of new policies and programmes geared towards children and youth. Beyond the New Deal for Young People, there was the Working Families Tax Credit (established October 1999 but replaced in 2003 by the Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit), together with the Childcare Tax Credit, plus the National Childcare Strategy. Sure Start was set up and focused on giving children from 0-3 years old a better start in life. Subsequently, Connexions was created for those over 13. By 2000, the Blair government broke ground with the establishment of a Children and Young Person's Unit (CYPU) (now part of the Department of Education and Skills). A Children's Fund was set up and administered by the CYPU to encourage local initiatives and community action to counter child poverty. While the Children's Fund supported community and organizational efforts, the 2003 Budget introduced a new Child Trust Fund to be paid to individuals. The government then proposed the creation of a Young People's Fund. Education Maintenance Allowances were provided in 15 pilot areas, and are now rolled out nation-wide, to offer means tested support to youth aged 16-18 who attend school or college and take full time courses. A new Vulnerable Children's Grant promised £252 million over 2003-06 to provide educational support for children most in need, including children in care (SEU, *A better education*:4), and the list continues.

This represents significant investment with funds allocated to deal with child poverty, to educate and safeguard children, and to develop a range of children's services. The emphasis on the child has been strategic. For instance, with children the government can engage in forms of redistribution, but not call it that, and also not invoke specific identities, i.e., avoid specifically addressing gender and racial inequality and so on (Dobrowolsky 2002). As we shall see, certain collective identities do fall through the cracks. But for now, let us examine how children, in general, have fit with the agendas of key state actors in New Labour's first and second term: Tony Blair, the New Labour Prime Minister, his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, and Blair's first two Home Office Secretaries, Jack Straw and David Blunkett.

Tony Blair is preoccupied with the child as the citizen-worker of the future (Lister, 2003b) and has paid close attention to issues like education, skills, training, and life long learning. The

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<sup>5</sup> These connections were made in a series of reports released by Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the LSE which stressed the 'importance of childhood circumstances for later outcomes'; 'how education affects patterns of advantage and disadvantage' as well as how 'processes of inclusion and exclusion operate in the labour market' (CASE 2003:7). CASE studies with titles such as, 'Intergenerational and Life Course Transmission of Social Exclusion, Influences of Childhood Poverty' and 'Childhood Poverty, Early Motherhood and Adult Exclusions' (Hobcraft 1998; Hobcraft and Kiernan 1999). Research of this kind had an important influence on New Labour policy orientations (Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin, 2005).

centerpiece of Labour's 1997 election manifesto was: education, education, education. Subsequently, the Blair government increased government expenditure on education and created new regulatory regimes as with the Office of Educational Standards (OFSTED). Blair's push for 'life long learning' was played out in a 1998 Green paper, where individuals were encouraged to invest in their own training and learning with the financial support of the state (Kendall and Holloway 2001:166).

In the Prime Minister's estimation, a modernized education system, educational reforms and investment in children would also help to promote active citizenship. This meant that a more robust political model of citizenship had to be promoted. And so, in 1998, an Advisory Group on Citizenship was set up with the goal of providing 'good citizenship' education in schools, and this was followed by an Education Reform Act (Frazer 2002:216).

Chancellor Gordon Brown is also committed to the child as citizen-worker of the future. However, Brown more than Blair has tried to engage in 'redistribution by stealth', and children have provided a good cipher in this regard. The Chancellor's approach embodies the liberal and social democratic tensions in the social exclusion agenda. On one hand, there are strict work-related requirements with the New Deals, but on the other hand, innovations like the National Minimum Wage, the WFTC and the new tax credit that replaced it, as well as improvement in out of work benefits for children (especially young children), hint at a more redistributive agenda. Moreover, the Treasury is not limiting itself to the economic realm: it is making social policy. Brown has been a pivotal influence not only when it comes to the New Deals, but also programmes like Sure Start. And, of course, through various child tax credits and the upping of benefits, the Chancellor has been able to work on New Labour's pledge to eradicate child poverty. Poor children are a preoccupation for Brown. In a series of speeches he highlighted the problem of child poverty even going so far as to describe child poverty as a 'scar on Britain's soul' (Brown 1999:8). Brown's pre-budget report in 2001 was entitled: *Tackling child poverty: giving every child the best possible start in life*. In his 2003 Budget, the Chancellor committed to making even faster progress towards the eradication of child poverty and in his 2004 spending review, 'Brown's goal of eradicating child poverty result[ed] in the one real surprise of the package, the expansion of nursery spaces' ('Brown' looks: 2004:14). His pre-(2005)budget document promotes: ' "opportunity Britain' based on extra investment in education, skills and childcare.' (White and Elliot, 2004:29).

The Home Office, has taken a more directive and punitive approach which is not surprising given the latter is the institutional locale (in charge of law and order) that gets to act on New Labour's 'tough on crime' message. In addition, as we have seen, the Home Office's take on citizenship emphasizes both individuals' obligations to society and a more community-based ethos. A crucial ingredient of active citizenship is civic renewal where citizens should be given opportunities and support to become actively involved in defining and tackling the problems of their communities and improving their quality of life.

