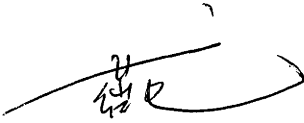# Social Inclusion and Children in Australia

Yu Wei Neo
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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
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Declaration

This thesis is my original work except where cited. The data used in this thesis were collected during my fieldwork in Australia in 2011, as a doctoral candidate at the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University.

Yu Wei Neo
November 2013

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Abstract

Social inclusion is a broad concept that has multiple meanings. Studies on how social inclusion is being understood by policy stakeholders often focus on the perspectives of a single group of policy stakeholders such as policymakers or service users. However, it is through the relations that these different policy stakeholders have with each other that construct and co-construct the discourse of social inclusion. In particular, children deemed to be socially excluded are the focus of the social inclusion agenda in Australia, but what social inclusion means to them is unclear. Therefore, this thesis seeks to compare the different perspectives of social inclusion from policymakers, service providers and children facing multiple disadvantages. By understanding these different or similar interpretations of social inclusion, this thesis examines how these interpretations shape social inclusion policies and services for children. This thesis uses a combination of research methods – discourse analysis on key policy texts published by government agencies and service providers, interviews and focus groups with policymakers, service providers and older children, as well as craft activities for younger children. Findings from this thesis show that policymakers and service providers share a broad understanding of social inclusion but children's accounts of their experiences of social inclusion are missing in the policy discourse of social inclusion. In particular, the policy discourse and practices of social inclusion programmes reveal the different social constructions of children that contradicts children's own experiences and understanding of what social inclusion means.

This thesis argues that when children are treated as co-narrators of the social inclusion discourse, they will bring new narratives that suggest ways of translating the values of dignity, respect and fairness into policy practice. In particular, when social policies are based on rights of 'being', the policy shifts from changing individuals' behaviour to removing structural barriers that prevent people from exercising their rights. Similarly, a children's rights perspective on social inclusion will focus less on control or disciplining children into ideal citizens, and more on creating opportunities in policy and service designs that enable children to exercise their right to participate in matters important to them.

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List of Abbreviations

AFL   Alternative Learning Programmes

ASIB   Australian Social Inclusion Board

BFO   Building Family Opportunities

BSL   Brotherhood of St Laurence

BSL & MIAESR   Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research.

CFC   Communities for Children

DEEWR   The Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations

FaHCSIA   The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

FLO   Flexible Learning Option

ICAN   Innovative Community Action Networks

PM&C   The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

SASIB   South Australia Social Inclusion Board

SASIU   South Australia Social Inclusion Unit

SIU   Social Inclusion Unit (Federal)

TAFE   Technical and Further Education

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1   Background

The definition of social exclusion is widely contested and ambiguous (Atkinson 1998, p. 13; Silver 1994, p. 536). Indeed, most scholars and policymakers would agree that the concept of social exclusion is complex and has diverse definitions (for example, see lists of definitions in Hayes et al. 2008, pp. 7-8; Taket et al. 2009, pp. 7-8). Social exclusion is a broad concept that may refer to the effects of poverty or the way people interact in social settings (Hill et al. 2004, pp. 79-80). Even so, an intuitive understanding of social exclusion often focuses on the multi-dimensional character of disadvantages and deprivations faced by various individuals or social groups. These disadvantages or deprivations are usually persistent or long-term and are often passed on to the next generation. However, what these specific disadvantages are, their magnitude and how they relate to each other are often disputed. At the same time, the usefulness of the social exclusion discourse in actual policymaking is debatable and the ambiguity of social exclusion is both celebrated as well as criticised. This ambiguity begs the question of how the metaphor has been used, by whom and for what purpose (Levitas 2003). Thus, there are on-going attempts to clarify the meaning of social exclusion at the policy level (see Gillies 2005; Levitas 2005; Lister 1998).

Most of the debate on the meanings of social exclusion is concentrated in the UK and in Europe, where the social exclusion policy discourse has had a longer history. Unlike the UK or in Europe, Australia has chosen the policy label of 'social inclusion' rather than 'social exclusion' as a deliberate attempt to use a positive framing for social exclusion issues. Yet, the positive labelling of 'social inclusion' continues to refer to individuals and social groups who are deemed to be excluded from participating fully as citizens. Thus, social inclusion is an aspirational concept that frames issues of social exclusion as 'what it should be' rather than 'what is'. Although social inclusion is a relatively new policy discourse in Australia that became the primary focus of the South Australian government in 2002 and under the Federal government in 2007, there has been a growing pool of research on social inclusion in Australia (see Hayes et al. 2008; Taket et al. 2009; Saunders 2011). The list of specific studies on the various aspects of social

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inclusion is too numerous to include here, such as: 1) Vinson's (2007) comprehensive study that maps out the locations of disadvantage in Australia; 2) Saunders (2003, 2005, 2008) and Saunders et al (2007) work on poverty and defining indicators of disadvantage in Australia; 3) Whiteford and Adema's (2007) study on the effects of employment strategies on child poverty; as well as 4) Hayes's (2007) study on the inter-related factors of risk that lead to poor child outcomes, are a few highly influential work that have shaped the Federal government's policy discourse on social inclusion.

However, while the pool of research on social inclusion and poverty is growing in Australia, these studies are mainly focused on the measurement of social inclusion or examining the causal and risk factors of social inclusion. While these are important areas of social inclusion research, this thesis seeks to examine the concept of social inclusion itself and how it is being understood in Australia. Therefore, this thesis is focused on understanding the ideas and meanings of social inclusion that frame the policy thinking in Australia. Instead of asking questions such as, 'what are the causes and effects of social inclusion?', this thesis asks questions such as, 'how does the aspirational understanding of social inclusion shape policies on social inclusion?'. This line of inquiry is based on interpretive theories of governance (see for example, Bang & Sørenson 1999; Bevir 2011; Bevir & Rhodes 2006; Dryzek 1993; Ingram & Schneider 2005; Lipsky 1980; Schram 1995; Stone 2002) that seek to understand how policies are being framed and shaped by the meanings that policy stakeholders give to the policy problems, as well as the way they understand the target population. At the same time, these interpretative studies on governance focus on the relationships between the different players within the policymaking process and argue that issues of power and social relations are integral to understanding why certain policy problems remain entrenched.

1.2   The Main Research Questions

Following interpretive theories of governance, this thesis will be focusing on three main groups of policy players that shape the policy discourse of social inclusion in Australia – policymakers, service providers and children who are deemed to be socially excluded. The main research questions of this thesis are:

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a)   How is social inclusion understood by policymakers, service providers and children[1] facing multiple disadvantages?

b)   How do these different or similar interpretations of social inclusion shape policies and services for children facing multiple disadvantages?

The reasons for focusing on children facing multiple disadvantages are twofold. Firstly, children in jobless families and children at-risk of long-term disadvantages are identified as a priority under the social inclusion agenda of the Federal government. Secondly, although there is an increasing awareness among policymakers about the need to include children's views[2] in their policymaking process, children's participation in government decision-making remains arbitrary and inconsistent. A failure to consider children's experiences of poverty could lead to policy responses that fail to address child poverty effectively (McDonald 2009, p. 7). Children are not directly represented by powerful interest groups that may influence policy-making processes or service delivery reforms. As noted by Lansdown (2000, p. 7),

> Children are socially and politically excluded from most national and European institutions. They cannot vote. They have little or no access to the media. They have only limited access to the courts. They are not members of powerful lobbies which campaign and lobby governments such as the trade unions, the commercial sector or environmental groups. Without access to these processes which are integral to the exercise of democratic rights, children and their experience remain hidden from view and they are, in consequence, denied effective recognition as citizens.

The lack of children's representation in powerful lobby groups does not mean that children's involvement in these groups would serve their interests better. Rather, it is to highlight that the channels and mechanisms for democratic citizen participation are adult-centric and many of these processes explicitly exclude children's membership. Often, children are excluded from policy-making processes not because they are wilfully being denied opportunities to participate but because policymakers do not even think of children as policy stakeholders (Prout & Tisdall 2006, p. 244). At the same

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[1] In this thesis, children are broadly defined as anyone under the age of 18, consistent with the definition given by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Where young people are mentioned in this thesis, they refer to the older group of children aged 12 to 18, which is consistent with how most service providers in this thesis define the age group of the young people they work with.

[2] One prominent example is Australia's 2020 Youth Summit in 2008 which included participants aged 15-24.

time, there is an increasing focus on the importance of developing meaningful, child-centric policy decision-making processes for children, especially on issues of participation and social inclusion (Tisdall & Davies 2004; Tisdall et al. 2006). In particular, there is a growing pool of research on children's views on the social and economic challenges that they face as a result of their family being poor or receiving welfare benefits (see Crowley & Vulliamy 2007; Ridge 2002; Roker 1998; Skattebol et al. 2012; Sutton et al. 2007; Sweeney 2008; Taylor 2004; Van der Hoek 2005). These studies on the impact of social and economic disadvantages on children reveal the complex and inter-related nature of social inclusion that is difficult to capture through statistical social indicators. More importantly, these studies show the resourcefulness of children as social actors, who often suppress their own needs or engage in a range of unpaid work at home (for example, caring for younger siblings) so as to lessen the stress on their families. Similarly, this thesis recognises children as social actors who are co-producers of the discourse on social inclusion and supports the theories on children's agency by scholars of the new sociology of childhood (James et al. 1998; James & Prout 1990; Mayall 2002). Moreover, children demonstrate a complex and nuanced understanding of social exclusion compared to dominant policy discourses on social exclusion (Davis 2007). The intent of this thesis is to position children as policy stakeholders in their own right by bringing their narratives into direct comparison with other narratives from policymakers and service providers. In doing so, this thesis aims to generate a more child-inclusive policy discourse on social inclusion. However, involving children in research or in other participatory activities pose several methodological challenges. The main ethical challenges of involving children in this research are discussed in Chapter Three on Methodology. In addition, Chapter Three elaborates on the overall methodology and research methods used in this thesis.

In addition to understanding children's views on social inclusion, this thesis also focuses on service providers' understanding of social inclusion. Service providers' understanding of social inclusion is important because they translate policies into programmes and services to service users. In this way, service providers, especially frontline workers, act as the 'street-level' bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980) whose relationships with the service users shape the user experience of the policies (see Darbyshire et al. 2006; Thompson et al. 2006). Having to work with both policymakers

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and their service users means that service providers are often expected to provide feedback from service users to policymakers. While service providers frequently become advocates for their service users, they can also contribute unintentionally to the social exclusion of service users by stigmatising them or through restrictive practices (Berry et al. 2010). At the same time, service providers continue to face challenges in changing their institutional culture or meeting service targets that limit their engagement with their users, despite actively promoting user participation (Milbourne 2009). Within the social inclusion policy discourse, service providers' interpretation of what defines a socially inclusive service or programme will determine the service approach used towards service users. However, service providers also frame their work according to their organisational and professional values that may be similar or different from values underpinning the social policy discourse (Axford 2010). As Bessell (2009a) points out, adult attitudes towards children's participation are diverse and complex, therefore, further investigation is needed on which attitudes facilitate or obstruct children's participation. The extent to which the values that service providers frame their work support the values that their child service users regard as important is investigated in this thesis.

In the next chapter (Chapter Two), a literature review will discuss the studies on the discourses on social inclusion, social exclusion and poverty, as well as studies on children's views of the social and economic disadvantages they face. Chapter Two will also look at some of the studies examining service providers' practices and perceptions of their clients that shape the way they carry out their work. In the discussion on the current literature on social inclusion, Chapter Two argues that it is insufficient to understand the concept of social inclusion using isolated perspectives from policymakers, service providers or children as service users. Rather, an interpretive analysis of what social inclusion means requires a detailed examination on how social inclusion is being constructed and co-constructed by relationships between policymakers, service providers and children as service users. Thus, this thesis contributes to the existing literature on social inclusion by bringing together these different narratives from different policy stakeholders.

1.3   Theoretical and Policy Significance

The theoretical basis of this thesis rests on what Bevir (2011) would define as an interpretative theory on governance. Interpretative theory sees human actors as 'self-interpreting beings' (Taylor 1985) whose actions are driven by how they interpret the world around them rather than by genetic or external factors. In addition, an interpretative research is empirical, taking into account language, texts as well as statistical data, to uncover the meanings behind these forms of data that shape action and understanding (Yanow 2006). An interpretive theoretical framework not only understands social actions as situated within specific social or historical constructs, it also focuses on the intentionality and contingency of human action (Bevir 2011). Instead of avoiding the relative cultural, moral and political dimensions of meaning-making, interpretive theory places these dimensions as central to social inquiry so that these dimensions may be exposed and be subjected to critique (Richardson & Fowers 1998). Therefore, an interpretive theory acknowledges Foucault's (1980, p. 142) argument that power is productive, positive and relational, rather than fixed, external and necessarily repressive (see also Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983, p. 186). At the same time, an interpretive theory recognises and centres its focus on the meanings or beliefs that drive individuals to 'create, sustain, and modify governance' (Bevir 2011, p. 58). Within this theory, individuals and the meanings that they give to their actions become central in what drives them to either reinforce social constructs or to change these constructs.

> Interpretive theory also insists that these beliefs do not simply reflect people's allegedly given interests or institutional locations. Rather, people reach the beliefs they do by changing an inherited tradition to respond to dilemmas. Because we cannot read-off people's beliefs from knowledge of social facts about them, we have to explore both how traditions prompt them to adopt certain beliefs and how dilemmas prompt them to change traditions. (Bevir 2011, p. 58)

In this way, interpretive theory stands out from other theories of social action in that it gives primary consideration to human agency rather than treating individuals as passive, isolated entities separated and helpless against their historical, social or institutional contexts. Interpretive research is focused on the 'everyday theories' used by situational participants and how these participants attach meanings to their actions (Haverland & Yanow 2012, p. 405). Given that different social actors have a part to play in either maintaining the status quo or changing the relations of power, it is insufficient to only

study how social inclusion is being understood by policymakers. Service providers, in particular, translate policies into actual services and programmes and, in doing so, have the capacity to act as switchmen that change the way service users experience the impact of policies. Similarly, children are active social agents who give their own meanings to their experiences of social inclusion. Hence, within an interpretive theory, this thesis first seeks to understand how different social actors in Australia – policymakers, service providers and children regarded as socially excluded – give meanings and values to social inclusion. By emphasising the agency of all these different social actors, this research gives value to their various views and uncovers ways or circumstances in which unequal power relations may be challenged.

Only by understanding the meanings that different social actors give to social inclusion is one able to further clarify how these meanings impact on policies and services. Therefore, the significance of the second research question of this thesis on how the similarities and differences in the interpretations of social inclusion shape policies and services, is based on the theoretical assumption that beliefs and values drive action. This draws on social constructionist theories that explain how policy responses are shaped by the way policy questions are framed and the way policy target populations are conceptualised (see Bacchi 1999; Gusfield 1989; Harris 2000; Schneider & Ingram 2007; Schneider & Sidney 2009; Schram 1993; Schram & Soss 2001). In order to be convincing, public policies use familiar discursive practices such as narrative, rhetoric and metaphors to frame the understandings of problems they aim to attack (Stone 2002). Hence, it is not surprising that even though the policy discourse on social inclusion is relatively new compared to a discourse such as poverty, the social inclusion discourse continues to be based upon entrenched constructs of the poor or those deemed to be disadvantaged.

It is common for policymakers to use symbols or metaphors to naturalise the depiction of the problem by making it seem 'real' (Schram 1995, p. 125). As Foucault (1972) argued, discursive practices produce and reproduce knowledge that becomes naturalised as facts over time. The most powerful function of discourse lies in its embedded features in everyday, invisible and self-monitoring practices (Foucault 1979) that are unquestioned. Therefore, while the policy discourse on social inclusion draw upon

entrenched social constructs about the people regarded as socially excluded, this perpetuates social constructs, establishing them as unchallenged 'facts'. By aiming to uncover how the 'facts' of social inclusion are being constructed, this thesis begins by unpacking and questioning what appears to be common sense about being disadvantaged, in particular for children who are considered to be socially excluded. Through taking apart the different layers of what social inclusion means, this thesis uncovers not only the rhetorical or narrative devices employed, it also identifies the persistent social representations of children deemed to be socially excluded. Not only do these persistent social representations of children shape children's policies and services, the fact that they are social constructions mean that they can be reconstructed. As proposed by sociologists of childhood (James et al. 1998; Mayall 2002; Prout & James 1990), understanding childhood as a social construction may well be the first step towards reconstructing new paradigms and theories on childhood that recognises children's agency and their own experiences of childhood.

Therefore, it is insufficient to merely look at how children are being represented in the social inclusion discourse without finding out what children themselves feel or think about social inclusion. As Bacchi (2000) argued, discourse theorists need to consider the lived experiences of those whose views are being marginalised by the dominant policy discourses as well as to recognise their contribution towards shaping or reshaping these dominant discourses. Children as social actors, co-produce and give their own meanings to their experiences on social exclusion. Including different views from children who are considered as socially excluded means that they are treated as experts in their own lives, rather than as secondary characters in policy research (Mason & Danby 2011). Treating children as experts in their own lives positions them as co-narrators of the social inclusion discourse rather than as passive, silent consumers of social inclusion programmes. However, as Davies (2007) pointed out, it would be naïve to assume that the social exclusion of children can be overcome solely by their involvement in participatory projects. When children are given the opportunity to participate in policymaking processes, their participation is treated as a 'favour' rather than their right, and insufficient resources in government departments limit the quality of engagement with children (Tisdall & Bell 2006). Similarly, children may find that

their concerns are not addressed despite being involved in decision-making processes (Tisdall & Davis 2004).

Children's right to participation is considered one of the key basic rights of children as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, children's participation is more than merely involving children in research or policy processes. Discussions on children's participation need to consider the dynamic and complex nature of children's power relations with adults (Davies 2007). Furthermore, children are socially excluded from full participation as citizens due to a particular combination of institutional barriers – patriarchy, social class divisions and the principle of protection (Mayall 2006, p. 201). In fact, children's right to protection is sometimes used as a reason by adults to deny children's freedom to participate in various activities. This research will contribute to on-going discussions on what constitutes meaningful participation for children as well as the difficulties in ensuring that participatory processes are fair for all children. At the same time, children are not the only social actors responsible for upholding their right to participation or for removing the barriers to their participation. More importantly, this thesis demonstrates that both policymakers and service providers play crucial roles in challenging the entrenched social constructions of children as well as enabling meaningful participatory processes for children. When policymakers and service providers take children's views seriously, they make decisions that better reflect the experiences of those children who are regarded as socially excluded.

1.4   Outline of Thesis and Research Sub-Questions

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. The first chapter, Introduction, gives a broad overview of the rationale for this research and states the research questions of this thesis. The second chapter, Literature Review, provides a detailed discussion of the key debates and studies on the policy discourses of social inclusion, children's views on social exclusion and service providers' role in implementing policies into services. The third chapter, Methodology, describes the research methods used in this thesis and discusses the challenges faced while conducting children's research as part of the fieldwork for this research.

The findings of this thesis begin by tracing how social inclusion became a dominant policy discourse in Australia. In particular, Chapter Four, Language, Symbols and Discourse of Social Inclusion, conducts a discourse analysis on the language and symbols used in policy documents and key texts on social inclusion. Chapter Four looks at how social inclusion is being conceptualised and how the discourse sets the context that frames the way policymakers and service providers talk about, and make sense of, social inclusion. In this way, Chapter Four uncovers the 'discursive formations' (Foucault 1972) of social inclusion that simultaneously set boundaries on what is knowable about social inclusion as well as hide other forms of knowledge on social inclusion. Hence, Chapter Four specifically addresses the following research sub-questions:

a)   How is the policy discourse of social inclusion constructed by policy makers and service providers?

b)   What language, narratives or symbols are employed in these discourses?

c)   Who are the socially excluded as defined under these discourses and in particular, how are children portrayed?

The discourse analysis in Chapter Four reveals policymakers and service providers as the main narrators of social inclusion and identifies how policymakers and service providers support each others' narratives while emphasising some marginal differences. In addition, it shows how individuals who are regarded as socially excluded, especially children, are being constructed in these policy texts on social inclusion. In addition, Chapter Four discusses the silence of children's views within the policy discourse of social inclusion.

The aspirational language in the discourse of social inclusion has an effect on the institutional structures of the government as well as the practices of service providers. In fact, the social inclusion discourse differentiates itself from the discourse on poverty by focusing on partnerships, a 'joined-up' approach, not just within the government sector but with third sector agencies as well as individuals considered to be socially excluded (Koikkalainen 2011). Therefore, Chapter Five, Power Structures and Power Relations, looks at how concepts such as 'joined-up' government, 'whole-of-community' and 'strengths-based approaches' shape the power relations among

policymakers, service providers and children deemed to be socially excluded. Consequently, Chapter Five addresses the following research sub-questions:

a) How does the discursive power of social inclusion shape the institutional structures within the government?

b) How does the discursive power of social inclusion shape the policy and service approaches in relation to people who are deemed to be socially excluded?

c) What are the contradictions and tensions brought about by the changes to the power structures and services approaches?

In many ways, the discourse on social inclusion illustrates what Rose (1999, p. 74) calls the government of freedom and the use of technologies of responsibilisation to align individual behaviour to the ideal behaviour as desired and mapped out by the state. With its aspirational language, individuals regarded as socially excluded are given the 'freedom' to choose to be responsible for their own social inclusion. However, this freedom to be responsible is problematic at many levels because the most severely disadvantaged individuals face multiple barriers in exercising their choices. Similarly, children's choices are constrained by adults' decisions. Chapter Five argues that it is the inequitable power relations between the socially excluded that need to be addressed in the policy discourse and practices of social inclusion.

At the same time, social inclusion discourses do not exist in a historical vacuum but instead draw upon other ideas and social constructs about who are labelled poor and disadvantaged. Likewise, children's social inclusion is framed by entrenched social constructions of children and childhood. However, these social constructions of children and childhood are constantly being challenged by children themselves, as well as by children's advocates. Hence, Chapter Six, Children's Values and the Socio-Economic Value of Children, discusses the following research sub-questions:

a) How are children being socially constructed by policymakers and service providers?

b) What are the implications of these social constructions of children on policies and services for children who are considered as socially excluded?

c) As social actors, how do children deal with the problems that they face and how do they value their own relationships with the adults around them?

Chapter Six begins by looking at some of the common policy constructions of children as problems. For example, children are treated as 'risks-to-be-prevented', 'victims-to-protected' or 'troublemakers-to-be-punished', which shape policies and services for children. The policy constructions of children as problems are compared with the problems that children face as a result of them being treated as problems. Despite the inequitable relationship that children have with adults, Chapter Six shows that children do not seek to share power equally with adults, but they do want to be treated with respect and fairness, values that are espoused in the social inclusion discourse. Chapter Six argues that when policies and services align their values on children with children's own values of respect, fairness and trust, children's concerns will be better addressed.

Indeed, values such as fairness, respect and trust underpin the social relationships that are important to children. Chapter Seven, Social Networks, Participation and Engagement, looks at the social networks that policymakers, service providers and children form with each other. In addition, Chapter Seven looks at the different dimensions of participation defined under the social inclusion policy agenda and compare those dimensions with children's own experiences of participation in these dimensions. Therefore, Chapter Seven addresses the following research sub-questions:

  a)   What kinds of social networks or social capital are formed among policymakers and service providers?

  b)   What are the social networks that children value and how useful are these networks as social capital?

  c)   How is children's participation being understood under the social inclusion discourse and what does participation mean for children?

Chapter Seven shows that the way children understand and make use of their social networks are different from the way that policymakers or service providers expect children to do so. In particular, having close or strong social networks with family or friends may not necessarily translate into useful social capital for children. Similarly, Chapter Seven shows that when children participate in domains where participation is unexpected (for example, employment), their contributions are unrecognised, which makes their transition to such domains more difficult when they become adults (for example, poor school-to-work transition programmes for high school students). Hence, Chapter Seven argues that children's social networks as well as participation are not

well understood by policymakers and makes the case for children to be recognised as co-partners in policy or service planning processes.

The last chapter of this thesis, Conclusion, summarises the key findings of this research and proposes some implications for policies and services on children's social inclusion. Chapter Eight concludes this thesis by arguing that there is potential for the policy discourse on social inclusion to be framed using a rights-based principle that values human dignity rather than individual aspirations.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The term 'social exclusion' is used more frequently in academic literature than 'social inclusion' due to its French origins which referred to people who were excluded from the country's social insurance system. While social exclusion refers to the problem, social inclusion represents the policy outcome that governments aim to achieve. Although this thesis is focused on social inclusion as it is used in Australia, this chapter reviews the literature around social exclusion as well as the related concept of poverty. The first section of this chapter outlines the different definitions of social exclusion and compares a few of the key theories on social exclusion and their policy implications. The second section focuses on how the problem of social exclusion is being framed and how policy framing reinforces certain social constructions of individuals who are deemed to be socially excluded. While policies may frame individuals deemed to be socially excluded in certain ways, the third section in this chapter looks at studies that consider how service providers view the problems of poverty, social exclusion and their service users. The fourth section of this chapter examines the growing pool of research on children's views on poverty and social exclusion. The fifth section of this chapter looks at the different social constructions of children and discusses the way in which some of these constructs shape and, in turn, are further being reinforced by the rationalisation of the modern state. This chapter concludes by looking at the contributions of this thesis to the literature in bringing together the different interpretations of social inclusion by policymakers, service providers and children deemed to be disadvantaged.

2.1   Definition of Social Exclusion

Most scholars agree that social exclusion is a widely contested concept (Atkinson 1998, p. 13; Burchardt et al. 2002a, p. 1). Hayes et al. (2008, pp. 4-6) list no fewer than eight ways to approach and frame the social exclusion discourse, and the list is by no means exhaustive. A few of the more commonly cited definitions are as follows:

Table 2.1: Common Definitions of Social Exclusion

Source	Definition
UK Social Exclusion Unit (1997, p. 1)	Social exclusion is about more than income poverty. It is a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.
Burchardt et al., Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE), London School of Economics (1999, p. 229)	An individual is socially excluded if: a) he or she is geographically resident in a society but b) for reasons beyond his or her control, he or she cannot participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society, and c) he or she would like to participate.
European Commission, Joint report by the Commission and the Council on social inclusion (2004, p. 8)	Social exclusion is a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feeling powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day today lives.

The different definitions of social exclusion show that while we may have an intuitive sense of what social exclusion is, different aspects of the concept are highlighted or played down by various authors and authorities. For example, the definition provided by scholars in CASE emphasise the inability to participate in normal activities of citizens for reasons beyond an individual's control. In this definition, the relativity of social exclusion is highlighted as well as the assumption that institutional factors rather than individual factors determine social exclusion. In contrast, the definitions by the UK government and the European Commission focus on individuals' incapacities, highlighting poor skills, incompetency, low incomes and unemployment as key features of social exclusion. Even though social exclusion has multiple meanings, de Haan (1998, pp. 12-13) concludes that these different definitions have some commonalities, in particular, that social exclusion is multidimensional, it is the reverse of social integration and it also refers to the processes by which people are excluded. In addition,

social exclusion is often linked with poverty or forms of deprivation, although the relationship between poverty and social exclusion is not straightforward.

A few authors have traced the theoretical roots of social exclusion to the work of Max Weber, where privileged groups maintain and protect their privileges over others through a process of 'social closure' (Burchardt et al. 2002a, p.1; Lister 2004, p. 75). The modern origins of social exclusion, however, came from the French Secretary of State for Social Welfare, René Lenoir, who, in the 1970s, described those not covered by the French social insurance system as 'les exclus' (de Haan 1998, p. 11). These included a broad range of people such as people with disabilities, lone parents and unemployed workers. Since social solidarity through active citizen participation in public life is central to the French Republican thought, the disengagement of individuals or the processes by which people are excluded from public life are treated as ruptures in social cohesion (Gore et al. 1995, p. 2; Silver & Wilkinson 1995, p. 285). Although Lenoir recognised that most socially excluded groups were also poor, they were disconnected because of non-participation in other aspects of life, such as having poor health or being geographically isolated (Davies 2005a, p.4). The difference between Weber's (1978) idea of 'social closure' and Lenoir's 'social exclusion' is perhaps a question of agency – Weber seemed to suggest that there is an active exclusion of one group by another while Lenoir's concept is vague on whether exclusion is a result of active intention by any one group or groups over others.

The question of agency - who is being excluded and by whom - has been identified as one of the key defining features of social exclusion, in addition to its relativity and dynamics (Atkinson 1998, p. 14). Indeed, the notion of the degree of participation in economic, social or political activities is central to the social exclusion discourse. However, as with other long-running debates on human agency, determining who is being excluded from participation, how and by whom, is never easy and often rests on philosophical or political arguments rather than empirical evidence. At the same time, the way policies are framed to place the responsibilities of social inclusion on either individuals or governments are also often based on deeply held cultural myths and political ideologies. For example, the Republican ideology in France views social exclusion as a threat to social cohesion which is reflected in French policy goals of

'insertion', 'integration', 'cohesion' and 'solidarity' (Silver & Wilkinson 1995, p. 285). This is in contrast with the UK's policy discourse on social exclusion which is dominated by terminology of 'long-term dependency', 'new poverty' and 'underclass' (Silver & Wilkinson 1995, p. 285). As a result, the French solution to social exclusion is to widen the scope of assistance to the disabled, lone parents and the unemployed who are without insurance cover as well as to introduce a Minimum Wage law (Evans 1998, p. 44). The British solution, on the other hand, being informed by a moral agenda with a tendency to judge and blame, has focused on forcing changes to individual behaviour, through means-tested assistance and welfare-to-work programmes (Evans 1998, p. 46).

Whether the origins of social exclusion are rooted in Weber's or Lenoir's ideas, it is a relatively new concept from the twentieth century. However, it is also strongly associated with the much older discourse on poverty, even though there is little agreement on the nature of the relationship. While poverty tends to be focused on material deprivation, social exclusion encompasses other dimensions of deprivation. Saunders (2011, p. 198) has highlighted that one of the key differences between social exclusion and poverty is its focus on the process and consequences of being excluded. Therefore, the concept of social exclusion consists of a time dimension that charts pathways where one aspect of an individual's exclusion may result in the inability to participate in other activities. Other scholars have charted the different relationships between poverty and social exclusion. Lister (2004, pp. 81-83) argues that social exclusion and poverty can be approached through their causal or descriptive links. Indeed, poverty and social exclusion are two concepts where many of their causal or descriptive links overlap because some people experience both social exclusion and poverty, while others only experience poverty or social exclusion (Lister 2004, p. 82). Without doubt, there are numerous similarities when dimensions of poverty and social exclusion are compared, particularly in the area of material poverty or deprivation. Empirically, income is strongly associated with some dimensions of social exclusion (Burchardt et al. 1999; Burchardt 2000), but it does not appear to be strongly associated with social isolation (Bradshaw et al. 2000). The way that poverty and social exclusion are related to one another also depends on the way both are defined. The more one chooses to define poverty narrowly as a uni-dimensional concept of material or income deprivation, the more distinct it becomes from the multi-dimensional character of social

exclusion (see Eurostat Taskforce on Social Exclusion and Poverty Statistics 1998; Levitas et al. 2007; Saunders 2003). The opposite is also true especially when we look at Townsend's concept of poverty which underlines the multidimensionality of disadvantages in terms of relative deprivation (Townsend 1979, p. 915):

> [R]elative deprivation – by which I mean the absence or inadequacy of those diets, amenities, standards, services and activities which are common or customary in society....If they (people) lack or are denied resources to obtain access to these conditions of life and so fulfil membership of society, they are in poverty.

In Townsend's definition, poverty is not only about material deprivation, but how material deprivation may lead to other social deprivations. It is also about the relative nature of deprivation where what is considered deprivation may differ from society to society. This interpretation of poverty is close to the more recent concept of social exclusion.

Paradoxically, the multi-dimensional character of social exclusion is both a defining feature of the concept as well as the reason for its definitional ambiguity. To complicate the concept further, these various dimensions are often inter-related. Burchardt et al. (2002b, p. 31) has identified four dimensions of exclusion:

a)   consumption: the capacity to purchase goods and services;

b)   production: participation in economically or socially valuable activities;

c)   political engagement: involvement in local or national decision-making; and

d)   social interaction: integration with family, friends and community.

The degree of social interaction, or indeed social capital, is likely to be related to participation in employment and other social activities. Similarly, individuals' level of participation in economic activities would also affect their ability to consume various goods and services. When we examine these different dimensions using detailed social indicators, the permutations of possible correlations become even more numerous. The inter-related nature of these dimensions forms the crux of debates on the usefulness of social exclusion as a concept in comparison with other concepts such as poverty, deprivation or social inequality. Some argue that the multi-dimensional and relational nature of social exclusion captures the complexity of deprivation and its emphasis on processes ensures its relevance to policies (see de Haan 1998; Sen 2000). However, the complexity of the concept not only makes it almost impossible to identify clearly who

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the socially excluded really are (Burchardt et al. 1999), it also means the concept could become nothing more than political rhetoric with little theoretical underpinnings (Oyen 1997). Indeed, it is precisely the concept's ambiguity that enabled it to become a powerful political symbol that enables politicians to tell a particular policy narrative on one hand, while making contrary decisions on the other.

> By portraying a decision one way in press releases, speeches, preambles, or surrounding language and yet executing it in another, leaders can perform the magic of making two different decisions at once. (Stone 2002, p. 159)

Even so, most scholars do agree on the potential usefulness of social exclusion as a concept or set of discourses, but emphasise that it should not lead to a neglect of other concepts such as poverty or deprivation which offer a narrower though more concrete understanding (see de Haan 1998; Lister 2004; Nolan & Whelan 1996). Crucially, the concept of social exclusion is only useful if it helps to illuminate the causes and relations of deprivation and poverty, rather than being a 'bewitching rhetoric' (Sen 2000, p. 9). In the context of Australia, Buckmaster and Thomas (2009) argue that unless the concept of social inclusion considers participation as a citizenry right, social inclusion will not be a useful policy framework.

The reverse of social exclusion is social inclusion, and the underlying concepts of cohesion and social integration. The dimension of integration which lies behind social exclusion/inclusion not only distinguishes it from other discourses such as poverty, but also binds it inextricably with political ideologies and political contexts. Therefore, it is unsurprising that social exclusion or social inclusion has become the new buzzword for many politicians and policymakers, often replacing the language of poverty, deprivation or inequality that have a negative ring to them. As such, the multiple meanings and dimensions of social exclusion serve a variety of political purposes (Silver 1995, p. 79). Silver (1995) has identified three paradigms as ideal-type approaches to social exclusion that are rooted in different political ideologies. The first paradigm is solidarity, inherited from the French Republic, where exclusion is understood as a breaking of the social bond between the individual and society, for example, when the poor or unemployed are defined as outsiders (Silver 1995, pp. 66-67). The second paradigm is specialisation, where exclusion reflects discrimination of certain groups that interrupts the freedom of movement of individuals across spheres of social life that should not be hierarchically

ordered (Silver 1995, pp. 67-68). The final paradigm is monopoly, that draws on Weber's (1978) idea of social closure by treating exclusion as a result of group monopolies that keep others out of their boundaries while enjoying monopoly over scarce resources (Silver 1995, pp. 68-69).

Silver's (1995) three paradigms on social exclusion have several parallels to Levitas' (2005) three discourses of social exclusion. The first discourse of social exclusion is redistributive discourse (RED), where poverty as well as social exclusion are linked inextricably to social inequality and the proposed solution is based on a redistribution of resources (Levitas 2005, pp. 9-14). The second discourse, moral underclass discourse (MUD), treats the socially excluded as dependent on welfare and morally distinct from the rest of the society, and hence the focus of government policy is to change their deviant behaviour (Levitas 2005, pp. 14-21). The final discourse, is social integration discourse (SID), focuses on social inclusion, mainly through means of paid work (Levitas 2005, pp. 21-27). Although Levitas (2005) primarily focused on the discourses of social exclusion in the UK, some parallels can be drawn between her approach and that of Silver's three paradigms. The following table makes a broad comparison between Silver's and Levitas' approaches, the social theories behind these approaches and the policy implications that are drawn from them.

Table 2.2: Comparing Silver's Paradigms and Levitas's Discourses on Social Exclusion

Silver's Paradigms (1995)	Levitas' Discourses (2005)	Social Theories	Policy Implications
Solidarity Republicanism as ideology. Society held together by shared morals and values. Social exclusion occurs when there is a rupture of bond between individual and society	SID (social integration) Language of 'social inclusion' and 'integration'. Defines social exclusion/inclusion as participation in paid work. Ignores unpaid work and does not question structural inequalities such as why women	Émile Durkheim's 'collective conscience' (1982). Assumes a dominant culture or class to which all members should be assimilated.	Directed as integrating those deemed to be socially excluded. Policies of assimilation to the dominant culture or class. Primary policy tool is to incentivise paid work and discourage unemployment.

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Silver's Paradigms (1995)	Levitas' Discourses (2005)	Social Theories	Policy Implications
	are paid less and are more likely to be employed in lower end jobs.		
Specialisation Liberalism as ideology.

Emphasis on individual rights and duties; small groups.

Social exclusion occurs when individuals or groups are discriminated such that their movements across social orders are disrupted. | MUD (moral underclass) Language of 'underclass' and 'dependency'.

Emphasis on the behaviour of the poor rather than structure of the society.

Benefits are seen as encouraging dependency.

Gendered discourse that does not recognise unpaid work and treats single mothers, young delinquents as social deviants. | Classical economists such as Adam Smith or John Stuart Mill, advocating for free markets and individual freedom.

Assumes that the poor or excluded members are responsible for their own situations. | Minimal state intervention and little or no universal benefits.

Punitive measures may be undertaken to discourage welfare dependency.

State's intervention, if any, is to remove discriminatory barriers ('equality of opportunity') and to encourage local or community solutions. |
| Monopoly Social democracy or socialism as ideology.

Existence of dominant social groups that keep out non-members. | RED (redistributive) Language of 'social equality' and 'redistribution'.

Poverty as prime cause of social exclusion.

Critique of inequality and the processes that lead to it.

Propose radical reduction of inequality through redistribution of resources and power. | Weber's 'social closure' (1978) and Marxist theories on social conflicts and inherent inequality of capitalism.

Questions the role of dominant groups or the rich, in maintaining the status quo of the poor or excluded. | Universal benefits preferred.

Redistributive policies directed at rechannelling resources (usually through taxation) from the rich to the poor.

Aimed at achieving minimal standard of living for every member. |

Although the above table is an over-simplification of Silver's and Levitas' arguments, it shows how different meanings of social exclusion have different ideological underpinnings that lead to different policy frames and responses. Naturally, the above categories are not mutually exclusive in any one country and there are several overlaps between the different theories or paradigms. Under Blair's government in the UK, the discourse of social exclusion shifts mostly between a moral underclass discourse and the social integrationist discourse, with a strong emphasis on paid work as the key solution to social exclusion (Levitas 2005). As Béland (2007, p. 134) observes, the social exclusion discourse shifts policy attention away from other forms of social inequality, while aligning Blair's Third Way agenda with moderate interpretations of economic liberalism. This observation is similar to Rudd's government in Australia. Regardless of the multiple and often irreconcilable interpretations of social exclusion, it is clear that how the discourse on social exclusion is framed will lead to different policy recommendations and outcomes. The following section will look at the literature on the framing and construction of social exclusion and inclusion, as well as the processes employed by these frames.