Children and youth link these concerns. In the early days of New Labour's first mandate, the Home Office under Jack Straw helped to promote families' responsibilities to their children by setting up the charity advice bureau, the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI) and piloting Family Advice and Information Networks. Then, it moved to make communities safe and secure by cracking down on criminal children and youth. In fact, several Home Office reforms, particularly those dealing with the youth justice system have reflected what some have described as 'knee jerk policy making and populist, short-term rhetoric' (Newburn 2003:245). The Home Office's MUD-like agenda was all too apparent with new pieces of legislation like the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) and its Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act (1999). These Acts promoted surveillance,

contained restrictions and sanctions. An array of new orders were put in place that ranged from detention and training, to parenting primers, curfews and efforts to limit anti-social behaviour. While Straw spearheaded punitive Home Office initiatives, his successor, David Blunkett, a social conservative on issues surrounding the family, sexuality and law and order, (Driver and Martell 2002: 207-08), took them further. As one columnist quipped, Blunkett has positioned himself as the: 'hard man of the party, a home secretary who makes Jack Straw look like a softy, guitar-strumming liberal' ('Hard man' 2002).

What has become increasingly apparent is that children in trouble with the law are separated out and treated differently from the totality of poor and excluded children. New measures that criminalize increasingly younger children reflect the idea that certain children apparently cease to be children when they get into trouble with the law. Now, children as young as 10 years old are considered culpable and responsible for criminal behaviour (Barnardos 2003:2). There are worrisome civil liberties issues involved as when one considers Home Office plans to have troublesome children identified and tracked. There is also growing concern about the criminalization of young people in deprived areas by Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. Other Home Office proposals have been dropped in the face of opposition, such as removing child benefit from the parents of persistent truants/trouble makers. Such measures would appeal to Blair and Blunkett, but not sit well with Brown.

The foregoing illustrates that, on issues of social exclusion, Blair's priorities reflect an amalgam of SID and MUD. The Prime Minister plays up the former and allows officials in the Home Office, in particular, to act on more of the MUD orientation. Brown reflects more of a SID and RED combination. Furthermore, although New Labour intended social exclusion to address the 'worst off,' particularly children and youth, some children are 'in' and some are 'out'. There are 'good' poor children deserving of assistance, but then there are 'bad' criminal children. Here, then, Blair, Brown and Blunkett's efforts appear to not be 'joined up' enough as there is a disjuncture between 'good' worthy children those perceived to have genuine needs (children who are poor, in care, have health problems) and those unsalvageable 'bad' children for whom the Home Office's prescription is to throw them in jail.

We begin to see a pattern where New Labour's social exclusion concerns have been responsive in certain respects, but are also deployed in ways that discipline individuals and groups who do not perform the requisite duties or fulfill the required obligations. Therefore, the social exclusion focus is neither comprehensive nor is its implicit citizenship dimensions criticism free. The lapses become even more apparent when we turn to those who have been, largely outside of the social exclusion agenda, such as women, and (up until very recently) racial and ethnic minorities, particularly im/migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

### **Part III: Who is Included and Who Is Excluded? Women**

Children are in (or more accurately, some poor children are in) but women are definitely not high on the list of Blair government priorities. Gender is rarely addressed in citizenship debates. The few exceptions that occur here are with, for example, constitutional reform (Dobrowolsky and Hart 2003), particularly issues around women's representation in parliament, as with the Representation Bill (Russell 2003; Squires 2003). Yet, despite the fact that gender is a key variable in determining who is in poverty, gender inequality has not been flagged in the fight against social exclusion, or even child poverty (Lister 2005). The exceptions to this rule are revealing in that they tend to involve the child, but in ways that underscore the citizen-worker model.

Women are implicated in SID, MUD, and RED policies, but they are most explicitly targeted in programs that deal with work-rest of life, or work-care balance. Women are affected by MUD and RED-inspired programmes to be sure. With respect to the former, as noted above, women and girls are targeted with SEU campaigns to prevent youth pregnancy, and lone motherhood. RED efforts have the potential for the most positive impact on women, as evidenced by the disproportionate benefit women receive from the National Minimum Wage.

Still, SID is the main preoccupation, and so here we see a strong incentive to get women into paid work. The activation thrust explains the Blair government's realization that in order for women's entry into paid work to be practically feasible, the state needs to provide more childcare provisions; hence, new policies like the Childcare Strategy and recent promises of more nursery spaces. Policies are put in place so that both women and men are encouraged to be active in terms of paid employment. Concomitantly, there have been some advancements in terms of maternity and parental leave. Again, this reflects the 'universal breadwinner' model (Fraser 1997:43). In terms of social inclusion, the Blair government is primarily concerned with getting people on benefit into work and ensuring at least one (and ideally two) earner(s) per household.

However, with this paid work focus, neither the domestic division of labour, nor the sexual division of labour in the marketplace are being addressed. Some Labour women Ministers, known for their feminist sympathies try to buck this trend.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Patricia Hewitt has recently started talking about 'career sexism' to describe gender segregation in the labour market and the Woman and Work Commission was launched to look 'at how women can get a fairer deal in the workplace' and occupational segregation (WEU 2004: 1). Still, the Labour government has not addressed the fact that because women care for others, many women take on part time work which tends to be lower paid. Given their unpaid responsibilities, many higher paid, professional and managerial jobs, which tend to be full-time commitments, are often not an option for women. Women's earnings are negatively affected now, and these shortfalls can have even more serious repercussions in the future with, for instance, low pension rates (Fitzpatrick 2004). This situation also helps to explain why women are more reliant than men on the benefit system. Many new social security rules disproportionately affect women and, as we shall see, especially minority and migrant women (ibid).

Nonetheless, women are not a primary concern for the Blair government. New Labour is loathe to address the concerns of collective identities in general. Identity politics are partly blamed for the party's past electoral failures. The women's movement, along with the anti-racist movement and other critical social movements evoke the fractious identity struggles which engulfed Old Labour in the 1970's and 1980's. These battles led Thatcher, the dailies, and much of 'middle England' to dismiss Labour as the 'loony left' (Lovenduski and Randall 1993). For New Labour, the women's movement, like the trade union movement, is associated with yesterday's troublesome politics (Coote 2000; 2001:128), and thus it seeks to avoid these types of associations.

For feminists, there have been peaks and troughs since the 1997 Labour landslide. Having a groundbreaking 101 Labour women elected (doubling the percentage of women in the House of Commons) was a highpoint, but one that was soon followed by the sinking feeling seeing Harriet Harman, as Secretary of State for Social Security, make the cut to lone parent benefits, mostly

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<sup>6</sup> The Labour government did act on its pre-election promise to create the position of a Women's Minister, and responded to women's demands by setting up a Women's Unit (which later became the Women and Equality Unit). But both remained marginal (Dobrowolsky 2003). Still, some female Labour Ministers have tried to push women's concerns forward (Childs 2001). Nonetheless, any inroads that have been made have mostly come by hitching women's issues to government's labour force attachment and/or children and youth bandwagons.

received by women. Reparations were made in what was dubbed the 'women and children budget' (Thomson 2001:201). Harman was influential here, and she and fellow Minister Margaret Beckett helped to steer through Labour policies considered to have had the most positive impact on women: the national childcare strategy and the minimum wage. But again, both emphasize New Labour's activation thrust, and one deals with children. Few social security measures directly respond to women's needs, save for perhaps increases in maternity grants, now notably called the Sure Start Maternity Grant (and paid because of the presence of a new infant). On the whole, gender tends to be an oversight and women are an afterthought when it comes to welfare reform.

To illustrate, when the old Family Credit was replaced by the WFTC in October 1999, the impact on women was not considered. The WFTC was to be distributed through the 'pay packet'. Chancellor Brown wanted to make the connection to paid work explicit, i.e., he believed 'paid people will associate the tax credit more closely with their employment if they see wage and credit on the same computerized read out, hence appreciating the final rewards of working.' (Grover and Stewart 2000:244). Women's groups had to mobilize to show how this change could be detrimental to women and children. In women's experience, assuming a male breadwinner norm and heterosexual two-parent family, if the credit went through the father's pay cheque, it was less likely that funds would actually go directly to the family than if the credit went to the mother (Goode et al, 1998; Lister 2003b, 2004). Thus, women's groups wanted the credit to go to 'the purse' rather than the 'wallet'. They lobbied to have the WFTC go to the main carer, typically to women (McLaughlin et al 2001:88). After extensive mobilization, the Labour government conceded that families would have the choice of having the WFTC paid to the mother at the post office. Subsequently, when the WFTC was replaced by the Child Tax Credit, the new credit was paid to the main carer.

While women, in general, are peripheral to the welfare reform and social exclusion project, some women are even more marginalized than others. The fact that ethnic minority and im/migrant women are not a social exclusion target is particularly surprising given the extreme dislocation faced by them. Consider writer Yasmin Alibhai-Brown's experience (who came to Britain from Uganda) as she outlines what it is like for her and other woman of colour im/migrants to rear children in Britain:

Black women and Asian women were and are having to bring up their children in a racist country. Rearing children in this atmosphere is so tough I sometimes wonder how we have had the courage to reproduce at all. So white mothers...understand what it is like when, added to all the moods and furies of teenage life, your child hates you for bringing him or her into this country, or regards you as inferior, or worst off turns to self-destructive acts because he/she expected to be embraced and was instead rejected, and there is no place to go? What is more, it is a thankless task, one that our men have mostly left to us. (Alibhai-Brown 2001:192).

In light of the Labour government's expressed concern with the child, and given the SEU's definition of what constitutes social exclusion, i.e., the interrelation of unemployment, low skills and income, poor housing and family breakdowns (SEU 2001, Chapter 1, 1), not tackling ethnic and racial minority women, and im/migrant women's exclusion is paradoxical.

As Pierson notes, people from minority ethnic backgrounds in Britain are more likely to live in poor housing, be unemployed, have low incomes, die young and suffer social exclusion (2002:190). These probabilities are even higher for women given the sexual division of labour, the feminisation of poverty, and the fact that women typically care for others at the expense of their own health and livelihood. There are also differences that do not pertain across all minority and ethnic groups, such as the fact that there are more lone mothers in Black Caribbean families than

in the general population, or that Bangladeshi women tend to have larger families and larger families 'are more likely to be in poverty and are harder to support on the relatively low earnings that apply to the sectors in which these families are most likely to be concentrated' (Platt: 2003: 262).

The confusion deepens in light of New Labour's preoccupation with work. In Britain, certain minority ethnic women can engage in more full time, paid work than white women. Krieger observes here that:

One of the most interesting and consistent findings about patterns of labour market participation by ethnic minority women...shows a marked divergence from the experience of white women with reference to part-time employment. Approximately half of white women work full time, but more than two-thirds of ethnic minority women work full time, with little variety in the rare of part-time work among women from different ethnic minority groups (1999:104).