2.2 Policy Framing of Social Exclusion

How a social problem or phenomenon is framed or constructed will inevitably shape its policy responses. For Bacchi (1999), problems do not exist independently 'out there' for governments to discover and respond to. Rather, the policy community plays a role in discursively constructing 'problems' though policy proposals, political debate and the policy analysis (Bacchi 1999, p. 200). Following Bacchi's line of argument, the 'problem' of social exclusion is also discursively constructed, that is, social exclusion is not a given fact, but is constructed to serve certain policy or political objectives. Thus, a critical question to examine is how the problem of social exclusion has, in many ways, dominated other problems such as poverty and deprivation. Social exclusion can become a useful policy frame by shifting the focus towards major social problems that are related to poverty, social inequality and 'underclass' (Béland 2007; Silver & Miller 2003). At the same time, the processes and dynamics behind policy frames are also crucial in understanding how certain discourses on social exclusion gain greater currency and dominance than others. Factors such as consistency, credibility, persuasiveness of articulators and the cultural narrations that frames employ, are key

factors determining the success of any particular frame (Benford & Snow 2000, pp. 619-622). In addition, the way policy frames its target populations is critical because this affects how different populations or social groups orientate themselves towards the government, as well as how they participate in society (Schneider & Ingram 1993). For example, negative constructions of target populations have significant stigmatisation effects that also lead to less political participation and higher distrust of the government (Soss 2005). Stigmatisation of target populations such as the poor or the disadvantaged may result in them becoming politically disengaged and they may also withdraw from political discourse (Schneider & Ingram 1993, p. 344).

The policy frame of social exclusion under the social integrationist and moral underclass discourses becomes a moralistic one where being an active, engaged and well-integrated citizen is equated with being a paid worker. In contrast, the excluded, disengaged or underclass are associated with the unemployed or unemployable. Such a simplistic construct raises many questions such as how those who are genuinely unemployable could be integrated, voluntary exclusion by the rich (Hutton 1996) and the realities of limited job opportunities. At the same time, social exclusion implies social inclusion and vice versa, drawing an imaginary line on who should be considered as 'included' and who are 'excluded' (Goodin 1996). This locks the social exclusion discourse into a language of marginality and the policy drive to push the excluded to the 'right side of the line' means that attention is shifted away from those who are at the borderline, even though they are on the 'right side' (Goodin 1996, p. 348). For example, low-paid workers whose wages are insufficient for participation in normal activities of society are considered as socially included, yet such workers remain unable to overcome various forms of deprivations. This situation is considered as 'unfavourable inclusion' (Sen 2000, pp. 28-29) where individuals participate in activities under exploitative conditions or deeply unequal terms. Sen (2000, p. 29) argues that a distinction must be made between those who are deliberately excluded from participation and those who are participating under unfavourable terms because both these problems are different and different policy responses may be required. Moreover, linking social inclusion to employment becomes problematic because the concept of employment only refers to paid employment and unpaid work performed mostly by women, children and minority groups go unacknowledged. As Levitas (1996, 2005)

pointed out, the discursive link between social exclusion and paid work ignores the underlying reasons behind why certain social groups in society, such as women, are consistently paid less or hired in low-wage jobs. Similarly, it would imply that people who are unemployable, or face barriers to employment through discriminatory job preferences, will always be treated as a moral underclass.

Despite the criticisms of how social exclusion is being framed, the link between exclusion and the moral underclass is not a recent invention. It is deeply rooted in past and current narratives on the poor, who are often constructed as being 'undeserving', 'dependent' or are blamed for their own plight. Cross-cutting these narratives on poverty are other narratives on gender, race or nationality. For example, Bensonsmith (2005) showed how stereotypes of African-American women were woven into welfare policies, constructing the image of the 'welfare queen' who is a single mother, heading 'broken homes', bringing up delinquent children. In this single image, poverty is associated not only with material deprivation, but also with being female, a single parent, of minority race as well as bad parenting and deviant behaviour (Bensonsmith 2005). Such negative images are all the more persistent and powerful when female welfare recipients themselves see others like themselves through the same lens and assign individual traits that have been legitimised by the media to other women on welfare to explain their use of welfare (Seccombe et al. 1998, p.862). Just like the moral underclass discourse on social exclusion, this framing ignores questions on gender inequalities in the workforce, as well as questions on racial inequalities in employment. Such discourses on poverty blame the poor for their individual characteristics or perceived pathologies. As such, even though the language of poverty has, in some ways been replaced by the language of social exclusion, the underlying constructs of the poor and marginalised groups remain largely unchanged.

The policy discourse on social exclusion is by no means the only narrative or frame available. As Hajer (1995, p. 65) pointed out, 'storylines' are taken up in policy through 'discourse coalitions' where previous practices are brought together to give meaning to a common political project. Dominant policy 'storylines' or frames are not only based on deeply held cultural beliefs, or myths, they tend to be projected as objective facts with the authoritative stamp of 'scientific evidence' to lend credibility and gain popular

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acceptance (Hajer 1995, pp. 138-139). In reality, however, the policy process often consists of multiple spaces of contestation and one has to look at the actors interacting in these spaces and the ways in which power mediates these processes (Brock et al. 2001, p. 35). Policymakers are not the only social actors directly, or indirectly, shaping the way we understand social exclusion. Their narratives on social exclusion may often be contested or supported by other social actors, such as service providers, who are responsible for translating policies into actual services for those deemed to be socially excluded. In the next section, we will look at some studies on the perceptions of service providers on their clients who are poor or receiving welfare benefits.

2.3   Service Providers Contesting and Affirming Policy Frames

The way service providers interpret policy concepts such as social inclusion or social exclusion is important because it forms another layer to the general discourse that may contest or collude with policymakers' understanding of social inclusion or social exclusion. Service delivery frameworks reflect not only policy-thinking, but also the practical realities of the clients that they serve. In this way, service providers are often the middlemen between policymakers and clients. The role that service providers play in policy implementation cannot be underestimated because they form the 'face' of policies. Service users' experience of services is dependent on the quality of service-providers' relationships (see Heintzman & Marson 2005; Neale 1998; Thompson et al. 2006). Service providers who are perceived as impersonal and distant have the effect of making service users feel disempowered (Goble 1999). In fact, service providers who have a paternalistic relationship with service users show negative effects on user engagement (Bruch et al. 2010). At the same time, service users who face severe disadvantages express that being treated with respect and being supported, are qualities of service provision that are more important than service accessibility (Darbyshire et al. 2006).

The policy discourse on social inclusion has introduced a new framework of practice for service providers that changes the way service providers relate to service users. The focus on social inclusion is difficult for some service providers to implement. For example, service providers providing arts or cultural programmes are caught in a bind when they are required to demonstrate hard evidence that measures the impact of their

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programmes against indicators of social inclusion even when social inclusion was not a specific objective in the original programme design (Long & Bramham 2006). As a result, the service providers are required to spend considerable time and resources developing criteria for social inclusion which will generate valid and reliable data (Long & Bramham 2006). Furthermore, service providers may already be using their own frameworks in their service delivery and the new discourse on social exclusion adds another layer of interpretation of their service users' problems that may or may not complement existing service approaches. For example, Axford (2010, p. 749) found that the current risk and protective model of practice employed by children's services already address some of the underlying causes of exclusion and therefore the concept of social exclusion does not add more value to existing service delivery frameworks. Therefore, Axford (2009, p. 43) argues that effective interpretation of children's well-being has to consider multiple approaches, such as need, rights, poverty, quality of life and social exclusion, rather than using a single approach.

In addition to grappling with new or multiple approaches, service providers are also confronted by their own experience working with service users. However, the way service providers perceive their clients or service users are varied. Some service providers' perceptions of their clients are more congruent with clients' own perception of their problems, while other service providers may perceive them differently. In an Israeli study, it was observed that the social work directors acted in line with policymakers' discourse on poverty, rather than with their clients', which resulted in poor client-centred services (Monnickendam et al. 2009). Another study looking at Belgian general practitioners' perception of poverty showed that while socio-economic factors were often cited as reasons behind their patients' poverty (such as low education, unemployment, bad housing or low income), individual characteristics such as 'laziness', 'lack of ambition and motivation to improve the situation', 'limited intellectual capacity' were also mentioned as significant personal factors (Willems et al. 2005, p. 179). Similarly, a study in the UK found that health and welfare workers personalised the problems of their female clients even though the female clients cited external circumstances as the cause of their problems (Edwards et al. 1999, p. 150). An Australian study comparing the values of service providers and service users' found that both service providers and service users valued economic outcomes (getting a job) and

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social outcomes (making friends, being engaged in community activities) but service users also valued emotional outcomes (children are safe, the opportunity to relax and enjoy peace and quiet) (Nevile 2009, p. 81). These studies show that service providers perceive their clients or service users with a broad range of constructs that sometimes support dominant policy discourses on the poor, but may also differ from these discourses. In addition, service providers' perception of their clients or service users' problems may also differ from the way their service users perceive themselves or their own problems.

While service providers work within required policy discourses, they are also in a good position to reframe some of the existing social constructs of poverty or social exclusion to better reflect the realities of their clients. De Mey et al. (2009, p. 305) have argued that since social work is embedded in the process of social and political framing of the problems that they purport to solve, social workers are in a good position to become reflective practitioners. For example, by reframing programmes to include a wider range of participants, social workers are able to avoid stigmatising participants from lower social classes or from ethnic minorities (De Mey et al. 2009, p. 301). Recent trends in social work are increasingly moving towards a critical practice that strives for the emancipation of their clients (Fook 2002; Stepney 2006) and to address the inequitable social worker-client relationship with anti-oppressive practice approaches (Burke & Harrison 2002; Danso 2009; Dominelli 1996; McLaughlin 2005; Strier & Binyamin 2013). One of the practices of anti-oppressive approach is to have greater client involvement in service delivery. However, clients' involvement in service delivery can be tokenistic and offering only illusory involvement as Berry et al. (2010) discovered in their study of mental health users in service design. The increasing need to satisfy government policy to involve service users and the dominant discourse of the 'powerful professional' are two factors that contribute to tokenistic forms of client involvement (Berry et al. 2010, pp. 414-415). Therefore Dowling (1999) argues that in order for social work to move away from being a form of social control or mere service provision, it has to have a strong advocacy role. This means that social workers' attitudes towards and services provided to the poor must be inclusive and participatory such that the poor feel that they have been listened to (Dowling 1999, p. 259).

2.4   Children's Views and Experiences of Social Exclusion

Children experience poverty and social exclusion in different ways. It is vital to consider the impact of poverty on children and not focus narrowly on the impact of poverty on adult members of the family (Harju & Thorød 2011, p. 296). Living in conditions of poverty and economic deprivation mean that children have limited economic resources such as pocket money. In Ridge's study (2002, pp. 39-40), nearly three-quarters of her young interviewees did not receive any pocket money or if they did, only on an irregular basis. Facing material deprivations in their families also mean that children have to go without food, clothes or even basic necessities (Sharma 2007; Skattebol et al. 2012, p. 41). However, children often adapt their preferences or deny that they want things that they knew they could not afford as a response to protecting themselves and to minimize the pain of missing out (Skattebol et al. 2012, p. 42). This strategy of minimizing their demands in order to ease their families' financial burdens was also observed by Ridge (2002, p. 37). Children without or with insufficient pocket money were also more likely to work, although access to work is also constrained by lack of opportunities, limited skills, transport and the difficulties involved in balancing school and work life (Ridge 2002, pp. 46-50). Finding work is more than an issue of earning money for children, as work is also a means for them to gain autonomy and independence (Ridge 2002, p. 47).

While economic and material deprivations may be one of the concerns facing socially excluded children, social or cultural deprivations often hurt them more. As noted by Redmond (2008, p. 4), it is not so much the economic deprivation that affects children most, but the experience of being excluded from activities that other children participate in, as well as the shame and embarrassment of not being able to do so. Friendships are consistently highlighted as being critical in children's lives (Hooper et al. 2007, pp. 66-67; Morrow 2001a, pp. 10-15; Ridge 2002, pp. 59-62) and it is through peer interactions that children's material deprivations gain social significance (van der Hoek 2005, p. 27). Friends are not only a form of social and emotional support, in addition to their families, they are also protective factors for children, especially those at risk of being bullied and excluded (Ridge 2002, p. 62). Children's need to feel a sense of belonging and identity as well as acceptance by their peers is very strong, regardless of the socio-economic status of their families (Sutton et al. 2007, p. 10). Children from all social classes want

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to feel accepted by their peers and fear being different or being singled out in one way or another (Sutton et al. 2007, p. 10). However, children from poor households face multiple difficulties in establishing friendships or when they do, they face challenges maintaining them due to their limited financial means to participate in social activities, transport problems, geographical isolation and inability to keep up with the cultural norms of their peers (Crowley & Vulliamy 2007, p. 13; Elliot & Leonard 2004, p. 357; Horgan 2009, p. 9; Ridge 2002, pp. 64-66; Ridge 2007, pp. 402-403; Roker 1998, pp. 23-24; van der Hoek 2005, pp. 27-28). In particular, having clean clothes and wearing the 'right' clothes are important in helping children be accepted by their peer groups and in preventing them from being bullied (Elliot & Leonard 2004, p. 356; Ridge 2002, p. 68; Skattebol et al. 2012, p. 120; van der Hoek 2005, pp. 27-28,). Although school uniforms are a form of social leveller, subtle differences in appearances (such as old, worn, ill-fitting or dirty uniforms) may mark children from poor households as 'different' in the eyes of other children (Skattebol et al. 2012, pp. 119-120). Special school occasions that require children to wear home clothes also place huge pressures on children from poor families (Ridge 2002, p. 73). Fashion brands are of particular importance as they are the key symbols of social standing and not having them may lead to bullying by others (Elliot & Leonard 2004, p. 356; Horgan 2009, p. 9; van der Hoek 2005, p. 33). Even though children from different social classes do not identify themselves as either rich or poor, they define themselves as what they are not and refer to 'the other' group of children using their own linguistic terms. For example, in the UK, children refer to poor children as 'chavs' and to rich children as 'posh' (Sutton et al. 2007, pp. 12-16). This not only reflects children's sensitive understanding of subtle social differences that go beyond ownership of material wealth, it also alerts us that what may seem trivial to adults (for example, right attire) may have real and serious consequences for children who may be bullied by other children.

Beyond trying to keep up appearances in the consumer-driven world, friendships are important to children because they are forms of social security and social capital that enables them to feel socially engaged or included. However, the costs of participation in social activities, lack of affordable transport and lack of neighbourhood opportunities (especially in isolated areas) make it extremely challenging for children to build or maintain strong social networks (Meek 2008, pp. 129-130; Ridge 2002, pp. 88-91;

Roker 1998, p. 10; Sweeney 2008, pp. 11-13). Children without strong friendship networks are more vulnerable to stigmatisation and bullying. Being called names, picked on, humiliated or ridiculed for not meeting the social and material norms of their peers, are common experiences for children in low-income families (Crowley & Vulliamey 2007, p. 11; Horgan 2009, p. 9; Sweeney 2008, p. 10). In addition, older children linked boredom to youth crime and emphasised the importance of positive leisure activities with their peers (Morrow 2001a, pp. 32-34; Sweeney 2008, pp. 13 & 18). Thus, the emotional impact of being socially excluded and poor on children is substantial. Studies have found that these children are often sad, anxious, lack self-esteem feel insecure, fearful, frustrated, angry, depressed, ashamed, envious, and lack faith in their future (Crowley & Vuilliamy 2007, pp. 24-25; Hooper et al. 2007, pp. 57-59; Sweeney 2008, pp. 19-20; Ridge 2002, pp. 100-106; Taylor 2004, p. 6).

Being poor and socially excluded impacts on children's relationships within their families. However, this association is not straightforward and is often complicated by other family conflicts or stressful events such unemployment, disability, illness, marital conflicts in the family. Studies show that children are keenly aware of their families' financial situations and the strains their parents are undergoing (Crowley & Vulliamy 2007, p. 22; Hooper et al. 2007, pp. 60-61; Ridge 2002, p. 105). Indeed, even very young children worry about their families' stresses and sometimes hide their own needs so as not to add to their family's financial burdens (Hooper et al. 2007, p. 61). Occasionally, financial stresses within the family may also create tensions between parents and children although children's relationships with their mothers appear much stronger than with fathers or stepfathers (Hooper et al. 2007, p. 60). Besides mothers, children also depend on their grandparents for support (Hooper et al. 2007, pp. 65-66), especially in single-parent households (Ridge & Millar 2008, pp. 40-41; Walker et al. 2008, p. 434). Children also face emotional pressures when parents confide their financial woes to them or borrow money from them (van der Hoek 2005, p. 29). However, children's experiences of poverty or deprivation are not always negative. This may be due to parents sacrificing their own comforts or needs to shield their children from the impact of exclusion (Middleton et al. 1997, pp. 59-68), or children's own optimistic take on their situations, often citing closer family or friendship bonds due to the adversities they face (Roker 1998, pp. 47-48; Weinger 2000, p. 140).

Across all these studies, it is consistently shown that children are active agents in adopting various strategies to cope and manage their challenging circumstances. Children take up employment (Ridge 2002, p. 45; Roker 1998, pp. 15-21; Skattebol et al. 2012, pp. 44-45;) or limit their needs or demands (Hooper et al. 2007, p. 61; Skattebol et al. 2012, pp. 41-42) in order to reduce the financial pressures on their families. In Ridge's (2002, p. 77) study, children actively tried to protect their parents from knowing the costs of some school activities by not asking for money to attend them. Instead, they assessed the costs of such activities or school trips as beyond their parents' means and made the decision not to participate (Ridge 2002, p. 77). In single-parent families, children also took on additional household responsibilities and duties such as caring or doing chores (Ridge 2007, pp. 408-409). In addition, young people often made a conscious effort to save money so that they can use it for their own purchases or to participate in school or peer group activities (Skattebol et al. 2012, pp. 42-43; van der Hoek 2005, p. 31). Where some family members are facing illness or disability, children often step in to become carers. The association between poor health of family members, poverty, social exclusion and young carers is a strong one (Becker & Becker 2008). Young carers not only have to forgo their leisure time in order to fulfil their care-giving duties, they often have to miss school, have less time for schoolwork and sometimes go hungry in order to provide for their sick family members (Becker & Becker 2008, pp. 32 & 42). Despite evidence that children from poor families are active agents in coping and managing the multiple challenges they face daily, policy and social constructions of children continue to treat children as passive, dependent beings.

2.5   Power, Social Control and the Social Construction of Childhood

Although adults in poverty are often blamed for their circumstances, children are rarely blamed for being poor. In addition, children are not expected to take up paid employment even though they are expected to do so in future, as adults. In this way, children who are considered as socially excluded do not fit neatly into either the moral underclass discourse, or the social integrationist discourse on social exclusion. Instead, children are seen as deserving welfare recipients and eradicating child poverty is often prioritised by politicians. As noted by Shanahan (2007, p. 410), 'children became central to discussions of inequality, but inequality has also became central to discussions of children'. In 1999, two years after Tony Blair became the Prime Minister

of the UK, he pledged to end child poverty by 2020 (BBC News 18 Mar 1999).

Similarly, the Australian Social Inclusion Unit at the Federal government of Australia

has listed helping jobless families with children and improving the life chances of

children at greatest risk of long-term disadvantage as two of its policy priorities (Social

Inclusion Unit 2011a). However, the policy focus on children and their well-being is

justified as an investment in future citizens and workers (Lister 2003). Indeed,

Dobrowolsky (2002) argues that under Blair's government, children have been used as a

rhetorical strategy to justify a social investment state without addressing critical

concerns about children's rights or agency. The social construction of children's well-

being under the social exclusion discourse is based on the belief that early intervention

programmes especially for very young children will mitigate some of the negative

impacts of their low family socio-economic status. As Levitas (2004, p. 49) observed

cynically,

> [C]hild poverty is targeted not from a moral rejection of poverty per se, but
> because poverty in childhood is a risk factor in later poverty and exclusion.
> Children brought up in poverty are less able to compete in capitalist labour
> markets when they grow up.

Children have moved from obscurity to the spotlight of public policy in modern life

because children represent the promise of a future good (Jenks 1996, pp. 65-67). As

pointed out by Rose (1989, p. 121), the rise of the modern state means that,

> Childhood is the most intensively governed sector of personal existence. In
> different ways, at different times and by many different routes varying from one
> section of the society to another, the health, welfare, and rearing of children have
> been linked in thought and practice to the destiny of the nation and the
> responsibilities of the state. The modern child has become the focus of
> innumerable projects that purport to safeguard it from physical, sexual and moral
> danger, to ensure its 'normal' development, to actively promote certain capacities
> of attributes such as intelligence, educability and emotional stability.

This modern form of social control is no longer external, achieved by brute force or

violence but through internalising norms and individual self-regulation (Foucault 1979).

The new governmentality as characterised by Foucault (1991, pp. 100-102) is an

ensemble of institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations and tactics that

enables the state to manage the population in a detailed and in-depth fashion for the

ultimate welfare of the population. In other words, governmentality is about the

'conduct of the conduct' or the state management of the behaviour of individuals

(Foucault 1983, pp. 220-221; Foucault 2007, pp. 192-193; Gordon 1991, p.2). Under

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this new governmentality, the population needs to be defined, analysed and managed in specific and micro terms (Foucault, 1991). The modern state constantly develops specific, comprehensive and extensive systems of expertise to assist or correct the way families raise their children. The family becomes the means by which the state administers its corrective intervention (Donzelot 1979, p. 92). Similarly, Mason and Noble-Spruell (1993, p. 26) note that child welfare policies perform a social control function that classifies socio-economically disadvantaged families as 'dangerous', hence justifying the policing of these families. In short, intricate and complex systems of services and policies are implemented to manage families' management of children. This is what Donzelot (1979, pp. 163-168) calls the 'climate of paternalistic philanthropy', where the possibilities of obtaining practical support or financial assistance from the government is conditional upon families' compliance of certain desired behaviour. The rise of disciplines such as psychology and social work contribute to providing such expertise on what constitutes 'good parenting' or notions of a 'normal' or 'good' childhood. Together, these new networks of experts form the 'tutelary complex' (Donzelot 1979, pp. 96-168) that governs the family and how children are supervised in families. The root causes of the problem child are attributed to the family, and the school becomes the corrective institution that monitors any anti-social behaviour tendencies of children (Donzelot 1979, p. 132).

At the same time, the rise of child experts means that a new language has been invented to categorise, identify, diagnose children and to provide the mechanisms of cure and normalisation (Rose 1989, p. 131). Once this new vocabulary enters the sphere of the family, '[i]t…become[s] the will of the mother to govern her own children according to the psychological norms and in partnership with the psychological experts' (Rose 1989, p. 131). This led to what James et al. (1998, p. 17) observed as the colonisation of childhood by developmental psychology, assisted by medicine, education and government agencies. Developmental psychology, with its authority as a science, assumes that children are a natural rather than a social phenomenon and their naturalness is an extension of their inevitable process of their maturity (James et al. 1998, p. 17). With this portrayal of the child as an incomplete being progressing towards completeness, children are compelled to accept a lower social status while they wait for their turn to be part of the participating adult citizenry (Qvortrup 2005, p. 5).

From this psychological framework, a universal, idealised and 'normal' childhood is being constructed, from which all real children, regardless of their social or cultural contexts, are being measured against.

As the sociologists of childhood (James et al. 1998; James & Prout 1990; Mayall 2002) have pointed out, the concept of a 'normal' childhood is in itself a social construct that needs to be critically examined. In fact, these social constructions of children and childhoods reveal more about social structures and control than about any 'natural' state of childhood (see Qvortrup 1994; Jenks 1996; James et al. 1998). The history of childhood supports the view that childhood is a social construct because the definitions of children and childhoods are not fixed or natural, and there are multiple meanings of children and childhood at different times (see Archard 1993; Ariès 1964; Cunningham 1995; Heywood 2001). This means that there is no 'essential child' and the present values ascribed to children, such as innocence or depravity, are socially constructed (Heywood 2001, p. 170). Similarly, the assumption that children are immature or incompetent has less to do with children's 'natural state', than with children's inequitable power relation with adults. As shown earlier in Section 2.4, children as social actors, use multiple ways of adjusting their own desires and activities to lessen the financial burden of their families. This is in contrast with the way social inclusion policies frame children as future citizen-workers (Lister 2003) to be invested because children's day-to-day problems go unnoticed while policies are aimed at their future identities as adult workers. As observed by Mayall (1994, p. 2) there is a disjuncture between what adults imagined children to be and what children really are, resulting in the modern construction of childhood that excludes children's experiences, mutes their voices and denies their personhood.

2.6   Bringing the Narratives Together – What's Missing?

From the literature on social exclusion it is clear that the policy discourses have a strong focus on children's well-being but few of these discourses include children's own contribution on what they think about social exclusion. Despite the growing literature on children's experiences and views of poverty and exclusion, there is little effort to build policy frameworks using these findings. Similarly, although many of the studies involving children are commissioned or conducted by non-government agencies or

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service providers, it is often unclear how the findings of these studies have been translated into the service frameworks or service-designs for their young clients. As shown in this literature review, policymakers, service providers and children who are perceived to be socially excluded have varied understandings of what social inclusion means. These different policy stakeholders and their social relations shape the ongoing discourse of social inclusion. Therefore, this thesis begins first by asking how policymakers, service providers and children considered as socially excluded understand social inclusion. This literature review has also shown that how policies are being framed are shaped by different meanings of social inclusion. Hence, the second objective of this thesis is to examine how the different or similar perspectives on social inclusion by policymakers, service providers and children have shaped policies or services for children.

By comparing these different discourses, this study aims to contribute not only to the current literature on how social exclusion has been represented as a social problem in the policy and service-delivery discourses, but also to highlight the importance of including children's experiences in both policy-planning and service design. Children's contribution to policies and services that affect them are not only about children's right to participation, but also about their status as active citizens, capable of enriching policy discussions in meaningful ways. However, children's participation in so-called 'adult' domains are fraught with difficulty because of their marginalised status and the unequal power relations with adults. This adds another challenging dimension towards research with children because children's rights, especially their right to participation, are often at risk of being reframed based on the social constructs of childhood that constrain and reinforce the view of children as dependent and passive beings. A common argument used by those who object to children's participation is the need to protect children from the risks of participation, using children's right to protection as a convenient tool to protect the adult world against the intrusion of children (Qvortrup 1994, p. 21). Hence, the processes and opportunities available to children to enable them to participate in policy discussions through research need to be critically examined because they do not guarantee meaningful engagement with children. In the next chapter on methodology, some of these issues concerning children's participation in research and the inequitable

power imbalance between children, the researcher and the institutional gatekeepers will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Given the nature of this thesis in seeking the meanings of social exclusion by different stakeholders in Australia, an interpretive methodological approach is adopted. This chapter outlines the research design used and discusses the challenges encountered while conducting children's research for this thesis. The first section describes the overall research design for this thesis which uses three types of research methods – 1) discourse analysis, 2) interviews and focus group discussions with policymakers, service providers and older children, and 3) children's research activities. The second section examines some of the key literature on ethics in children's research and discusses the perceived 'vulnerability' of children as the main rationale for having multiple gatekeepers to safeguard children's interests in research. The third section discusses how different relationships between gatekeepers and the researcher shape the way ethical concerns were addressed in this research.

3.1 Research Design

Since this thesis is focused on uncovering the different meanings that policymakers, service providers and children who are deemed to be socially excluded give to social inclusion, the methodological approach adopted in this research is based on various interpretive methods. By interpretative methods, it is taken to mean that the methodology is centred on the processes of how meaning is being constructed and reconstructed by human actors primarily through the language they use, although other forms of expressions may also be studied (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006). I have used three types of data-collection methods to answer my research questions and these methods can be categorised under the broader label of 'interpretive methods' (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006, p. xx). The first method, discourse analysis, is used to uncover the policy narratives on the social inclusion of children in Australia. The second method is a series of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with policymakers and service providers to find out what policymakers and service providers think about different aspects of social inclusion and what they understand by children's inclusion. These two methods of data collection are used to complement each other, as two alternative methods to understand the diverse meanings given to social inclusion by policymakers

and service providers. The final method consists of different age-appropriate children's research activities to draw out children's own understanding of their experiences of social exclusion. The following table illustrates the three research methods used and the secondary research questions that each method addresses.

Table 3.1: Secondary Research Questions and Research Methods Used

Secondary Research Questions	Research Method Used
a) How is the policy discourse of social inclusion constructed by policymakers, service providers and children deemed to be socially excluded? b) What language, narratives or symbols are employed in these discourses? c) Who are the socially excluded as defined under these discourses and in particular, how are children portrayed?	Discourse Analysis • Policy reports, papers, articles, research reports. • Newspaper articles. • Speeches and interviews. • Websites and electronic reports.
a) How does the discursive power of social inclusion shape the institutional structures within the government? b) How does the discursive power of social inclusion shape the policy and service approaches in relation to people who are deemed to be socially excluded? c) What are the contradictions and tensions brought about by the changes to the power structures and to the services approaches? d) How are children being socially constructed by policymakers and service providers? e) What are the implications of these social constructions of children on policies and services for children who are considered as socially excluded? f) What kinds of social networks or social capital are observed among policymakers and service providers?	In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions • Policymakers • Service providers
a) As social actors, how do children deal with the problems that they face and how do they value	Children's Research Activities • Drawings

Secondary Research Questions	Research Method Used
their own relationships with the adults around them? b) What are the social networks that children value and how useful are these networks as social capital? c) How is children's participation being understood under the social inclusion discourse and what does participation mean for children?	• Maps • Paper cut-outs • Individual interviews • Group discussions

For this research, I have focused on the social inclusion policy agenda of both the Federal and South Australian governments. South Australia was selected because it was the first Australian State to adopt an explicit social inclusion policy agenda in 2002 and its policy framework significantly shaped the model established by the Federal government in 2007. The Tasmanian government also has a dedicated government unit overlooking social inclusion policies which was established in 2008. However, this unit is relatively small compared to the social inclusion units in South Australia and at the Federal government level; hence the number of publications on social inclusion are correspondingly fewer. The structure of the social inclusion unit in Tasmania is modelled after the South Australian and Federal governments' social inclusion units. Other than South Australia and Tasmania, no other State or Territory government in Australia has an explicit social inclusion agenda. Due to the low policy output in terms of publications on social inclusion from the Tasmanian government, together with its similar organisational setup with the South Australian and Federal governments, I have excluded Tasmania in this research. In the following sections, I will elaborate on the research methods (Table 3.1) that I have used in answering my research questions.

3.1.1   Discourse Analysis

Foucault (1972, p. 49) defines discourses as 'practices which form the objects of which they speak'. In developing a 'critical discourse analysis', Fairclough (1992, 1995) argues that the study of texts and rhetorical strategies reveal the ways in which language is used to encourage particular types of ideology and political change. The use of discourse analysis in deconstructing policy texts, speeches, documents and websites published by policymakers and service providers is aimed at finding out how social

inclusion and children are being talked about, or not being talked, about by acknowledged experts. In doing so, the language of social inclusion, which forms the discursive rules of practice (Foucault, 1972), reveals the underlying power relations that limit or permit ways in which social inclusion can be understood or conceptualised. In addition, the discourse analysis in this thesis is a form of triangulation that complements the interviews and focus groups conducted with policymakers and service providers.

Dryzek (2005, p. 8) has defined discourse as a shared way of apprehending the world through constructions of meanings and relationships that define legitimate knowledge, and each discourse rests on assumptions, judgments, and contentions. Discourse analysis requires that the researcher constantly asks, 'why am I reading this passage this way?', 'what features produce this reading?' (Potter & Wetherell 1987, p. 168). In particular, discourse analysis is focused on talk and texts as social practices and the type of resources that they rely on that enable those practices (Potter 1996, p. 129). However, discourse analysis is difficult to define precisely and Gill (2000, p. 177) points out that there are no 'recipes' on how to conduct discourse analysis. This has led to several common methodological pitfalls committed by discourse analysts, as pointed out by Antaki et al. (2003), which include 1) under-analysis through summary; 2) under-analysis through taking sides; 3) under-analysis through over quotation or through isolated quotation; 4) circular identification of discourses or mental constructs; 5) false survey; and 6) analysis that consists in simply spotting features. The methodological challenges of discourse analysis have contributed to a general misconception that 'anything goes' in discourse analysis (Antaki et al 2003).

A few authors have attempted to provide broad frameworks to guide scholars through discourse analysis. Dryzek (2005, pp. 17-21) has offered a broad framework as a means to start analysing texts by looking at 1) basic entities whose existence is recognized or constructed, 2) assumptions made about natural relationships, 3) agents and their motives and 4) key metaphors and rhetorical devices employed. Similarly, Hajer (2006) offers three tools for discourse analysis of public policies. The first discursive tool refers to metaphors which describe or represent a phenomenon, the second discursive tool refers to storylines or statements that condense complex narratives together, and the third discursive tool refers to a 'discourse coalition', which describes a group of actors

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engaged in a set of identifiable practices that share the usage of a storyline together over a period of time (Hajer 2006). Other scholars have pointed out that policies often make use of familiar narrative structures and these not only help policymakers explain a complex policy issue, they are also a means by which those policies can be analysed (see Dodge et al. 2005; Roe 1994; Kaplan 1986; Krieger 1986; Ospina & Dodge 2005a).

This thesis uses a combination of the tools offered by Dryzek (2005) and Hajer (2006) to frame the analysis on social inclusion policies in Australia. In particular, this thesis uses Dryzek's (2005) and Hajer's (2006) concepts of metaphors and rhetorical devices employed in policy texts. In addition, Hajer's (2006) concept of a 'discourse coalition' is also used to understand how actors such as policymakers or service providers share storylines. Hence, the policy texts are analysed using the following questions:

a) Who are the narrators or authors of the various published policy texts on social inclusion?

b) What are the language and symbols being employed to narrate these discourses?

c) What are the different narratives being told by the policymakers and service providers? How are they different or similar?

d) Who is the target audience of these narratives on social inclusion?

e) Who are neither the narrators nor audience of these policy narratives on social inclusion?

Treating policy texts as narratives of social inclusion will uncover the thinking behind the social inclusion policy discourse, as well as the assumptions that are being made about people who are deemed to be socially excluded. At the same time, the narratives will reveal other embedded social constructions about social inclusion and, in particular, the way children and childhood are socially defined. Furthermore, the social groups that are not considered as narrators nor audience reflects the underlying power relations between those considered to be experts, who define what the problem is, and those who are viewed as policy problems to be solved.

Policy documents and texts are useful sources for discourse analysis as they reflect the official narratives of social inclusion that, in turn, shapes public knowledge of what

social inclusion is about. In this research, I have focused on analysing key policy documents or materials published by the Federal Australian Social Inclusion Board[3], the Federal Social Inclusion Unit, the South Australian Social Inclusion Board, the South Australian Social Inclusion Unit, speeches, published interviews and newspaper articles by prominent social inclusion advocates, as well as websites and publications of service providers that have an explicit social inclusion agenda. The policy texts were selected if social inclusion was the main focus of the content and the text was published by Australian government agencies, service providers or individuals in their professional capacities. Texts or other published materials on social inclusion published by individuals in their personal capacities, for example, personal blogs, tweets or facebook posts, are excluded because they do not fall within the scope of this thesis. However, children's personal blogs or published commentaries on social inclusion would be considered for analysis, but there were none that I could find during the period of this doctoral research. Using the five analytical tools outlined in the previous paragraph, data from the policy texts were coded accordingly. A sample of how the texts were analysed using the analytical tools are shown in the table below.

Table 3.2: A Sample of How Texts were Analysed

Analytical Tools	Text 1	Text 2
Narrators	Published by Federal Social Inclusion Unit (2009)	Published by Anglicare (2008)
Language, Metaphors and Symbols	Visual: Photos of prominent politicians (Foreword) 'A new approach' (Foreword) 'Our Aspirations' (p. 2)	Introductory quotes by Amartya Sen, Senator Ursula Stephens and then DPM Julia Gillard (p.1) 'Anglicare's perspective is essentially moral: a primary commitment to a fair and decent society, rather than wealth creation as an end in itself' (p. 1)

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[3] Since 2011, the Social Inclusion Unit in the South Australian State government (SASIU) was dissolved and its functions were transferred to the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI). However, the South Australian Social Inclusion Board (SASIB) remains. Since September 2013, the Federal Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) and the Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB) have been disbanded by the Abbott Liberal-Coalition government.

Analytical Tools	Text 1	Text 2
Narratives and sub-plots	Narrative Structure: 1) Problem definition: Social exclusion as a problem about the value of 'fairness' - 'All Australians...', 'Every Australian...' (p. 2) 2) Action plans: strategies and initiatives outlined in chapters 4-9. 3) Problem resolution and future plans: 'National Action Plan on Social Inclusion, 'National Compact with Third Sector' (p. 67)	Narrative Structure: 1) Problem definition: Social exclusion has been rightly identified by the Federal government as key social concern, but Anglicare cautions against the government's over-emphasis on economic participation - 'Anglicare Australia concurs with the emphasis on economic participation - but only as long as it not used as a universal, 'one size fits all' policy, either in principle or practice. To repeat, Anglicare's primary focus is moral (p. 4). 2) Acton plans: An '[a]lternative perspective' using Sen's 'capabilities approach (pp. 6-7) 3) Problem resolution and future plans: Anglicare's strategies (p. 8)
Target Audience	Literate, middle-class, people who take an interest in social justice, social policy issues.	Politicians, government agencies, other non-profit service providers and general interested members of the public.
Excluded Narrators and Audience	Individuals who are deemed to be socially excluded.	Individuals who are deemed to be socially excluded.
Other Observations	Text published in hardcopies and online.	Available online.

Bearing in mind the potential discourse analysis pitfalls cautioned by Antaki et al. (2003), this thesis could not avoid providing summarised results from its discourse analysis or in selecting salient quotes to illustrate each point of argument because a

comprehensive representation of all the qualitative data in this research would extend well beyond the length of this thesis. The main results of the discourse analysis are presented in the next chapter that looks at the language, symbols and discourses of social inclusion. In addition, the themes that are gathered by the preliminary stage of the discourse analysis served as a guide to refine the interview questions for policymakers and service providers. Hence, discourse analysis in this thesis complements the next research method - interviews and focus group discussions - rather than existing as a separate research method.

3.1.2 Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with Adult Participants

Interviews and focus group discussions play a central role in my research design. This research method is used primarily to gather data from policymakers and service-providers. Interviews with policymakers and servicer-providers, in particular, complemented the discourse analyses of policy documents. Interviews are advantageous for research because they help the researcher to interpret both their texts and documents better (Richards 1996, p. 200). According to Weiss (1994, p. 1), the use of semi-structured interviews helps the researcher learn 'about people's interior experiences... what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions'. Yet, Baker (2002) argues that both interviewers and interviewees co-construct the meanings that are generated through the interview process. Hence, interview data are neither 'true' or 'false' accounts of what the interviewees experienced, but rather, the researcher is focused on the dual aspects of how interviewees interpret their experiences, as well as what was being experienced, in the active interviewing process (Holstein & Gubrium 2004, p. 142). Hence, the interviews in this thesis are focused on how and what meanings of social inclusion are produced by policymakers, service providers and children who are deemed to be socially excluded.

In the beginning, a wider sampling of policymakers was considered. Invitations to participate in my research were first sent to all staff at the Federal Social Inclusion Unit and the South Australian Social Inclusion Unit. Four individuals from these two Units agreed to participate and they expressed the view that because their Units were small, it was unlikely that I would be able to achieve an adequate number of interviews for my research. Instead, they suggested potential interviewees from other government

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departments with whom they worked closely, noting that social inclusion was about inter-departmental partnerships, therefore it was important to capture the views of people working in other government departments. As a result, a snow-balling sampling method was established, based on the networks of individuals whom my research participants considered to be key players in shaping the social inclusion agenda. These networks show how power relations, social networks, partnerships and collaborations between different policymakers, service providers or organisations function under the social inclusion agenda. At the same time, to address the limitation of snow-ball sampling where potential interviewees might be excluded, I continued to send invitations to participate in my research to relevant government departments (for example, the Federal Department for Human Services and the Department for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) and to all the members of the Federal Social Inclusion Board and the South Australian Social Inclusion Board. However, response through the snow-ball sampling was greater than through the non-targeted invitations sent to government departments.