In this respect, many women from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds would appear to be the ideal New Labour citizens. But then, of course, there are the disparities in the conditions and type of employment most women do, compared to men. Notably, here the gap between ethnic minority and white women is far less than that between ethnic minority men and white men. Still, because they are not only women, but are racial and ethnic minority women, employment 'ghettoization' is even more of a problem. Again, Krieger explains:

female labor participation from every ethnic minority group indicates a marked concentration in the service sector and thus displays a particularly acute form the characteristic pattern of female labour market participation...Women of African-Caribbean descent are especially concentrated in the hospital and health care sectors, while the women of Indian descent are represented heavily in hotels and catering services and low-end manufacturing industry. Women with West Indian and Guyanese origins are strongly over-represented in a range of relatively low paid service work (1999:104).

These patterns and conditions point to some serious problems that perpetuate social exclusion. Still the Labour government directs its attention to women only intermittently. This is particularly problematic for those who are most likely to be excluded: racial and ethnic minority women and im/migrant women. To situate and help to explain these apparent lacunae and inconsistencies, a closer examination of how 'race', ethnicity, im/migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are treated in Britain would be beneficial.

#### **Part IV: Who is Included and Who is Excluded? Racial and Ethnic Minorities, Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

Britain today is a heterogeneous society. While the general percentage of the racial and ethnic minority population runs at 8 per cent, there are several localized areas in which minority populations are much more highly concentrated. The 2001 census indicates 76 per cent Black and ethnic minority communities in London, the West Midlands and three other areas (Home Office 2004:16). There are also trends that suggest growing diversity, from the reality that in Britain mixed race relationships are among the highest in the world, to the fact that in the UK, Islam is the fastest growing religion (Alibhai-Brown 2001:2-3). Also notable, given the concerns of this paper, is the

fact that the ethnic minority population tends to be younger than that of the white population (Krieger 1999:100).

Yet, racism and racial discrimination are prevalent. Racial and ethnic communities continue to experience discrimination and exclusion in multiple realms, including employment. Certainly, there are variations here in that a few racial and ethnic minority groups are concentrated in professions such as medicine, nursing and accountancy. As Alibhai-Brown notes, although there are no doubt 'billionaires who are brown-skinned'; nevertheless, 'unemployment among Afro-Caribbeans, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis is substantially higher than the national average' (ibid, 3). Platt elucidates:

Employment in vulnerable sectors, alongside discrimination, concentration in poorer areas which offer fewer opportunities and some groups, notably Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Black Caribbeans, greater difficulty in obtaining high levels of qualifications, have resulted in both high unemployment for many minority groups, especially [for] Caribbeans, Pakistanis and, particularly, Bangladeshis, and much higher rates of self-employment among certain groups, in particular Indians, Chinese and Pakistanis (2003:258).

This suggests why, in 2003-04, the risk of being in poverty (measured as below 60 per cent of median income after housing costs) was 20 per cent for whites and 69 per cent for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. For Indians it was 22 per cent and Afro-Caribbeans it was 32 per cent (Lister 2004:62).

Given the government's preoccupation with work and the links made between employment and exclusion, one would think that addressing the needs of racial and ethnic minorities would be at the top of the Prime Minister's social exclusion list. There have been some policies (if inadequate) to address employment disadvantage, but these have failed to meet the mark.

Racial and ethnic minorities continue to be marginalized, in part, because immigration continues to be treated as a threat (Parekh 1991) even though many members of minority ethnic communities are born in Britain. To be clear, racial and ethnic minorities, refugees and asylum seekers are *not* one and the same, but they tend to run together in the public consciousness, especially on the part of the white majority.<sup>7</sup> As a result, despite significant differences, there can be similar treatment involved.

Concomitantly, the most vivid example of racialization and one of the most dramatic cases of exclusion in Britain occurs in relation to im/migrants, and especially refugees and asylum seekers. Pierson details the situation for asylum seekers:

They face many parallel experiences to that of the ethnic minorities; dislocation, powerlessness and discrimination while having few supports to call on and no concerted action from government to reconstruct public opinion. From the moment they arrive they face a volatile and often aggressively hostile local public with racist political sentiment openly engaging in intimidation and local press making accusations of 'bogus claims' and 'a drain on national resources'. (2002:203).

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<sup>7</sup> For example, members of racial and ethnic minorities can be longstanding British citizens with formal British citizenship rights reaching back for several generations. In contrast, a refugee is a person who falls under the UN Convention's designation entitling him or her to refugee status. An asylum seeker is a person who claims to be a refugee and is seeking recognition of this refugee status.

As just one example of the severity of negative media and public sentiments, in 2003, *The Sun* ran the following advertisement: "End the asylum madness". It argued "this sea of humanity is polluted with terrorism and disease and threatens our way of life...Blair must say no more *now*, revoke the human rights law and lock up all the illegals *now* until they can be checked.' Hundreds of thousands of *Sun* readers signed up to this campaign.' (CIH, 2003: 4).

This is the harsh reality, and yet New Labour's social exclusion concerns have not adequately addressed ethnic and racial minorities, nor do they extend to issues of im/migration and asylum. To understand why the links are not made manifest, a brief historical overview would be beneficial.

In the past, and over time, different groups have been targeted by the British state, and the rights of certain 'aliens' have been circumscribed in multiple ways. For example, the Aliens Act of 1905 was intended to control Jewish immigration from Russia and Europe, which was followed by an Aliens Restriction Act in 1914 which gave the Home Secretary extensive powers to 'ban the entry of aliens, limit their movement and restrict their stay' (Layton-Henry 2001:127).