Most of the interviews conducted were based on a one-on-one interview format to preserve confidentiality of information given. However, at the request of some interviewees and organisations, focus group discussions were conducted as it was more practical and convenient for them. Focus group discussions are usually preferred by interviewees who have a close working relationship with their colleagues and feel comfortable in sharing their views with one another. Indeed, the group setting is advantageous in this instance because the interviewees felt more comfortable discussing my research topic in a group and they took the opportunity to supplement, support, add on and even disagree with one another. Furthermore, their familiarity with each other enabled me to quickly establish rapport with the group and most members of the group were active participants. In total, 40 adults participated in my research either through one-on-one interviews or in focus group discussions. 12 of the interviewees were policymakers from both the Federal and South Australian governments, while 28 interviewees were from two faith-based service providers in South Australia.

The two faith-based service providers were selected after considering several factors. Firstly, to distinguish service providers with an explicit social inclusion focus, it was

necessary to select service providers that ran programmes and services funded under social inclusion initiatives from both the South Australian government and the Federal government. Service providers that ran similar programmes or services, but were not funded under the social inclusion initiatives were excluded because it was difficult to establish whether these programmes or services were specifically designed with a social inclusion objective. Secondly, since the scope of this thesis focuses on children aged between seven to 18, service providers who ran a comprehensive set of services or programmes targeted at children in this age range were preferred. The last consideration was an ethical one. There were ethical concerns that children who participated in my research might make new disclosures of abuse that warrant mandatory reporting and follow-up services. Hence, service providers who have an established protocol on mandatory reporting of abuse, as well as follow-up services for the children who make disclosures of abuse, were selected. Only two faith-based organisations met all the criteria and these two organisations were invited to participate in my research.

On average, the length of the one-on-one interviews was 45 minutes with the focus groups lasting about an hour each. All but two of the adult participants have chosen to remain anonymous, but codes are given to all of them in this research because the two participants who did not mind being named were in group discussions and the information they gave could lead to the identification of their colleagues who wished to remain anonymous. Policymakers have been given codes with the prefix 'PM', followed by 'F' for those working in a Federal government agency and 'SA' for those working for the South Australian government. All the policymakers held senior positions[4] in government agencies or in the social inclusion boards, with the exception of four interviewees who were mid-ranked[5]. The policymakers represent various government agencies from the Federal and South Australian governments, including the independent Australian Social Inclusion Board as well as the South Australian Social Inclusion Board. Due to the small number of participants in my research, a detailed listing of all the agencies that they represent may render the identities of my participants obvious and

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[4] Senior positions include directors, chairpersons, board members as well as head of departments and units.

[5] Mid-ranked positions include managers and senior executives.

for this reason, such a list is not included in the thesis. Furthermore, there were several organisational changes in the South Australian and the Federal governments after the completion of my fieldwork that affected the designations and appointments of my participants. Hence a detailed listing of the government agencies represented by my participants is less relevant as many of these agencies and departments no longer exist. The two faith-based service providers have chosen to remain anonymous to safeguard the identities of the children from these two organisations who participated in my research. All the adult participants working in these two organisations have been given codes. Those who held frontline appointments are coded 'SPF' while those who held either senior executive or managerial appointments are coded 'SPM'[6]. Given that there was a high degree of policy synergy between the different government agencies, data saturation point was reached relatively early, where interviewees were repeating similar themes and using repetitive language or phrases. A similar trend was observed with the service providers.

The interviews and focus-group discussions were based on a semi-structured format where broad themes and questions were covered, with specific questions being developed according to the nature of each interview. For example, focus group discussions with frontline workers in the service provision agencies included specific questions on their interactions with the children attending their programmes, whereas such questions would be irrelevant for some of the policymakers or management level service providers who did not have prior experience working with children. The following table shows the themes and broad questions that were covered during the interviews and focus-group discussions with policymakers and service providers.

Table 3.3: Interview Guide for Policymakers and Service Providers

Interview Themes	Main Questions
Concept of social inclusion	a) What do you understand by the term 'social inclusion'? b) Before the concept of social inclusion gained currency, where there other

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[6] A few interviewees hold positions as centre coordinators and have partial managerial and frontline roles. For these interviewees, they are coded as, 'SPM'.

Interview Themes	Main Questions
	policy/service approaches that were used? c) What are the similarities or differences between these approaches and social inclusion?
Application of social inclusion in work	a) How useful is the social inclusion agenda to your work? b) What are the strengths and limitations of using the concept of social inclusion in your work? c) Besides social inclusion, what other concepts or policy frameworks are useful in your work?
Partnerships and collaborations	a) Do you engage in any collaborative or partnership projects with other government or non-government agencies? What are these projects? b) How has the social inclusion agenda affected your partnerships with other agencies? c) What are the strengths and limitations of these partnerships?
Children deemed to be socially excluded.	a) What are some of the initiatives for children that are being adopted as a result of an emphasis on social inclusion? b) How have these initiatives affected the policies/services for children? c) What are the strengths and limitations of using this concept for children's policies and services?

As the intention of this thesis is to discover the underlying meanings of social inclusion, it was important to allow interviewees to express themselves freely without having a rigid and structured interview guide. However, the extreme of a totally non-directive

interview should be avoided, as Whyte (1984, pp. 97-98) advised, because respondents expect interviewers to come prepared and may become uneasy if the interview topic is too free-ranging. The above interview guide in Table 3.3 only shows the broad themes covered in each interview. In the actual interviews, several other sub-themes and questions were covered but these additional themes varied for each interview and focus group discussion according to the nature of respondents' work experience. This open and semi-structured approach allowed me to exercise 'social scientific imagination… when issues beyond prior planning and expectation arise in the discussion which may be important' (Gaskell 2000, p. 40). Indeed, social scientific imagination was especially critical for the next research method I will be elaborating on – children's research and the ethical considerations that are inseparable from conducting children's research.

Interview data in this thesis was analysed using an iterative approach that combines a cycle of deductive and inductive processes (Miles & Huberman 1994). The interview and focus group discussion data were first coded and analysed using the broad interview themes in Table 3.3. Two interview transcripts were selected to be analysed using these broad themes. From this initial analysis of the interview data, other themes and sub-themes emerged. The list of themes and sub-themes were further refined and modified as new interview transcripts were being coded and included in the analysis. Across the themes and sub-themes, groups of data from the policy documents, policymakers, service providers and children were compared. The table below shows an example of a preliminary analysis examining the sub-theme, 'economic participation'.

Table 3.4: An Example of Preliminary Analysis on a Sub-Theme

	Theme: What do people say about social inclusion? **Sub-theme 1: Economic participation**	**Preliminary notes and analysis**
Policymakers	Employment as the key to social inclusion (PMF04). Key to break intergenerational cycle of joblessness is to increase children's school participation which would in turn lead to better job prospects for them	• Literature on children as future citizen-workers. • Compare with policy documents. • Examine PMSA03's example. How does the BFO programme work

	Theme: What do people say about social inclusion? Sub-theme 1: Economic participation	Preliminary notes and analysis
	(PMSA01, PMSA04, PMSA06, PMF01, PMF02, PMF03). Example of a successful employment programme (Building Family Opportunities or BFO) that does not have explicit employment outcomes (PMSA03). Opposing view: Employment is a lofty ideal for the most disadvantaged (PMSA02).	without having employment outcomes? • Examine PMSA02's opposing view. Why does she disagree with other policymakers that economic participation is beyond some of the most socially excluded individuals?
Service Providers	Helping children break the cycle of intergenerational joblessness also means helping them overcome other social disadvantages they may face, eg. child abuse (SPM08). Social and economic cost to society if children are caught in long-term intergenerational cycle of disadvantages (SPM08). Successful outcome of Communities for Children (CFC) programme: mothers found jobs through gaining confidence and competency skills (SPM05). Intergenerational unemployment contributing to children becoming homeless (SPM06).	• Children as 'risks' or 'costs' to society. Similarity to PMF01, who talked about the economic and social costs of children facing long-term disadvantages. • Support text analysis that showed service providers differ from policymakers' strong focus on economic participation by understanding that forms of economic and social participation are inter-linked. • CFC is not a targeted children's programme. It is a programme aimed at developing families' capacities and to encourage cooperation between local agencies.
Children	Older children already working part-time (Troy and Kase).	• Literature on history of childhood(s). Children as

	Theme: What do people say about social inclusion? Sub-theme 1: Economic participation	Preliminary notes and analysis
	Children talk about contributing to housework (Sara, Nathan, Jack, Dainess, Max and Nee). Older children talk about their plans and what they are already doing to achieve their career aspirations (Mason, Jack, Sky and Dainess).	workers were a norm prior to industrialisation and in some cultural contexts. • Children as active agents in planning for their careers, in contrast to being 'costs' to society or passive beings caught in intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.

From the preliminary analysis on economic participation, literature on children as 'future beings' as well as the history of childhoods, are examined to develop and refine the analysis further. Other observations led to a more detailed analysis on the Building Family Opportunities (BFO) and the Communities for Children (CFC) programmes. The opposing view offered by PMSA02 was also examined in detail leading to a new theme on 'choice in participation', while SPM08's view that economic participation is inter-related to other forms of participation supports the earlier text analysis observing a similar understanding among other service providers. Final results emerged from this constant process of refining themes and sub-themes, identifying patterns or links across different groups of interviewees, referring to existing literature, as well as checking for opposing or affirmative views. Bearing in mind that the processes of meaning production during the interviews are as critical for analysis as the content of the interview (Baker 2002; Holstein & Gubrium 2004), field notes on the physical environment, the mood and expressions of the interviewees, as well as the interactions between interviewees or interactions with the interviewer, were also considered in the analysis. As approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee, all the data collected for this doctoral research had been digitally archived and will be stored for five years before being destroyed.

3.1.3 Children's Research Activities

This thesis takes the perspective that children are competent social actors and their understanding of social inclusion is an important area of study, though somewhat neglected by policy researchers, in contrast to adults' views of social inclusion. While parents' views about children's social inclusion are equally important as a subject of study, parents' perspectives have been excluded in this thesis for several reasons. Firstly, as Christensen and Prout (2002, p. 480) point out, investigating children's world through the perspectives of parents makes an implicit paternalistic assumption that children are vulnerable and incompetent research participants, requiring more 'competent' adults' views to supplement children's views. Just as researchers interested to find out about women's views would not correspondingly seek men's views as a supplement to their research, there is no compelling reason that parents' views, though valid, are essential in children's research. Secondly, including parents' perspectives would distract and dilute the expressive space given to children who participated in this research, as there is a risk that their views would be interpreted in the context of their parents' views, rather than in the context of their independent autonomy. Christensen and Prout (2002) caution that children's researchers need to be mindful not to allow competing demands from well-meaning adults, such as parents or teachers, to crowd out children's interests in the research process. While parents' views on social inclusion are a worthy topic deserving a separate study, children, as compared to their parents, have less social and political space to make their views heard on policy matters.

Lastly, there are also methodological and ethical concerns that parents' involvement in this research may, directly or indirectly, influence children's views. As pointed out by children's researchers (Bessell 2009b, p. 22; Christensen & James 2000a), there is a tendency for some children participating in research to seek approval from adults on whether their views are acceptable, even when they have been assured that all views are accepted. With parents' involvement, there is further risk that some children may seek their parents' endorsement of their views, or that parents' participation in the research may prevent children from sharing information freely (Mauthner 1997). Even if parent's participation in the research is carried out separately, parent and child may influence each other's views prior to the research or contest the validity of each other's views

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after the research, leading to additional layers of methodological dilemmas. For these reasons, parents' views were excluded from this research.

Since the targeted child participants in this research should conform to the broad definition of those considered as socially excluded, child participants were sampled from those who were attending various programmes or receiving services from the two faith-based organisations that agreed to support my research. While it can be argued that the children who are receiving services from service providers are not likely to be the most socially excluded, a judgement had to be made between conducting my fieldwork in the most isolated communities in Australia with no additional social support services, or to work with existing service providers who are providing services to communities deemed to be relatively disadvantaged. The decision was made to work with existing service providers due to ethical considerations in children's research, so that additional support services for children were available, if it was found that they required these services (for example, follow-up services would be required if children were to disclose new incidents of abuse). In total, 30 children participated in this research out of a potential group of between 50 to 70 children[7].

Due to the confidentiality of the contact details of the children and their parents, the two faith-based organisations selected, contacted and gave out the parental consent forms on my behalf. Some parents consented to their children's participation, but the children were unable to take part in the research on the specified day due to illness or other activities. From the group of children with parental consent given, the children were invited to give their consent for taking part in the research. The age range of the children was between seven to 18 because most of the programmes run by the two service providers were for school-aged children. Even though 18 years old is beyond the definition of a child under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, two 18 year-olds were included in the group discussions because they were keen to participate with

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[7] It was difficult to estimate the exact number of children taking part in the programmes from the two service providers because some of these programmes had fluctuating numbers of children. For example, youth drop-in centres or programmes under Communities for Children do not have a fixed number of children turning up every week. The estimated number of participants was based on the number of attendees that children and youth workers had gauged for their programmes.

their friends and it was unreasonable to exclude them simply because they were a year over the age limit. Of the 30 children, 18 were aged between 13 and 18, while the remaining 12 were aged between seven and 12. There were 16 female children and 14 male children and they were more or less evenly split between the older and young groups of children (seven females out of 12 among the younger group and nine out of 18 for the older group).

Visual methods were used for the younger group of children because most of the children were familiar with drawing, making maps or making paper decorations, having done these activities frequently in school. However, this does not mean that all children enjoy drawing or colouring and using these methods may reinforce stereotypes of children (Tisdall et al. 2009, p. 79). In this research, visual methods were used mainly as a way to build rapport with younger children and to start conversations with them (Boyden & Ennew 1997, p. 115), rather than as a primary data collection method. Similarly, it is important to find out children's interpretations of their drawings and not assume the visual images produced are self-evident (Boyden & Ennew 1997, p. 115). At the start of the research, I explained to the children that the research would involve drawing the activities that they enjoyed doing or their favourite places, making maps of their neighbourhood and decorating paper cut-outs to illustrate the people who were most important to them. The children were also encouraged to write or talk about their favourite activities or people if they chose not to engage in drawing or decorating. Through asking children about their favourite activities, places or people, conversational topics related to the social inclusion domains identified by the Federal government in the social inclusion monitoring and reporting framework (ASIB 2010, pp. 18-21) were then initiated. The following table shows these domains and the talking points with children.

Table 3.5: Social Inclusion Domains and Talking Points with Children

Social Inclusion Domains	Talking Points with Children
Learn	Children's experience of their school life.
Work	Children's informal work at home, their career aspirations and work experience (if any).

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Social Inclusion Domains	Talking Points with Children
Engage (social participation)	Children's relationships with family, friends and other social networks. Children's activities with family and friends.
Have a Voice (political, civic, community participation)	Children's participation in civic, community or political activities (if any). Do children have a say on various issues in school, home or in the community?
Material/economic resources	Children's expenses. (Since the topic of financial adequacy can be sensitive, the topic is reframed as the type of expenses that children have, what they would like to spend money on and what they do with any additional pocket money)
Health and disability	Children's experiences of health services and medical care.
Education and skills	See domain 'Learn'.
Social resources	See domain 'Engage (social participation)'.
Community and institutional resources	Children's experiences and relationships with their neighbours and other people in the community.
Housing	Children's thoughts and feelings about the place and neighbourhood that they live in.
Personal safety	Children's thoughts and feelings about safety in school and community. (Safety issues at home can be very sensitive and this topic was only broached if a child indicated a willingness to talk about their family.)

For the activity of decorating paper cut-outs of people, children were asked to draw and colour the people most important to them. If they did not like drawing or colouring, they could also use stickers to decorate the cut-outs. An example of paper figures decorated by Kyiesha (8) is shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Kyiesha's Important Relationships
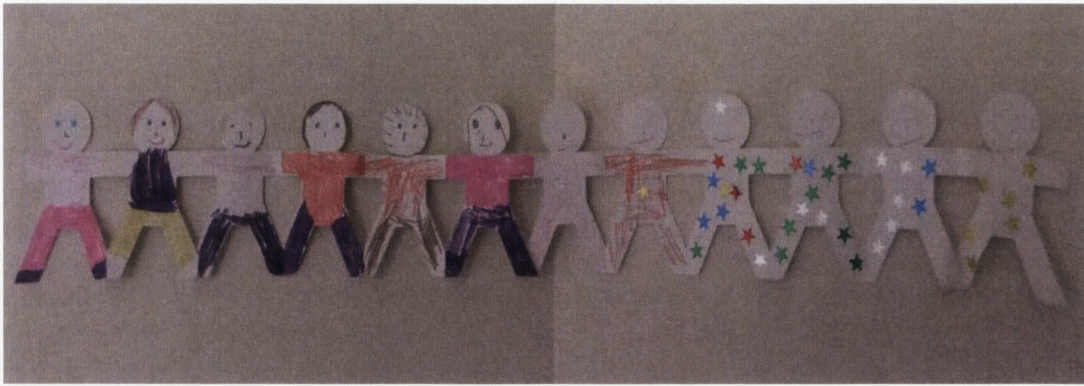
From the above paper cut-out, Kyiesha was then invited to talk about her relationships with the people whom she thought were important to her. In this way, the social inclusion domains, for example, social participation or 'have a voice', as well as other domains (see Table 3.5 on the social inclusion domains) were explored. In addition, children could talk about other topics not covered under the social inclusion domains and through natural course of the conversation, children could choose to focus on only one domain or several. Similarly, in drawing their favourite activities and their favourite places, domains such as housing, personal safety, community and institutional resources, education, material resources and work were explored. The following is an example of a map that Reece (7) drew that showed what his neighbourhood looked like.

Figure 3.2: Reece's Neighbourhood
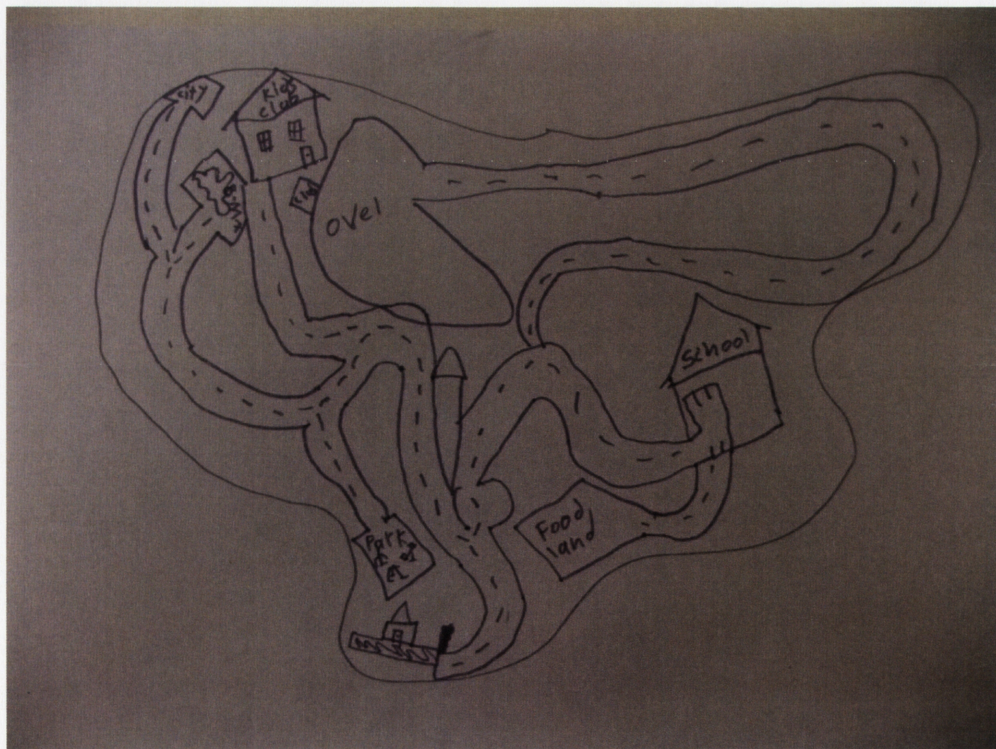
Jazzy, who just turned 13 when she took part in the activities, did not enjoy drawing as much as the younger children in the group, so she chose to express her favourite activities through a combination of writing, decorating and using symbols such as skulls to represent her dislikes and smiley faces to represent her likes (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Jazzy's Likes and Dislikes

It is important to note that not all children use the same symbols or expressions to mean the same thing. For example, while Jazzy (13) used the skull stickers to express the things or activities she disliked, Mason (7), used the skull stickers to represent the people who are most important to him, because he loved skull stickers. An illustration of how Mason represented the most important people in his life using skull stickers is shown in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Mason's Use of Skulls[8]
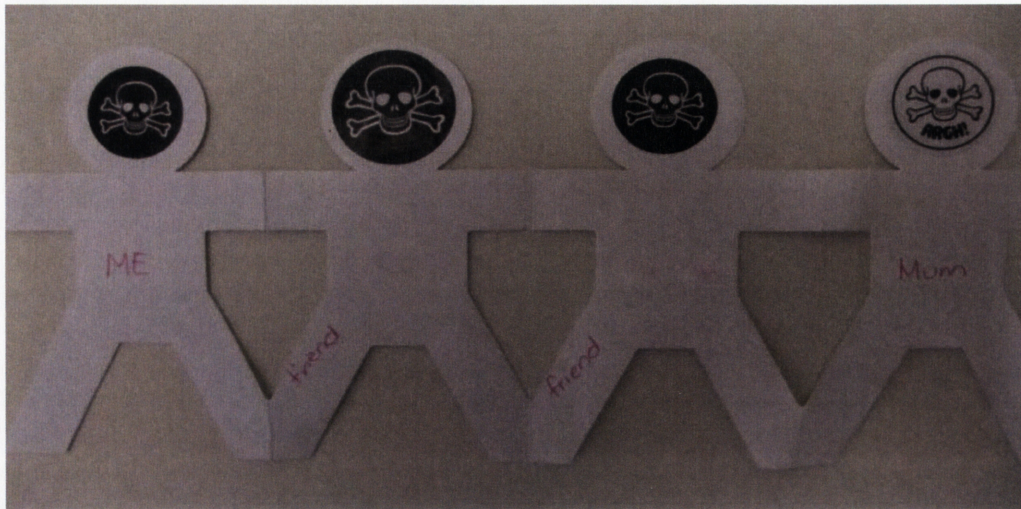
Mason (7) was keen to tell me about his extensive network of friends, family members, teachers and his school principal and requested that one of the programme staff present help him write down their names on the paper figures as he could not spell them. This insistence on being accurate was also observed with Bianca (9) who, at one point, turned to her sister, Jazzy (13), and asked, 'Blue is your favourite colour, yes?' so that she could get the colour of her sister's blouse right. Many times, children would pause and check with each other on the details of their drawings to make sure they were accurate representations. This sense of integrity in mutually checking the accuracy of the information they gave to the researcher, amidst joking and having fun together, supports other studies (Cobb-Moore et al. 2009; Danby 2005; Denzin 2010, pp. 185-186) that show children actively constructing and maintaining their sense of a social order during play. It also supports the view that children are capable of acting ethically (Nieuwenhuys 2008, p. 10; Skånfors 2009) and goes against common assumptions that children are unreliable research participants.

The older group of children, aged 13 to 18 years, were invited to join a group discussion with their friends or to participate in a one-on-one interview instead of participating in any of the visual research activities. Most of the older children preferred group activities and discussions, consistent with the findings of other older children's research (Hill

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[8] The actual names of children's family members, friends and other relations have been erased in all the figures used in this thesis.

2006, p.81; Punch 2002a). Older children are less likely to find visual research activities fun and may be embarrassed by their perceived inadequacies in drawing (Punch 2002b, p. 331). Like the younger group of children, the older group of children were also encouraged to talk about other related topics, in addition to the social inclusion domains in Table 3.5, if they wished. All the interviews and group discussions with the older group of children were conducted in private or semi-private settings, as it was preferred by the children and staff members from the service provision organisations respected this decision.

At the beginning of each visual research activity, discussion or interview, all children were given a consent form that requested their permission to take part in the research and to have their voice recorded. Two of the children in the group of seven to 12 year olds were uncomfortable with having their voices recorded. Since they were part of group activities, it was difficult to record the others without capturing some of what these two children had said. As a result, the voice recorder was turned off for most of the group activities except during individual conversations with those in the group who had consented to having their voices recorded. The consent form was explained to the children in detail and they were invited to ask questions or to clarify items on the form. In particular, children were told that they could withdraw from the activities at any time, or not answer any question if they felt uncomfortable. This right to withdraw from the research was repeated at various junctures during the research when children showed signs of distraction or boredom. This is an important process because seeking children's assent in research is a relational and on-going process (Cocks 2006; Dockett & Perry 2011). Children were also free to listen to their voice recording if they wanted to. In addition, children were given a choice to be represented in this research either by their first name, or by a nickname of that they had chosen. At the end of the research, a small gift and appreciation card that included a summary of their contribution to my research were given to every child. With children's permission, digital photographs of all the drawings and craftwork created by the children were taken and the original works were returned to them. Initially, I had planned on returning to meet my child participants in order to share my research findings with them. However, this was not possible because most of the children were no longer attending programmes or receiving services at the children and youth agencies I visited.

3.2   Ethics and Gatekeepers in Children's Research

Any form of children's research is potentially fraught with ethical issues and dilemmas because children are perceived to be vulnerable research subjects (Morrow & Richards 1996; Thomas & O'Kane 1998). However, children's 'vulnerability' is in itself a construct that needs to be examined more closely. In other words, researchers should ask themselves whether this perception of vulnerability is due to a mistaken belief about children's incompetence, for which childhood studies have emphatically shown the reverse (see Alderson 2000; James et al. 1998; James & Prout 1990), or whether it is due to institutional barriers or discriminatory practices that place children on an unequal footing with the adult researcher (Morrow 2005). Hence, a distinction needs to be made between inherent vulnerability of children that is related to children's biological immaturity and structural vulnerability that is related to a disregard of children's agency (Lansdown 1994). Therefore, ethical decisions on children's research need to consider children's vulnerability in terms of their age, gender, class, social position and sensitivity of research topic, rather than assume the same level of vulnerability for every child. In particular, Bessell (2006) argues for a rights-based framework that acknowledges children as social actors in research ethics guidelines.

Ethical considerations for human research are, of course, not restricted to children's research, but must be considered whenever the researcher and the people involved in the research are in a significantly unequal power relation, or when the research topic involves sensitive issues, or will potentially lead to unethical conduct by the researcher or the participants. Issues most discussed in childhood studies on ethics are similar to ethical concerns which arise in other forms of human research – informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (Gallagher 2009, p. 14). However, as pointed out by Punch (2002b, p. 323), ethical issues tend to dominate children's research more than other methodological concerns even though many of the ethical issues raised in children's research could also be applied to research with adults. Whether most of the ethical concerns involving children's research are based on the mistaken view of children's incompetence or vulnerability, the fact remains that children's researchers are subject to close scrutiny by layers of gatekeepers to safeguard against unethical research practices involving children.

Perhaps it is due to this predominant concern on ethics in children's research that there is no shortage of comprehensive research guides that provide useful advice and tips on conducting research with children, especially highlighting the responsibilities of the researchers in carrying out safe and respectful activities with children (see Alderson & Morrow 2011; Boyden & Ennew 1997; Christensen & James 2000b; Farrell 2005; Tisdall et al. 2009). As these authors have shown, the onus is on the researchers to be critical about their assumptions about children or childhoods as well as to be aware of the unequal power relation between themselves and their child participants. However, when the researcher is in the field, the researcher may find that some gatekeepers do not share the same thinking about children and have difficulty believing that children are competent research participants (Balen et al. 2006; Campbell 2008; Powell & Smith 2009, p. 137). For example, gatekeepers may understand the vulnerability of children as an inherent fact about all children while the researcher may see the gatekeepers as maintaining the very power structures that place children in a vulnerable position by placing excessive barriers to children's participation in research. Both gatekeepers and the researcher claim that their own understanding of what ethical research means is in children's 'best interest'.

Hence, in children's research, the power relation to be considered is not only between the researcher and the child participants but also between the researcher and gatekeepers (Berrick et al. 2000; Butler & Williamson 1994; Powell & Smith 2009, p. 136; Thomas & O'Kane 1998). Gatekeepers have a duty to check on the proposed methodology of all children's researchers but a trusting relationship on the part of both the researcher and the gatekeepers is important for a shared understanding of how the research practice can better address ethical concerns (Emmel et al. 2006, para 9.3; Punch 2002b, p. 329). In some studies, gatekeepers are found to be overprotective and paternalistic, resulting in situations where some groups of children were being excluded in research (Campbell 2008; Heath et al. 2007; Hood et al. 1996; Powell & Smith 2009, p. 136). It has also been argued that ethics assessments based on a potential risk approach is likely to end up serving the interests of universities and institutions rather than serving the interests of children (Graham & Fitzgerald 2010, p. 141). In this chapter, I will focus on two gatekeepers within the same organisation that had different views about what vulnerability means for children in research. As a consequence of these different views,

the way in which some of the ethical issues, such as informed consent, was addressed differently for different groups of children in this research. Similarly, children's studies scholars (see Butler & Williamson 1994; Hood et al. 1996; Munro et al. 2005) have pointed out that the complex web of power relations amongst themselves as well as with the researcher have an impact on why certain decisions were made on the research methods. I argue that that while many gatekeepers continue to play overprotective roles that disregard children's agency, the gatekeepers who recognise children's vulnerability, as a result of institutional barriers, are more willing to challenge the social construct of 'vulnerable children'. When both gatekeepers and researchers share a common understanding about children's agency as well as the limits to their agency in an adult-dominated research space, they are better able to work with each other in enabling a more respectful and ethical research practice for children.

3.3   Gatekeepers as Barriers and Facilitators of Children's Research

The gatekeepers in this research play different roles in how ethical issues about children's involvement in this research were being managed. In this section, I will elaborate on my experiences with two gatekeepers from the same organisation who had contrasting views on children's involvement in research that not only shaped the different relationships I had with both of them, but also the way ethical concerns were being addressed for different groups of children in this research. For the first gatekeeper, children's involvement in research was perceived as risky, given that many of the target group of children had had experiences of domestic violence, abuse, neglect, family crises or had acrimonious relationships with their family members. As a result, this gatekeeper played a highly protective role in this research and excluded the majority of the children attending programmes at the organisation from participating in this research. The exclusion of children from research by gatekeepers is observed in other studies (see Campbell 2008; Hepinstall 2000; Thomas & O'Kane 1998). For the second gatekeeper, children's involvement in research was perceived as an opportunity for children who were considered as socially excluded, to participate in giving their views on social inclusion. As a result, the second gatekeeper felt that there was a need to support this research and to work with the researcher closely to address some of the ethical concerns for this research. The following is a description of how these two

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gatekeepers and their relationship with the researcher shaped how ethical issues were managed in this research.

I will begin by describing my experience with a general manager at one of the service provision agencies that I had approached for my research. At our first meeting, the general manager was apologetic but firm that she was not in favour of supporting my research, even though the organisation's research ethics committee had approved my application to conduct research with children at the organisation. The main reason for her reluctance to support my research was because she felt that children attending programmes at the organisation were vulnerable and needed to be protected against being 're-traumatised' by my research. I was also told that the organisation had had a bad experience with a previous researcher which resulted in them taking a cautious approach towards all other researchers. Consequently, I was only allowed to talk to no more than ten children, aged between seven and 12, in two separate groups. The children were to be selected by the centre or programme coordinators, but I was not given a say on how the selection was made. In addition, the general manager said that a staff from the organisation would be present at all the research sessions. It is suggested that the presence of a parent or carer may prevent children from disclosing confidential information (Mauthner 1997). In my research, it was observed that having a staff who was familiar to children during the research process had its benefits and drawbacks. Since the children who participated in these two groups were young, aged seven to nine, having a staff who was familiar to them helped to put the children at ease. Furthermore, the staff present were respectful of the research process and did not intervene in children's preferences or activities except when the children needed help. However, the familiarity between the children and the staff meant that some children were sharing more information with the staff than with me. This suggests that the decision to include or exclude the presence of adults, other than the researcher, during children's research needs to consider the age of the child, the relationship between the child and the adult(s), as well as the sensitivity of the research topic.

While the decision to have a staff present during the research helped the children to feel at ease, the general manager's decision to pre-decide and exclude the majority of the children attending programmes at the organisation was more worrying. This brings to

the fore what children's 'informed consent' meant for the children attending programmes at the organisation, since one group of children is given the privilege over others in being selected as potential participants in my research (see Sinclair 2004; Tisdall & Davis 2004 for further discussion of this issue). In addition, by limiting the time I could spend with the children who participated in my research, there was less time for the children to familiarise themselves with me, or for me to engage with them in a more meaningful way. For example, even though most of the children agreed to participate in the research, they did not have much time to think about their involvement in my research to make a considered choice. This goes against the principle of creating an environment where children can make an informed dissent (Boyden & Ennew 1997) and disregards the importance that children place on being able to work at their own pace (Thomas 2001, p. 107). To mitigate the pressure on children to participate in my research, I reminded them at various points during the activities that they could withdraw from the research (see Alderson & Morrow 2011; Boyden & Ennew 1997; Gallagher 2009 p. 16). Having only one session with the children meant that I was unable to discuss some of the social inclusion domains, such as health or transport with all the children. When some children asked if they could complete the activities in the following session or had more to say about their drawings and maps, I had to tell them that I would not be present at the next session. Not only was children's ability to give informed consent or dissent to the research compromised, their sense of time as well as their desire to contribute more to the research were not respected as a result of the strict access imposed by the general manager.

In contrast to the general manager, one of the centre coordinators from a children's agency expressed keen support for my research. The centre coordinator felt that the topic of social inclusion was especially important to the children attending the centre's programmes because they were often excluded from research projects. She went through the questions that I intended to ask the children and felt that most of them were of a non-sensitive nature. Between the centre coordinator, her team and myself, we discussed different research approaches that would be respectful towards both the children and their parents. The centre coordinator and her team took time to discuss in detail how my research would be carried out. Since the children's workers knew the children's personalities and habits very well, they were able to give me advice about the

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effectiveness of various research methods with different children in the group. This is important since children have different preferences on research methods (Hill 2006; Punch 2002b). For example, the team told me that most of the children enjoyed craft activities except for two of the older children so that I was able to prepare a slightly different activity for the two older children. Furthermore, I was given sufficient time to look at the facilities of the centre so that I could prepare the research environment as best as I could in advance. As pointed out by Punch (2002b), Hill (2006), Edwards and Alldred (1999), the research environment is important because it affects children's interactions with the researcher. With the help from the staff at the centre, we placed several toys and games at a corner of the room so that the children who decided to withdraw from the research mid-way could have other activities to do. Similarly, we discussed how the staff would introduce me to the children and this took place a week in advance of the planned research session. During this pre-research session, the children were able to familiarise themselves with me and then they were given a choice whether or not they wanted to be involved in my research the following week. This meant that children were given time to interact with me, think about my research and make a considered decision whether they wanted to be part of the research. Similarly, the centre agreed to arrange a short meeting with the parents so that they could ask me questions about my research and to clarify any doubts. This was important because parents were able to meet me personally, know what my research was about and then make an informed decision about their children's participation. In contrast to the general manager's non-negotiable approach, the centre coordinator's open approach meant that I was able to form a closer working relationship with her and her team to discuss ways to create a research environment that enables children to make more considered consent or dissent to the research.

The experiences I had with the different gatekeepers in this research show that ethical research with children need not be about pitting different interests, children's, parents', service providers' or researcher's, against each other. Similarly, children's right to protection and their right to participation in research are not mutually exclusive (Melton 2008, p. 913). Power, as Hill et al. (2004, p. 89) pointed out, is a contested concept that can operate at many different levels, such that what is understood by 'children's participation' is more about how different relations of power operate than it is about

who have or have not power. This supports Foucault's view (1983) on power that is understood as a relation, rather than as a position or status that one owns. Not all gatekeepers perpetuate the constructed vulnerability of children by being overly protective. In fact, frontline gatekeepers who have been working closely with children are in a good position to make more meaningful checks on the researcher's proposed methodology because they are more familiar with the children than the researcher. Given that children have different preferences and needs in the research process, gatekeepers can support the researcher by giving useful suggestions on what would or would not work with different children. Similarly, even though the researcher is primarily responsible for the ethical practices during the research process, the support from gatekeepers make the task easier and gives the researcher more confidence in handling the different ethical issues that may emerge during the research process. For example, prior to conducting the research with children, I was able to discuss with frontline workers about how to manage situations where children disclose new incidents of abuse or bullying during the research process. Although none of the children[9] in this research made new disclosures of abuse or bullying, it was important that I could rely on the support of frontline workers, should there be new disclosures being made. Similarly; at one of the youth centres, the issue of bullying was discussed at a youth forum. The children from the centre were, therefore, familiar with different ways of managing bullying situations, even if a few of them expressed that they did not adopt the methods they learnt.

Indeed, this collaborative and partnership approach in addressing social inclusion issues forms one of the central themes in the discourse on social inclusion. This discursive focus on partnerships and 'joined-up' approaches is potentially powerful in reconstructing children as competent partners in policy-making processes. However, in the following chapter (Chapter Four), it is shown that while policymakers and service

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[9] One of the older children revealed a history of sexual abuse during the research, but it was not a new disclosure and she was receiving on-going counselling, as well as other support services from the service provider. Other children talked about bullying incidences in the past, but these incidences have either been reported to other adults or the children and their families had resolved them in their own ways (for example, by moving to a different school). Children who talked about their own bullying behaviour also talked about the subsequent punishment they received.

providers see each other as co-narrators in the discourse of social inclusion, individuals deemed to be socially excluded are subjects in the discourse to be talked about, instead of being seen as partners or co-narrators. Similarly, children who are deemed to be socially excluded are not considered the co-narrators of the social inclusion discourse. Instead, children's well-being is used as a rhetorical device in the narratives on social inclusion because it is morally difficult to oppose arguments that are made in favour of children's social inclusion. The next chapter will elaborate on the discourse of social inclusion – who the main narrators are, the narratives that they are telling, the narrative devices used, the target audience of the narratives as well as how the people deemed to be social excluded are being represented in these narratives.

CHAPTER 4

Language, Symbols and Discourse of Social Inclusion

Every policy text tells a story and behind each story there are narrators, target audiences and narrative devices that will help to frame the stories. This idea of understanding policy texts as stories or narratives is not new. Indeed, policymakers not only prefer to think in terms of stories, the narrative structure also helps them to communicate a particular issue to the public by using specific depictions of how a proposed programme will operate and how they intend to accomplish the proposed outcomes (Kaplan 1986, pp. 771-772). A good policy story 'allows readers to see themselves in stories yet also transform how readers see the stories' (Kaplan 1986, p. 775). Narrative analysis has often been used to unpack contesting policy discourses (Roe 1989) and policy advocates use different narrative strategies to validate their policies (Borins 2012a; Borins 2012b, p. 186). Often, narrative analysis is also able to bridge the divide between academics and practitioners, involving both groups as active producers and consumers of knowledge (Ospina & Dodge 2005a; Ospina & Dodge 2005b).

Hence, to understand what social inclusion means, it is critical to analyse policy texts on social inclusion and examine the narratives they tell that shape and reshape the policy knowledge in those narratives. As with other policy narratives, the story of social inclusion is being told by different narrators, with different target audiences and using different narrative devices. It can be understood as an on-going contest of different narratives of social inclusion, where each one jostles for legitimacy and credibility. When dominant narratives emerge, it is also critical to ask why these have prevailed over others. This chapter draws upon various publications from government bodies and not-for-profit agencies, including reports, pamphlets, online information, speeches, video and interview transcripts, where a discourse analysis is applied to understand how the concept of social inclusion is being constructed as similar or different narratives by policymakers in the government and service providers from not-for-profit organisations.