Large scale immigration occurred in the 1940's, and patterns of immigration changed significantly with the advent of the British Nationality Act of 1948. This Act extended British citizenship to all members of the empire and dominions, and it allowed them to enter Britain. The theory was that this would maintain a strong and united Commonwealth. The practice was that citizenship claims from 'non-white' dominions grew, and people from India, Pakistan and the Caribbean came to settle in Britain. This also coincided with a need for labour power, especially cheap, un- or semi-skilled workers, and thus, in the 1950's, some employers, such as London Transport and the health service began to recruit from places like the Caribbean and India. What followed were explicit forms of racial exclusion on the part of the citizenry and the state.

Racial minorities faced blatant discrimination, open hostility, and even violence. Race riots in the 1950's involved 'whites' attacking 'blacks' in places like Notting Hill and Nottingham. Both Labour and Conservative governments responded by putting into place measures, covertly then overtly, to limit 'black' migration (Carter, Harris, and Joshi 2000:23). Restrictive Acts were passed in 1962, and 1968 that limited the entry of 'black' first time immigrants and their families. The controls on Commonwealth citizens effectively 'operationalized the significance of skin colour in the definitions of group identities and "Britishness" ' (Krieger 1999:128). Calls for tighter controls on immigration, and to keep Britain 'British,' i.e., 'white', grew; and there were those who linked immigration with violence or crime. It is in this context, in 1968, that Conservative MP, Enoch Powell made his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech. Powell advocated not only an end to black migration, but to make those who had settled leave Britain (Budge 2002: 650).

Race riots flared up in subsequent decades as well. Riots in Brixton led to an inquiry headed up by Lord Scarman. His 1981 Report was 'authoritative and widely welcomed' but nonetheless, 'little progress was made to remedy the deficiencies identified...in the political climate of the 1980's' (Bennett 2002:465). History would repeat itself in the spring and summer of 2001, where riots in the north of England compelled the Labour government to act.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile immigration restrictions continued. The 1971 Immigration Act contained only a modicum of leeway to permit Asian refugees from Uganda to enter Britain on compassionate grounds. It also stipulated that those seeking family reunification would not have access to public funds until the applicants were granted residence status (Platt 2003: 258-59). In 1981, the British Nationality Act restricted immigration to those with British parents or parents settled in Britain. That is, British citizens not born in the UK and with no familial link to Britain could not settle in the UK. This was geared towards preventing most of the Hong Kong population from settling in the UK.

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<sup>8</sup> We will describe and assess the nature of the Labour government's response to these 2001 'disturbances' later in the paper.



In spite of this less than welcoming environment, in the 1980's and 1990's, asylum applications to Britain grew. The Conservative government, in turn, imposed mandatory visas on countries such as Haiti, Turkey and Somalia, and it raised fines for carriers found with undocumented passengers with the Carrier's Liability Act (1987) (Layton-Henry 2001: 130-131). Two subsequent pieces of legislation passed in the 1990's also took an uncompromising approach: the Conservative government's 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act and its Refugee and Asylum Seekers Act. The latter specified that asylum seekers should not get social security and other benefits, it introduced measures such as fingerprinting to address concerns about social security fraud, it 'reduced obligations on local authorities to provide permanent accommodation and [it] removed some rights of appeal' (Layton-Henry 2001: 130-131). The belief was that tough immigration and asylum policies were needed to safeguard domestic race relations.

And so, these measures developed alongside British domestic policies meant to prevent racial discrimination. For instance, Race Relations Acts in 1965, 1968 and 1976 were all oriented towards dealing with both direct and then indirect discrimination (the latter in 1976) in areas of education, employment and housing. A Race Relations Board, which would become the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was also established. Multiple forms of racism and discrimination persisted despite these efforts, and public figures continued to play into racist public hysteria. In 1978, Thatcher echoing Enoch Powell-like sentiments, stated that the 'British character' might be 'swamped' by immigrants from different cultures (Budge et al 2002:650). There was little formal political opposition to these views, given that since World War II (when three MPs of Indian origin were elected), and until 1986, the House of Commons contained not a single MP from a racial and ethnic minority background. Of course, various forms of political mobilization did occur on the ground, and increasingly, in and against the state (Parekh 1991; Meehan 1999:24), often instigated by British racial and ethnic minority women (Chatterjee 1995; Griffin 1995; Roy 1995; Mirza 1997).

Nevertheless, the systemic nature of the problem was tragically illustrated in the 1993 case of Stephen Lawrence. This young black teenager, while standing at a bus stop, was attacked and stabbed to death by five young white men. The police took their time in getting to the scene of the crime and then provided little support in gathering evidence that could lead to the prosecution of the identified suspects. Later it would be revealed that police officers had even lied about what took place. The incident led to calls for an inquiry, but the Conservative government resisted any action on the matter.

From 1995-1996 alone, the police recorded 12, 222 racial incidents in England and Wales, a 3% increase from the previous years (Budge et al, 2001:651). When New Labour came to power in 1997, action was obviously necessary and thus it wasted little time in launching an official inquiry into the Stephen Lawrence case. The ensuing Macpherson Report of 1999, named institutional racism and identified it in all major British institutions. It also acknowledged that some of the police officers who appeared before the inquiry were ' "palpably wrong" and could not have told the truth, and that the police investigation had been ' "marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and failure of leadership by senior officers' " (Budge et al 2002:531). Seventy recommendations were made.