The first section of this chapter looks at the narrators of the social inclusion discourse in Australia. As the main narrators of the social inclusion discourse, they are considered to be the experts of social inclusion and their interpretation of social inclusion sets the

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limits of what is known and can be known about social inclusion. However, narrators of social inclusion need to understand the audience of their stories and hence, the second section of this chapter discusses who the likely audience are, as well as the roles they play in shaping the narratives on social inclusion. The third section of this chapter examines the narrative devices that are being employed in telling the stories on social inclusion. These narrative devices include a deliberate shift away from the language of poverty as well as the use of statistics. The fourth section of this chapter analyses the two different yet parallel narratives of social inclusion that employ a grand narrative about Australia together with an underlying narrative that focuses on economic participation. The final section of this chapter looks at the characters who have been considered as socially excluded in the stories of social inclusion. While they are the protagonists of the narratives on social inclusion, they are neither the narrators nor the audience of these stories about themselves. In particular, children's narratives on their experiences of social inclusion are missing in the policy discourse of social inclusion.

4.1   The Narrators of Social Inclusion

The role of the narrator or narrators in storytelling is critical if not essential in understanding how the story is to be presented and hence how it will be received by the audience. At the same time, narrators present their stories with a target audience in mind, styling their narration and choosing words or the pace to suit this audience. The original narrator who coined the label, 'social exclusion', was René Lenoir (1974), the French Secretary of State for Social Action in the Chirac government and he used the term 'les exclus' to describe those who were excluded from the French employment-based social insurance system. The concept of social exclusion gained popularity in France in the 1980s, leading to the development of a new set of social policies under the Mitterrand government (de Haan 1998, p. 11). The concept then spread across Europe and in 1989, 'The Resolution of the Council of Ministers for Social Affairs on Combating Social Exclusion' was issued, laying first claim to the concept as a legitimate concern of the European Union (Daly 2006, p. 6). In the UK, although the social exclusion approach had been used to study poverty and deprivation since the mid-

1990s, it was only in 1997 that the UK Social Exclusion Unit (SEU)[10] was established by the Blair Labour government. In both the French and British contexts, the political narrators of social exclusion have held a distinctively centre-left ideological position that advocates for a stronger government role in social security and welfare policies.

In Australia, the concept of social exclusion was largely championed by political narrators from the Australian Labor Party, who were influenced by the UK's policy narrative. However, in Australia, the concept took on a more positive labelling of 'social inclusion' when the Premier of South Australia, Mike Rann, set up the South Australia Social Inclusion Unit (SASIU) within his State Labor government, under the South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet in 2002. Athough Mr Rann based the model of the SASIU on the Social Exclusion Unit in the UK, an additional South Australian Social Inclusion Board (SASIB) was also established to provide independent advice to the South Australian government. The SASIB reported directly to the Premier and played a key leadership role in shaping South Australia's social policies, making policy recommendations and giving policy advice to the SASIU. Significantly, the SASIB (SASIU 2005, p 2) was expected to '[l]ead ministers, through committees with ministerial, chief executive and treasury membership, provide the means of implementing policies and programs following Cabinet's agreement on priority directions'. This gave the Board authority to work across the various government departments in South Australia and to influence the government budget and resource allocation.

At the Federal level, a similar institutional structure was set up after the Rudd Labor government came into power in 2007, consisting of a Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as well as the Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB). Among the board members of both the ASIB and SASIB were ex-public servants, notable academics and leaders of non-for-profit organisations and business corporations. Many board members held key positions in other government boards and committees. Other than the explicit roles that ASIB and SASIB members

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[10] The SEU became smaller in 2006 and re-named Social Exclusion Taskforce (SETF). Both the SEU and the SETF have been dissolved since David Cameron became the Prime Minister of the UK in 2010.

had to fulfil as set out in their terms of reference, these two Boards performed the critical role of articulating what social inclusion meant through their research reports and publications. Even though the ASIB was an independent advisory body to the government, the reports it produced were similar in tone and subject matter to those published by the Federal government. This is shown in a comparison of the titles of key publications from the ASIB and the government agencies in the following table.

Table 4.1 Comparison of Key Publications from ASIB and Government Agencies

Publication Titles from ASIB	Publication Titles from Australian Government Agencies
Principles for Social Inclusion – everyone's job (ASIB 2008a)	Social Inclusion Principles for Australia (SIU 2009a)
Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Faring (ASIB 2010)	Our State of Inclusion: Outcomes from the South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative 2002-2010 (SASIU 2010)
Addressing Barriers for Jobless Families (ASIB 2011a)	Family Joblessness in Australia (Whiteford 2009 - commissioned work by SIU)
Children at Greatest Risk of Long Term Disadvantage - Elements of Successful Programs and Services (ASIB 2008b)	Social Inclusion and Early Childhood Development (Vinson 2009c – commissioned work by DEEWR)
Breaking Cycles of Disadvantage (ASIB 2011b)	Intergenerational Disadvantage (Vinson 2009d – commissioned work by DEEWR)

While it is likely that the overlap between the ASIB and the SIU was intentional, as both were based on an agreed set of policy priority areas, the similarity in tone and subject matter meant that the ASIB and the SIU had set a clear boundary over the policy discourse of social inclusion at the Federal level. Social inclusion is, therefore, about jobless families, children at risk of long-term disadvantage, homelessness, people with disability and mental illness, locations with multiple disadvantages and closing the gap for Indigenous populations (SIU 2011a). By specifying these priority areas, these policy narrators not only tell the audience what social inclusion is, it also tells them indirectly, what it is not. Similarly, there are several areas of overlap between the Federal social inclusion agenda and the South Australian social inclusion agenda:

Table 4.2 Comparison of Publications from Federal and South Australian Agencies

Publication Titles from South Australian government (SASIB & SASIU)	Publications from the Commonwealth government (ASIB & SIU)
People and Community at the Heart of Systems and Bureaucracy (SASIU 2009a) Innovative Community Action Networks: an innovation of South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative (SASIU 2009b)	Building Inclusive and Resilient Communities (ASIB 2009b)
Our State of Inclusion - Outcomes from South Australia's Social Inclusion Initiative 2002-2010 (SASIU 2010)	A Compendium of Social Inclusion Indicators: How's Australia Faring? (ASIB 2009a) Social Inclusion in Australia: How is Australia Faring? (ASIB 2010)
Stepping Up, A Social Inclusion Action Plan for Mental Health Reform 2007-2012 (SASIB 2007)	National Mental Health and Disability Consultation Findings (ASIB 2008c)

The overlap between South Australian and Federal policies on social inclusion is not surprising given that the Federal government's social inclusion agenda was strongly influenced by the South Australian agenda. Furthermore, the Chairperson for the SASIB and the Deputy Chairperson for the ASIB was Monsignor Cappo, who was a vocal supporter for policy reforms on issues such as mental health, homelessness and disability. The fact that Monsignor Cappo held key positions in both the ASIB and SASIB meant that he was an influential narrator of the story of social inclusion in South Australia as well as at the national level.

Academics and researchers play an important role in conceptualising social inclusion, shaping and measuring it, often by drawing upon their own research or research from other academics. A substantial number of government publications on social inclusion are written by either specialist government researchers or had significant inputs from academics who were either in the ASIB, SASIB or were hired for specific research projects. One of the first publications from the ASIB was written by a team of researchers from the Australian Institute of Family Studies and it was titled, 'Origins,

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Concepts and Key Themes' (Hayes et al. 2008). In another two publications by the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), an academic who is also a member of the ASIB, Professor Tony Vinson, was commissioned to write papers on social inclusion, the first is 'Origins, Meaning, Definition and Economic Implications of the Concept Social Exclusion/Inclusion: Incorporating the core indicators developed by the European Union and other illustrative indicators that could identify and monitor social exclusion in Australia' (2009a) and the second, 'Markedly Socially Disadvantaged Localities in Australia: Their nature and possible remediation' (2009b). As these were the first few policy texts on social inclusion published by the Federal government, the main objectives were to clarify the concept of social inclusion, how it was developed, how it was measured and how it related to the Australian policy context. This conceptual clarification was necessary given that the narrative of social inclusion was relatively new to Australia at the Federal level. Hence, it set the framework and boundaries of what the concept meant in terms of government policy. As authors behind the first few publications on social inclusion by the Federal government, academics, such as Professor Tony Vinson, take on the role of experts who set the conceptual boundaries on social inclusion as well as how it should be thought and talked about. In addition, expert knowledge performs a symbolic, legitimatising function, lending credibility as well as signalling authority and validity of policy decisions (Boswell 2009, p. 61). This legitimatising function of social inclusion narrators-as-experts is important given that the concept is relatively new and highly contested. Indeed, as Bourdieu (1991, pp. 109-111) points out, the discourse on social inclusion needs to be articulated by people who are perceived to have the authority and power in order for the concept of social inclusion to gain credibility.

However, experts are not confined to researchers or academics. Besides the publications that were authored by academics, other policy documents were also released by the SIU or ASIB by unnamed authors. Similarly, these unnamed narrators of social inclusion are considered as experts who play an important role in shaping the policy discourse on social inclusion. To give policy texts a stronger authority, prominent politicians are often featured on the front sections of the publications. For example, on the first page of 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia' (SIU 2009b), in the Foreword section, there are photographs and signatures of Julia Gillard (former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister

for Social Inclusion), Jenny Macklin (former Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) and Ursula Stephens (former Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion). Similarly, on the Acknowledgement section of 'Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Faring' (ASIB 2010), a group photograph of the entire ASIB, together with former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard and Ursula Stephens, are featured. These photographs act as visual endorsements of the publications, giving them an authoritative stamp on the published contents on social inclusion. It sends an indirect message that any challenge towards these publications will be a challenge to the authority and expertise of these political and community leaders.

The narrators from the service providers or not-for-profit organisations differ little from those in the public service or from the politicians in terms of their expertise on the subject. Large and well-resourced service providers often collaborate with academics and other researchers on social research. The expertise developed from these service providers are considered as credible as expertise from the public service bureaucrats since it taps into a similar pool of established academic researchers. In addition, this expertise is often enhanced by the service providers' direct knowledge of the clients whom they serve. Furthermore, some of the service providers were narrators of the social inclusion discourse before the Federal government took up this role. For example, Catholic Welfare Australia was already advocating for a national social inclusion approach at the Australian Social Policy Conference, four years before social inclusion became a policy priority at the Federal government level (Mitchell 2003). At another conference just before the Federal Election in 2007, Tony Nicholson (2007), Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, made it clear that the Brotherhood had been advocating for a social inclusion policy approach for a long time.

> For some time now, the Brotherhood has been aggressively making the case for 'social inclusion'...Our advocacy of social inclusion is now paying off. The leading politicians have got the message...So regardless of who wins the next election, Australia will have a government with an interest in social inclusion policies – something unthinkable just a few short years ago.

Indeed, service providers' narratives on social inclusion have significant influence on policymakers' understanding of the concept. For example, in one of her pre-election speeches on social inclusion, Gillard (2007, p. 107) acknowledged the role that the

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Brotherhood of St Laurence and the St Vincent de Paul Society played in advocating for and contributing to the definition of social exclusion. Furthermore, several of the leaders in not-for-profit service provider organisations held key appointments and as a consequence, have a direct influence on the policy definition of social inclusion. As narrators of the social inclusion discourse, both policymakers and service providers are considered as joint narrators of the social inclusion discourse, supported by expert knowledge from academic researchers.

4.2   The Audience of Social Inclusion

Regardless of whether the narrators are policymakers or service providers, they write with an audience in mind. However, in the story of social inclusion, narrators perform the role of the audience, to share and align their narratives with one another. The narrators of social inclusion all fall into the three types of primary audiences that Throgmorton (1991) has identified – scientists, politicians and lay advocates, where the service providers can be seen as 'lay advocates', policymakers as 'politicians' and academics as 'scientists'. The policy discourse needs to be constantly mediated among the scientists, politicians and lay advocates or risk appearing illegitimate (Throgmorton 1991). When policymakers, service providers and academics align their narratives on social inclusion, the mediated account of social inclusion gains greater legitimacy and authority. Hence, the first group of audience that narrators of social inclusion have engaged with are other narrators. A strong indicator of this is the heavy use of statistics and jargon in key publications on social inclusion, which limit the audience to other specialised groups of narrators who are considered to be social inclusion experts.

The process of sharing stories about social inclusion among the narrators takes place at conferences, forums and other consultation processes where the experts (bureaucrats, politicians, academics and service providers) gather together. Many of the key speeches on social inclusion were delivered at these conferences or forums where the audience consisted of participants who were already familiar with the general story of social inclusion. For example, the launch of the National Statement on Social Inclusion, 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia', took place at the inaugural Social Inclusion Conference where the main audience consisted of public servants, practitioners and academics who were working on social inclusion related issues. Thus, similar conferences are

opportunities for narrators of social inclusion to share their own narratives of social inclusion. At the same time, they learn how to be better narrators and to understand how their narratives complement other narratives on social inclusion. This is the substantiating function of knowledge where policymakers try to win support from other members of the policy community (Boswell 2009, p. 91). This is important because narrators need to know the stories that others are telling about social inclusion in order to corroborate each other's accounts when the credibility of the concept is threatened. Indeed the story of social inclusion is often under siege and when a prominent narrator makes a mistake of not articulating the narrative of social inclusion clearly, the concept's credibility is threatened. For example, when the then Minister for Social Inclusion, Mark Butler (2011), wrote in *The Australian* that the 'language of social inclusion is relatively new and perhaps unfamiliar', this remark was immediately taken up by the then Opposition Shadow Minister, Mitch Fifield (2012), who questioned the usefulness and relevance of social inclusion, promising to dissolve the SIU and ASIB if the Opposition wins the next Federal Election. Mitch Fifield's article was swiftly followed by two rebuttals, not from Butler or from the SIU, but from Monsignor Cappo[11] (2012) and Ms Kasy Chambers (2012), Executive Director of Anglicare Australia, both prominent community leaders who defended the relevance of social inclusion. This episode shows that narrators of social inclusion need to support each other in telling a clear policy narrative on social inclusion or risk the collapse of the entire discourse.

More importantly, it reveals the symbolic power of social inclusion that can be exercised only when recognised, or misrecognised as arbitrary (Bourdieu 1991, p 170). At the same time, the corroboration between policymakers, service providers and academic researchers on the discourse of social inclusion supports Watt's (2000, p. 25) observation that social exclusion is 'a linguistic currency' that can be easily used across different ideological perspectives and across universities, research institutes or within the government. Furthermore, a shared discourse on social inclusion between service

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[11] Monsignor Cappo's wrote his reply to Mitch Fifield in his personal capacity, as he had resigned from both his positions of Chairperson of the South Australian Social Inclusion Board and the Deputy Chairperson for the Australian Social Inclusion Board.

providers and policymakers makes it easier for service providers to align their service outcomes with government contracts, although Smith and Lipsky (1993) highlight the problem of service providers losing their autonomy by doing so. In section 4.4 of this chapter, it is shown that service providers balance the tension between their autonomy and being aligned to policymakers' discourse on social inclusion through emphasising or downplaying different aspects of their social inclusion narratives.

The second group of audience that narrators of social inclusion need to reach out to is the general public, which is largely middle-class. Support from the middle-class for the narrative on social inclusion is important because they form the majority of voters, lay advocates as well as funders (as taxpayers and donors). Indeed, the concept of social inclusion is about mainstreaming the 'excluded' into the category of the middle-class, as demonstrated in the following example of a video interview conducted by the DEEWR audio-visual team with one of the ASIB members, Dr John Falzon, on, 'what does social inclusion mean to you?' (ASIB 2009c)

> What it means is that it is really about 'us' not about some kind of imaginary 'them'. It's about recognising that we have so much in common and that some of us, indeed many of us, some quite visible, some invisible are being left out or pushed out more to the point...I'm talking about very simple things that we take for granted in many respects like the opportunity for children to engage in extracurricular activities, to be able to play sports, to go to music lessons, to be able to experience culture.

In another interview with Dr Jonathon Welch (2009) during the Social Inclusion Week, Dr Welch said, 'but more than that, it's not just about me, it's all about "we"'. Among the service providers, a similar social inclusion narrative about 'we' is being told and indeed, the question of 'who are we?' goes to the heart if the tension between inclusion and exclusion (Mitchell 2003, p 6). The use of the word 'we' is powerful, since it is the function of such small words that are pervasive yet innocuous, that create a sense of nationhood that seems natural and taken for granted (Billig 1995).

In addition, by saying that social inclusion is not about 'us' and 'them', but about 'we', the narrators make an assumption that there is a norm to which socially excluded individuals should aspire. This norm appears to be broadly middle-class in nature, where families are expected to send their children to 'extracurricular activities' such as playing sports, going for music lessons and experiencing culture, as Dr Falzon

mentioned. In this way, social inclusion becomes a yardstick to measure those who have been perceived as excluded against an 'ideal' middle-class lifestyle. Hence, those who have been socially excluded are vilified, not because of evidence that they suffer from poor outcomes, but because their lifestyles do not conform to their middle-class peers (Wilson & Huntington 2005). At the same time, the social inclusion texts appeal to the broad, middle-class audience by endorsing their lifestyles as the 'norm' to which the socially excluded should aspire. In another newspaper article by the previous Minister for Social Inclusion, Ms Tanya Plibersek (2010, p. 11), she began the article by using the example of Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest Edward Dunlop and Mary MacKillop, both of whom were ordinary people, but who performed extraordinary work for people who needed help. These examples appeal to the general public because the message is that 'we', the ordinary audience, should be responsible for the most socially excluded groups in our midst, just as Dunlop and MacKillop were. Similarly, when asked how important it was for the general population to understand the concept of social inclusion, Faulkner (2009, p 10), who was then the Chairperson at the ASIB, said, '[s]ocial inclusion needs to be well understood to generate personal support as well as political support to do something about it'. In other words, it is important that the middle-class majority understands and accepts the narrative of social inclusion because their support will translate into political support for the government that will promote policies and programmes on social inclusion.

4.3 The Narrative Devices of Social Inclusion

Most narrators of social inclusion would agree that the term is often vague and has multiple meanings. It is a term that can be considered as 'floating signifier' which has zero symbolic value; that is, 'a sign marking the necessity of a supplementary symbolic content over and above that which the signified already contains, which can be any value at all' (Lévi-Strauss 1987, pp. 63-64). This ability to encompass diverse meanings means that the concept could suit different narrators and narratives but it also means that it opens itself up for multiple contestations or be criticised for being an empty label or mere rhetoric. As was discussed earlier, this conceptual ambiguity about social inclusion means that there is greater need for narrators of social inclusion to corroborate or know what other narrators are saying about social inclusion. A policy narrator who admits that the language of social inclusion can be 'unfamiliar' (Butler 2011) risks

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revealing that it's an empty signifier that has been used merely as a political rhetoric. However, even if social inclusion is rhetorical, its symbolic representation is fundamental to its discourse because it conveys moral images of right and wrong, which underlie contests over public policy (Stone 2002, p. 156). Rhetorical devices are particularly useful when narrators intend to persuade the audience into new frames of thinking that may lead to a change in behaviour. Effective rhetorical devices appeal to the audience's emotions rather than through rational arguments (Harris & Williams 2003). In fact, social inclusion works through an intuitive-emotional domain by connecting people through shared values such as 'the Australian way' (Harris & Williams 2003). Hence, many of the speeches and texts on social inclusion evoke a sense of an Australian identity or what are presumed to be Australian norms and values. For example, the key Federal government publication on social inclusion is titled, 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia' (SIU 2009b) and the shared value of 'having a fair go' is used frequently in the policy discourse of social inclusion. In her speech to launch the National Statement on Social Inclusion, Julia Gillard (2010), then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Social Inclusion said, 'our national spirit is built on the idea of a fair go for all and the power of each individual to make their own story'. Similarly, in the video on the old Social Inclusion Unit's website, the then Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector, Ms Ursula Stephens (n. d.) said, 'social inclusion is also about understanding why some Australian's don't get a fair go'. In another example, Dr John Falzon (ASIB 2009c), an ASIB member, noted that '[w]e've got a very strong history in Australia, a strong tradition of a fair go'.

Service providers from the not-for-profit sector also articulated this idea of social inclusion as providing 'a fair go' for all Australians. This can be seen in the speech by Tony Nicholson (2007, p. 7), Executive Director, of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, '[a] national framework for social inclusion....points the way to expressing our national value of a fair go in the modern age'. Indeed, as Professor Paul Smyth (2010, p. 6), then General Manager of the Research and Policy Centre at the Brotherhood of St Laurence noted, '[t]he reality is that for popular politics, phrases like a "Fair Go" will be the ones that work'. This idea is echoed by Lin Hatfield Dodds (2012), UnitingCare Australia National Director.

> Whatever your philosophical underpinnings, at its heart, social inclusion is about ensuring a fair go for everyone –regardless of postcode or family of origin.

The rhetorical device of 'a fair go' becomes a rallying phrase for politicians, policymakers and service providers to do something about social exclusion. By evoking a commonly shared value, this narrative device works through a vision of an 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006) where everyone's socially included and no one is 'left behind', as can be seen in this speech by Gillard (2010).

> For some, the language was new. But the core value behind the words is as old as our community. It is that in a strong and fair nation, nobody is left behind. A recognition that everybody shares the responsibility to maintain that fairness. To give others a fair go.

This narrative technique of defining social exclusion as a threat to the perceived shared value of 'a fair go' is effective because it appeals to anyone who considers themselves as Australian. As Smyth (2010, p. 8) observed,

> [t]here is a variety of approaches to social inclusion which can be suited to every political persuasion. We are all social inclusionists now: from neoliberals to social democrats.

Politically, the rhetoric of 'a fair go' has a broad appeal across audiences from both the left and right ideological spectrums, as well as those from the middle-ground. Hence, although social inclusion as a policy framework is associated with Labor governments, its capacity as an empty signifier allows it to move into a politically neutral space that is based on the audience's sense of shared national identity. Thus, to be socially included means to be seen as 'Australian', rather than being about the poor or disadvantaged groups who are at risk of social exclusion.

4.3.1   Moving Away from the 'P' Word

In addition to being an empty signifier, social inclusion allows the narrators to discuss poverty or disadvantage without using 'the p word', poverty, which has become a stigmatising label. The shifting of the labelling from 'social exclusion' to 'social inclusion' creates further distance from the more traditional concept of poverty, as it has an aspirational and positive connotation. However, the history of social inclusion is unavoidably rooted in the discourse of poverty and deprivation. Indeed, the popularity of the discourse on social inclusion is also largely due to the dissatisfaction with the concept of poverty which was defined mainly in terms of financial or material

deprivation. In 2004, a Senate Inquiry into poverty led to an open debate on the usefulness of the income based poverty line which resulted in poverty being removed from the policy agenda (Smyth 2010, p. 15). At the same time, notable academics are moving away from the simplistic model of poverty as income poverty. Sen's (1999) capabilities approach and Townsend's (1979) relative deprivation framework mark clear shifts away from the traditional understanding of poverty as a problem of financial deprivation. In particular, social exclusion or social inclusion looks at dimensions such as social participation, social relations and the customary way of life, which are not considered in traditional concepts of poverty (Daly & Silver 2008, p. 539). Hence, the narrative of social inclusion was seen as an improved version of the story of poverty because its story was more complete, taking into account multi-dimensional measures other than income or wealth.

The ability to move away from a one-dimensional concept of poverty opens up the space for service providers or not-for-profit organisations to advocate for a broadening of services to people who are perceived to be facing multiple problems rather than an isolated problem of financial deprivation. In fact, Anglicare South Australia (2010) believes that social exclusion also includes service exclusion, where people who need assistance are not able to access services. In the same way, UnitingCare Australia (2007) has called for a national action plan that includes integrated access for clients. Other than focusing on the priority groups that the ASIB have identified, Anglicare Sydney also considers groups such as refugees and older carers who care for their adult children with disability as groups that experience social exclusion (King et al. 2010). This expansive focus is also reflected in UnitingCare Australia's (2007) focus which includes people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and asylum seekers. New immigrants from non-English speaking countries also appear in the Brotherhood of St Laurence's social exclusion monitor (BSL & MIAESR 2012b). While new immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers form one of the key client groups for these service providers, these groups are not often mentioned in policy texts from either the South Australian or Federal governments. Where they are mentioned, they are not considered as one of the priority areas (SIU 2011b, p. 3) but are included in the last paragraph, almost as an afterthought. Similarly, in the monitoring and evaluation framework for social inclusion, new immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers are only

mentioned in relation to one indicator, 'long-term recipients of full-rate income support payments' (ASIB 2010, p.27). Elsewhere in the document they are subsumed in the broader category of 'people from non-English speaking backgrounds'. Policymakers' deliberate narrowing of the target social inclusion population allows them to avoid substantial spending or wide-ranging wealth redistribution policies, while continuing to demonstrate their concern for people who are socially excluded (Watt 2000, p. 25).

Another difference between how service providers and policymakers present the problem of social exclusion is the way in which service providers attempt to demonstrate the complexity and multi-dimensional aspects of social exclusion. For example, The Brotherhood of St Laurence differentiates between marginal, deep and very deep levels of social exclusion (BSL & MIAESR 2012c). In addition, The Brotherhood looks at the persistence of social exclusion, distinguishing between those who experience temporary social exclusion and as well as those who are experiencing both deep and long-term exclusion. This is in contrast with the Federal government's indicators of social inclusion, where there is little or no data on the depth or temporal aspects of the issue. For example, the Federal Government's 'Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Faring' (ASIB 2010, p. 21) states that 'entrenched disadvantage' and indicators on multiple disadvantages throughout the life stages will be tracked, but these indicators are not included in the report. For service providers, the shift towards a more multi-dimensional presentation of the problem of social exclusion allows service providers to justify the necessity to broaden the scope of services to a diverse group of potential service users. In contrast, policymakers present a more well-defined scope of what social inclusion is that supports their justification to concentrate on a few target priority groups such as children in jobless families or children at risk of long-term disadvantage. This is not to suggest that policymakers are not aware of the complexity or multi-dimensional aspects of social inclusion, but that their policy objective is to remain focused on a few targeted groups rather than be wide-ranging. In particular, policymakers' focus on children is a form of 'defensive rhetoric' (Potter 1996, p. 107) that resist undermining from alternative arguments because children are considered to be a deserving target population that is helpless and needy (Schneider & Ingram 1993, pp. 336-337).

The shift away from using the word, 'poverty', further allows policymakers to talk about poverty-related issues using a new and more aspirational narrative. Social inclusion is branded as a new approach by policymakers and politicians. It is a 'fresh' and innovative way of tackling old problems that prior governments have failed to resolve. This is reflected in Gillard's (2007, p. 103) speech at the Sydney Institute.

> The concept of social inclusion in essence means replacing a welfarist approach to helping the underprivileged with one of investing in them and their communities to bring them into the mainstream market economy.
> It's a modern and fresh approach that views everyone as a potential wealth creator and invests in their human capital.

While politicians acknowledge that the problems of social exclusion are entrenched, they emphasise that the approach of social inclusion is a new one, as reflected in the Foreword in 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia'.

> We understand that entrenched disadvantage is not a new problem but addressing it requires a new approach. This statement sets out our new approach (SIU 2009b).

As a new language and a new narrative, social inclusion allowed the newly elected Federal Labor government in 2007 to justify the replacement of the 'welfarist approach', adopted by the previous government. Not only could the new government reject the old language of poverty, it could also reject 'old' policy approaches by its rival opposition party. Indeed, this was what the Labour government did in the UK, when Tony Blair came into power, rebranding its political ideology as 'New Labour' and adopting the 'third way', from which a new narrative on social exclusion was told. By moving away from the language of poverty as well as 'old approaches', social inclusion becomes a story about the future, rather than the past. However, because social inclusion is presented as 'modern and fresh' approach, it becomes a device for focusing on policy solutions, instead of delving into the on-going struggle of finding the underlying causes of the problem. For example, a publication by the SIU (2011b) titled, 'Foundations for a Stronger, Fairer Australia', is essentially an outline of the government's plan from 2010 onwards. Similarly, the chapter headings and sub-headings of the earlier publication 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia' (SIU 2009b) are particularly telling.

> Chapter 1 – Social Inclusion Strategy: Our Aspirations
> Chapter 2 – The Case for Change
> Chapter 3 – A Framework for Action

By focusing on action plans, goals and policy solutions, policymakers and politicians are able to side-step questions of what are the root causes of social exclusion, or how people become socially excluded. Even when politicians talk about how social exclusion has come about, the discussion is framed as a result of what was wrong with previous government policies. Indeed, the very economic successes that Australia had achieved under the previous Liberal-Coalition government were blamed for social exclusion.

> We are constantly being told that we've never been wealthier. And many of us are. On average we all are. But that's just the problem – no one is average. In fact, the Prime Minister boasts that Australian working families 'have never had it so good'. It's a claim that grates with many people because while the economy is booming, and people like us here tonight are probably better off, a lot of people feel that for them it actually was better in the past. And many believe they are now doing worse than their neighbours. (Gillard 2007, p. 104)

In this manner, the language of social inclusion works at multiple levels that allow politicians and policymakers to reject older narratives of poverty and welfarism and to begin new stories about inclusion, investments and aspirations. Yet, regardless of the change in government, the underlying narrative of social inclusion is about the economy and employment.

4.3.2   The Language of Economics and Statistics

The language of social inclusion is inextricably bound to the language of economics, where the relationship between economic growth and social justice is assumed to be mutually beneficial. This is clearly reflected in one of the first speeches on social inclusion by Gillard (2007) titled, 'The Economics of Social Inclusion', as well as the Federal government's Framework for Action, where 'economic growth' and 'equitable social policy' were the first two pillars for a 'stronger, fairer Australia' (SIU 2009b, p. 10). Both service providers and policymakers employ the language of economics and statistics extensively in their social inclusion narratives. If the label, 'social inclusion' is a rebranding of the older concept of poverty, then the use of statistics as an attempt to measure the concept expresses the government's ability to master or control it.

First, we must define social inclusion and exclusion…Second, we must find a new way of governing, a new approach to building partnerships to set goals and targets and meet them. Third we must ensure that core government programs improve social inclusion…Fourth we need to maximise employment for the socially excluded. And finally we must enter into accountable social inclusion partnerships with state and local governments, the private sector and the community sector. (Gillard 2007, pp. 107-108)

The ability to define and name the concept, and then to measure and monitor it is critical, because it is a way of expressing control or authority over the subject matter. The ASIB's publication, 'Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Faring', is an example of defining the problem and then measuring it. In this publication, social inclusion is first defined as people having (ASIB 2010, p.15),

[t]he resources, opportunities and capabilities [and] they need to:
Learn (participate in education and training);
Work (participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities);
Engage (connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities); and
Have a voice (influence decisions that affect them)

The document then outlines the principles of social inclusion as well as the monitoring and reporting framework, which consists of a range of statistical indicators for each of the Participation and Resources domains (ASIB 2010). The bulk of the text is devoted to the statistical indicators that will be used to monitor and evaluate the state of social inclusion in Australia. In an earlier document, 'Social Inclusion: A Compendium of Social Inclusion Indicators' (ASIB 2009a), a slightly different set of statistical indicators on social inclusion were used – indicators that compares Australia with other countries. Service providers also use statistics on social inclusion (see, for example, BSL & MIAESR 2012a, 2012b; King et al. 2010).

As symbols, statistics are powerful because they indicate that we can count, measure, monitor and evaluate social inclusion. It is an expression of the ability to understand and control the problem as well as to stimulate demands for change (Stone 2002, p. 186). However, the use of numbers is also about categorisation as well as judgements about inclusion and exclusion; numbers are metaphors emphasising some features while ignoring others (Stone 2002, p.165). Dimensions of social inclusion that are difficult to measure or when there are problems in data collection are likely to be excluded. For

example, data on children's involvement in civic or voluntary participation is often unavailable because their participation is either subsumed under their parents' participation or civic organisations simply fail to consider children's formal or informal contributions. Yet, whether children are involved in community or civic activities play an important role in children's experiences of social inclusion. Statistics, on their own, are unable to uncover the often complicated, inter-related reasons behind why a person is experiencing social exclusion. However, statistics enable policymakers to simplify an otherwise complex concept into numbers that can be measured and succinctly represented in graphs or charts. Numbers also tell the audience indirectly if a phenomenon is frequent or critical enough to be counted and in so doing, further authenticate the story that the issue is a serious one (Stone 2002, p. 172). Representing social inclusion through statistics also means that its narrative can be told as a scientific story with the narrators as experts. Yet, the idea that policy analysis is a science is in itself a form of rhetoric, although scientists often deny this to maintain their credibility and authenticity (Throgmorton 1991). In the hierarchy of knowledge where scientific knowledge is valued above other forms of knowledge, this becomes an especially powerful policy representation of social inclusion.

4.4   The Narratives of Social Inclusion

As shown earlier, the narrative of social inclusion in Australia is influenced by the narrative of social exclusion in the UK. The underlying policy narrative of social inclusion is an economic story - about getting the unemployed, who have been deemed to be socially excluded, to be employed and hence, to be socially included. In the case of children, the policy aim is to engage them in education and training for as long as they can to attain the relevant skills for future employment. Yet, the underlying economic plot of social inclusion is not very different from the narrative of poverty. In particular, under a Labor government, social inclusion becomes as much about boosting economic growth, as it is about portraying a political concern about social justice and issues on social inequalities. In other words, the story of social inclusion needs a strong grand narrative to frame it while maintaining an underlying story of economic growth. As Roe (1994) argues, conflicting policy stories often require a meta-narrative to represent a policy problem that is complex. For social inclusion to be a powerful political rhetoric and policy metaphor, the narrative works through a moral imagination,

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evoking shared Australian values and representations of national identity (Harris & Williams 2003). The following sub-sections will look at the grand narrative of social inclusion that is tied to the Australian national identity and the underlying narrative that is about economic growth and employment.

4.4.1   The Grand Narrative - A Story about Australians

Like many narratives, the policy narrative on social inclusion in Australia follows a basic three-act structure where in the first act, characters are introduced and a problem is set up. For example, the first chapter of 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia' begins with a story about an ideal Australia, 'a nation in which all Australians have the opportunity and support they need to participate fully in the nation's economic and community life, develop their own potential and be treated with dignity and respect' (SIU 2009b, p. 2). However, this ideal vision is not realised because '[i]n Australia today, not all Australians can do these things' (SIU 2009b. p. 2). In the second chapter, there is a clarification of what the problem might be and further elaboration on the people or characters who need to be socially included.

> Despite a long period of strong economic growth, not all Australians have benefited from increased prosperity. Without determined action they and their families may fall further behind. (SIU 2009b, p. 5)

Hence, the problem that is preventing Australia from realising its ideals is that groups of individuals, who suffer from 'poverty and low income' (SIU 2009b, p.6), who 'lack access to the job market' (SIU 2009b, p.7), have 'poor educational outcomes' (SIU 2009b, p.7), 'poor health and wellbeing' (SIU 2009b, p.8), 'lack social supports and networks' (SIU 2009b, p.8), face 'discrimination' (SIU 2009b, p.9), are at risk of social exclusion and hence unable to take part in an Australian way of life. At the same time, these socially excluded Australians add substantial costs to the society through increased budget spending for health, financial support and policing, loss of productivity, weakening of community ties and interaction (SIU 2009b, p.9). Although chapters one to three of 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia' do not form the bulk of the contents, they are the most important chapters because they form the 'causal stories' (Stone 2002, p. 188) that define the problem of social exclusion. As causal stories, these chapters identify the individuals who are considered to be socially excluded and indirectly blame them for the social costs of social exclusion.

Chapters four to nine of the document, 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia' comprise the second act of the three-act structure with information on what is being done to resolve the problem outlined in the first act. Like most narratives, this forms the main bulk of the storyline where the protagonists (that is, the policymakers) draw up 'Action Plans' (SIU 2009b, p.19) to enable the socially excluded become socially included. Finally, in the third act, we see a final resolution which brings together different elements of the story. For example, in chapter ten, aptly titled, 'The Way Forward', we see a reassurance that progress has been made and will continue to be made through the establishment of the ASIB (SIU 2009b, p.66), the development of a National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (SIU 2009b, p. 67), the National Compact with the Third Sector (SIU 2009b, p.67), the SIU (SIU 2009b, p.68), regional and local partnerships (SIU 2009b, p.68), and building an evidence base (SIU 2009b, p.68). In this way, the narrative goes back to the beginning where Australians are urged to help other Australians, who are deemed to be socially excluded, to participate in the Australian way of life to which all should aspire. In these three acts of the grand narrative, the earlier point that the discourse on social inclusion is mainly about presenting solutions rather than understanding the problem, is reiterated. More than that, the problem of social exclusion is presented as a problem about specific groups of individuals, such as those who are poor, low-income or have poor education outcomes. Even though factors such as a lack of social supports or discrimination are mentioned, it is unclear whether these factors are related to each other. Instead, the problem of social exclusion is framed in terms of individuals who are poor, with low education or low-income, without focusing on the structural barriers, such as social or institutional discriminatory practices, that may have contributed to their undesirable situations. Assigning blame on the victims of social exclusion is a typical way of constructing an 'inadvertent' causal story (Stone 2002, p. 193) where the policy solution that follows would be to change the behaviour of these victimised individuals.

In her speech at the launch of the National Statement on Social Inclusion, Gillard (2010) followed the basic narrative format as discussed above. Her speech was about a similar story that began with the reiteration of an ideal Australia where 'in a strong and fair nation, nobody is left behind. A recognition that everybody shares the responsibility to maintain that fairness' (Gillard 2010). However, this idealised vision faced challenges

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because '[w]e all lived through a period in which, though the economy grew, not all Australians benefitted...Too many Australians felt that, as a community, we were losing touch with fairness' (Gillard 2010). In order to address these challenges, her speech outlined the government's framework and priority areas to help 'jobless families', improve 'life chances of children at risk of disadvantage' and 'break the cycle of locational disadvantage' (Gillard 2010). Finally, the speech concludes in a similar tone to the publication, 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia', with a call to action, '[to] stand together at the start of a new decade'. It acknowledged that '[i]t will not be an easy road. But in following it, we stand on the shoulders of pioneers and innovators, of activists and reformers, of researchers and visionaries who have helped to pave the way' (Gillard 2010). In Gillard's speech and the earlier document 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia', the concluding note does not talk about how the ordinary Australian citizen can help those deemed to be socially excluded. Rather, it is a rallying cry to other experts of social inclusion, the ASIB, the 'pioneers and innovators...researchers and visionaries' to work together to help socially excluded groups. It is also an endorsement of the authority of these experts over the narrative of social inclusion. As the expert storytellers of social inclusion, the narrative provided becomes the official one where any challenge to it would also mean a challenge to the authority of the narrators.

4.4.2 The Underlying Narrative – Economic Participation

While the grand narrative of social inclusion is a story about the ideal Australia, the underlying narrative and indeed, the most consistent theme is about economic participation. It is interesting to note the contrast in Gillard's two key speeches on social inclusion, one just before the Labor government came into power in 2007 (Gillard 2007), and the other given a few years later at the launch of the National Statement on Social Inclusion (Gillard 2010). The first speech was aptly titled, 'The Economics of Social Inclusion', where she stated that, '[s]ocial inclusion is an economic imperative' (Gillard 2007, p. 103) and the grand narrative of an ideal Australia is absent. The later speech, however, employed this grand narrative much more explicitly, with the story of economic participation becoming more of an underlying or supporting story (Gillard 2010). This underlying economic story is one where high economic growth did not benefit everyone, although it presumably should, because the assumption is that there is no shortage of jobs given the strong economic performance. Hence, the story is not

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about structuring the economy in order for it to benefit everyone. On the contrary, the strong economic growth, in itself, justifies a continuation of the same economic management principles that have brought about the growth. Those who did not benefit from this growth are shown to be a small group suffering from multiple disadvantages.