By setting up the Macpherson Inquiry, the Blair government did try to 'engage in a national conversation about how it could tackle the racism affecting its institutions and infecting its private, public and popular culture' (Younge 2002:11). It proceeded to introduce a new offence of racial aggravation in the 1998 Criminal Justice Act, and then extended the Commission on Racial Equality's (CRE's) ambit (Driver and Martell 2002: 152). Acting on Macpherson Report recommendations, amendments to the Race Relations Act in 2000 and 2003 were made, with the

latter implementing EC Article 13 Race Directive outlawing discrimination on 'grounds of racial or ethnic origin in the areas of employment, vocational training, goods and services, social protection, education and housing' (Squires, 2004:6). There have also been other initiatives coming out of a Home Office which now houses a Racial Equality Unit. And yet, it was not long before 'the pendulum of racial discourse [began] swinging back to an altogether more complacent and less challenging era' (Younge 2002:11).

Despite a long history of immigration and emigration, 'and a population stemming from multiple roots and complex patterns of inward, outward and return migration through processes of conquest, colonization and decolonization,' (Platt 2003:240), Britain continues to act (both in terms of the state and the general public) hostilely to those deemed to be 'foreigners'. Sensational media reports stoke xenophobic and reactionary fires. The widespread (unfounded) perception is that newcomers are getting unfair priority when it comes to public services, that they take away jobs from British born citizens, or that they contribute to growing crime rates (Krieger 1999:130). Recent polls emphasize public opposition to further immigration, and indicate that a sizable section of the British public blames im/migrants and asylum seekers for deficiencies in public services.

All this takes place, and still the numbers of people seeking asylum in Britain continued to rise significantly. Whereas in the 1990's the number of asylum seekers ran from 20,000- 40,000 a year, since then, the numbers have doubled (CIH 2003:2) and in recent years, almost tripled.<sup>9</sup> Thus im/migration, refugees and asylum seekers are once again 'hot button issues' and New Labour has tried to tread carefully, but in so doing the government reveals the limitations of its social exclusion efforts. That is, rather than working on social exclusion with im/migrants and racial and ethnic minority communities, there have been efforts that lead to more exclusionary results.

Given negative public sentiments, and in light of its efforts to disassociate itself from an earlier 'loony left' image, New Labour has gone out of its way to show that it does not have a 'soft touch' when it comes to im/migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The Blair government played up its tough side by not only tightening entry controls, tackling illegal immigration and accelerating the application process for asylum seekers, but also by restricting benefits, putting in place punitive measures, and promoting a policy of dispersal. The first New Labour Home Secretary succumbed to 'knee jerk populism' not only in relation to children in trouble with the law, but also in terms of immigration and asylum law. With respect to the latter, Driver and Martell observe that Jack Straw's 'tough stance on asylum seekers' revealed 'that New Britain isn't always as compassionate and cosmopolitan as we are led to believe by New Labour' (2002:150).

Little more than a year after its election win, the Labour government published a White Paper that was called 'Fairer, Faster and Firmer: A Modern Approach to Immigration' (1998). As part of this 'modern' and 'firm' approach, appeal and legal aid rights have been reduced. For example, asylum applicants are held in detention centres, when they have not committed any crimes. Asylum seekers who are being investigated do not have the right to work (initially, they had no right to work for the first six months – but then the right to work after 6 months was withdrawn) (Layton-Henry 2001:132). Like the Conservatives, the Blair government extended carriers' liability.<sup>10</sup> New Labour also introduced a Bill whereby social benefits for asylum seekers would come in the form of vouchers rather than cash. Although vouchers have since been withdrawn in the face of opposition, more restrictive policies have come into force in relation to both the entry of asylum seekers and their treatment once in the country.

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<sup>9</sup> Revealingly, it has gone down somewhat in the last year because of deliberate government policy to reduce numbers.

<sup>10</sup> Levying greater fines against carriers that contained undocumented passengers.

More specifically, the Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999 created a number of problems. One part of this Act took away various means tested benefits for those who are 'subject to immigration control', including benefits from the Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support to Child Benefit and Disability Allowance. Asylum seekers can, however, claim support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). NASS, a new body established in the Home Office, provides assistance but it is usually conditional on being dispersed from London and only gives asylum seekers about 70% of the income support level (Fitzpatrick 2004). The government's objective was to provide basic needs for asylum seekers and house them 'more evenly throughout the country' (Pierson 2002:204), but, in effect, this meant that they are given vouchers of accommodation compelling them to go with little recourse to challenge where they are sent (Pierson 2002:207). One report suggests that:

Some dispersal has been successful, leading to practices in places like Yorkshire...Other cases were unsuccessful, most dramatically with the murder of the Kurdish asylum seeker Firsat Dag in Sighthill, Glasgow, the use of poor quality accommodation in places like North West England, and difficulty in securing sufficient 'dispersal'. (CIH 2003:3).

Restrictions are placed on the help available to asylum seekers, from temporary housing to limited financial assistance. Conditions are imposed: 'intended to exclude "unpopular" groups from entitlement to social security benefits' (Fitzpatrick 2004). Most recently, the Blair government has introduced rules whereby adult asylum seekers who do not claim asylum immediately, ' "as soon as reasonably practicable" ' are not entitled to basic assistance (CIH 2003:2). This has left many destitute. Given their experiences in their countries of origin, and in light of their treatment once in Britain, many asylum seekers will live on an income that is below income support levels for many years.

Asylum seekers are treated differently, and this applies to women asylum seekers and their children as well. For example, maternity payments are limited to £300 for asylum seeking women as compared to £500 for other women. Whereas women receive milk tokens for children up to age 5, women asylum seekers receive these for children only up to the age of 3 (Fitzpatrick 2004). Furthermore, because women asylum seekers are not eligible for benefit, consider the dire circumstances they face in the case of family breakdown or violence. If they have children, they can try to get help under the Children Act, but this assistance is not consistently received, and when it is, it is typically directed towards the child not the mother. This means, of course, that in the context of family violence, women 'subject to immigration control' often have little choice but to stay with their abusive husbands.

After Straw, Home Secretary Blunkett was entrusted to revamp asylum policy. Like his predecessor, Blunkett's MUD-inspired approach extended from children to im/migrants and asylum seekers. In Blunkett's view, 'the only way Britain will accept further decades of immigration, and a fully multi-ethnic future, is on the basis of tough rules and "order and stability"' (Hard Man 2002). Blunkett also referred disapprovingly to 'arranged marriages to foreigners' as though they were 'something alien to British culture' when one columnist reminds readers 'of the six British monarchs of the last century five married foreigners and most of these unions were arranged' (Younge 2002:11).

Under Blunkett, the Home Office began propagating limited notions of Britishness by, for example, insisting on the use of the English language, and pushing for language classes and 'citizenship lessons' for new immigrants. The Home Office White Paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, recommended that all new immigrants: would require a working knowledge of English as

well as a basic knowledge of UK culture and history, and envisaged new citizens swearing an oath of allegiance to Queen and Country (Coxall et al, 2003:394). Acting against advice from a panel of experts, the Home Office decided to introduce 'tougher than expected English tests for new immigrants. People wanting to become British citizens will have to demonstrate a defined minimum standard of English or take a compulsory course of language and citizenship classes for which those who can afford will be expected to pay' (de Lotbiniere 2004:1).

The post 9/11 climate and 'war on terror' has added fuel to the fire. In the public mind, and fed by hysterical reports in the tabloid press, asylum seekers (and also Muslims) are sometimes linked to terrorists. This perception in people's minds was effectively cemented by the fact that a number of terrorist suspects arrested in January 2003 proved to be asylum seekers. As Coxall et al recount:

The events of 11 September 2001 and the war against terror not only raised suspicions over asylum seekers, but caused massive problems for members of ethnic communities long settled in Britain. Britain's now substantial Muslim population have been victims of irrational panic reactions in what has been termed 'Islamophobia' (2003:394).

Thus, Home Office White Paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* also suggested that citizens could be stripped of their citizenship if they concealed any involvement with terrorism (Coxall et al, 2003:394).

Recent developments further emphasize the hard line approach taken, especially when it comes to illegal migrants. Home Office figures indicate over 1,000 illegal migrants have been arrested after 'random swoops on Underground passengers and pedestrians in London'. This practice has become 'a regular weekday event in the capital, with 235 operations in the past 15 months' on the part of police and immigration service officials. Home office information suggests that 717 of those who were arrested constituted failed asylum seekers ('More than 1,000,' 2004:15).

All this has come to pass, and yet the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in Britain remains deplorable. As just one example, consider the case of a young, Kurdish man with a disability, who had been granted refugee status. In September 2004, he left the apartment he shared with his brothers and friends, to buy a pizza and:

Within the hour he was dead, clubbed from behind in a single devastating blow. Police say he was killed because of the colour of his skin, but believed it was an isolated incident. Others from the 200-strong Kurdish community disagree. They talked of constant abuse and harassment. 'In this society, when you are foreign you have to look behind you all the time to see who is there,' said one (Brown 2004: 13).

This incident is suggestive of a wider pattern. A study released by the Institute of Race Relations in autumn 2004 reported that 180 asylum seekers died trying to reach Britain illegally. Many expired as stowaways on planes, trucks and boats, but 34 killed themselves 'when faced with deportation, four died accidentally as they tried to avoid immigration officials...Fifteen were killed in race-related attacks and others died while working illegally or in prison, policy or psychiatric custody.' What is more, the author of the report, Harmit Athwal, suggested that these numbers represent a 'huge underestimate of the true death toll' as most of these deaths go unrecognized' (see 'Death Toll highlighted', 2004:14).

Despite such tragic realities, making the link between social exclusion and im/migrants, refugees, asylum seekers has not been a prime consideration for the Blair government. And, as Ruud Lubbers, UN High Commissioner for Refugees concluded in a commentary written in the *Guardian* – ‘A policy built on exclusion is not only morally reprehensible, it is also impractical: it will simply push all forms of migration, including refugees, further underground’ (Lubbers 2004).

What is even more disconcerting, given New Labour’s concern with children, is that this inattention extends to children of migrants. Since the 1990’s especially, large number of unaccompanied children have arrived in Britain, mostly London:

At first they came from countries such as Ethiopia and Somalia and subsequently from Kosovo, Algeria, China and Afghanistan. Children are especially vulnerable to violence, have no voice and no independent access to services. Many of the unaccompanied were young people able to demonstrate sufficient independence skills to survive in supported accommodation with the equivalent of Income Support in cash payments from local authority social service departments through Section 17 of the Children Act. That support system terminated by statute in 1999.’ (Pierson 2002:205).

While this issue of unaccompanied children was touched upon in the 2003 Green paper, *Every Child Matters*, the group that continues to be blatantly ignored is the children who accompany asylum seekers.

Recall also that many of the targets of racially based crimes are children and youth. Beyond Stephen Lawrence, in the 1990’s alone, we can refer to a shockingly long list of racially-based murders of young people many of whom are the children of recent im/migrants:

Rohit Duggal (15), Rolan Adams (15), Navid Sadiq (15), Liam Harrison (14), Manish Patel (15), Rikki Reel (18), Imran Khan (15), Michael Menson (29), Ali Ibrahim (21), Ashiq Hussain (21), Ruhullah Aramesh (24), Panchadcharam Sathiharan (28), Donna O’Dwyer (26)...Thousands more have been maimed by racists- often young white malcontents (Alibhai-Brown 2000:104-105).