> A small but significant number of Australians experience multiple disadvantages. Analysis of the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey shows that approximately 5% of the Australian population aged between 18 and 64 years experience multiple disadvantages which may impact adversely on their ability to participate in the community. (ASIB 2010 p.5)

In the same policy document, there were three priority groups that were of great concern to policymakers; namely, people who live in locations of concentrated disadvantage, jobless families and children at risk of long-term disadvantage. There are overlaps between these groups, which make up about five per cent of the population. However, the story of social inclusion as told by the policy narrators is not an all-inclusive one. Other socially excluded groups, such as refugees or asylum seekers, are not considered to be priority target groups under the social inclusion agenda. At the same time, it is assumed that the majority of the population are benefiting from strong economic growth. This allows the Labor government to balance neo-liberal economic policies with its grand narrative of social justice, by targeting only a specific but small group of individuals in the population. In this way, it allows policymakers to move away from the moral underclass discourse (MUD) to a social integration discourse (SID), even though some of the policies continue frame disadvantaged individuals as a moral underclass (Levitas 2005). Indeed, the shift from a moral underclass discourse to a social integrationist discourse was explicitly stated in an interview with Monsignor Cappo (ASIB 2009c).

> What we don't want to develop in Australia is underclass. We see that in some other countries, we haven't got it here, we don't want it here but there's a danger and if we don't attack this issue very seriously we will develop underclass in our society.

The assumption that there is no underclass in Australia is a clear articulation in support of a social integration discourse. More than that, it is an aspirational framing of social inclusion that does not deny the existence of the five per cent of individuals facing multiple disadvantages, yet presents this problem as one which will not develop into an underclass. This enables the government to justify its targeted approach on social

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inclusion, instead of embarking on more universal social policies under the banner of 'a fair go'.

Like policymakers, service providers provide a narrative of social inclusion that is mainly about economic participation and encouraging employment among those deemed to be socially excluded. However, the narratives on social inclusion among service providers are more varied and differences exist between providers in terms of how economic participation is being talked about. For example, Anglicare SA (2010) looks at social exclusion in terms of:

a) disengagement or lack of participation in social activities;

b) service exclusion in terms of not being able to access services used by the majority; and

c) economic exclusion where there is a lack of employment or inability to save.

Economic exclusion, in this regard, is only one aspect of social exclusion. This is in contrast to UnitingCare Australia (2007), for whom an inclusive community is about overcoming poverty and income inequality, advocating for 'a well-resourced national action plan which addresses both the causes and symptoms of poverty and social exclusion'. On the other hand, rather than seeing social inclusion as an aspiration or social exclusion as a consequence of poverty, social inclusion can also be seen as the solution to poverty as reflected in the Brotherhood of St Laurence's website (BSL 2011b) which states that, '[s]ocial inclusion is central to the Brotherhood's approach to tackling poverty'. What is common throughout these examples is that these service providers do not shy away from talking about poverty as part of their narratives on social inclusion. This contrasts with publications from the policymakers where the word 'poverty' is used sparingly.

One of the main differences between service providers' and policymakers' narratives on social inclusion is that service providers emphasise a moral dimension to social inclusion as more important than the economic dimensions of social inclusion. Like policymakers, some service providers talk about this moral dimension in terms of fairness. However, creating a fair society is the main objective of social inclusion

policies and not economic growth. This is explicitly expressed in Anglicare Australia's Discussion Paper on Social Inclusion (2008, p. 1) where it states,

> [w]hile accepting much of the Government's argument – and endorsing the bulk of its proposed policies – Anglicare Australia differs, albeit slightly and collegially, on points of principle, analysis and policy practice. The fundamental difference is that Anglicare's perspective is essentially moral: a primary commitment to a fair and decent society, rather than wealth creation as an end in itself.

In addition, this emphasis on the need to understand social inclusion beyond economic participation is expressed elsewhere in the discussion paper, 'social inclusion policy should be integrated with economic policy; but also justified on independent, moral grounds' (Anglicare Australia 2008, p. 5). In fact, Catholic Welfare Australia (Mitchell 2003, p. 2) goes further by calling social inclusion a 'morally imaginative' concept that is the solution to an overemphasis on economic rationalism.

> [Social inclusion is] a timely attempt at emotional persuasion and, far from being a tactic of obscuration and deception, is a very necessary element to counteract the current obsession with economical rationalism.

Some service providers are more specific about the kind of moral dimension that the story of social inclusion should tell. For example, Morrison (2010) writing for The Brotherhood of St Laurence, calls for individuals to be treated with dignity and to be recognised as valued members of the society, as the main discourse on social inclusion. In other words, social inclusion has to go beyond the social and economic dimensions to an understanding that recognition and dignity need to form the philosophical foundation of social inclusion (Morrison 2010, p. 20). Taking a rather different approach, Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA 2010) advocates for a more emotional and relational understanding of social inclusion. For CSSA (2010), 'love and friendship' are seen to be missing in the policy narrative on social inclusion and it is

> [t]his kind of love – the kind embodied in the Biblical exhortation to 'love your neighbour as yourself'…a recognition of shared humanity. It is our ability to look at another person and understand that they matter just as much as we do, not just in an intellectual way but in an emotional way, that motivates us to do something (CSSA 2010, p.44).

Regardless of whether it is 'moral imagination', 'dignity' or 'neighbourly love', these service providers tell a moral story about social inclusion, going beyond the story of economic or social participation. Hence, although service providers recognise the importance of economic participation in the policy narration of social inclusion, there is

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a strong sense that a purely economic narrative is insufficient or even detrimental. By advocating for a moral story about social inclusion, service providers are implicitly dissociating social inclusion from its political leanings, which inclines towards Labor governments. This is particularly clear in UnitingCare Australia's Opinion Piece (Hatfield Dodds 2012).

> I'd love it if the Australian Government and Opposition used their collective New Year's resolutions to focus political debate and action on the things that will deliver Australian communities where everyone belongs, is valued and can contribute. Taking a coordinated approach to social inclusion can deliver significant economic gains...This proven and practical approach deserves bipartisan support.

By dissociating the narrative of social inclusion from politics, service providers articulate the importance of social inclusion regardless of which government is in power. For service providers, it is the concept of social inclusion that is important and not the label, 'social inclusion'.

> If the government changes, the heyday of 'social exclusion' may pass and researchers, activists and politicians may move on to some new discourse. In Australia, policymakers may eventually find a new label for programs focused on entrenched disadvantage. 'Social inclusion' may lose its shine and fall from use in the same way that 'social justice' did in the 1990s. But nevertheless many of the entrenched problems the government is now addressing will persist (in less severe forms, we hope). (CSSA 2010, p. 52)

Similarly, Kasy Chambers (2012), Executive Director of Anglicare Australia, makes the point that

> [t]he most valuable thing about social inclusion as a concept or a set of principles is that it links our most vulnerable citizens to our society as a whole. It allows us to make their well-being fundamental to our national goals and values. Speaking personally, it's not the label that counts. It's that purpose.

From a service providers' point of view, this dissociation of social inclusion from its Labor government roots is not surprising since service delivery requires the continued funding support of any government that is in power. The ambiguity in the concept of social inclusion serves this bipartisan function particularly well because it is able to bring different interest groups with different wishes for policies together (Stone 2002, p. 158).

Where service providers align very closely to policymakers' narrative on social inclusion as economic participation, it is explicitly stated that the government's social

inclusion agenda must be more than just an assortment of programmes directed at a few social groups that are deemed to be socially excluded (Smyth 2010). Instead, Smyth (2010), writing for The Brotherhood of St Laurence, calls for a 'social investment state' based on a new compact with the shared value of 'a fair go'. This vision of a social investment state advocates for 'blurring the lines between social and economic policy' (Smyth 2010, p. 26) and it acts as 'a bridge to the reintegration of welfare with economic policy and in a way which resonates with Australian history and mainstream social values'. In other words, service providers recognise the importance of economic participation among the groups considered to be socially excluded, but they advocate more strongly for a fundamental moral and value shift, rather than merely reiterating the shared value of 'a fair go' as policymakers do. At the same time, service providers make a strong case for holding the government accountable for social inclusion targets, and service providers support the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, which measures the government's social inclusion progress.

> Australia needs a national action plan for social inclusion, with measurable goals and targets and clear accountabilities, including whole of government reporting on progress against the goals on a regular basis. This national action plan would align and guide the plethora of government activity that so often is either ineffective or actively works against itself on the ground in real people's lives. (Hatfield Dodds, 2012)

> [A]ll Government policy be developed and articulated within a social inclusion framework. One practical proposal would be to request that a 'Social Exclusion Impact Statement' be included with any documentation about significant new policy – replacing the 'Family Impact Statement'. (Anglicare Australia 2008, p. 8)

In service providers' narrative on social inclusion, the government needs to be more accountable and more responsible in achieving its policy goals and outcomes. However, at an interview with a few policymakers from the Social Inclusion Unit, it was revealed that the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion was under review between the State and Federal governments, hence it was not a priority for the Social Inclusion Unit at that point in time.

When policymakers do talk about responsibility, social inclusion is everyone's responsibility.

> Active government plays a big role, but social inclusion is about more.
> Social inclusion is about all Australians working together. (SIU 2009b, p. 2)

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> But even more than changing the way government works, social inclusion is about learning to mobilise our whole community. (Gillard 2010)

> Social inclusion principles – everyone's job. (ASIB 2010, p. 16)

For policymakers, it is everybody's responsibility to participate in the domains defined by the social inclusion agenda, because this responsibility is part of being an Australian citizen, as well as a personal obligation, according to former Minister for Social Inclusion, Tanya Plibersek (2010).

> Education, a job, good healthcare and shelter should be the birthright of every Australian. With that birthright comes the responsibility to participate: to make the most of the education you're offered; to do paid or unpaid work as you can; to take seriously our laws and democracy, and our responsibilities to our families and neighbours.

> Achieving social inclusion also means taking tough decisions and insisting that, while everyone deserves support and opportunity, we all have a personal obligation to take part and put our best effort into taking those opportunities. (SIU 2009b, p. 2)

In these examples of citizens' responsibility to participate, social inclusion is not just about harnessing the resources of the community or about appealing to the support of every Australian to be concerned about the less privileged. It is about a conditional inclusion, where it is the personal responsibility of each citizen to participate actively, especially in employment or education, in order to be considered as socially included. In this way, 'belonging' and one's national identity becomes provisional and conditional upon one's adherence to 'the Australian way' (Harris & Williams 2003, p. 216). Thus, the implication is that, if a citizen is not participating in either education or employment (paid or unpaid), then that person is not fulfilling the duties of a citizen and social inclusion will not be guaranteed. If a citizen has difficulties participating in education or employment, then he or she is responsible for taking part in the programmes and services designed to help them be engaged in employment or education. This underlying thread of citizen's responsibility in the policy narrative of social inclusion deviates from the service providers' narrative where the government has the responsibility to invest in its citizens and to be held accountable for the policy outcomes of social inclusion. Service providers are also more aware that many citizens are socially excluded not because they are irresponsible, but because of personal crises beyond their control, lack

of stable or well-paid jobs and ironically, sometimes because of economic booms in certain sectors.

> Evidence shows us that it isn't only inadequate income that leads people to emergency relief. It is a range of factors including family breakdown, illness, natural disasters, and – particularly during the global financial crisis – mortgage stress. More and more now these relief services are also seeing people in work, but with inadequate and insecure jobs…Yet the government's policy goals still focus on any jobs, rather than good jobs. The resource boom, a key feature of our present economy, is proving destructive of many regional communities. In 'Staying Power', Dr Philip Shade from Anglicare Central Queensland reports on townsfolk forced out by skyrocketing rent. (Chambers 2012)

> We would support an emphasis on individuals doing their bit. But today unemployment is essentially a structural problem. Being unemployed is not primarily about the money, it's about the lack of skills, relevant work experience and often robust health. A new social contract is needed which demands responsibility but also guarantees individuals' effective access to the support and resources they need to make effective choices about their lives. (Smyth 2011)

By 'structural problem', Smyth (2011) sees social inclusion as going beyond merely having a job or adequate level of income. Rather, it is about having state investment in integrated and accessible services for individuals to develop skills, competencies that will enable them to find stable, meaningful jobs (Smyth 2011). Hence, even though service providers generally agree that individuals are responsible to a certain extent for their own economic and social participation, there is a recognition that the underlying problem of social exclusion is due more to multi-dimensional factors, often beyond the individuals' control, than the lack of motivation or participation on the part of individuals deemed to be socially excluded. In contrast, policymakers and politicians focus on personal responsibility to find employment and to stay employed, rather than the state's responsibility to invest in skills training, in providing accessible social and employment services, or to invest in business innovations that improve the quality of jobs.

4.5   Neither Narrators nor Audience

As discussed earlier in Section 4.2, the texts on social inclusion by policymakers and service providers were written to be shared among social exclusion experts. The audience and the narrators are the same group of experts. Hence, the texts are not written with the socially excluded as audience in mind, nor are those considered as socially excluded co-narrators, together with policymaker or service providers. Instead,

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the socially excluded are the central protagonists in the narratives of social inclusion – the homeless, jobless families, people with mental and physical disabilities, Indigenous people, children at risk of long-term disadvantage or those living in areas with multiple disadvantages. As protagonists in the narratives of social exclusion, the socially excluded take on the role of fictional characters, forming 'the other', 'the excluded', the people who need to become more like 'us' or become a part of 'we'. As neither narrators nor audience, the socially excluded are not considered the experts on social exclusion or social inclusion. When the opinions of the socially excluded individuals are included in the texts, they appear as disembodied, one-line quotations, such as those found in the publication, 'Foundations for a Stronger, Fairer Australia' (SIU 2011b).

> Being socially included is having someone to believe in you from the start. (p. 6)
> Being socially included is having your needs met with respect and dignity. (p. 15)
> Being socially included is having someone to turn to when times are tough. (p. 21)

A footnote on page six of this document states that these quotations were 'developed following conversations with members of the community about what social inclusion means to them'. It is unclear whether the members of the community were given a standard fill-in-the-blank template beginning with, 'Being socially included is

_____', or whether the actual quotes were all paraphrased into this text format by the policymakers. Furthermore, there is no information on how these quotes were gathered. It is not known if the information was gathered from a survey, a programme feedback, a community gathering or other forms of feedback. Hence, it is unclear how many people took part in it and how the quotes were selected or paraphrased. In addition, none of these quotes has a name and there is no basic profile information on the people who had contributed to the quotes. Where there are photographs in the policy documents, presumably depicting 'socially excluded' people, the individuals looked more like professional models rather than actual beneficiaries of any social inclusion programme. Not only are the people who have been identified as socially excluded been deemed as non-experts and non-narrators, they are also rendered as anonymous, faceless background characters in the policy stories that are ironically about them. As anonymous characters, the socially excluded are represented as statistics or as specific categories of people. They are categorised as 'jobless families', 'homeless', 'children at risk of long-term disadvantage', 'people with disability of mental illness', 'Indigenous Australians' and 'people living in neighbourhoods and communities with multiple

disadvantages', which are the prioritized groups defined by the Federal government (see SIU 2009b, 2011a, 2011b).

For service providers, the socially excluded are labelled broadly as 'vulnerable groups' (UnitingCare Australia 2007) or as people with certain characteristics (gender, age, place of birth, ethnicity, health condition, educational qualifications, marital status and housing type) that place them at risk of social exclusion (BSL & MIAESR 2012a). When the stories of individuals who are deemed to be socially excluded are represented, these stories play a supportive role to the larger narrative of the success of the programme or service they have received from the service provider. This can be seen in the stories of Darryl, Marice, Duc, Pat, Olive and Sandra from the website of the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL & MIAESR 2012b). The template for each of these stories is the same. Each individual talked about themselves and what has happened to them in the past. For example, Pat's story begins as follows (BSL 2011a):

> Hello, I'm Pat. I was married at seventeen. I had three children. I had a very violent relationship, a very violent marriage. It was very frightening and that, and you had nobody there you could turn to. Finally my husband left.

Midway through these stories, the individuals talk about how they received help from the service provider and how their lives had turned around since receiving this help.

> Thirty-four years ago the Brotherhood helped me find a place to live....The Brotherhood helped me to turn my life around. Yes, they have. They've been the greatest support I've ever had. (BSL 2011a)

While this narrative template is similar for each of the stories featured on the Brotherhood's website, these stories do not form the main narrative on social inclusion because they are not featured on the main page on social inclusion. Instead, these individuals' stories are relatively hidden within the main website because the reader has to click on a few hyperlinks before arriving at the pages of these stories. In this way, the individuals featured on the website are not represented as the main narrators, the co-narrators or the protagonists, but as supporting characters of the social inclusion narrative.

Children who are deemed to be socially excluded belong to one of the priority target groups of the social inclusion agenda. However, unlike the representation of adult individuals who are considered as socially excluded, children's views, whether as one-

line quotes or as success stories, are not featured in either the policy texts or texts from service providers. Nor are there any references from the studies on children's views and experiences of poverty or social exclusion. Instead, children are represented in abstract terms. Omissions and gaps in policy narratives reveal what the narrators consider as unremarkable or obvious that is not worth paying attention to (Patterson & Monroe 1998, p. 329). For example, one of the key policy priorities identified by the ASIB is, 'improving the life chances of children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage' (SIU 2011b) and for SASIB, 'breaking the cycle of young offending', as well as 'increasing school retention rates' (Government of South Australia 2009, p. 1). However, children aged 0-14 are seldom counted in the Federal government's statistical indicators of social inclusion. With the exception of the indicators, 'children in jobless families', 'early child development', 'proportion of those aged 5 and above who do not speak English well' and 'child protection', where children under aged 15 are counted, social indicators only measure those who are aged 15 and above (ASIB 2010, pp. 18-21). While one can argue that some of these social indicators may not be relevant to young children, there is a general assumption that people under 15 years old are not significant enough to be measured in policy terms. For example, indicators measuring social and community participation, engagement in education or work, personal safety, having support from family/friends when in crisis, having a say in the community, access to public or private transport, access to health service providers, homelessness, feelings of safety all omit children younger than 15 years (ASIB 2010, pp. 18-21) even though these indicators are relevant to this age group of children. Such a numerical representation of children has led Qvortrup (1990) to remark that children are often invisible in statistics and other forms of social accounting because they are referenced around the experiences of adults or not referenced at all. Therefore, while children feature prominently in the policy discourse on social inclusion, they are talked about in an abstract way – as a reference to their families, or represented as statistics that may not differentiate children according to their age, gender, class or ethnicity.

Another form of the abstract child that is being represented in the social inclusion discourse is that of the future child. Children's present well-being is often framed in terms of their future as adult citizens. When conceived as future citizens, children's well-being becomes a social investment strategy to justify who may be considered as

worthy of state investment and who may not, while glossing over the divisions of class, gender, ethnicity or disability across children as a social group (Dobrowolsky 2002). It is not difficult to see why children's well-being becomes an appealing political rhetoric since it is unlikely to invite any opposition. This use of children's well-being as strategy to justify the focus on social inclusion is reflected in the opening paragraphs of Tanya Plibersek[12]'s message in 'Foundations for a Stronger, Fairer Australia' (SIU 2011b, p. 2).

> John Dewey once said that what the best and wisest parent wants for their own child is what our community should want for all its children...We want our children to grow up knowing that anything is possible if they work hard. We want them to know that their unique qualities are to be celebrated. We want them to know that they are part of a community to which they have a responsibility to contribute, and that the community will give them a helping hand if times get tough.

Children are talked about as future citizens in the above quote rather than as citizens in their own right, in the present. This supports Lister's (2003) observation that children are future citizen-workers in a social investment state. In Plibersek's message, children will only know that 'anything is possible if they work hard' when they grow up; their unique qualities 'are to be' celebrated, but not now; they are part of a community where they have a responsibility 'to contribute' in future, but not now. This is also reflected in the policy priority for social inclusion, 'improving the life chances of children at greatest risk of long-term disadvantage' (SIU 2009b, p. 17), where it is the long-term 'life chances' of children that are critical. Children are future citizens, not citizens now and their present well-being is of policy interest in that it prevents future risk of social exclusion. This policy notion of preventing future risk of social exclusion is also reflected in the significant government investment into early childhood development programmes, services and measurement. There are also significant policy investments in maternal, child and family health services, as seen in the establishment of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI), the National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), the National Early Childhood Development Strategy, the National Maternity Services Plan, the National Framework for Child and Family Health Services, the National Perinatal Depression

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[12] Tanya Plibersek was the Minister for Social Inclusion between September 2010 and December 2011.

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Initiative, as well as the government's $970 million investment and target that by 2013, every child will have access to at least 15 hours a week of quality play-based early childhood education in a preschool or kindergarten for 40 weeks in the year before full-time schooling (SIU 2009b, pp. 27- 29). Similarly for older children in middle childhood, there are significant government investments in educational infrastructure such as teacher training programmes, new information and communication technology equipment in schools and school infrastructural improvements (SIU 2009b, pp. 29 – 31).

Children's social inclusion programmes are specific to particular issues such as the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children for children who have been abused or neglected, the Social Inclusion Pathways for Refugee Youth (SIPRY), the Newly Arrived Youth Support Services (NAYSS) or the Reconnect programme for young people are homeless or at risk of homelessness (SIU 2009b, pp. 29-35). The National Strategy for Young Australians emphasises young people's future, rather than the present. For example, two of the core priorities for action are, 'equipping young Australians to shape their own futures through education' and 'strengthening early intervention with young Australians to help prevent any problems getting worse and to help young people get their lives back on the track' (SIU 2009b, p. 35). Hence, although children are a key feature of the policy narrative of social inclusion, they are portrayed as projected future adult citizens. Similarly, Williams (2004) points out that social policies' focus on children is based on children's potential as future workers. Children, in their current state, are only of policy interest as 'risks' for the future. In chapter six of this thesis, the implications of this construct of children as 'risks' is elaborated.

In contrast to policymakers, children are not a regular feature of service providers' narratives on social inclusion. If they are mentioned at all, they form only one of the many clientele groups for which service providers offer programmes or services. They are neither prioritised nor ignored. In other words, children are treated no differently from other social groups that are considered to be socially excluded. For example, the website of the Brotherhood of St Laurence features the profiles of socially excluded groups in terms of age, gender, country of birth, Indigenous background, health, education and housing (BSL & MIAESR 2012a). In the position paper by UnitingCare

Australia (2007), only specific groups of children were mentioned – Indigenous babies with high infant mortality rates, low average household income for one-parent households with dependent children and children living in rural or remote communities that experience limited access to community resources and facilities. Children were not singled out as deserving prioritised attention and the focus was more on their environments (rural or remote areas, Indigenous communities and one-parent households) rather than on the children themselves. Similarly, children are not portrayed as future citizens or as long-term 'risks'. When children are mentioned briefly by service providers, they are represented in a more factual manner.

> Children who live in these neighbourhoods experience growing up in a low-income family as well as having limited access to the facilities, resources and opportunities that other better-resourced communities take for granted. (UnitingCare Australia 2007, p. 2)

> Deep social exclusion is more likely to be experienced by children under 15 years and adults older than 50 years, at around five per cent in 2009. (BSL & MIAESR 2012d)

In addition, while service providers articulate their strategies and plans for social inclusion they do so by focusing on what the government should do rather than on what they, as service providers will be doing for their specific clientele groups. The lack of focus on children in the social inclusion narratives of service providers does not reflect a lack of concern on their part since other social groups are portrayed in a similar way. Large service providers generally provide services to a wide range of social groups and do not confine themselves to a few priority groups as outlined by the government in the policy document, 'A Stronger, Fairer Australia'. Furthermore, service providers rarely use children's well-being as a rhetorical device to appeal for support as politicians or policymakers have done.

While it is the responsibility of those deemed to be socially excluded to participate actively in the economic and social spheres of their lives and the responsibility of every other Australian citizen to uphold the shared value of 'a fair go', many untold narratives of social inclusion lie beneath the main policy narrative discussed in this chapter. As noted earlier, those deemed to be socially excluded are neither narrators of their own stories nor the audience. At the other end of the spectrum, however, the wealthy elites are similarly missing from social inclusion narratives. Wealthy elites are assumed to be

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socially included even though the lifestyles and social participation of these elites are intentionally exclusive. The exclusivity of elites is unquestioned and the elites are not held accountable for the problem of social exclusion. In fact, individuals who are facing multiple disadvantages disagree that the voluntary exclusion of the wealthy in society is unproblematic and express that the exclusion of the wealthy threatens social solidarity (Richardson & Le Grand 2002, p. 509). Even though policymakers depend on the business elites' contributions as taxpayers, these contributions are framed as 'charity' and not as a form of personal responsibility. In fact, one service provider was critical of the perceived government's over-dependence or prejudice in favour of big business corporations at the expense of other interest groups, 'Australia needs strategies to ensure the interests and needs of everyone underpin this development, not just those of high value business customers' (Chambers 2012). As Goodin (1996, p. 348) argues, social exclusion is a limited concept with the narrow objective of pushing those considered to be socially excluded 'just over the line' but ignores the larger issue of social marginality.

In this chapter, it is shown that policymakers and service providers share similar narratives on social inclusion and support the concept of social inclusion when it is under threat. At the same time, they differ in the way that they use their narratives to justify their objectives. For policymakers, social inclusion is both a rhetorical device as well as a tool to justify its fundamental policy goals of economic growth and employment. Indeed, as several scholars have argued, in the UK, social exclusion has been used mainly as a rhetoric that appears to be addressing entrenched, 'wicked problems'; while in reality, underlying problems, such as social and economic inequalities, are not addressed (Béland 2007; Dobrowolsky 2002; Evans 1998; Watt 2000). Similarly, in Australia, social inclusion carries both the grand narrative of a 'strong and fair' society, while its underlying narrative on economic participation ignores structural causes of unemployment, such as economic crises or the inadequate investments in education or skills training. The next chapter explores how the narratives of social inclusion shape the institutional power structures within the government as well as service approaches for practitioners. In particular, the next chapter shows that social inclusion is about the inequitable power relations between those who are considered to be socially excluded and the social inclusion experts such as the

policymakers and the service providers. For social inclusion to be more than a rhetoric, this inequitable power relationship needs to be addressed.

CHAPTER 5
Power Structures and Power Relations

Conceptually, social inclusion is about power relations. It is about the construct of a group of people, deemed to be socially excluded whose needs are to be managed, so that they adopt behaviours and practices that are considered to be socially desirable. The fact that a group of people are deemed to be excluded already constructs them as not belonging to the mainstream, hence somehow 'not belonging', as the label itself implies. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, exclusivity in itself is not the criteria for being defined as socially excluded because the elites and their exclusivity are never considered as such. The elites are exclusive but not excluded, hence social inclusion is about the powerless, rather than the powerful. As Procacci (1991) pointed out, the discourse on poverty is not about the elimination of inequality in wealth but it is about the control and elimination of certain behaviours that are deemed to be different. In this way, the relationships between service users and frontline workers, frontline workers and their agencies, as well as agencies and the state, are shaped by unequal power relations (Pollack 2004). At the same time, children have always been the targets of social control and 'the child – as an idea and a target – has become inextricably connected to the aspirations of the authorities' (Rose 1989, p. 121). From the moment a child is born, the child is constantly subjected to endless conditioning and disciplining. Children are treated as pliable beings rather than as social actors. As Mayall (2000, pp. 244 & 247) observes, childhood is a political issue and any proposal that childhood is neutral is itself a political act.

This chapter will focus on how the discursive power of social inclusion operates through changes in both the institutional structures of government, as well as the service approaches in regard to socially excluded service users. The first section of this chapter examines the effects of social inclusion's emphasis on a 'joined-up government' and 'whole-of-community' responses on institutional structures, as well as partnerships in the community. In particular, the attempts to decentralise power within the government and to rely on a bottom-up efforts by community agencies brought about other challenges that made it difficult for some of these partnerships to work well. The second section looks at the effects of social inclusion's emphasis on empowering the socially

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excluded and reveals that the concept of 'empowerment' is itself a constraint for some socially excluded individuals. Two examples of social inclusion programmes that adopt an aspirational, strengths-based approach towards socially excluded individuals are discussed. In the third section, the question of whether socially excluded individuals should be made responsible for their own choices about being engaged in a service is raised and examined. It is argued that while social inclusion programmes that stress personal responsibility have supported many families and children who are disadvantaged, the most severely disadvantaged may not benefit from this approach. Responsibility and freedom to make choices are also problematic for children because their preferences are accorded a lower priority than adults' preferences. The final section concludes this chapter by arguing that the discourse on social inclusion does not question the fundamental inequitable power relations between children and adults or between service users and service providers. For social inclusion to address these inequitable power relations, children and other socially excluded individuals need to be recognised as social actors.

5.1   Power Structures: Joined-Up Government and Whole-of-Community Response

One of the key features of the social inclusion discourse is the decentralised approach to policymaking, where different government agencies are encouraged to collaborate or 'join-up' to tackle the multidimensional nature of social inclusion. Similarly, bottom-up 'whole-of-community' responses are encouraged as the government sees itself as playing a smaller role (mainly as a funder) in intervention programmes in the disadvantaged communities. The following sections will discuss how these decentralised approaches affect the institutional power structures as well as create challenges to the efficacy of these approaches.

5.1.1   To Decentralise Power, Centralise It

To embrace the model of a 'joined-up' government under the social inclusion agenda, government structures and departments were reorganised. As a result, the Federal government established a dedicated Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, as well as an independent Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB). A similar bureaucratic structure had been established in South Australia

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with a South Australian Social Inclusion Unit (SASIU) under the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and a South Australian Social Inclusion Board (SASIB) that acted independently from the South Australian government. This set-up followed the model of the Social Exclusion Unit in the UK during the Blair government, which reported directly to the Prime Minister's Office. However, unlike in the UK, an additional independent social inclusion board was established to advise the government, consisting of ex-government officials, academics, community leaders, business leaders and senior members of non-government organisations. Both the Federal and the South Australian governments had their own separate social inclusion boards with different members. As noted by Gains and Stoker (2011), special advisers to the government hold the unique position of transmitting policy ideas directly to the government from 'outside'. These special advisers play an important role not only because of their expertise, but also because of their perceived political neutrality.

At the same time, new sections and staff positions were created within other government departments under the label of 'social inclusion'. For example, a new Social Inclusion Branch in the Federal Department of Human Services was created, which acted as a service delivery counterpart of the Social Inclusion Unit. Similarly, within the Strategic Policy Branch of the Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), there was a Social Inclusion Section that played a coordinating role looking at policies and providing information to the Social Inclusion Unit, mainly for its publications and policies. A broader reason for creating these smaller sections within other government departments was to promote the language of social inclusion within different policy units and to encourage policymakers to think about the impact of their work on social inclusion.

> And a number of the Departments, in particular the social policy departments have their own social inclusion bit, so maybe it's a small team but it's the team that's looking at, within their department, promoting a social inclusion angle to their work. What's really interesting is the amount of references to social inclusion that you do see through the other departments in briefings and stuff that comes through for Cabinet decisions. It's kind of permeated the language or it's in people's minds. (PMF01, 14 June 2011)

The establishment of the SIU and SASIU at such high levels of the government, with direct access to the Prime Minister or the Premier, was intentional. As Skelcher et al. (2005) observes, strong public managers at a central agency are required to provide a

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stable and authoritative collaborative space among policy stakeholders. At the same time, the autonomous social inclusion boards comprising community leaders function as a form of 'metagovernance' (Sørensen & Torfing 2009, p. 246) that regulates networks and allows politicians as well as public authorities to 'let go of the reins without losing control'.

> I know as well that it includes a very deliberate choice on the part of the government when it came in to put Social Inclusion Unit in the Prime Minister's Department because traditionally, PM&C[13] has an overarching coordination role. It was a very deliberate choice to position the Unit not within one of the line agencies so that it had that coordination capability and a lot of the work we did at the beginning was focused on making sure that social inclusion was embedded in other policy areas in a matter of course. (PMF03, 14 June 2011)

> That the social inclusion approach is about setting up structures to really direct that strongly. And I think there are very few circumstances in which the most excluded in our society will do better by just one department doing a good job. And that, really, social inclusion is how you bring together all the resources of government to really try to make a difference for a particularly excluded group of people. (PMSA05, 13 July 2011)

Yet, the establishment of these new bureaucratic institutions under the auspice of social inclusion acting as an overarching coordinator with close access to the highest levels of government is not always welcomed by other government departments. In part, it is precisely because these new units and boards had such close and direct access to power. Given their central coordinating role, they were also responsible for monitoring the progress of social inclusion policy initiatives undertaken by other agencies.

> I think in some respect, it's like an ordered function, so not only providing policy advice to the government, they're also providing a very valuable ordered functioning in terms of, 'are agencies delivering what they should be delivering?' (PMSA06, 30 June 2011)

In South Australia, the independence of the SASIB was seen as a regular check on the agencies' progress and outcomes. While this proved to drive social inclusion policies and programmes forward quickly, it can also become a 'stick' to get those agencies deemed to be underperforming up to speed. As someone who was not from the government, the chairperson of the SASIB could play his role even more effectively

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[13] The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

since the government agencies did not wish to be perceived as slacking in their work by an outsider.

> None of that would have happened if there hadn't been that 'Breaking the Cycle' report from the Social Inclusion Board and [if] we didn't have the Chair of the Social Inclusion Board constantly saying, 'and where are your results? Where are your results?' And someone's outside the government, but is on an important government board, asking those questions constantly, you can't duck and weave and get away from [them]. So that's created a real sense of momentum around that piece of work. (PMSA01, 8 August 2011)

> Or, on many occasions, the local committees, their chairs who were the community champions would meet regularly with the Minister and the [Chair] and say, 'this is an issue now, this is what you need to know, these are some of the things we're addressing, this is what we want to do, we want to propose that or you need to know that somebody's not playing their part'. And then, the big stick would come out from [the Chair] and say, 'well, you're not playing your part, you need to [do this]'. (PMSA04, 20 July, 2011)

For policymakers who worked directly on issues related to social inclusion, having such direct access to the Monsignor or the Premier definitely added a 'real sense of momentum', but for agencies that were at the end of the 'stick', it was a source of stress. In fact, there were often tensions between the SASIU and other partner agencies because each agency's specialised expertise may be challenged or contested.

> There's always a tension in the fact that we're actually an external, independent body providing advice to agencies who think that they're more or less the experts. So, there's always a tension, telling an agency or suggesting or actually providing policy that the agency sees as their business is always going to create a certain amount of tension. And also, agencies have developed cultures over many years and they tend to have a certain way of doing things and a certain ownership on ways of doing things and by trying to move the culture forward, that itself inherently creates tension, I think. (PMSA06, 30 June 2011)

At the Federal government level, the relationship with the ASIB was more distant and it did not wield a 'stick' in the way that the SASIB did within the South Australian government. Instead, tensions arose at the Federal government level because policymakers were often caught in between the politics and power differentials among different Ministers.

> The relationship with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Social Inclusion Unit is often difficult at times, while the actual people there are lovely. They are answerable to one Minister and we're answerable to another, so they can be very different. There is some tension, we think, at Ministerial level, between Ministers. For [the Minister for Social Inclusion], it's hard because social inclusion [goes] through programmes that other Ministers run, so if she wants to

stand up and say, 'we've helped jobless families and we've fixed homelessness', it's not actually her or her Department that's [done it], it's another. So there are some politics involved there. (PMF06, 7 November 2011)

Since the SIU played a central coordinating and monitoring role that had no direct influence on the programme areas covered by other Departments, the Minister for Social Inclusion would find it difficult to take credit for the achievements of the SIU. This situation was different when the Minister for Social Inclusion was Julia Gillard, because she was also concurrently the Deputy Prime Minister at that time. The problem became acute when more junior Ministers were appointed as Minister for Social Inclusion. This was in contrast to the South Australian situation, where the Chairperson of the SASIB, an 'outsider', had a more influential role in directing the social inclusion policies and programmes. The politically neutral position held by the Chairperson of the SASIB meant that he had considerable power to influence and coordinate actively among different government agencies.

5.1.2   Challenges to Centralised Power

The new institutional changes brought about by the social inclusion agenda received mixed responses among the policymakers. To begin with, even though the new bureaucratic establishments enabled a more coordinated policy response, it was also more time-consuming. Furthermore, it was often challenging to get different agencies to speak on the same terms.

> One of the, I suppose, drawbacks is, it's extremely time-consuming. Getting agencies to work together actually takes a bit of effort and particularly if agencies aren't used to working with each other and agencies speak different languages, very, very different languages. (PMSA06, 30 June 2011)

When agencies start to use very different terms to talk about the same issue, then it is the role of the coordinating social inclusion agency to clarify the differences in the language used and communicate that openly to everyone. However, being able to keep the communication channels open became very difficult when there were too many different agencies or people involved. As a result, one of the policymakers did not think that the new social inclusion portfolio made any difference to her work.

> I don't think [the] Social Inclusion Unit, the Social Inclusion Board, having a Minister for it, I don't think it has directly changed what we do. (PMF06, 7 November 2011)

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Having a powerful central coordinating agency such as the Social Inclusion Unit not only created tension among the Ministers, PMF06 also felt that this was an elitist structure that generated more work than was necessary.

> Prime Minister and Cabinet on the whole, thinks that people should jump as high as they want them to, within the time-frame, it's very much an elitist view, that often comes out of central agencies, that says, 'we need this, you must give it', but actually we don't. And we do try very hard but then it's complicated, we'll get multiple requests, we'll get requests over and over again, you end up with social inclusion fatigue. (PMF06, 7 November 2011)

In fact, the tension created by this top-down approach from the SIU on other government departments is straining the working relationship and policymakers from some departments reported that they are on the verge of protesting against the perceived ceaseless requests for information.

> As we go, 'why are we doing this? And why so constantly? Why is there this constant need to provide material and redo material when we've given them once, why can't they just use what we've given?' And the Social Inclusion Unit is caught because they're happy with whatever, but they've got a Minister telling them, 'no', she wants something different. It's quite a difficult partnership, from a governance point of view, I don't think it's that sustainable. There's a bit of a sense of people saying, 'we're just not going to play ball, we're just going to stop'. We're not doing that, but I do wonder how much longer, unless things become a little bit more streamlined, a little bit more give and take, you can understand that, if a department did get to that point. (PMF06, 7 November 2011)

This situation created problems for the SIU and the SASIU because on one hand, their main function was as a central coordinator that brought different government agencies to work together, yet on the other hand, if they pushed these departments too hard, they risked disengagement on the part of the departments. The power and authority of the people in-charge of the SIU or SASIU were critical in maintaining a balance in the working relationship with other government agencies.

Thus, the contradictions within the power structures of the social inclusion agenda created points of tension and instability. As pointed out by McGuire and Agranoff (2011, p. 267) there are several limitations to networks such as asymmetrical power relations between the different agencies. Even though the SIU and SASIU were meant to play facilitating roles, they can only play their roles well if they were situated in the highest government departments and had powerful politicians or community leaders driving their agenda. Only then could these units bring various government departments

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and community partners to work on complex policy matters in a 'joined-up way'. At the same time, this arrangement seemed to work better at the State level rather than at the Federal level because the State policymakers were often directly involved in the planning and design of programmes they funded. At the Federal level, however, the SIU's perceived role by other Federal government departments was reduced to an information gatherer and little else. As Bevir and Rhodes (2006, 2010) observed, street-level bureaucrats give different meanings to their actions and this reinterpretation reproduces power in slightly different ways. For example, a policymaker in one of the line departments said that social inclusion is simply a 'by-product' of what they had always been doing.

> Well, [the Department] clearly has a number of programmes. Have any been initiated because of the social inclusion agenda? No. But there are things that are initiated more because [the Department] doing what its core business is, which is about looking after families, children parents, so social inclusion is a goal, but it's not necessarily a driving goal, so it's often a by-product of what we do. (PMF06, 7 November 2011)

Hence, not every government department sees the social inclusion agenda as being useful nor do they react to the 'joined-up' approach in similar ways. To some policymakers, social inclusion is just a by-product of what they have always been doing.

5.1.3 Decentred Power: The Community is Responsible

While the internal restructuring of the government has resulted in a concentration of power in central coordinating units, the governments' relationship with non-governmental organisations has taken on a partnership approach. The language of social inclusion, as discussed in the previous chapter, focuses on a 'partnership' model where the government is only one of the many stakeholders responsible for social inclusion. The ASIB and the SASIB are not only responsible for coordinating among different government agencies, they are also responsible for engaging with community leaders and businesses with regard to social inclusion issues. Policymakers talked about the social inclusion agenda as one that attempts to engage multiple stakeholders, beyond government departments.

> [B]ut I think the real challenge is how you turn that into an approach which also engages community, non-government sector, how you get a whole-of-community to come together. (PMSA05, 13 July 2011)

The policy discourse on social inclusion is about building an ideal society and that means that every individual is responsible for helping the people or communities deemed to be excluded. One of the policymakers gave the example of disability as an issue that the government should not be solely responsible for.

> [D]isability is not just a government issue. It is an issue for every community to be more inclusive of people with disabilities. They're ordinary folk, who have some additional needs but the government's role should be only in relation to an additional need, not in terms of the person with disability who lives in my street, who needs to be able to go down the footpath, use the local GP, get into the shop, do all the ordinary things. And government really should be focusing just on the special service. (PMSA05, 13 July 2011)

This new whole-of-community approach not only means that the government is no longer the sole stakeholder responsible for social inclusion, but that responsibility is diffused and everyone is responsible. In particular, local governments and community agencies are urged take up more leadership roles instead of State or Federal governments.

> If you can't get local governments to take the lead in terms of inclusion, who's going to do it? And so, I think you've got to look in your inclusion plan in a way in which you really have a community response as well as a bureaucratic response. You can't do it unless you're going to look at some local, at least regional, but preferably a more local engagement. (PMSA05, 13 July 2011)
>
> The plan was that communities needed to have a say in what was going on, rather than a central agency say, 'alright, we'll fix that school retention for you'. It's to say, 'OK, you need to have a voice in saying what are the issues in your area that cause barriers to remaining in school'. (PMSA04, 20 July, 2011)

In fact, the State government sees itself as playing a facilitating and supportive function rather than providing the solutions.

> [W]hen we have a State ICAN[14] team here, we don't tell people what to do, we support the facilitation at the local level on what to do. (PMSA04, 20 July 2011)

Often, getting other stakeholders to see the benefits of shared responsibility is the key to getting their commitment to be part of a social inclusion initiative.

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[14] Innovative Community Action Networks (ICAN) is a South Australian initiative to help students stay engaged in school or in the community through working with local businesses, non-governmental organisations, schools, parents, government agencies and young people.

> I think the issue is about the shared responsibility, when they see that there's a shared responsibility and shared benefit then they'll find it hard not to be at the table. (PMSA04, 20 July 2011)

For some of the intractable issues related to social exclusion, having multiple agencies and shared responsibility also means that no one particular agency can be blamed if some of the initiatives do not work out.

> [R]ather than attributing blame to one agency, it's to say, 'well, if you did your bit and we did this then we all come together and it'll be our shared responsibility'. (PMSA04, 20 July 2011)

Thus, this model of cooperation is beneficial for all the agencies involved in the social inclusion agenda because if there are successes from the programme, all the agencies will benefit from them. Yet, if some programmes do not perform as well, the blame can be shared as well.

At the service delivery level, it is worth noting that some of the large non-government organisations also find themselves taking on a supportive or facilitating role. For example, the Federal government puts a tender out for a Communities for Children (CFC) project for different sites across Australia. The tender spells out that it has to be a community partner model, with the design based on local community needs and in consultation with the community. However, it does not specify what each of these project sites should look like, or the kind of activities that must be delivered. Service providers will then bid for these projects but the well-resourced and larger non-government organisations are more likely to win these tenders. Service providers who won these contracts perform a similar coordinating role as the social inclusion units in the government agencies.

> We utilise a whole-of-community approach to do that and Communities for Children has a leadership or facilitation role throughout the community looking at collaboration and integration of services as well as working with children and families on the ground. Most of those activities are then contracted out so we contract out to another agency and then they deliver the activity on the ground. So we play very much a supportive role in that we support what we call community partners who are delivering activities to make sure that they're meeting outcomes and working with them if they need an extra person. (SPM05, 25 August 2011)

With the whole-of-community approach, the decentralisation of power not only takes place at the policy-making level, but also at the service delivery level. Among government departments, the central coordinating agencies are given the highest

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authority, while among the service providers, the better resourced and well-established organisations play the central coordinating role that manages other smaller service provision agencies. Indeed, some scholars (Davies 2005b; Perrons & Skyer 2003) have noted that power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of public managers who, not only coordinate among different policy stakeholders, but are also responsible for pushing the agenda of national governments.

5.1.4   Community Constraints

As the state plays an increasingly distant, coordinating role and places more responsibility on the community to come up with solutions for its own problems, non-governmental service providers take on more services that were once provided by the government. However, it is unclear that this decentering of power from state to non-governmental organisations brings better outcomes for service users (Hague 2011). As discussed earlier, larger and better resourced non-governmental service providers begin to mimic the state's powerful, central coordinating role even though they operate under the banner of a whole-of-community approach. Unlike the larger service providers, smaller service providers face uneven levels of resources and capabilities. This is evident in the example of the Communities for Children programme (CFC), an initiative aimed at supporting families with children living in areas of that have been identified as having a high level of socioeconomic disadvantage using the SEIFA (Socioeconomic Index For Areas). The components of the programme are unique to each of these areas because they are based on the needs of the individual communities. CFC is credited as using a bottom-up approach based on a whole-of-community model where the local councils, government agencies, social service agencies, schools and other organisations collaborate and work in partnership to identify the needs of children and their families within the community as well as provide the services that will address those needs.

> Communities for Children is a bottom-up approach, so it's actually designed based on local community needs so it's very much around placed-based initiatives and local needs. Everything was developed and designed through consultations with the community. There were no directives from the Commonwealth as to what that might look like. We had to come up with a local community strategic plan and each Communities for Children site is very different to the other, so they're developed very much on local needs. (SPM05 25 August 2011)

One of the key factors influencing the success of the programme lies in how well the coordinating agency works with a myriad of community partners such as the schools,

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the local council and other service providers. Although managing some of these partnerships can be challenging, the main difficulty is not in maintaining these relationships, it is in managing the differences in resources and capabilities of each agency.

> There're a lot of stakeholders that we have contact with and all of them have their own different responses as well, so it's very variable across the whole gamut. But I'm finding community partners are often at capacity, so as far as working to give an additional programme, often it's challenging for them to be able to do that, to the fullest of their ability. They can often see the idea and they're very keen and so that's one of the challenges, to work with them through, when they're working over their abilities or capacity. (SPF13, 25 August 2011)

Similarly, SPM08 talked about how funding to non-government agencies should not only focus on direct services to service users, but on building long-term infrastructural capacities that will enable the community to come up with its own solutions to the problems that it is facing.

> [T]he funding has always been based on, 'what are we going to give to those young people in that community?' That seems to be logical, well, if you want to have a full partnership with your community, then you'll also need to fund that community enough …to go to their infrastructure, like, their policy development, their project planning, thinking through what services might be in five or ten years' time. If you only fund direct service delivery, then you undermine your own position as a government body because you don't build capacity in the community to help you get the best answers. (SPM08, 23 September 2011).

The lack of focus on long-term, strategic planning of community infrastructure and planning of services is also noted by Davies (2009, p. 89) who found that community partnerships were pragmatic but did not address 'big issues' facing the community. Similarly, service providers in this research welcomed the focus on partnerships in the social inclusion agenda. However, many of these service providers were already working closely with the local councils and community agencies prior to the social inclusion agenda. In fact, since Adelaide is a relatively small city, many service providers I spoke to knew each other even though they worked in different organisations.

> [H]ere, everybody knows everyone and probably people had worked in a number of services so it's just a small place and you don't piss people off basically. We're a small community within a small community and there's the acknowledgement that if we don't get on, it's going to impact on all of us. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

For these service providers, the challenge is not about working with different agencies, but that each agency has different levels of resources and capabilities. By focusing on a whole-of-community approach and shifting the responsibility to the local level, it means that each community has to rely on its own existing resources. In addition, long-term planning becomes difficult because the individual communities do not have the required resources or capabilities to invest in infrastructure projects.

At the same time, a focus on community and local approaches means that some of the critical networks formed between service providers and members of the community are difficult to maintain. For example, one of the service providers talked about forming an important working relationship with teachers from a school in a disadvantaged community, but, once the client no longer required the services, this working relationship ceased. By the time a new client is referred to the service provider from the same community, the service provider has to start a new working relationship with new teachers or principals from the school.

> [I]f it's services based on one region, you can spend the time to build up the
> relationships but for us, because we do the whole metropolitan area, we might
> have a client from say [this area] and we'll work closely with [the high school
> there]. But then we might not have a client back in that area again for a year and
> so then you lose the contacts, that's the difficulty. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

At the same time, when good working relationships are formed, it is due to the personalities of the professionals involved and not because of how the systems were set up.

> [W]hen you have a good relationship with a school, it's because there's a good
> teacher, it's not because their systems are in place. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

Therefore, while the social inclusion agenda aims for a community approach and encourages cross-agency partnerships, many of these social or professional relationships are difficult to maintain because they are arbitrary in nature. Good partnerships are formed when there are available resources and when the professionals working together show commitment towards each other. Yet, each community has different resources and professionals working together are not able to rely on a substantial number of service users in a small area for them to maintain a consistently strong working relationship. As several scholars have cautioned, the concept of 'community' is problematic because the claims to enable communities to be responsible for themselves mask other inherent

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infrastructural problems that perpetuate the marginalised status of disadvantaged individuals in those communities (see Cass & Brennan 2002; Fremeaux 2005; Mowbray 2005).

5.2 Power Relations: Empowering the Socially Excluded

The social inclusion agenda not only changed the organisational structures in the Federal and South Australian governments, it also shaped the way programmes and services are designed and implemented. Gillies (2005) suggests that social inclusion's positive rhetoric of empowerment, instead of a top-down projection of values and standards onto families, encourages their compliance rather than promote their access to parenting resources (Gillies 2005). The following sections discuss how aspirational and strengths-based approaches shape social inclusion programmes such as the Building Family Opportunity (BFO) and the Innovative Community Action Networks (ICAN). In particular, the strengths-based approach is aimed at empowering socially excluded individuals and children by giving them the responsibility of making their own choices.

5.2.1 Personalising Strengths and Aspirations

The previous chapter noted that the discourse on social inclusion is a discourse about social aspirations that are constructed as desirable personal goals for every citizen. Discourse and the language that constructs the knowledge on social inclusion are 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1980, p. 131) that constrain as well as reproduce what we know and what is knowable. However, the way in which these 'regimes of truth' operate differs among the discourses on social inclusion. Some discourses on social inclusion work through a moral sense of shame while others work through positive ideals of well-being. The moral underclass discourse (MUD) frames the socially excluded as individuals who live in a culture of dependency and are to be blamed for their own situation (Levitas 2005). On the other hand, the social integrationist discourse (SID) constructs the socially excluded as not being integrated into the society because they are unemployed or insufficiently employed (Levitas 2005). Most of the discourse on social inclusion in Australia takes on a social integrationist discourse where those who are deemed to be socially excluded are encouraged to aspire towards becoming an ideal citizen through a series of incentives and disincentives to promote employment. Socially excluded individuals under the social integrationist discourse are defined as

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people who lack incentives or aspirations to work rather than deviants who refuse to work, as in the moral underclass discourse. Indeed, the positive language of social inclusion was deliberately adopted by the ASIB, rather than social exclusion as used by the UK and other European countries because it is aspirational.

> We chose to call it not social exclusion but social inclusion which expresses an aspiration. The label meant to express the aspiration that people, all people, in our Australian community will have an opportunity to do a number of things and the definition here is – to earn, to learn, to access services, to have a say and to have their voice heard. (PMF04, 15 June 2011)

However, even though social inclusion expresses an aspiration for all Australians, the government's policies are targeted at a small group, the unemployed.

> [T]he then Minister of Social Inclusion, Ms Julia Gillard, talked to the Board about what would the Board do, because social inclusion is very broad, and all sorts of people thought that it meant the government's going to work for me. So typically excluded groups all felt that it was for them and the breadths of the groups that it covered was seen to be too broad. So she sort of said that amongst all the people who see themselves as not participating in the life of the community, they all had, underpinning them, a concept that the way to inclusion was through the dignity of work. So that's the best way of getting people included in the community would be to help them participate in the workforce. (PMF04, 15 June 2011)

Although the policy discourse on social inclusion defines other aspects of participation, such as social, civic and political participation, it is clear that for the politicians and the ASIB, economic participation in the form of paid work is the main objective of social inclusion policies. When an individual is unemployed, it is understood as a failure to participate in 'the life of the community' which then results in the individual being socially excluded. This is a distinctive shift from looking at individuals as passive citizens where the government is expected to work for everyone, to one that assumes active citizen participation in paid work as the primary way to social inclusion. In addition, paid work is linked to personal dignity and, hence, the need to focus on the self or the individual's qualities and values. The language of social inclusion emphasises active citizen participation and engagement. As Rose (1989, p. 10) observes, '[s]uch a citizen subject is not to be dominated in the interests of power, but to be educated and solicited into a kind of alliance between personal objectives and ambitions and institutionally or socially prized goals or activities'. This alignment of personal ambitions with social goals, of associating paid work with dignity also signals an 'ethicalisation' of government where the unemployed are obliged to participate in

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practices of self-shaping, self-cultivation and self-presentation (Dean 1998, p. 92). In this respect, the school and the workplace become the sites of personal discipline where these practices can be carried out. With this focus on the self, a system of rewards replaces a system of punishment.

> And cultures can be changed by rewarding behaviours, so if you can define clearly what the behaviour is that you want and communicate that effectively, I think that's a good start...Again, when we look at the literature on conditionality, the literature showed that carrots work much better than sticks. So, part of it is perhaps to have more evidence about what works because most people believe that if you punish somebody, they will behave, you know, that's what they think will happen. Whereas the evidence actually shows that if you encourage people, that is more successful than punishing people. (PMF04, 15 June 2011)

Education and training, under the auspices of care and cure, are far more productive interventions than punitive measures to achieve desired social behaviour from individuals. It is no longer about government policies that work 'for your own good' but through encouraging individuals' own aspirations and aligning those aspirations with social values such as dignity or respect through paid work. Working or learning is no longer talked described as being tedious or drudgery. Instead, paid work is expressed as a personal aspiration. Indeed, Donzelot (1991, p. 280) observes that pleasure in work conflates the social sphere with the economic sphere in the interest of greater efficiency and lesser costs. A worker who finds pleasure in work is more productive, will engage in continuous job training, works longer and reduces economic and social costs to society. Work as a path to self-fulfilment breaks down the distinction between economic, social and psychological goals because the worker's personal desires are aligned with the goals of the state (Rose 1989, p. 118).

In a social integrationist discourse, individuals are assumed to desire employment but are hampered by various barriers. However, unlike the redistribution discourse (RED) (Levitas 2005), these barriers are less likely to be construed as structural than as personal and local barriers. Hence, the government's role is to place the individual at the centre of its policies and services – to help the individual and the immediate community in which the individual is living. At the same time, it is about drawing upon the individual's and community's strengths, rather than focusing what they are doing wrong.

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> [O]ne of the worst things to happen to people is they turn up for some sort of government service and the sense of hopelessness is reinforced by the way they're treated, as opposed to you know, people being positive and looking, 'now, what could you do?' rather than 'this is what you're doing wrong'. So we've tried very hard and the current Minister, who's also the Minister for Human Services, has asked the Board to continue to work through the service delivery reforms to make sure that the culture and approach is one of building on people's strengths. (PMF04, 15 June 2012)

> I think the word that they used in the beginning is based on a strengths-based approach, focusing on solution rather than the problem; being socially included as opposed to the problem which has been social exclusion. (PMF03, 14 June 2012)

> I think from a policy point of view, it's probably a better term to use, just because it's a strengths-based, positive approach to the issue rather than the social exclusion term that they use in the UK. (PMF01, 14 June 2012)

The use of a strengths-based approach is similarly echoed among the service providers.

> And we use a strengths-based perspective so basically positive things that we take for granted, we try and really emphasise with regards to the young people and celebrate for them, things that they've done. (SPM02, 3 Aug 2011)

> We come from a strengths-based perspective, so we all acknowledge what's working well for the families, that's the whole family, not just the young person. (SPM01, 10 August 2011)

It is not surprising that service providers talk about a strengths-based perspective given that it has become a key approach of social work and case management, following the positive psychology schools of thought. A strengths-based social work approach believes that individuals have the resilience and the role of the social workers is to help them 'develop the language, summon the resources, devise the plot, and manage the subjectivity of life in their world' (Saleebey 1996, p. 303). The approach also emphasises membership in a community where individuals are valued and responsible for their behaviour (Saleebey 1996, p. 298). The assumption is that individuals have an innate resilience and are members of communities where the main roles of social workers or psychologists are to help them discover their personal strengths as well as to draw upon their community resources to assist them.

This strengths-based approach becomes a form of social disciplining by placing the individual at the centre of policies and services as a means of 'empowering' the individual. The more traditional approach of 'blame and shame' underlying the moral

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underclass discourse is replaced by a positive approach of emphasising people's strengths and using incentives to motivate them to behave in a desirable way. Both policymakers and service providers share this positive approach. At the policy level, the social inclusion discourse describes an ideal way of living to which all socially excluded individuals can personally aspire and strive towards. This ideal citizen that social inclusion policies hope to create is a well-defined one – someone who is economically active or engaged in school, is involved in the community and has a strong social support network.

At the service delivery level, a strengths-based case management approach is used that assumes that individuals have the autonomy to make decisions about their lives. Therefore, the service providers see their role as one that empowers their clients to make their own choices. In particular, a strengths-based approach corresponds to the increasing focus in social work on anti-oppressive practice (Burke & Harrison 2002; Danso 2009; Dominelli 1996; McLaughlin 2005; Strier & Binyamin 2013) that is based on an egalitarian value system that focuses on empowering service users by reducing the power differential between service providers and service users. In this way the discourse on social inclusion operates on the productive power of personal empowerment to change individuals' behaviour. As Rose (1989, 1996 & 1999) notes, it is a way of governing by deploying strategies where the desired social behaviour is achieved through the autonomous decisions of individuals and local communities, often with the help of psychological expertise (Rose 1985, 1989). As with all constructs of utopia, the ideal of a socially inclusive society functions not only by creating hope, but more importantly by creating a desire for a better way of living (Levitas 1990, p. 191). To create a desire for a better way of living, policies need to emphasise the moral objective of social inclusion (the aspirational grand narrative) rather than the instrumental objective of social inclusion (the economic narrative of paid employment). In the following sections, two social inclusion programmes are discussed as examples of how the instrumental objective of social inclusion is achieved by narrowing the field of choices available to the programme user to align those choices to the desired goals of the programme.

5.2.2 The Building Family Opportunities (BFO) Programme

Like many other social inclusion programmes, the Building Family Opportunities (BFO) programme is targeted at severely disadvantaged communities in South Australia. The BFO started as a demonstration project that was initiated in three severely disadvantaged areas, focusing on helping jobless families with children break out of the cycle of intergenerational joblessness. Even though BFO is a programme about tackling joblessness, its approach is markedly different from traditional approaches because it does not have any employment targets.

> It's an intensive case management approach, so we look at the whole family. It's a 'life first' approach, so we look at the complex needs, not automatically hone in first on trying to get the person into employment. We don't actually have any employment targets, although we're very pleased we're producing employment targets. It's a 'life first', not a 'job first' programme. (PMSA03, 22 July 2011)

Having a 'life first' approach reflects the two twin narratives of social inclusion, about economic participation and the Australian value of 'a fair go'. In this way, the BFO seeks to understand the personal barriers that prevent the socially excluded individuals from being employed. Hence, the BFO focuses not only on an individual's needs but also on the family's needs.

> So, basically the programme is different from the existing employment programmes because we focus on the family, not the individual and we look at the needs of the family, focus on the family, not just the needs of the individual. And that, I think, is the most innovative aspect. It's relatively simple for people to get a job, it's remaining in the job and overcoming the barriers of the lack of confidence, lack of skills, all the issues of mental health, drugs and alcohol, family violence, homelessness, all of those sorts of things that prevent people even thinking that there's a possibility they might do training or get a better job. (PMSA03, 22 July 2011)

Unlike traditional approaches that define jobless individuals as problems that require solutions, BFO's approach is about understanding jobless individuals as people with problems that need to be addressed before they can find jobs. In this way, the BFO recognises that economic needs can only be met when other personal physical and social needs are met.

> [H]ow can you think that the families are going to put all of their energy in getting a job when their energy has been in keeping warm and keeping their kids safe? (PMSA03, 22 July 2011)

With the recognition that individuals and families have multiple needs, the BFO is structured around providing intensive case management to every family in the

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programme. This involves performing a key brokerage role to link families to other relevant service agencies that can help the families facing different problems. As a result, BFO case managers need to form close partnerships and working relations with other agencies. In addition, unlike most other employment programmes where the programme ends when the clients are matched with jobs, BFO case managers continue to support the families even after they have found jobs.

> [T]hat's the programme and even after the family or someone in the family gets a job, they're not sort of terminated at that point, we want to support them while they're in work and help them address all the issues because it's like a honeymoon period after they get a job but then all the issues, especially if they havn't got transport or very good clothes, they're not used to working, they're not used to getting up early, all of those sorts of things. (PMSA03, 22 July 2011)

This extended support to the families in the BFO programme acknowledges that helping the jobless is not just about helping them get a job, it is about helping these individuals stay in jobs. Similarly, the BFO supports jobless individuals through giving practical assistance or advice and, in doing so, helps improve their confidence in the job-searching process. This is critical especially when most of these individuals start off with casual work rather than full-time, permanent positions.

> [M]ost people pick up little causal jobs and really although that gives them confidence and that helps them get into the way of work, we want to keep supporting them so they can build on that confidence and get something a little more solid behind them, a little better paid, a bit more security for them. (PMSA03, 22 July 2011)

In doing so, BFO acknowledges that it is often relatively easy to find jobs for jobless families but they are often trapped in the cycle of casual, unstable and low-paid work that does little to improve their situations. The success of the BFO is talked about in terms of helping families gain the confidence to look for jobs or to access school and training courses. However, according to the policymaker involved in the BFO programme, the number of successful employment outcomes was considered good.

> And we've got about 300 families and all in all that's about 500-600 family members and we've had some remarkable successes with helping the family gain the confidence that they need to think that they can get ahead and access school or training. A lot of good training outcomes and 45-50 employment outcomes, which is fantastic. (PMSA03, 22 July 2011)

Since the BFO provides an intensive case management service, its success is largely dependent on the relationship between the case manager and the families. At the same

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time, this intensive relationship is not what every jobless family is expecting from the programme.

> I suppose everything depends on the families' receptivity. We've had other families that have been really disadvantaged but what they had wanted was more of the charity model. So, yes, they'll be OK to accept food parcels and help with the bills or whatever. But as soon as it starts to come to, 'what about the training aspect?', 'what about getting the children back to school?', they start to wane. So we've had a few families that have come in and they seemed to need a lot of help, they seemed to be engaging quite well but as soon as they don't get exactly what they want, immediately they disengage. So we've had a few case closures because basically, we have to concentrate on families that are able to accept help and able to follow the programme because we're not just a charity model where people come and get emergency assistance and that sort of stuff. But sometimes that learned powerlessness is just really deep within the person. Doesn't mean that they won't come back, after perhaps a period of reflection and thinking, 'yeah, we're ready now'. (PMSA03, 22 July 2011)

Therefore, programmes like BFO that use an intensive case management and engagement with the case worker require the families to be willing to commit to such a relationship. Families may be powerless to make the choice of committing to an intensive form of case management not because they have a 'learned powerlessness' but because they can barely cope with the day-to-day demands, let alone sign up for the BFO that is likely to make more demands on their time. In addition, when families choose to disengage from the BFO, support for the families will cease. As a result, there is an implicit condition in the BFO that families need to be engaged with training, education or job-seeking activities in order to continue receiving other material or financial support. This reflects a contractual mode of control that deploys seemingly voluntary contracts or agreements in order to regulate deviant or disorderly behaviour (Crawford 2003).

Similarly, while the BFO focuses on supporting families by removing personal barriers such as building their confidence in the job-search process or providing therapeutic services to deal with substance abuse in the family, BFO is not designed to deal with structural barriers, such as racism. However, policymakers recognise that structural barriers, like racism, play a significant part in the experience of being excluded.

> Because if you're there with a smelly, Aboriginal homeless person, that's half-pissed and you're in the emergency room of the hospital with them, you're told to, 'go down to the back!' and you're there from 2pm to 10pm and they're still not gonna take that person, you know what exclusion feels like. (PMSA03, 22 July 2011)

A few other policymakers have also highlighted racism as a barrier to social inclusion, but the social inclusion agenda does not dwell on structural issues such as racial discrimination. Instead, social inclusion is framed in terms of engagement and participation, where programmes are designed with a heavy component of intensive intervention by professionals such as social workers and psychologists. In the above example of a homeless Aboriginal person, BFO is designed to support the person to access services at the hospital, but it is unable to address the hospital's condescending treatment towards the person.

5.2.3   The Innovative Community Action Networks (ICAN) Programme

For children, it is educational participation rather than participation through paid work that policymakers are concerned about. In particular, children from jobless families are one of the key priority groups targeted by the social inclusion agenda. The school is the site where children are trained and prepared for their jobs in the future. The focus on children 'at risk' of future joblessness. Hence, children's policies on social inclusion are about prevention rather than about solving future problems, to avoid trouble rather than to understand or deal with it (Young 1999, p. 67).

School retention is a key concern for policymakers regarding children's social inclusion. Children at risk of becoming disengaged from schools are the target of new learning programmes that uses a flexible, client-centred approach to keep students engaged in school. One of the successful programmes initiated by the SASIB, ICAN (Innovative Community Action Networks), was built around the idea that school retention and a student's engagement in school should be based on a flexible learning plan.

> It's got to be flexible, it's got to be one-size-fits-one, not one-size-fits-everybody, so every ICAN student has a flexible learning plan that is developed between the school and the case manager to work out what that young person is interested in. (PMSA04, 20 July 2011)

Under the ICAN programme, every student is assigned a case manager who will help them 'sort out the issues that are stopping them from going to school' (PMSA04, 20 July 2011). The case manager does this not only by providing traditional therapeutic

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work but also to understand the multiple barriers that are preventing the student from attending school and finding solutions through the different community partners.

> [S]orting out doesn't necessarily mean they sit down on a one-on-one and just give them therapeutic work. If homelessness is the issue, they will help the young person to find stable accommodation and support them by getting all the resources they need to actually bring together the key players in the community who will help that young person to have a safe place to live. (PMSA04, 20 July 2011)

In fact, ICAN goes beyond looking at the student's needs to looking at the student's interests, even if some of these interests are perceived to be anti-social. The task for the case managers is to explore ways to turn these anti-social activities into beneficial ones. The following is an example of turning graffiti into a useful skill for the student and the community.

> [I]f all they want to do is graffiti on the walls, then we start with that and say, 'well, OK, you've got some skills in art, let's help make that a useful skill, so that you can be a positive member of the community'. And this is where around the table, the community players and the management committee will help. Local governments spend a lot of its money fixing up the graffiti and cleaning up the broken swings at the park...[S]o the local council [will] provide the space where we can teach these young people how to do good sign-writing and then they can become, potentially, employees of the council...And we'll help them get the training along the way to do that. So, that's the benefit to the council, because they're not paying for the graffiti [cleaning], it's a benefit to the community, because they've got a nicer park and it's a benefit for the young person, because they're supported in their training and then potential employment. (PMSA04, 20 July 2011)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, a strengths-based approach is used in ICAN where the focus is on the client's needs, interest and strengths rather than on punishing them for their anti-social behaviour. It is a system of positive disciplining by turning bad behaviour into good behaviour. This positive disciplining operates through changing the context and interpretation of the behaviour around the individual such that the harm that the behaviour can potentially cause becomes neutralised or is made beneficial. Such an approach is a radical departure from traditional approaches and ICAN has been credited for breaking conventional thinking about students' learning.

> [S]o this was the main key project and was the one that took I guess, the risk to do things differently. The others were building on things that've been tried before. But this was the one to say, 'really, the rules are the ones that you make up'. And with it, obviously a framework. (PMSA04, 20 July 2011)

In contrast to ICAN, the Alternative Learning Programmes (ALP) does not adopt a preventive approach and students who are referred to the ALP have already stopped attending school and all the programmes offered by the ALP are not school based.

> [T]hey felt that there was only a 'one-size-fits-all' at school. You either do what you're told in the classroom or if you can't, you don't. And if you're suspended for bad behaviour because you're not engaging in learning, then you drop out eventually because you can't keep on being excluded. And so, in the old days, before ICAN, it used to be that some schools would have what they called 'Alternative Learning Programmes' and if you didn't fit into the school-based, then you all must fit into the non-school based. (PMSA04, 20 July 2011)

In addition to being a one-size-fits-all approach, the ALP offers predetermined or conventional skills training programmes such as brick-laying, instead of courses that the student is interested in or good at. In contrast, ICAN tailors and personalises its programme around each student according to his or her interests. By being flexible, ICAN reflects the emphasis on personal empowerment instead of a top-down, authoritative approach to achieve its goal of high rates of school retention. In this case, empowerment is about providing choices and opportunities for the students under the ICAN programme to make decisions on their own. It is about these students being responsible for their own learning. The role of policymakers and service providers is to create the necessary structures, systems and environment that allow students to have this opportunity to make their own decisions. Yet, even though power no longer works in a top-down manner, this new focus on personal empowerment is a highly effective means to achieve the desired behaviour from students. Since ICAN is focused on what students want or are interested in, being disengaged from school is not a likely option that students will take. In this case, discipline works through realising students' aspirations so that they remain engaged in learning in school. In fact, ICAN became so successful that there is more demand from students to be placed on the programme than the programme can handle.

> So, by and large, in fact the bigger problem is that we have more kids who have been dropped who get re-involved in ICAN and then they say to their mates, 'oh, this is fantastic!' And then the other kids want to do it and the schools say, 'no, you can't because you're already supposed to be in school'. And that's more difficult. (PMSA 04, 20 July 2011)

The freedom to do something that a person is good at or is interested in is a powerful one. When policies and services are designed to encourage a particular type of behaviour through this personal freedom, it shifts the responsibility to the individual.

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However, the freedom to do what one wants is framed in such a way that what one wants is also aligned to what the government wants. There is only the freedom to do what one wants and not a freedom to do nothing. In other words, children's services continue to be bound in an instrumental rationality where more services are needed only to deliver predetermined outcomes (Moss & Petrie 2005, p. 101).

> [In] reality, government says everybody's got to be learning or earning and so the choice to have an option to do nothing is not there. (PMSA04, 20 July 2011)

At the same time, not all the programmes or services for children are as flexible or tailored to suit every child's needs or interest. In fact, ICAN is one of the few exceptions where there children are given a choice about their own learning process. Even so, ICAN is restricted to students who are close to becoming disengaged from school. The many other students who have already been disengaged from school for a prolonged period of time, would not be qualified to join the programme and face the probability of their problems going unnoticed. As Broadhurst et al. (2005) argue, policy responses that focus on personal agency may help children who are disengaged from schools due to temporary setbacks in their lives, but are less effective with children who are disengaged from schools due to long-term problems such as chronic poverty, homelessness or domestic violence. There are few options that this group of disengaged students can turn to if they wish to return to school.

5.3   Freedom as Discipline: What Does Choice Mean?

In order for people to manage themselves, it entails a degree of freedom where individuals can 'govern their own conduct freely in the maximisation of a version of their happiness and fulfilment that they take to be their own, but such lifestyle maximisation entails a relation to authority in the very moment that it pronounces itself the outcome of free choice' (Miller & Rose 2008, p. 215). This form of governing through personal freedom has become a feature of advanced liberal democracies or neo-liberalism (Miller & Rose 1992, 2008; Rose 1999). Rose (1999, p. 74) has argued that freedom is a form of discipline that operates through responsibilising individuals and systems of self-care. However, freedom of choice and personal responsibility are restricted for children as well as for other individuals who do not see that the exercise of their choice would make any difference. This section looks at what 'choice' means for

children and other individuals who have chosen to disengage from the services that purport to help them.

5.3.1 Children's Choices, Parents' Consent

Although the ICAN offers students flexible learning options that cater to their interests and strengths, this child-focused framework does not necessarily apply to many other children's programmes. A more common framework for children's programmes and services gives priority to parents' or families' decisions over children's decisions. For example, children under different age limits do not have direct access to most services without parental consent. Service providers in this research talk about the difficulties for children to gain access to programmes or services on their own.

> [I]f you're talking about inclusion or exclusion, it's not necessarily recognising the needs of the child, particularly if you have two parents who are in a high conflict, in high stress, nasty stuff going on. The last thing [is] trying to make our programme known to them. We can't target it at the kids because it's not age-appropriate. So we have to go through adults to acknowledge the kids and so they might go to school and they might get a referral through the school but the parents might put it on the back-burner. (SPF18, 14 September 2011)

> So, it's a matter of like, that kids get excluded from services because they can't put up their hands and say, 'that's what I want'. (SPM07, 14 September 2011)

> And parental consent, you need both parents to consent. (SPF20, 14 September 2011)

> There've been a couple of families over the years where I've done interviews and the young person is really keen to come in but the parents havn't been prepared to change their stuff and they've actually said 'no' to the process. (SPM01, 10 August 2011)

Service providers who run services for children face several problems at various levels. Firstly, children may not perceive themselves as needing a service especially when there are other more stressful things going on in their homes. Secondly, services are often designed in a way that children have to be referred to the service provider by another agency (often through the school) and, hence, children may not know how the referral system works. Finally, even if parents' consent is sought, both parents must agree to their children taking part in the programme and this makes it challenging for children with parents who are in an acrimonious relationship. Indeed, it is critical that services for children involve the whole family because it is the chaotic family situation that is

directly isolating the child. Therefore, providing a service for a child requires service providers to work with the family. An example of this is shown when a service provider who runs a temporary accommodation service for teenagers talked about how their work involves working with the family to bring about reunification of the teenager with the family.

> [W]e work on a reunification and restoration model with families so the aim is to work with families where there's a whole lot of conflict going on and if things don't get resolved, the young person may have to leave home prematurely. We come from a strengths-based perspective, so we all acknowledge what's working well for the families, that's the whole family, not just the young person. (SPM01, 10 August 2011)

When working with the family, the approach is also about getting everyone in the family involved in the process.

> And if the whole family is engaged, it's really good. It's really hard if there's say the mum wants to come in and dad says, 'this is rubbish, you know I'm not keen'. But if you can get everyone on board and everyone comes in for weekly counselling. That's why we try and make everyone, even if it's a step-parent, we like them all to come in for counselling because it makes a difference. (SPF07, 3 August 2011)

> In fact, really anything you do with young children, you have no option but to work with the parents. Because it just doesn't work if you're trying to put things into place to address issues at home. Then you need to work with the family, the whole family, to get this to work. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

Often frontline workers, such as counsellors, have to work more with the parents rather than with the child, especially in persuading the parents that the child is not the only one responsible for the difficult behaviour. The parents, rather than the child, are often more challenging to work with.

> So in some ways it's easy for us to do that with the young person and be consistent as a team but then the challenge is how then to get the mother to incorporate that stuff at home. So then for me the challenge is way more with the mother than it is with the young person because young people tend to take things on really really quickly and if you're positively reinforcing what they've done well, they'll just keep doing it. (SPM01, 10 August 2011)

> [O]ne of my challenges is not with the children but parents, if I can say that in the nicest way possible. (SPF19, 14 September 2011)

> [T]he dilemma or difficulty in counselling is getting the parents to take on board that they're responsible for the child's behaviour. (SPF17, 14 September 2011)

Services for children are seldom provided solely for children. Rather, children are usually framed in relation to the context of their families. Indeed, as Hindess (1993, p. 301) noted, as a mode of governance, personal autonomy is not only about being responsible for oneself, but about being responsible for the care and behaviour of a few select others. Children, perceived to be dependent and less mature, fall into this category of individuals who are the responsibility of others (parents) rather than responsible beings. The problems that children face and the needs that they may have are understood to be caused or influenced by their family environment. In fact, children's choice in what they wish to participate in becomes challenging especially when their parents are separated and in high conflict with one another.

> Kids can't get to things because one partner hasn't got transport anymore because there's only one family car, so then the child is excluded from their sport or their friends or things become awkward for them. The fact that they have to shift schools, we don't acknowledge the massive loss and grief associated with that as well. (SPM07, 14 September 2011)

> [I]f they have court orders, where they go to see one parent on the weekend and then another parent next weekend, one of the parents may not agree with that activity so they miss out on going to that sport every second Saturday so they get excluded from the team. Also had one incident where there was a little boy and he was made to play in one football team and in another football team the next week. (SPF20, 14 September 2011).

For children, their freedom to decide on what they want or can do is limited, even though there have been growing attempts among service providers to give them more say in decisions that affect them. Young children, for example, are rarely asked for their opinions and neither are they expected to take up the responsibility for making their own decisions. As Donzelot (1979, p. 47) observes, children are under 'supervised freedom' whether at home or in school. Service providers noted that because many separated parents have limited time to spend with their children, they would prefer that their children spend time doing the kind of activities that they, the parents, want instead of what their children would prefer.

> [T]heir parents say, 'it's my time with the children, so I want to do what I want to do with my children'. So that doesn't mean if Johnny likes to play football on a Saturday, they don't think about that. They think about what they'll like to do with them, it's *their* time, the parents' time. And you know, you do so many different things when you're a child to find out what you like doing but they don't get the chance. Or they're made to have a telephone call for a second time every night so that cuts into being able to do training or whatever. (SPF20, 14 September 2011)

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Frequently, children caught between their parents' conflict end up excluding themselves totally from various activities to avoid making decisions that they feel will upset either parent.

> [T]he kids go as the peacekeepers. They think, 'I can't ask to play this sport because it's going to cost money and then dad's gonna say this and mum's gonna say that'. (SPF18, 14 September 2011)

> Or they might say, 'I don't want [my parents] to turn up together to watch me play a game'. (SPF20, 14 September 2011)

> 'What would my friends think?' So it's easier to say, 'I don't want to play'. (SPF18, 14 September 2011)

Children in these situations may be given a choice to take part in an activity, but the choices presented to these children are difficult choices because children are aware that making either one of those choices may result in upsetting one of their parents. In these situations, children choose instead to play a peace-keeping role by withdrawing from the activities that they would otherwise have participated in. Therefore, giving children's choices does not necessarily mean more empowerment for children because children may not perceive these choices as good choices. Not making a choice, to the child, is a better option that picking among bad choices. Without considering the child's perspective, it is easy to label a child who has chosen to reject the choices given as being disengaged. However, when the child's perspective and social agency is considered, it is not difficult to understand why giving children choices alone is insufficient to empower them.