The incident recounted above, involving the young Kurdish man, shows racially-based violence causing death continued to occur in 2004.

What are women, the mothers of these children and young people, left to think? Here, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown reflects on the feelings of Stephen’s mother, Doreen Lawrence:

You watch Doreen Lawrence’s face displaying at once tenacity and impossible pain as she seeks justice for the killers of her son, Stephen, and you see what hopes were killed on that day at the bus stop- the hopes that drive immigration, the hopes of a young black woman who felt strong enough to risk procreation in a racist society, and the hopes of a mother who felt that the future was worth all the troubles and sacrifices that motherhood brings. Motherhood here cannot only be examined through the white, gender perspective because such an analysis fails to explain or understand what a woman like Doreen Lawrence has gone through (Alibhai-Brown, 2000:219).

Instead of responding to this challenge re youth and children, the Labour government has failed to address its predecessor’s actions that worked to limit the scope and effect of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child having to do with refugee children. Consequently, refugee children do

not fall under Britain's 1989 Children Act. This means that the welfare of children of refugees is not held in great regard leading to censure by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2002 (Lister 2003b: 435).

In the end, rather than tackle social exclusion, what the Home Office has done, of late, is put into place several measures aimed at promoting 'community cohesion.' More specifically, in response to Stephen Lawrence, partly as a reaction to developments post 9/11, and mostly as a direct response to race riots that occurred in several northern towns in the spring and summer of 2001, an independent review committee was set up. After it reported, the Labour government came up with its own report, *Building Cohesive Communities: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion*, in December 2001. This, in turn, sparked various measures from a new Community Cohesion Unit in the Home Office, to new grants, and most recently, a consultation process, *Strength in Diversity: Towards a community cohesion and race equality strategy* (Home Office 2004:3).

However, these efforts focus on cohesion and not exclusion. Part of the former does address citizenship concerns. But here, the emphasis is more on integration than tackling deeply rooted inequalities. For instance, citizenship ceremonies, education and activities are promoted so that 'All citizens, whether by birth or naturalized, White or from a Black and minority ethnic (BME) group...need to be able to see themselves as "British" whether or not they add their cultural identity to the term' (ibid: 8).

Once again, the Blair government's initiatives are insufficiently 'joined up'. In fact, the Home Office even admits that while it has been 'pursuing a cross departmental agenda, there is not yet ownership within other departments and most have failed to integrate community cohesion and equality' (ibid: 18).

## **Part V: Conclusions:**

### **Challenging the Statuses and Practices Citizenship, A Case in Point: Women, Children Minorities and Migrants**

When such discrimination, racial hatred, 'deliberate and unconscious exclusion are the reality' (Alibhai-Brown 2001: 105), it becomes patently clear that the Blair government is not casting its net wide enough as it promises to deal with the worst off when it comes to social exclusion. Despite the prevalence of discourses of social exclusion and citizenship, then, the Labour government's actual responses have been both insufficient and contradictory especially when collective identities like those of gender, race, ethnicity and class are factored in.

As we have seen, some children are included, but others are excluded. For the most part, women are only included if their concerns are linked to certain children, or are a part of measures that promote a universal breadwinner model. Active citizenship, in the sense of being active in the labour market, is equated with good citizenship. The complicated relationship between public and private when it comes to citizenship is obscured. This negatively affects women as the contributions of the private sphere to citizenship, primarily women's contributions, are not valorized in this good paid worker/good citizen nexus. At the same time, this citizen-worker ideal does not even apply consistently to all women, as the needs of racial and ethnic minorities and im/migrants and asylum seekers, are particularly disregarded.

Clearly, these complex intersecting identities need to be written back in along with more expansive views of social exclusion and citizenship. This would bring to light the plight of outsiders such as women, racial and ethnic minorities, im/migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and their

children. This would also mean that the British government would not only deal with poverty, but lack of power, discrimination and prejudice, and it would push for full participation and society and engender belonging. A truly comprehensive definition of social exclusion, then, would highlight the interconnections between collective identity and poverty, access to goods and services from housing to health and well being, would incorporate broader, more substantive citizen rights, and foster a wider array of socio-political networks and meaningful senses belonging.

According to Stuart Hall, race and ethnicity ' "Is a blanked out space as far as the language of New Labour is concerned, written out of the imagined post-Millennium New Britain which the government is struggling to construct" ' (Hall cited in Margetts, 2002 193). More optimistically, the most recent documents from the SEU begin to hint that racial discrimination will become more of an emphasis. For instance, in a September 2004 report, *Breaking the Cycle* the SEU has added 'discrimination' to its definition of social exclusion, something that was notably absent in its 2001 definition cited at the start of this paper. The 2004 definition suggests:

Social exclusion is about more than income poverty. It is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas face a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, **discrimination**, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing so that they can create a vicious cycle in people's lives (2004:3, our emphasis).

What is more, this same document also indicates that there are many groups 'with complex needs' and that there are 'three main broad and overlapping groups of people for whom policies consistently seem less effective' with one of these categories being: 'People from some ethnic minority groups, including asylum seekers and refugees' (2004:7). This is precisely where we argue the Labour government has been remiss. Indeed it should vigorously pursue the priorities that it has only just begun to acknowledge. But of course, now we have to wait and see if these words lead to deeds.

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