5.3.2   The Preconditions of Choice

In the above examples of BFO and ICAN, there is a clear shift towards moving the responsibility on the individual service users to change their behaviour by aligning their aspirations with the desired policy goals. As both BFO and ICAN have shown, this departure from traditional approaches means tailoring services and programmes according to each person's situation. However, such an approach requires the service users to engage intensively with the service providers. Although the BFO and ICAN are both voluntary programmes, users' 'choice' to engage in these programmes are structured in such a way that it would be difficult for them to disengage. For the BFO users, there is an implicit condition that they need to engage in training, education or

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employment in order to receive other material forms of support. For the ICAN students, their school participation is structured in a way that coincides with their interests. As McCallum (1998, p. 121) observes, under a self-governing mode of governance, there exists a 'problem' group that sits in between being treated as 'defective, dangerous' persons or persons with 'personality' issues. Individuals under the BFO and ICAN programmes belong to this 'problem' group who are neither considered dangerous and to be kept away, nor suffering from personality disorders and to be cured.

At the same time, the positive and strengths-based approach emphasised by the social inclusion agenda may empower some groups of service users but may make little difference to service users whose ability to make their own choices is constrained by multiple and chronic barriers, such as long-term mental or physical health problems. In the case of children, their choices are often constrained by their parents' preferences and in the case of disadvantaged families, their choices are constrained by the day-to-day demands or multiple crises that are heaped upon them. Thus, the social inclusion agenda, based on its participatory, bottom-up ethos, may continue to fail the people who are considered to be the most disadvantaged.

> So if you have a community where they're currently going through a spate of really high suicide rates in their young people and there's really high unemployment and a whole host of issues, but they have quite a strong social network, a whole group of parents and grandparents that are really concerned and socially active and they want to fix this thing, yes you can have a very bottom-up approach. If you're looking at a community where there's generation after generation of people with no jobs, with substance abuse issues, with no housing, poor housing, then it becomes a bit harder to have the bottom up approach, because the people in the community don't yet have the capability to tell you what they need, what they want. So, there's a real role for bottom-up, the risk is though if you follow a bottom-up model, the worst won't participate. The worst communities won't be able to do it, so you can lose people. (PMF06, 7 November 2011)

Another policymaker shared her experience in working with the chronic homeless and was not convinced that initiatives by the SASIU to reduce homelessness were effective, despite SASIU's claim that there was a significant reduction in homelessness (South Australian Social Inclusion Unit 2010, p. 3). For this policymaker, the social inclusion agenda was perhaps successful in engaging those who just 'need a hand', but has failed to help the 'hard-baskets' whose numbers have remained the same and are likely to increase with the aging of the population.

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Well, in our programme in particular, we would love our clients to have achieved the lofty heights of support about employment, education, jobs. But we're dealing with people who, just trying to engage them, just trying to capture they're out there and at risk is difficult enough. Who are hidden, if you like and who are chronic. They're the people [who] aren't eligible for services, who are often banned. They're not nice people where they need a hand. They're the people who are the hard-baskets and for whom there's no diagnosis that would then lead to mainstream service...

Look, I think possibly for that group, who are nice people who needed a bit of help, there have been some fabulous outcomes, I don't doubt that at all. But the clients I'm describing, we've had only one ever access Common Ground[15] property and he didn't last very long because he just couldn't live in a community like that. He couldn't cope and he couldn't comply to the rules and the conditions and he was very quickly rejected. So, I don't see a huge change for the population I'm talking about and I think there's more coming, more aging. (PMSA02, 5 August 2011).

Ironically, according to this policymaker, this group of homeless people may probably benefit more from being arrested because then, the most critical services can be provided to them while in custody, whether they want these services or not. Without compelling these individuals to receive certain essential services, they may drift in and out of various agencies without any long-term solution to their multiple problems. For this group of individuals, the forms of social control continue to be punitive because they are only able to receive critical services when they resort to criminal behaviour.

This might sound ridiculous but it seems really useful to us when people are actually imprisoned. If we can advocate really, really heavily to...while they're in custody, have them detoxed and then do some assessments that might then lead to some clarity around how they're functioning and how they're operating. Because so often, somebody with mental health, florid mental health issues might go into the hospital and be detained for 48 hours or something and they're released. But it's not enough time to do a really comprehensive assessment, that would inform how best to work or treat them long-term. (PMSA02, 5 August 2011)

At the same time, these 'hard baskets', who are not obviously physically incapacitated, become even more contemptuous because they appear to wilfully reject the empowering efforts of the state to help them help themselves (Hoggett 2001, p. 44). In this way, punitive measures against this group of people are justified along the reasoning that they are irresponsible and have chosen to live their lives in perpetual dependency. Similarly,

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[15] Common Ground is a not-for-profit housing project for homeless individuals.

Ferguson (2007) cautions that the increasing personalisation, individualisation and responsibilisation of social services carries the potential of further stigmatising those who are placed on welfare.

Social inclusion's emphasis on personal autonomy and responsibility also pose problems for children because their lives are constrained by the limits set for them by the adults in their lives. Even when children are given some autonomy as in the ICAN programme, this opportunity is conditional only upon their attendance in school. As one of the policymakers said, 'the option to do nothing is not there' and, hence, where education is concerned, children do not have other learning options except through attending school. Programmes such as the BFO and the ICAN favours individuals who are disadvantaged and who have the type of personal strengths or capabilities as defined by service providers that can be leveraged. In cases of the most severely disadvantaged people, the barriers that they face are not only personal ones, but also structural ones, such as discriminatory practices, that reinforce their powerlessness. In the case of children, they face the constraints of ambiguity about their ability to make decisions, which further places a burden on children to speak and be heard (Lee 1999). Children who are caught in between different adults' interests are placed in a stressful situation where withdrawal and silence become children's preferred option.

5.4   Power, Tension and Agency

While power is decentralised under the social inclusion agenda and flows along strategic pathways that sets deterministic personal goals for individuals, its flow is neither smooth nor without resistance. This chapter has highlighted the points of ambiguity and sites of tension, as well as the agency of various actors that support Dean's (2010, p. 27) argument on the reflexive nature of governmentality.

> On the one hand, we govern others and ourselves according to what we take to be true about who we are, what aspects of our existence should be worked upon, how, with what means, and to what ends. On the other hand, the ways in which we govern and conduct ourselves give rise to different ways of producing truth.

Similarly, it is the competing and blending of different theoretical traditions from different policy stakeholders, rather than a single linear model that determines the policy-making process (Richardson 2011). The chapter began by showing the organisational changes that were made with the introduction of the social inclusion

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agenda by the Federal and South Australian governments. In particular, powerful coordinating government bodies such as the social inclusion units and the independent social inclusion boards were established to coordinate the different government departments. Similarly, well-resourced and more powerful service providers were selected as coordinating agencies to facilitate local councils and other service agencies at the community level. The idea of a 'joined-up' government or a 'whole-of-community' response decentralises power among certain agencies but gives considerable authority to the coordinating central agency. At the Federal government level, this resulted in tensions between the central coordinating agency and some of the government departments. At the community level, service providers had been collaborating with each other prior to the social inclusion agenda. The social inclusion agenda with its 'whole-of-community' approach only emphasised existing partnerships without addressing the ongoing problems of capacity building and infrastructure that these partnerships have been facing. As noted by Davies (2009, p. 90), the consensus built on the partnership ethos is shallow because it enabled stakeholders to work 'as if' they have shared norms without questioning unresolved conflicts. Indeed, Davies (2007) goes further to argue that local empowerment may depend less on establishing democratic networks than on strong, independent community organisations that are capable of acting against governing institutions.

The aspirational tone of the social inclusion discourse is translated into its programmes and services through emphasising personal empowerment based on strengths of the individuals and giving them the responsibility to make their own decisions. However, Gillies (2005) argues that the focus on empowerment and investment represents a top-down projection of values and standards on to families, thereby incentivising conformity rather than promoting access to resources. By placing responsibility on individuals, blame is also placed on individuals for being disengaged or unreceptive when they choose to withdraw from programmes such as the BFO. In contrast, structural barriers, such as racism, are not addressed by the social inclusion agenda. As cautioned by McLaughlin (2005, p 300), the anti-oppressive practice of social work recast structural problems as the moral failings of individuals who, therefore, need to be corrected by anti-oppressive social workers. Similarly, the positive approach adopted by the social inclusion agenda favours those who have the freedom to take on personal

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responsibility and who have the time to commit to an intensive working relationship with caseworkers from the programme. As Dean (2009) argues, since power is ubiquitous, personal autonomy is illusory because both the opposing identities of being responsible and being irresponsible serve the same purpose of maintaining social order.

Furthermore, the way that 'strengths' are defined is geared towards creating a common middle-class aspiration for people deemed to be socially excluded. In other words, as Ryan (2009) noted, inclusion is ultimately for those who are marginalised, disadvantaged or those 'at risk' where they are expected to govern themselves. However, those deemed to be criminal or dangerous are still excluded in the name of safety and security (Ryan 2009). Foucault's (1983, p. 221) argument that power can only be exercised over free subjects does not seem to explain children's subordinate position in relation to adults because freedom is limited for children. For them, the hegemonic forms of power and control are still very much a part of their lives, even as more spaces of negotiation, personal autonomy are being created. As Freeman (1998, p. 442) noted, there will always be limits of participation placed on children and giving them access to decision-making bodies does not remove the entrenched processes of domination over them. Childhoods are subjected to oppressive practices because children have to live in a world where the rules are set by adults; there are no alternative worlds for them (Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers 1992, p. 191). Alanen (2001, p.129) calls these practices the 'generational structuring' of children's lives, where complex social processes construct people as 'children' or 'adults', with the result that children are positioned as 'dependent' on adults and their lives are structured around sets of rules on what they can or cannot do as 'children'.

This is not to argue that children have little or no agency or are incapable of resisting, especially through a culture of contestation (Courpasson & Dany 2009, p. 341) where contest and resistance are encouraged. Rather, it is to understand that there are often taken-for-granted, structural discriminatory practices against children that constrain their ability to exercise agency or to have their agency acknowledged (James & Prout 1990; James & James 2001). Underlying the unequal power relations between adults and children are entrenched values and norms regarding children and childhood that continue to justify children's subordinate position. It is important to understand what

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these contesting values and norms are, their ambiguity and inconsistency, in order to use them to re-interpret children's position in an adult world. In the next chapter, the role that social values and constructs play in maintaining as well as resisting the power relations between children, service providers and policymakers will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6
Children's Values and the Socio-Economic Value of Children

Social inclusion is more than just a framework to understand the multi-faceted nature of social and economic disadvantage or poverty. As we have seen earlier in the narratives of social inclusion, the concept contains a distinctive moral dimension that describes a set of shared values that represent the Australian national identity (Harris & Williams 2003). The language used in the social inclusion agenda is aspirational and the approach used focuses on personal strengths and capabilities. Yet, the concept of capabilities or competencies becomes problematic when applied to children, not because children are inherently incompetent, but because they are socially constructed as lacking in adult capabilities (James et al. 1998; Prout & James 1990). By understanding children through a social constructionist framework is to question the naturalism behind how children and childhoods are defined, thus situating children within their social, cultural, political or economic contexts (James et al. 1998; James & Prout 1990; Jenks 1982; Stanton-Rogers 1989). More crucially, the socially constructed child means that, 'children are not formed by natural and social forces but rather that they inhabit a world of meaning created by themselves and through their interaction with adults' (James et al. 1998, p. 28). Under the various social constructions of children, children are being socially and economically valued in different ways by policymakers and service providers under the social inclusion agenda. However, more often than not, children are treated as 'things, as problems, but rarely as human beings with personality and integrity' (Freeman, 1983, p. 24). In this chapter, it is argued that under the social inclusion agenda, children continue to be constructed as problems and risks, although frontline service providers are increasingly challenging these constructs. It is also argued that when children are treated fairly as persons with integrity, trusting relationships are established with children that enable children to seek appropriate help when they need it.

This chapter begins by looking at how children are being constructed in the policy framework of social inclusion. Within this first section, I argue that children are mainly valued as future workers or as risks to be managed before they become socially excluded adults under the policy framework of social inclusion. Children's response to

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being framed as future beings and the implications of constructing children using arbitrary age time frames are also discussed. In the second section, the services dimension of social inclusion is examined by discussing how service providers frame and understand children. Frontline workers have to deal with parental expectations that they will 'fix' their children, while managerial staff in service provision agencies see their primary role as a protective one. Yet, children often have different concerns about their own protection or safety, highlighting bullying as one of their primary safety concerns. Furthermore, children have different responses to bullying and, where there is a lack of trust towards adults, some children decide to handle bullying incidences on their own. In the third section of this chapter, it is demonstrated that children as social actors highlight values such as fairness and respect, which are critical in establishing trusting relationships with adults and these values are mirrored within the grand narrative of the social inclusion discourse discussed in Chapter Four. While social constructs of children as passive, dependent beings continue to dominate the policy and services dimensions of social inclusion, some frontline children's workers are gradually challenging these constructs through reframing children as capable professionals of their own lives.

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6.1   The Value of Children in Children's Policies

The discourse of social inclusion in Australia tells two parallel narratives – the grand narrative is a story about a 'stronger and fairer Australia' while the underlying narrative is about continuing to achieve high economic growth. These two narratives are not unlike the social integration discourse (SID) and the moral underclass discourse (MUD) that Levitas (2005) wrote about where the pathways to social inclusion are basically understood in terms of participation in paid work and changing people's behaviours through a stick or carrot approach. Hence, under the policy discourse of social inclusion, children are primarily valued as potential workers in the future. Children who face multiple disadvantages are framed as 'risks' that require policy intervention and investment. The cost of investing in children is seen to be a necessary one, to prevent children from becoming future costs to the society. The following sub-sections show how policymakers construct children as an economic problem and how children's experiences contradict these constructs.

6.1.1   Children as Costs: The Economic Value of Children

In Australia, social inclusion policies and programmes draw heavily on a positive rather than a punitive approach and even though other forms of participation (social and political) are included in the policy definition of social inclusion, the emphasis is on economic participation through paid work. In particular, under the Labor government, the governmental practices of changing the behaviour of the unemployed through self-shaping, self-cultivation and self-presentation (Dean 1998, p. 92) also become ethical practices. Hence, the narrative of social inclusion is not only about economic participation but it is also about a set of articulated moral practices that attempt to shape individual's behaviour through linking paid work with values such as fairness, trust, dignity and respect. Indeed, social inclusion is expressed as an approach that is able to achieve good economic outcomes through being a good social policy.

> Social inclusion is not only good social policy, it is good economic policy. Ensuring that people have the resources, opportunities and capabilities to participate, will reduce the costs often associated with high levels of social exclusion - like preventable illnesses, under-employment and crime - and help create a more educated, skilled, productive and cohesive nation. (ASIB 2011c, p. 3)

Hence, the justification of using a social inclusion agenda is because it is a 'good economic policy' that reduces the costs to society by reducing ill-health, unemployment and crime. Similarly, the way to creating a 'socially inclusive nation' is by having an educated, skilled and an economically productive population that is fully engaged in paid work. This is not to say that other forms of work are not part of the definition of social inclusion. In fact, the official definition of social inclusion does include unpaid or voluntary work, including caring responsibilities (ASIB 2010, p. 15).

Similarly, programmes initiated by the social inclusion agenda such as the Building Family Opportunities (BFO) or the Innovative Community Action Network (ICAN) are evaluated for their processes or for their users' engagement, rather than looking at the traditional outcomes of employment or school achievements. For example, BFO looks at the number of times the clients have met with the case manager or the family visits that the case manager has made for a given period of time. Employment outcomes are secondary to BFO programme outcomes as PMSA03 (22 July 2011) said, 'We don't actually have any employment targets, although we're very pleased we're producing

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employment targets.' In addition, as noted in the previous chapter, the success of programmes such as the BFO or ICAN lie precisely in the way they are customised and intensively managed to each and every individual or family's aspirations, needs and interests in ways that leave only the option of employment or schooling as the most attractive choice to make. Therefore, BFO becomes a successful employment programme, even if its objectives were not about meeting employment targets and ICAN helps retain students in school by making learning fun rather than through compulsion.

In this way, social inclusion is about economic participation although it does this by structuring its policies and programmes as moral practices where self-respect, dignity, personal aspirations and 'being Australian' become synonymous with engagement in paid work or education. The value of each individual or each family can therefore be calculated in economic terms – as a cost or a benefit to society. It is not surprising that several of the policy makers talk about socially excluded individuals or families as being a future cost to society which the state must avoid incurring, or as the 'five per cent' that is preventing Australia from being a more productive economy.

> [I]f you look at Australia's performance on so many things, in terms of participation of children in pre-school, it's very high. So it is the last five per cent that's holding us back. If you look at the school completion rates, very high, but it is the last five per cent. At the moment, we're close to full employment, we need more employees and there's a group of five to ten per cent of people who have no skills and if they could work, we'll be a much more productive economy. So, in an environment like this which is close to full employment and where there have been substantial achievements in terms of school completion, school participation, it is the last five per cent that's ruining the statistics basically. (PMF04, 15 June 2011)

> [A] taxpayer should realise that if they don't invest in [children] now, this five per cent in this way, in ten years' time, they'll have to invest in that same population probably even more because they've allowed things to further deteriorate. (PMSA01, 8 August 2011)

Service providers who were holding executive positions had similar views with policymakers on viewing children as necessary economic and social investments for the future.

> [T]he focus of society is still very much on economic development and on the survival of the fittest, rather than looking at how we can put upfront, for young people and children to make sure that they achieve their potential. Because if you

don't do [it], it's a very false economy. Because by not getting it with young people, they're the kids that end up in mental health institutions, they're the kids that end up with behaviours that are very bad for their physical health like smoking, drinking, some of the kids end up in detention programmes. Now, there are the very expensive services that the government [then has to] provide. (SPM08, 23 September 2011)

The cost of funding social inclusion programmes for children is justified by estimating the future costs that these programmes will save the economy and the society. Framed in this way, children become the ideal pragmatic rhetorical device for the social investment state because, on the one hand, children as citizens-in-becoming represent the ideal world peopled by self-actualising individuals; and on the other hand, justifies collective responsibility (Dobrowolsky 2002, p. 45). As future workers, the state invests heavily in children's policies because they are treated as resources which will provide the social and economic returns in the future, thereby instrumentalising children's welfare (Alanen 2007, p. 35).

A whole industry of child experts is created where the every stage of childhood and children's development is studied, measured and examined in detail, especially with regard to the future economic costs and benefits they are projected to bring. As Stafseng (1993, p. 77) commented, this is the 'century of the child professionals'. The child development industry, consisting of lawyers, doctors, social workers, educationalists and academics have dominated the market in our knowledge of children (Mayall 2000, p. 245). Indeed, policymakers in this research justify their social inclusion focus on early childhood intervention by quoting prominent experts who have undertaken cost-benefit analyses of early childhood intervention. For example, prominent economist, James Heckman, and his research on the rate of economic returns from investing in early childhood, is quoted by one of the policymakers as an example of the importance in investing in early childhood policies.

> [A] lot of research come through about disadvantage starting very young, so even in the womb, there's evidence around [how] disadvantage affects, impacts at that state and it'll continue...The evidence is quite strong that if you are disadvantaged from an early stage that that will stay with you, will take a long time to overcome. So in terms of that intergenerational transmission of disadvantage, focusing on children is a key aspect...Actually, the Heckman stuff is very interesting, it does show the rate of return you get for investment for each child versus other stages, it's quite a compelling piece of evidence. (PMF01, 14 June 2011)

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Yet this construct of childhood as a time where its value is chiefly measured in terms of economic costs and returns once again frames children as problems whose childhoods require intensive state intervention or they will become a cost to society when they grow up.

6.1.2 The Value of Children's Work

Prior to the nineteenth century, children were not seen as an economic cost because they were part of the workforce. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a significant transformation of childhoods took place where children who were previously conceptualised as workers began to be conceptualised as school children (Cunningham 2005, p.158). Prior to the nineteenth century, children had always been working members of the society, whether by taking part in invisible industries such as housework, caring duties at home, or by working alongside adults in the fields, factories or offices (Heywood 2001, pp. 123-134). In fact, it is the brutal, appalling conditions of children working in textile mills and mines in the nineteenth century, together with the rise of the bourgeois class with evangelistic views of what childhoods should be, that culminated in a distinct separation of children from work (Hendrick 1990, pp. 41-42; Heywood 2001, pp. 135-136). Schooling was made compulsory in many European countries and American States during that period of time in such a way that by the 1920s, parents and children had accepted schooling as a norm (Cunningham 2005, p. 160). At present, compulsory schooling applies to children in Australia aged between five and 15 to 17, depending on the State or Territory, and date of birth. The transition of childhood from workplaces to schools has the effect of creating a universal concept of childhood as a time of innocence, learning and 'play' while adulthood becomes characterised as a time of work. In contemporary childhoods, working children, often labelled as 'child labour', becomes an aberration while schooling or children's play are not considered work (James et al. 1998, pp. 101-102). However, as pointed out by James et al. (1998), children have continued to take up various forms of paid and unpaid employment, even though their work is often rendered invisible or unaccounted for in official economic accounting of employment. Instead, children are treated as current costs to the economy, financially dependent on their families or as consumers using up resources, rather than as productive citizens (James et al. 1998). The distinction between children-as-learners and adults-as-workers also led to what Mayall (2002, p. 63) calls,

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the 'scholarization' of childhood where schooling is regarded as the primary occupation of all children. Therefore, children are only valued 'as learners, not as workers; their relations with adults (for example, parents and teachers) are those of dependency, just as they were when children worked in family workshops or factories' (Mayall 2002, p. 64). Kept out of paid work, which is the only form of recognised 'productive' work in economic terms, children become constructed as consumers using up precious resources or being financial 'burdens' to families (Morrow 1994). Similarly, Zelizer (1985, p. 3) observes that children have become economically 'worthless' but emotionally 'priceless'. Constructed solely as learners, the belief that children are dependent beings, lacking in knowledge or capabilities and hence, need to be educated and developed into future productive adults, is reinforced.

In reality, children continue to be involved in both paid and unpaid work even though they spend most of their time in school. Studies by Skattebol et al. (2012, p. 44) and Ridge (2002, pp. 46-47) found that older children facing economic disadvantages were keen to look for work. Many of the older children I talked to expressed strong desires to work or had already taken some steps to find odd jobs, even when these jobs were poorly paid or unpaid. However, the children in this research who had found part-time jobs were not working because of financial deprivation. As noted by Hobbs et al. (1992, p. 98), children taking part in low-end jobs cannot be understood only as a problem of poverty (though poverty could be a reason for some children working) or as a problem of disposable reserve labour. Instead, children's involvement in low-end jobs is a feature of capitalist economies where the demand for cheap labour at low-end jobs is met by children's desire to acquire work skills that could complement their other desire for education (Hobbs et al. 1992, p. 98). This supports similar observations made in this research where children who were involved in part-time jobs did so without compromising their schoolwork. For example, Kase (18) was actually juggling three part-time jobs, volunteering in a youth dance club and schooling. In fact, Kase was working at the youth centre at one of the service providers as a receptionist and this experience was helping her accumulate essential social and cultural capital for her eventual career ambition to be a social worker. Kase also said that balancing work, play and school had helped her to manage her time carefully, resulting in her being more productive in the time she allocated for each activity. Other children took up part-time

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work in order to pay for essential consumables that would help them gain some independence from parents' control. For example, Troy (15) talked about how his mum would not be able to restrict his use of the computers because he was given those computers for free when he worked at a computer store.

> Mum can't ban me from my computer 'cos if she tries to ban me from the computer, I go, 'well, you didn't pay for it so it's not your computer'. I got [my computer] for free. I worked for it where I'm working at the moment. (24 August 2011)

In addition to being involved in part-time work, many more children in this research were involved in unpaid housework and caring duties at home. This supports other research that show that children are regularly involved in housework and other caring duties at home (Aldridge & Becker 1993; Goodnow 1988; Morrow 1994). Nathan (15), Jack (15), Dainess (17), Max (13) and Nee (18), talked about doing housework such as laundry, washing dishes, running errands and looking after their younger siblings or relatives. For Ethan (16), Dainess (17) and Nee (18), baby-sitting is an essential part of what they do at home especially when their parents or other adults in the family need to work.

> I've got little cousins so [I] take care of them sometimes, like in the morning, when their mum's asleep, take care of them, keep them from running. (Ethan, 16, · 23 August 2011)

> I sometimes babysit for my sister. She has two little kids and she has a daughter and a son. I pretty much look after my nephew. At his age, he's not allowed to go to childcare, but right now, I'm trying to help out. Probably I'm going to do more babysitting because she's just going to go to work tomorrow. So, I pretty much just help out sometimes. (Dainess, 17, 4 October 2011)

> I'm the only one reliable in my family. [So, I have to babysit my] 'lil brother, 'cos my mum doesn't trust my older siblings 'cos they just dump him there and go to the pub or somethin'. And my other sister, [my mum] doesn't trust her with anyone. She's like 15, she just goes out there and does whatever she wants, sneaks out of the house, whatever. (Nee, 18, 4 October 2011)

Among the younger children, Sara (8) talked about taking care of her two younger siblings.

> I got one lil' brother and one lil' sister. When mum has to go out somewhere and nobody's at home, I've to take care of them. (Sara, 8, 20 September 2011)

In addition to babysitting, Dainess also used her youth allowance to help pay for the rent. In Nee's family, being the most responsible child meant that he was given the task

of taking care of his younger brother. As noted by Morrow (1994, p. 134), adults acknowledge children's responsibilities in the work that they do, but some adults also view such responsibilities as compromising children's schoolwork or school attendance. Hence, some youth workers working at a youth home, talked about teenagers at the home not knowing how to perform basic chores such as dishwashing or laundry. At the same time, none of the children I spoke to were primary caregivers or were inundated with housework. As Miller's study (2012, p. 18) pointed out, teenagers' contributions to household and care work in Australia is polarised, with many doing nothing and some doing a lot. In this research, children talked about household chores without complaint as they saw the chores as part of their shared responsibility as family members. This responsibility taken on by children goes unnoticed in the policy discourse of social inclusion not only because housework is not children's primary responsibility, but also because childhood is socially constructed 'as a period marked by dependency and an absence of responsibility [that] prevents us from knowing about those cases of children working and taking responsibility' (Morrow 1995, pp. 226-227).

6.1.3   Children as Future Beings - Risks to be Managed and Mitigated

The social construction of children as dependent beings is not a recent phenomenon. Historically, children's lives are of little interest for their own sake as they are always subordinate to adults (Schultz 1995). In the Aristotelian concept of children, they are considered important only for their future potential because the 'ideal' age for men is when they are in their middle-age (Heywood 2001, p. 3). Yet, it is only in the mid-twentieth century, where social sciences began to systematically treat children as incomplete adults who need to be 'developed' (psychology) or 'socialised' (sociology) to become 'mature, rational, competent, social and autonomous' adults (Heywood 2001, p. 3). Likewise, as part of children's development, children need to be schooled. Compulsory education means that governments have unprecedented control over the experience of childhood. Schools became sites where children are not only expected to learn habits of order and obedience but also socially sanctioned norms and roles, such differentiated gender roles (Cunningham 2005, p. 159). This pedagogical aspect of schools continues to predominate in current educational policies, operating in more sophisticated ways that are geared not only towards shaping an ideal adult workforce, but also as a means to prevent future ills. Children who are considered as socially

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excluded are perceived as risks that need to be managed or mitigated at present so that they do not carry their disadvantages into their adulthood. The management of risk in the practices of mental medicine and social work becomes a form of social control and the preferred mode of governance (Castel 1991). This risk management approach constructs children as future citizen-workers (Lister 2003). As future workers, children's well-being is predominantly valued in economic terms. Governments need to invest in children's well-being in order to hedge against the future risks of an unemployed, socially excluded workforce that will become dead weights to the economy. Therefore, one of the key priorities of the social inclusion agenda is to 'improve the life chances of children at-risk of long-term disadvantage' (SIU 2009b, p. 26). Yet, as noted by Dobrowolsky (2002, p. 68), seeing children's well-being as a form of social investment constructs children in terms of an 'at-risk' or 'as risks' dichotomy that portrays them as either victims or criminals.

In particular, children who are not in school or have low school attendance rates are shown to be at-risk of various long-term negative outcomes or further risky behaviour. For example, low school participation has been linked to criminal behaviour outside of school (Chapman et al. 2002). Early school leavers are also associated with unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, lower earnings, poorer physical and mental health as well as less engagement in active citizenship (Lamb & Rice 2008, p. 6). Other studies show significant social and welfare costs associated with early school leaving (Hankivsky 2008; Owens 2004). These studies are undoubtedly valid and provide useful evidence that support more state investment on children's education, but, at the same time, they inevitably frame children (or their families) as the policy problem and hence the solution is either incentivising families to monitor their children's school attendance or to punish those who do not. By framing the problem in terms of children 'at risk' or 'as risks', responsibility is placed on children themselves as well as their family members to change their behaviour. As discussed in Chapter Five, the emphasis on personal responsibility does empower some socially excluded families to make changes to their circumstances. However, it also further stigmatises other severely disadvantaged individuals or families by implying that they are 'irresponsible' when they choose not to be engaged with social inclusion programmes. In another example, the policy priority of the social inclusion agenda, 'targeting jobless

families with children to increase work opportunities, improve parenting and build capacity' (SIU 2009b, p. 20), makes in indirect assumptions that jobless parents put their children at significant risk of social exclusion and that these parents lack appropriate parenting skills or capacities. Whether there are underlying reasons on why families are chronically jobless, or why they may lack the capacity to supervise their children's school attendance, are not examined in the policy documents.

School attendance is not the only area of focus for policymakers under the social inclusion agenda. Some older children where school participation is not possible, are expected to participate in vocational training or to seek employment. Children who are not engaged in education, employment or training are viewed as a threat and a critical policy problem. Although the statistics of youth 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) is widely monitored by most countries, few have addressed the deeper underlying causes of NEET. Instead, when statistics on school participation and negative outcomes are presented as a series of direct, linear relationships, they continue to feed into the social fear and belief that children and young people who have nothing to do are nothing but trouble. As noted by Schwab (2012, p.11) labelling early school leavers, particularly Indigenous students, as being 'at-risk' has the effect of representing them as 'trouble-makers, young people on the edge, those who don't participate, don't appreciate and don't play by the rules. They are demonised, dismissed or stigmatised as failures'. The symbolic and institutional demonisation of children decontextualise childhoods, attributing children's problems to their own individual behaviour with its associated adult moral response of fear as well as anxiety that further justifies the social control of children (Goldson 2001).

6.1.4   Children Now – Children, Young People or Young Adults?

Framing children as risks that need to be managed because their future is more valued masks the problems that they face now. One of the issues highlighted by service providers as being increasingly serious, yet invisible, is the issue of homeless young people. Indeed, the commonly used term, 'homeless young people' hides the fact that many of these young people are children under 18 years old. SPM06 informed me that the homelessness programme she was running provides services to children from eight

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to 18 years old, although the programme is also accessed by homeless families with babies.

> We've servicing from eight, because of the drop-in group and we also work in the primary schools in Year Sevens[16] and our homelessness programme, they work from nought, so they work with the family but they do work with children who are homeless because mum or dad or carers are homeless. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

However, most of the children at the centre were a mix of primary to high school-aged children, from 12 to 18, which was the reason for SPM06 referring to them as young people instead of children during our interview. In the following quote, SPM06 talked about how this group of homeless teenagers, who are caught in between lay definitions of children and young people, find themselves without access to safe accommodation because foster parents prefer younger children or babies.

> Most people want little children and babies, they don't want what they see as a troubled youth...so that's when you get couch-surfing; they move on to another one and another one because they can't find permanent accommodation...in some instances, they feel they're placing a burden on that family, so they'll just do a cycle. They're living out of bags, even though they may be in a safe environment, it's not permanent, so they're still considered to be homeless. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

The classification of older children as 'young people' places them in a position where they are perceived to be too old to fit into the social construct of vulnerable children in need of protection. Instead, older children as 'young people' are associated with the image of a troublemaker from whom the rest of the community needs to be protected from. Without access to foster homes willing to care for these older children, they find themselves couch-surfing in friends' homes indefinitely, rendering the problem less visible. At the same time, the invisibility of children's homelessness exacerbates the problem of children's access to safe accommodation because it is assumed that homelessness is not a problem associated with children.

In fact, the social inclusion agenda in South Australia has been credited with a significant reduction in homelessness (Government of South Australia 2011, p. 6), particularly in rough sleeping. Notably, the South Australian government has developed

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[16] At Year Seven, children are typically 12 or 13 years old.

a 'youth gateway' as part of its policy reform on homelessness where youths were defined as those aged 15 to 25 years (Government of South Australia 2011, pp. 19-20). However, younger children aged zero to 12, who wish to access homelessness services must be accompanied by an adult (Government of South Australia 2011, p. 22). This means that children between the ages of 13 to 14 are likely to be caught in between being perceived as neither children nor young people, with limited access to foster homes or to appropriate safe accommodation on their own. Furthermore, accommodation built for adult homeless people is unsuitable for children because they do not cater to children's safety needs. Indeed, SPM06 is of the view that for this group of children aged 12 to 18, there seems to be few, or no, safe medium to long-term accommodation for them at all.

> [A]ccommodation in the North for young people, emergency accommodation, medium-term supported and long-term is an absolute big issue in the North, we really struggle to help young people who are at risk of homelessness...there is no accommodation for those young people. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

Older children's risk of homelessness also takes on a different character from issues of adult homelessness. For older children, homelessness is often related to crises in their families, such as domestic violence or abusive family environments. Homelessness is a risk they take when they are trying to escape from these abusive family situations. Older children running away from abusive family environments are in need of safe accommodation but often find themselves at risk of other violent or unsafe situations when they are homeless or out in the streets.

> [T]hey'll do a variety of things to survive that increases their risk of [being involved] in crime, alcohol, drugs, violence because it's for survival, they need to survive...so if a young person is living at home and experiencing domestic violence, or any violence, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, they need to escape that and we've got nowhere for them to escape to. It's just very difficult to find safe accommodation for them. (SPM06, 14 September 2011).

According to SPM06, most of the emergency accommodation for older children is full and even though there are consultations and research being conducted on youth homelessness, few shelters are being built.

> There's not a lot, *practically*, being done. There's research that takes place, there's consultations that take place, but in all the years I've been working here, I've never gone, 'oh wow, we're building a youth shelter'. There's not another youth shelter being built or emergency accommodation. [Or] an alternative care situation where young people are placed in care of a guardianship. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

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When there were plans to build a youth shelter, the perception of young people as troublemakers led to the community opposing the plan.

> There was a project some years ago, they were going to build some more youth accommodation in the northern area...but there was a community consultation and the community around where they were going to build said, 'no'. Just the perception of young people, I guess they felt at risk for their own property. And if you present a young person, sometimes the perception is that they're trouble, they're going to be trouble but they're actually *troubled*, as in they haven't got accommodation. It doesn't mean that they're going to create trouble. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

We have here a contrasting perspective of what protection means for older children in danger of homelessness and for members of the neighbourhood who saw them as young people who will bring trouble to the community. However, from the perspective of service providers, homeless children are in need of a safe place to live. As pointed out by SPM06, the trouble that young people get into, such as drugs, alcohol or violence, is likely a consequence of them not having a safe place to live, rather than being the cause of their homelessness. This observation is supported by other studies on youth homelessness where homeless young people resort to 'survival crime' (Kerr & Savelsberg 2003; Savelsberg et al. 2000; Savelsberg & Martin-Giles 2008), become involved in drugs out of despair (Kidd 2004; Rowe 2005; Tyler & Johnson 2006) or even start using drugs as a way to secure a bed at detoxification units (Savelsberg & Martin-Giles 2008).

Therefore, a system of services that divides children by strict age criteria can limit the way children's problems are being addressed through different ages of childhood. Just as the radically opposing perceptions of children-to-be-protected and young people-to-be-feared are problematic, the construct of childhood as radically distinct from adulthood creates two different systems of services for children and adults that do not adequately address children's problems. For example, there was a young man who was facing multiple problems when he was 15 and managed to receive a wide range of services from youth centres. However, just as he was doing well in some of these services, his life fell apart again when he turned 18, the legal definition of an adult, where he struggled to cope in the adult criminal justice system.

> [A]t 15, when he came to us, he had drug induced psychosis and he's on and off a fairly regular amphetamine user, he lives on the street a lot, he's got a range of

mental health issues, he's in and out of jail and I advocated for him. He did very well at our group home, but once he became 18 and went into the adult sector, things really fell apart for him and that's when he did things wrong, he found himself going into the justice system, and once you're in and out of that system, it just perpetuates...He's been a whole year in jail...he never gets bail because he has nowhere to live so he continues to stay locked up, which does terrible things to his mental health. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

From the above, it can be seen that the two different systems of services for individuals aged below 18 and for those aged 18 and above fail to recognise that the young person going through the two systems has been facing similar problems throughout his childhood and teenage years. For babies and young children, perceived as vulnerable, the community response is protective, with access to services directed at caregivers rather than at the children themselves. For older children perceived as troublemakers, the community response is more punitive although these children may start to access some services directly because they are perceived as 'young people'. When young people cross over to adulthood, as defined by the legal age of 18, they face a punitive system that often bears little or no continuity from the systems that are in place for children and young people. The above examples indicate that structuring services around the age of the child draws attention to arbitrary perceptions of what a child means that distracts attention from the problems and crises that the child is facing. Rather than structuring services or policies based on age criteria, it is worth thinking about designing services that are sensitive to each individual child's circumstances and needs.

6.2   The Value of Children in Children's Services

While policymakers value children primarily for their future economic value, service providers construct children based on their perceived social value or in some cases, on their lack of social value. Hence, children are constructed as social problems to be solved. Nevertheless, different service providers construct children in different ways and result in contestations of how children should be treated as service users. At the same time, by treating children as problems, the problems that children face are hidden. The following sub-sections show how children are constructed as service users, the assumptions made about children's problems and how children manage their own problems when services fail to address their concerns.

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6.2.1 Children as Problems to be 'Fixed'

Constructed as a potential future cost to society, children who are considered socially excluded become a policy problem that requires intensive intervention. Their behaviour is subjected to adult scrutiny, whether these adults are their parents, social workers, psychologists, teachers, policymakers or the community. Indeed, contemporary childhood is subject to various strategies of surveillance and observation all in the name of the child's good (Jenks 1996, p. 77). In particular,

> [p]sychologists were to claim a particular expertise in the disciplining of the uniqueness and idiosyncrasies of childhood, individualizing children by categorizing them, calibrating their aptitudes, inscribing their peculiarities in an ordered form, managing their variability conceptually, and governing it practically. (Rose 1989, p. 132)

From this perpetual professional gaze on the child, a single vision of the 'correct childhood' is born and imposed on all children, often disregarding their specific cultural, economic and social contexts (Ennew 1986, p. 21). Together with the concept of a 'correct childhood', the concept of 'correct parenting' is developed. The surveillance of the child extends to the surveillance of families where a 'tutelary complex' (Donzelot 1979) is formed through the practices of experts such as social workers, psychologists and professional carers that serve to normalise 'difficult' families. Qvortrup (1985) notes that the work of these child experts rarely question the dependent status of children. However, not all child experts agree on what constitutes a 'normal' childhood or how to deal with children's 'difficult' behaviour. For example, the frontline social workers in this study found it difficult to work with parents who perceived the social workers' responsibilities as 'fixing' their children. Under pressure to correct their children's behaviour, parents turn to social workers and counsellors to 'fix' their children.

> So a lot of times, people expect coming in...they've been here a week, 'my kid's not fixed yet, what's going on?' (SPF07, 3 August 2011)

> Because most of the time, [the parents are] thinking, 'we need to fix the young people' rather than you know, so that makes it hard. (SPF08, 3 August 2011)

> [A] lot of families that present to me where children are acting out are usually issues between the adults that are causing the tough act rather than the child being a naughty person that needs to be 'fixed'. (SPF17, 14 September 2011)

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Children, especially older groups of children, find themselves being perceived as troublemakers when their behaviour does not conform to perceived social or ethical norms of behaviour (Bolzen 2005). When older children are involved in offending behaviour, the response leads to more coercive policing strategies instead of addressing the underlying causes of children's offending behaviour (Cunneen & White 2002, p. 263). In particular, children who are deemed to be socially excluded are perceived as risks that need to be managed now or they will turn into young people who will become troublemakers. Hence, children are framed as problematic beings that require constant monitoring, supervision, disciplining or, if they cannot be controlled, they need to be 'fixed' or avoided. In other words, there is a tendency for the adults in children's lives to assert their authority over them and an expectation that children must submit to this authority.

> [A] lot of parents will think you've got to come down hard on them or 'well, I've got to show them who's boss!' (SPF07, 3 August 2011)

However, frontline workers who find it difficult to work with parents who are over-authoritative towards their children also battle with a diagnose-and-fix mentality that underlies modern medical approaches to health and well-being. Hence, within Donzelot's (1979) 'tutelary complex' lies competition and contests among different experts of children and families. Under a psycho-medical construction of childhood (Hendrick 1990, p. 47), social workers, psychologists and doctors have different understandings towards what constitutes a 'normal' child and consequently adopt different approaches to how the child's behaviour should be corrected.

The medical model itself, is based on a pathological approach that treats all patients, young or old, as individuals who are 'ill' and who need to be treated. In this way, clinical interventions become a means of limited targeting at specific children and families that need help, offering a simple, manageable solution to essentially complex social economic problems (Foley 2001, p. 17). At the same time, medical science has established itself as a form of superior knowledge, known only to an exclusive group of experts to which patients have to submit. The medical model is also based on fast solutions where problems are treated with medication or operations and relationships with the medical experts are maintained at a wide professional distance. In contrast to the medical model, social workers and counsellors understand children's misbehaviour

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as having more social rather than pathological causes. Yet as a children's worker pointed out, parents tend to opt for a medical approach to 'cure' their children's misbehaviour rather than seek a more long-term service, such as counselling, where members of the family other than the child will be involved.

> [I]t's that if a child isn't behaving in the way that the parents hope for, they tend to stigmatise the child, 'there's something wrong with the child'. So, they'll go through the medical model, go through the doctor, the psychologists and get into the mental health system, like that. But quite often, that may or may not be the most appropriate way for dealing with the issues [because] the child is just reacting to an issue or a situation in the family. And because they're looking for a diagnosis, they don't think of coming necessarily to family counselling...And when it gets through the medical model, it ends up in the mental health system and that just gets crazy...again, we're pathologising the child. (SPF17, 14 September 2011)

Parents sometimes choose the medical model because it gives their problem a name and in fact, it redefines what is essentially a problem with the family (or with the parents themselves), to the child being the problem. Once children become diagnosed with a mental health problem such as Asperger's or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), these labels give a name to the problems that the family is going through.

> And the parents *want* that label to hold on to so that they don't have to take on board that it might have something to do with them or might have something to do with the situation that they're in. (SPF17, 14 September 2011)

Furthermore, the way that services are designed encourages this need to put a child through a medical assessment before other social support services can be assessed.

> And sometimes that's necessary to get extra services in school too. You know, you have to have the child get certain diagnosis and then you get an extra someone [as support]. (SPM07, 14 September 2011)

> And that's the run-up, if you can get a diagnosis, you can get extra funding, you can get extra support through the school system and that's important for a child that's struggling. (SPF17, 14 September 2011)

Unfortunately, once these labels are placed on children, they stay with them throughout their lives. Children's workers are sometimes suspicious that the labels become a self-fulfilling prophecy that erodes children's confidence and traps them into a defeatist attitude that has devastating consequences into their adult lives.

> You become what you're called. So, the challenging behaviour and 'naughty boy', and I start to behave like a naughty boy because that's what I am. And that happens a lot and breaking that label, it's quite difficult. And that goes on into young adulthood. (SPF17, 14 September 2011)

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I found when I was working with men who were unemployed...a lot of them have been diagnosed with ADHD when they were younger and into their adulthood...not being able to actually find work because of that label. (SPF20, 14 September 2011)

A lot of [the men with ADHD] have beliefs like, 'I can't concentrate' or 'I can't take in too much information' and quite often you go, 'hang on, you just remembered a whole heap of stuff from three weeks' ago'. So I think they do believe that it means that they don't attempt things that would benefit them. (SPM07, 14 September 2011)

While it may take time to change the system of values that constructs children as problems or 'trouble', services or programmes for children do not need to be designed in ways that reinforce the belief that children are pathological subjects to be 'fixed'. However, it is not only children-as-trouble that need 'fixing', children-as-victims also need 're-wiring', as the next sub-section shows.

6.2.2   Children as Vulnerable Victims in Need of Protection

In direct contrast to the social construction of children as trouble, children have also been constructed as victims. In Chapter Three, it was discussed that children are seen as dependent and vulnerable research subjects to be protected by adults. Hence, there exist two very different and conflicting constructs of children, namely children as being 'trouble' and children as being 'vulnerable' beings. These two contrasting images of children mean that there are two different discourses of children – the discourse of welfare and the discourse of control – that co-exist in different spheres of children's lives and inform child agencies or professional groups, all advocating for the child's 'best interests' (Stainton Rogers 2001, p. 30).

Service providers are more likely to construct children as 'vulnerable' or 'at risk' clients to be protected, rather than as future workers valued for their economic potential. Children's right to be protected has become the key value embedded in children's services. This is reflected in the way research with children, especially younger age groups, are classified as one of the highly vulnerable groups of research subjects. As shown in Chapter Three, gatekeepers who perceive children as inherently passive or vulnerable may become overprotective and hence, unintentionally, lead to more compromises on how ethical concerns are addressed in children's research. This is not

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to say that children's right to be protected should not be taken seriously, but to point out that the right to protection often takes precedence over children's other rights, such as their right to participation. In this way, the language of child protection is appropriated by adults to justify excluding children from participating in activities adults deem unsuitable for children. As noted by Mason (2005, p. 96), protection is often used as means of justifying children's exclusion from discussions around interventions in their lives, hence trivialising children's knowledge and placing it at the bottom of a hierarchy of cognitive authority. Exaggerated insistence on children's protection is more about protecting the adult world from children's intrusion than about protecting children (Qvortrup1994, p. 21). This prioritisation of the right to protection over other rights contravenes the argument that children's rights are indivisible (Freeman 1998). Instead, children find themselves with 'rights to protection and training but not to autonomy' (Ennew 1986, p. 21). Hence, contemporary childhood becomes a 'protectionist experience' (James & Jenks 1996, p. 318). Unsurprisingly, a large part of children's services are focused on the area of child protection which is a key principle for service providers.

> So every single activity that we deliver, if you read their philosophies, is around social inclusion, that is one of the main principles. And the other principle, apart from the social inclusion, is child protection, it's a major principle too, so that's the foundation principle. (SPM03, 15 July 2011)

However, child protection as defined by most service providers and policy makers is narrowly defined as protection from familial abuse, neglect or other forms of domestic violence.

In reality, children face multiple forms of potential dangers and abuse from their peers (for example, bullying). An Australian study on bullying estimated that one in four students, aged between nine to 15 years, are bullied every few weeks or more frequently (Cross et al. 2009). Yet, child protection, whether in policy or services, is chiefly focused on abuse within the family context or between adults and children. This is not to say that adult-child abuse is not a serious issue, but the way in which the concept of child protection is invariably associated with adult-child abuse, instead of peer abuse, reflects a particular constructed idea of what a 'child' means. As pointed out by Jenks (1996), although various forms of child abuse have existed throughout history, contemporary understanding of child abuse has become more of a moral and political

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projection of adults' nostalgic longing for lost innocence than it is about child abuse itself. Under this social construction of the child as an innocent and blameless being, the language of child protection then describes the abused child as a 'victim', 'vulnerable', 'traumatised' or whose emotional, mental and physical states are 'damaged' and hence, requiring treatment or intensive therapy.

> [A] lot of my programmes are in the child protection area. Children coming out of abusive situations are often highly traumatised in terms of their emotional and mental well-being as well as physical well-being. So, if you start to acknowledge that a child comes from that sort of traumatic experience and there's a lot more research on the neurobiology of trauma. They need to adapt to programmes because if you get those kids right and help them re-wire. We know the plasticity of the mind can overcome those trauma. But kids need to have support basically. You can't treat a child with trauma the same way as a child who has gone on a regular sort of child development process. So that's from a child protection angle where if you don't get those things right, you exclude social development because kids will always [be] re-traumatised in whatever situation and they won't achieve the goals that they can. (SPM08, 23 September 2011)

Hence, the discourse of child protection makes the assumption that children are passive and vulnerable beings that require professionals or child experts to re-wire, re-shape the plasticity of their minds. Seen from this passive and vulnerable construct of children, abused children are framed as victims in need of intensive professional intervention which further justifies the tutelary complex that polices children and families (Donzelot 1979). At the same time, children's needs are not universal (Woodhead 1990). Every abusive context is different and children react to abuse in different ways. By assuming that all abused children are similarly traumatised and having to be 're-wired', not only denies children's resilience, it further perpetuates the perception of children's helplessness.

6.2.3 Children's Troubles – Bullying as a Form of Peer Abuse

Without dispute, children from abusive families have the right to a safe environment and in cases where they are suffering from trauma, will benefit from appropriate therapeutic programmes. However, the narrow definition of child protection as adult-child abuse within the family context masks other forms of abuse faced by children, in their schools or in their neighbourhoods. Among the children I talked to, peer bullying was a discussion topic consistently being brought up by children without prompting. As noted by Cross et al. (2009, p. xxi) in a study on bullying in Perth, 27 per cent of

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students aged between nine to 15 experienced covert and overt forms of bullying every few weeks or more frequently. Covert forms of bullying include forms of aggressive behaviour that are hidden from adults while overt forms of bullying refer to physical aggression that attracts adult intervention (Cross et al. 2009, p. xxii-xxiii). Hurtful teasing and hurtful lies are the most common forms of covert bullying (Cross et al. 2009, p. xxi). In my interviews with children, hurtful teasing is often an example that children gave about bullying behaviour although the teasing sometimes escalates into physical aggression. For example, Jake (13) and Mason (15) (17 August 2011) talked about Jake being bullied in school because of teasing and threat of violence by another student who was also a drug user.

Jake: Yeah, I left my school because I got a lot of teasin' in that. So, I went to another school and I was on a four-week trial and today I found out that they enrolled me, fully.

Mason: You gonna tell her why you left that school?

Jake: Oh, 'cos someone tried to stab me.

Mason: He's actually part of [our] programme…He knows me.

Jake: He's crazy.

Mason: I think it's because he's trying to be cool, like he's tryin' to…he's just been with the wrong group, so he smokes, he does like that weed and everythin'.

The story that Jake (13) and Mason (15) told about bullying is typical and supports Cross et al.'s (2009, p. xxiii) study that Year 8 students (aged 13 to 14 years), together with Year 4 students (aged nine to ten), are most likely to report being bullied. Similarly, boys are more likely than girls to experience overt bullying or a combination of overt and covert bullying (Cross et al. 2009, p. xxiv). While bullying may occur among similar age groups of children, younger children are also been bullied by older children. For example, Jamie (11) (14 September 2011), talked about a teenager who had harassed her and her friend in school.

And there was this guy from another school, a kid that's got suspended from school, and like they're on their bikes and they called [my friend] a slut. And she said, 'You're suspended! You're supposed to be at home!' and they're like, 'Who are you fucking, girl!' And they came to the school again and I was walking past them and I said, 'Hey, you're suspended, you're supposed to be not here.' and they're like, 'so?' And I said, 'You guys are fools, cowards', and they're like, 'No

we're not, you bitch.'...I wasn't angry...And they were chucking rocks at our windows. Lucky, we got pretty strong glass.

Again, Jamie's experience of bullying supports Cross et al.'s (2009, p. xxvii) study in that most students (88 per cent) knew the person(s) who bullied them or knew at least one person who knew the bullies. Similarly, Jamie and her friend's seemingly nonchalant response was not unusual, as reported in other studies on bullying in Australia, where students chose to either walk away, ignore the bullies (Cross et al. 2009, p. xxvii) and were bothered by the bullying (Rigby 1997, p. 29). However, this does not mean that children are not affected by bullying. In fact, frequent teasing led Jake (13) and Max (13) to change schools because it was affecting their work and peer relations significantly. The nonchalant response is also worrying because it indicates a sense of resignation or that the high prevalence of bullying has resulted in indifferent attitudes (Rigby 1997).

For the older group of children in this study, cyber-bullying was an issue that they talked about whereas younger children who do not access social networking sites as frequently did not bring up issues of cyber-bullying. This supports Cross et al.'s (2009, p. xxv) study that found cyber-bullying via social networking sites is more prevalent among older rather than younger children. Cyber-bullying among older children may also spill into physical fights and take on a racist tone. For example, Kase (18), Nee (18), Dainess (17) and Jack (15) (4 October 2011) talked about cyber-bullying on Facebook,

Nee:	Well, there was this fight, someone decided they're gonna write stuff about someone else on Facebook and go back around. And they started fight'in in the carpark.
Kase:	It will be more on Facebook than in face-to-face.
Nee:	Or like there's racism.
Jack:	There's racism.
Kase:	Yeah, I guess. Quite a lot.
Dainess:	Some people from different culture and things like that. They bash up people because they're from different country. Sometimes they fight and then they get suspended. That's pretty much their punishment.

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Similarly, Mason (15), Gnomi (14), Tom (14) had experienced cyber-bullying through Facebook and they are as much the victims of cyber-bullying as they are the perpetrators. From what children said, it is often unclear how incidences of cyber-bullying started, because as Nee (18) pointed out, cyber-bullying and offline bullying are closely linked. Furthermore, most of the targets of bullying know each other, but the lines between who is a bully and who is a victim are often blurred (Davis & Watson 2000). For example, hurtful comments on Facebook against Mason (15) led to his friends warning him that he might face aggression by the cyber bullies offline and so Mason contemplated whether to physically retaliate against the cyber bullies. In such a situation, if Mason had decided to retaliate physically, he would be considered the perpetrator if an adult were to intervene at that point. Yet, from Mason's point of view, the bullying had started online where he was the original victim. This indicates that bullying, whether online or offline, needs to be considered in both contexts and that the power dynamics between peer networks as well as between individual friendships are crucial in understanding how bullying occurs (Mishna et al. 2009). However, as Gnomi (14) pointed out, adults ('they') who try to intervene in incidences of bullying rarely consider the complex relationships between children online and offline, preferring to lay the blame on someone they perceive as the perpetrator.

> Some stuff that could happen on Facebook, they can pinpoint you saying you did, even if you didn't. (Gnomi, 14, 23 August 2011)

Although Gnomi readily admitted that she frequently got into Facebook fights, 'I always get involved in them, but I can't help myself', she felt that some teachers had been unfair towards her because they failed to understand how these fights started. Instead, she was blamed as the troublemaker even though she felt that she was not responsible for starting the fights.

The stories children tell about bullying reiterates the importance of considering the social contexts and power relations among children rather than using convenient labels of 'victims' or 'perpetrators' to understand or respond to the issue of bullying. For Jamie (11), the power relations across different age groups and gender of the children involved is pertinent. Jamie and her friend were bullied because they were younger and were female. Among the older children, offline and online bullying are invariably linked (Spears et al. 2008) as with the complex social networks between peers, that render

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simplistic, dichotomised categories of 'victim' and 'perpetrators' unhelpful. In fact, in the next section, children talked about adults with whom they had lost trust because these adults had labelled them as troublemakers and children felt that these labels were unfair. However, this loss of trust with adults who could intervene on their behalf during a bullying incident means that children then resort to using their own methods of responding to bullies, sometimes using aggressive or violent measures, which means they continue to be labelled as a 'troublemaker'.

6.2.4 Children's Responses to Bullying and Losing Trust in Adults

Children have different ways of dealing with bullying. Like Jamie (11), who adopted a nonchalant attitude towards the bullies, several other older children have chosen to not to get involved in bullying incidences. For example, Nathan (15) and his friend Ethan (16) take a non-involvement stance as bystanders.

> Like we don't get bullied or bully people. We see it sometimes, but just don't like to get included. (Nathan, 15 and Ethan 16, 23 August 2011)

Similarly, Mason (15) decided not to retaliate against the cyber-bullies because he did not want the situation to escalate to a point where he would end up getting hurt.

> And any problems that I have is when like someone on Facebook like say something stupid about me and then like, I try to tell them not to do that because like, I have some friends, like really good friends with me and they'll like 'face' me that somebody's going to [bash] me. I understand not to do it or otherwise I'll get bashed. (Mason, 15, 17 August 2011)

However, some children chose to take matters into their own hands when they felt that the adults around them could not be trusted to help them. For example, Gnomi (14) and Tom (14) said they would fight back if bullied. For Gnomi, talking to teachers or school counsellors was not an option because a counsellor once broke her promise to her over another incident which led her to distrust all teachers or counsellors in school.

> *What do you do when there are instances of bullying?*
> Gnomi: Just fight back.
>
> Tom: Big fight back.
>
> *Won't that get you into more trouble?*
> Gnomi: Yeah, but then people...if you don't fight back, people'll tease you.
>
> Tom: Sometimes, that's why you beat up people.

Do you talk to teachers about bullying?

Gnomi: I've talked to my counsellor about one problem.

Tom: And she told your mum anyway.

Gnomi: And she told the police and my mum and she promised she wouldn't. She did so I don't go to her anymore, tell that stuff. It was pretty personal.

Tom: She broke her promise man!

Gnomi: Yeah. She told other teachers in the staffroom and I got into trouble by my mum....And I didn't talk to anyone about anything after that.

The narratives told by these children clearly show that they are neither victims nor trouble. As we saw from Gnomi and Tom's response to bullying, it is often difficult to draw a clear distinction between victims and bullies. Gnomi herself admits that she has been suspended by her school for bullying behaviour or 'Facebook fights' even though she has also been bullied. Unfortunately for both Gnomi and Tom, who were from the same school, they have been treated as troublemakers due to their misbehaviour in the past. Being labelled as troublemakers also means that teachers tend to blame them for other problems that occur in the classroom. Hence, they find it difficult to shrug off this label.

Tom: 'Cause I dunno, they'ld blame you for stuff that you don't do sometimes.

Gnomi: Happens a lot, they pinpoint people as well, even if you...

Tom: So, even if you didn't do it, they'll claim you did.

Gnomi: 'Cause of what happened in the past before, so they'ld just blame you.

Therefore, Tom and Gnomi said that they would not go to their teachers for help if they were being bullied because they felt that their explanations about the bullying would not be believed by teachers who had already labelled them as troublemakers. For Tom and Gnomi, the choice is between telling a teacher who would not believe them and could even punish them as bullies, or to resort to their own means of fighting back the bullies with a chance of getting away with it. Seen in this way, it is not difficult to understand why Tom and Gnomi said they would choose to fight back bullies.

Unfortunately for Tom, his distrust of adults with authority extends to the police, whom he said had frequently singled him out to be searched, for no apparent reason. Gnomi agreed that it was unfair that they get singled out even when they are not doing anything wrong.

> Tom: Tell [the police] to work better, stop pulling people over, over nothing really. I'd a receipt stuck on my shoe so I took it off and I get into trouble for it. So I reasoned that it wasn't even mine. Yeah they [keep pulling people over] all the time.

> Gnomi: [L]ike, they gotta look for the people that actually have something wrong with them or have done something wrong, not for the little stupid things.

Tom's experience of being pulled over by the police was also replicated when he was out with his dad because his dad was an ex-offender.

> Me and my dad were walking on Rundle Mall and in the end they searched my dad, uh, he gets it all the time. He's always in and out, you know. Trash them, he had to take off his belt in the crowd...they nearly [asked him to pull his pants down] though! Had to hold it up for him (*laughs*). (Tom, 14, 23 August 2011)

For Tom, being treated as a troublemaker was a regular occurrence that not only happens to him but also to his dad. In this way, there is a cumulative effect of Tom's personal experiences with teachers and the police that have led him to have a cynical attitude towards these authority figures. However, Tom and Gnomi are not alone in their experiences with some adults, usually teachers, who often treat them as troublemakers who need controlling.

> Some of [my teachers] are really 'douche'...they're freakin' 'douche'. They give me crap some reason or another, but other than that, I get along with most of them. (Troy, 15, 24 August 2011)

> [M]y teacher, everytime I don't do something and [my teacher] blames it on me, I always get the blame myself. [As for] mum, I'm not allowed to use the laptop. She won't let me go on YouTube, she won't let me go on Facebook, she won't let me go play any games that are actually decent. She says, 'what for?' and I'm like, 'homework' and she's like, 'what type of homework?' 'Homework!' and she's like, 'no.' (Trixie, 12, 24 August 2011)

> [There] are the ones that I like...and then there're teachers that are really mean. Like, not mean, but they're really indifferent towards us, so yeah, just don't get along...Yeah, some teachers are just grumpy, you do the wrong thing like without knowing and they [go off with you]. They try to argue with you and like if you argue back, they just end it with, 'you've got detention!' (Nathan, 15, 23 August 2011)

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There is a perceived sense among these children that some adults are not to be trusted because they fail to treat children fairly or to understand children's problems beyond treating children as the problems that need to be corrected. Indeed, what children said in this research about being treated unfairly by some teachers is supported by another study (Osman 2005) on Australian students' experience in schools. Students in the study (Osman 2005, pp. 185&187) felt troubled about the arbitrary nature of how teachers interpret their behaviour and mete out various types of punishment which were perceived as 'unfair' punishment because they were not given the opportunity to explain their behaviour. In contrast, when power imbalance against children is alleviated by actively creating open communication processes based on values such as care, civility, trust and respect, children are better engaged in schools (Mitra 2005, pp. 540-541).

6.3 The Values of Social Inclusion and Children's Values

Not all adults in children's lives perceive children as 'problems' or 'risks'. In the following sub-sections, it is shown that children value the relationships they have with adults who respect their views and who treat them with fairness. Similarly, not all service providers value children in the same way. Service providers who perceive children as 'professionals in their own lives' challenge the social construction of children as 'problems' or 'risks'.

6.3.1 Children's Valued Relationships – Negotiating Respect and Fairness

Naturally, not all children's experiences with adults are negative. Children talk as much about adults who respect them and whom they trust as much as those whom they dislike. Younger children, for example, often named their favourite teachers and school principals alongside their family members as people who are most important to them. For example, Dell's (9) immediate reaction when asked to draw the most important people to him was to ask if he could draw his school principal. When asked why his school principal was important to him, he said it was because the principal was always there when a student was hurt and helped students solve problems. Similarly, Nikketa (9) declared that her class teacher was her 'favourite person' at that moment but did not elaborate on the reason. Likewise, Liam (9), Mason (7) and Kyiesha (8) also drew teachers and principals alongside their family and friends as the most important people

in their lives. The younger children in this research also talked about peers or siblings who are 'annoying' but none mentioned about adults with whom they did not get along. In addition, younger children reported more positive experiences in school than older children. For example, Sara (8) was keen to share her experience of winning a netball match in school, while Nikketa (9) wanted to show me a medal that she had won for cheerleading in school.

The issue of homework also divides the school experience between the younger children and the older children. For example, Bianca (9) cited the reason for not having any homework as her main reason for liking school, but this was immediately countered by Flick (13), who said there was too much homework in school. Younger children's positive experiences with adults mirror the comment made earlier by one of the service providers, SPM06, that it was easier to find foster carers for young children because '[m]ost people want little children and babies'. Again, this brings into view the social construct of childhood, especially in earlier years as a time of innocence, moral purity, vulnerability and hence deserving to be loved, protected, but not to autonomy (Ennew 1986, p. 21). This structures adults' relationship with younger children where children are treated with love, kindness and tolerance not because they are respected as social actors, but because not to do so is perceived to be morally repugnant and wrong. Hence, child abuse is less about the child who is being abused than it is about a breach on the collective nostalgia about our social identity.

> To abuse a child today is to strike at the remaining, embodied vestige of the social bond and the consequent collective reaction is, understandably, both resounding and vituperative. The shrill cry of 'abuse' is a cry of our own collective pain at the loss of our social identity. (Jenks 1996, p. 109)

In contrast to the younger children, older children had mixed views about adults, peers or siblings. As discussed earlier, older children are no longer socially constructed as innocent or vulnerable. Indeed, the social portrayal of older children crosses over to the other extreme where they are perceived to be troublemakers. At the same time, older children are more likely to be perceived and treated as competent social actors. Hence, while older children talked about adults who have patronising attitudes towards them, they would also talk about adults who respected them. When older children formed close relationships with adults, they talked about how these adults were trustworthy, gave them a fair chance to express their views and respected these views even though

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they did not necessarily agree with them. This observation supports similar research on older children who form strong relationships with service providers who gave them opportunities to be heard and who respected their views (De Rosa et al. 1999; de Winter & Noom 2003; Kidd et al. 2007). Below are some examples of what children in this research say about the relationships that they value with adults such as teachers or frontline service providers.

> But another teacher gave me half the [detention] time, so I get 15 minutes instead of half an hour. She's really good, my teacher is really really nice. So she intervened and said, 'let's just settle this in the most comfortable way that we can'. She listens to me lots. (Flick, 13, 14 September 2011)

> [L]ike my dance teacher, I have a very close relationship with my drama teacher also, like I could trust them with whatever. (Kase, 18, 4 October 2011)

> My teachers are my best friends to me. (Dainess, 17, 4 October 2011)

> Brook is one of those people that...she looks like you can't talk to her, but really you can. And I can actually trust her. Like, with my song-writing and stuff. I didn't know if I could trust her by showing her but then I showed her and yeah. (Sky, 15, talking about a youth worker)

When adults demonstrate values of trust and respect, children, in turn, respect and trust these adults. Children expect their views to be challenged and respect that boundaries need to be established (Utting 1997). Furthermore, children understand that they will not always get their way but they appreciate the opportunities given to them to negotiate or to have their views heard. Airmax, for example, talked about 'meeting halfway' with his principal and teachers.

> The principal's good if he asks you something, you'll try to agree to it. But you've got to meet him halfway. I really like my teachers you know, because you meet them halfway and they'll agree to you. Dumb thing is, you've got to meet them halfway. (Airmax, 14, 24 August 2011)

Similarly, Troy talked about how his mum had changed her attitude towards him where, instead of screaming at him in the past, she is now giving him a chance to give his reasons for wanting to do something.

> Because if we disagree on something, it's not yelling and screaming, it's discussion. Basically like a mini debate. She tells me why she won't let me do this and I tell her why I want to do it. (Troy, 15, 24 August 2011)

It is clear that both Airmax and Troy understood that they needed to negotiate and reason with adults about what they wanted. Similarly, Flick understood why she was

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given detention but was appreciative that a teacher intervened, listened to her and negotiated the detention time to be cut to 15 minutes instead of 30 minutes. Children value the opportunity to express their views and to have those views heard even though they have to settle for compromises sometimes. The following exchange between a group of older children (4 October 2011) further illustrates that they have a strong sense of what they consider to be fair treatment by adults.

Steph (16):   Some talk to you like you're a baby in school.

Nee (18):   They do!

Steph: The teachers that you trust and get along with treat you like an equal but then other teachers don't.

Nee: They're like, they're in-charge and you're just there for a ride.

Dainess (17):   Yeah, it depends. I pretty much think that people treat you the way you want them to treat you. Like, if you respect yourself, they will respect you.

Nee: That's so untrue! Like you can be nice to a teacher but she'll still be a bitch to you. (*Dainess laughs*)

Jack (15):   I think some adults exercise their power a bit too much (*Nee and Dainess laughs*). They think, because they're the adults, they can do whatever they want and that makes them just as immature as the kids they're supervising.

Kase (18):   Well said.

The values of fair treatment, being heard, respect and trust are being articulated in the language and discourse of social inclusion, particularly in the grand narrative, that highlights 'a fair go' as a value that Australians can identify with. In an adult-centric world, children are often treated as morally deficient beings or problems where they should be 'treated' with a good dose of moral authority from adults. Yet, it is this imposition of a moral high ground from adults that alienate children because it contradicts precisely these values of fairness, equality, trust and respect that children consider important. Children are far from being passive actors when they are caught in situations where they are treated unfairly or when they face problems such as bullying. This is consistent with Mathews's (1994) argument that children are moral agents rather than amoral beings or morally deficient beings. Children are part of the same social world as adults where both try to negotiate and grapple with various moral issues that

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they face. For example, children may choose to turn to trusted adults for advice or help if they are being bullied but, if they do not have any trusting relationships with adults who can intervene on their behalf, they may choose to solve the bullying problem on their own. However, the inconsistent relationships that children have with adults such as teachers, whom they may or may not trust, mean that children do not view all adults as equally reliable in helping them with their problems.

6.3.2   Children as 'Professionals of Their Own Lives'

While the dominant policy constructs of children may be entrenched in their value as future workers or as vulnerable individuals to be protected, these constructs are occasionally challenged by frontline children and youth workers. As with the policymakers who have frontline experience working with adults deemed to be socially excluded, frontline children and youth workers also tend to see their young clients not as problems but people with problems. They are more ready to emphasise the autonomy, resilience and resourceful nature of children than either the policymakers or managerial staff at the service agencies. For example, in Chapter Three (Methodology), it was shown that the centre coordinator and her team of children's workers did not perceive the children attending programmes at the centre as vulnerable research subjects. Instead, they were ready to assess the objectives of this research against both the criteria of the potential risks as well as the potential benefits for the children involved in this research. In doing so, they acknowledge and respect that children are capable, competent, contributing social actors. This group of children's workers and the centre coordinator discussed the tension between protecting children and recognising children's contribution as moral agents.

> SPM07:   The fact that we've been encouraged by society to be so protective of children. And again, sometimes, are we protecting them too much?
>
> SPF20:   A fine line.
>
> SPF18:   I think in society, we often assume that adults teach children, [but] children teach us and we don't acknowledge that. And quite often, what we're teaching is quite negative, what they're teaching us is [really] positive. It's like the theory of mindfulness. We teach adults mindfulness constantly and you know who does that perfectly? And naturally? A kid. [We should] have a five-year old teach them and pay [the child] the cost of a counsellor.

Another frontline worker from another agency talked about the importance of letting young people (aged 12-18) be their own professionals in their lives and to listen to what they have to say instead of telling them what to do.

> One of our workers says, 'a young person's the best professional in their life'. They know what they need but we're there to find out what their needs are and then walk with them, walk with them through the issues, not tell them what to do, just listen, offer advice and walk alongside with them. And know to give them all the information you can, it then becomes that young person's choice, whether to take that advice or not. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

When frontline workers talk about children being the experts of their own lives and the role of adults is to listen to them, be their guide rather than an authority, they give value to them as social actors instead of framing them as 'risks', future workers or as victims. At the same time, this respect for children with its corresponding translation into spaces where their opinions are considered and put into practice are congruent with children's own views on fair treatment and trust. As Williams (2004) argues, the policy constructs of children as 'risks' or future workers emphasise the protection of children's needs without questioning children's position in these constructs. In particular, social policies talk about achieving a 'child-inclusive society' without addressing what values would constitute such a society and are 'far less forthcoming in how to create a culture of respect for children and childhood' (Williams 2004, p. 411).

When children are valued as social actors that share the same social and economic spaces as adults and where relationships are based on trust, respect and fairness, services for children become meaningful opportunities for them to be engaged in these spaces. This congruence between the values of service delivery organisations and service users is important because it has a positive impact on users' experiences and lends legitimacy to the work of service providers (Nevile 2009). While one of the main objectives of the social inclusion agenda is to enable better access to services, this is insufficient when it comes to children because their ability to access services are regularly mediated by their parents whose consent is required. As discussed in this chapter, social constructs such as children-as-risks, children-as-future-workers, children-as-victims or children-as-troublemakers which continue to dominate policy discourses and discourses among managerial levels in service provision agencies, have not been able to address some of the actual concerns that children face. Social inclusion

of children and young people then, is more than an issue of accessibility of services. Rather, because children are often either valued as future workers by policy makers or as vulnerable at-risk persons to be protected by service providers, their own agency is ignored or unacknowledged. Hence, the recognition of children as valued individuals in their own right and acknowledging children's own values become critical if policies and services are serious about enabling a child-inclusive environment.

> [T]he literature tends to be around very practical things like, it's about access, it's just services...access to transport, housing, health services...all those things. But I think I think [i]t goes beyond that...it's about recognition of children because I think if they're recognised, they'll be included because their value will be recognised and that's sort of massive. (SPM07, 14 September 2011)

The recognition of the value of children as spoken by SPM07 is about framing policies and services in a way that values children as individuals in their own right, with their views treated with equal respect. At the same time, frontline workers at service provision agencies are challenging the dominant social constructs of children by reframing children-as-professionals to give recognition to their social agency. This recognition of children's agency as competent social actors mirrors children's own views about the importance of having a chance to give their views and having those views respected.

Like adults, children understand that respect and trust are values that must be constantly negotiated and earned, such as when Airmax spoke about meeting his principal and teachers 'halfway'. As noted by Such and Walker (2005), children value responsibilities given to them and recognise that certain rights need to be earned through negotiating as well as earning responsibilities. The processes in which children learn and make sense of their own social spaces in an adult's world take multiple forms. Such processes are challenging for children who face uneven and often extreme ends of power relations with adults. For example, children may face adults who are controlling and authoritative, as experienced by Nathan (15) who said that when children tried to make their own arguments with some teachers, they could never win because there was always a risk that the argument would lead them into being placed on detention. However, in the next chapter, it is demonstrated that when children are able to establish trusting, egalitarian relationships with adults, children gain a valuable source of social capital that they can call on when other social networks fail.

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Indeed, the values of fairness and respect that children saw as important in their relationships with adults are not dissimilar to the values espoused by the social inclusion agenda. In the next chapter, the ways in which policy makers, service providers and children engage with one another to build their social networks will be discussed. In particular, the chapter will examine how social relations based on mutual trust and respect create spaces for children to participate and 'have a say' (both defined as domains in the Federal social inclusion agenda) in matters affecting their lives or their work. However, the social inclusion domains of 'having a say' and 'participation' are framed in the policy agenda in particular ways that may, or may not, relate to children's own understanding of what participation means. While children's participation may mean creating spaces for them to articulate their views, having those views heard and considered become the critical difference between mere participation and being actively engaged decision-making processes.

CHAPTER 7

Social Networks, Participation and Engagement

The social inclusion agenda defines inclusiveness mainly as the various forms of participation and engagement that an individual has. Being socially included means having the resources, opportunities and capabilities to 'learn (participation in education and training), work (participate in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family and carer responsibilities), engage (connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities) and have a voice (influence decisions that affect them)' (ASIB 2010, p. 15). However, children's participation, and thus their inclusion in various aspects of life, is fraught with difficulties, not least because they are constructed as problems rather than as participating citizens. As noted by Freeman (2005, p. 60),

> [p]articipation is key to inclusion. It is emblematic of what being a person is. But children and young people (even when technically 'legal' persons, a status acquired at 18 years of age) all-too-often remain social problems rather than participants in social processes.

This chapter looks at the concepts of engagement, social networks and participation, focusing mainly on children's perspectives and argues that the way these concepts are being framed by the social inclusion agenda do not reflect the realities that children face. The first section looks at the type of engagement and social networks being formed among policymakers and service providers, which are then compared to children's own social networks. In particular, this section points out that there are limitations on the extent to which children can turn their family and peer networks into useful social capital, as well as highlighting the challenge of digital social networks. The second section examines children's participation in education and employment, and their contributions to civic engagement projects. It is shown that the predominant focus on children's educational participation fails to prepare children adequately for their transition from school to work, or for their involvement in community projects. Even within children's educational participation, the common practice of school suspensions excludes children from learning. The third section looks at some examples where children are given opportunities to contribute their views but this does not mean that their views are necessarily heard or taken seriously. The chapter concludes by proposing

that taking children seriously is as much about giving them opportunities to be involved in decision-making as it is about the process of decision-making itself.

7.1 'Being Engaged', but Whose Social Networks are Recognised?

Partnerships, participation and 'being engaged' are the key words in the discourse on social inclusion. Policymakers, service providers as well as individuals who are considered as socially excluded are encouraged to work with each other and to form strong networks among themselves or with each other. However, not all social networks being formed are necessarily useful. Children, in particular, are selective in how they turn to different social networks for specific issues or problems that they face. The following sections will discuss the social networks being formed by policymakers, service providers and children deemed to be socially excluded.

7.1.1 Social Networks between Policymakers and Service Providers

To some policymakers, social inclusion is synonymous with partnership and engagement, especially in terms of working across government departments and agencies, as well as between service providers. For example, service providers acknowledge the success of the Social Inclusion Unit in working with different government and non-government agencies to bring up issues that require collaboration with and between government and non-government agencies.

> [B]asically, the Social Inclusion Unit has the opportunity to go across governments and has the power to ask or raise up questions from different clients from the field. So instead of having all the silos not being properly connected, the Social Inclusion Unit could drive any initiatives, what would go across different agencies and I think they've made some real inroads there. (SPM08, 23 September 2011)

Initiatives such as the Building Families Opportunities (BFO) and the Communities for Children (CFC) highlight the successes and difficulties of these collaborative efforts. These formal partnerships work particularly well in relatively small cities such as Adelaide where most of the professionals working in the social services sector tend to know each other. Sometimes, these professional networks also take on a more social and personal nature, reinforcing the sense that these close relationships has a significant impact on how professionals communicate with each other.

> One of my funders in my Federal funded programme belongs to the same swimming club that my husband belongs to...One of the [other] funders, I've

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known her for 25 years, you just know people for a really long time and...that kind of coffee culture that we have in Adelaide...as soon as you take it out of an office and turn it into something a lot more casual, you're able to have a lot more of an honest conversation...The team managers across most services all get together and meet [regularly], so South Australia has a very collaborative approach. Because I came from Sydney and nobody talks to anybody over there...I find here, people are really honest, they're prepared to talk about the things they do well and the things they don't do well. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

Similarly, policymakers find it important to have open communications with different agencies at formal meetings where the individuals and their representatives are not familiar with each other.

[I] think that one of the common things that you find when you first get agencies around the table talking, is actually learning what each other's meaning, when they're actually saying something and being quite open about it and questioning what exactly is the intent of the language that's being used...I think it's really important that you have your policy developers, your operation implementers and your research people having regular communication and actually being able to tease out what each other means so that everyone is getting the most out of the relationship they can. And I think that that's a really good part of this [social inclusion] initiative – the opportunity to bring those three [groups of people] together (PMSA06, 30 June 2011).

Hence, formal and informal networks between different policymakers and service providers have enabled better communication as well as more flexible approaches to the implementation of services. Indeed, these policymakers and service providers often expressed the view that social inclusion is about helping their clients build strong and supportive networks within the communities in which they live.

Stronger supports and networks will reduce a whole range of requirements for other types of traditional services. So the families that have the supports they need with neighbours or friends or playgroups or whatever, they're less likely to need some of the professional services because those areas are covered and supported. They've got somebody they can ask questions. (SPM05, 25 August 2011)

The importance of social networks and the potential support that they bring to isolated individuals and families is monitored by statistical indicators such as, 'proportion of people who had contact with family or friends in the past week', 'proportion of people involved in a community group in the last 12 months' or 'proportion of people who got together socially with friends or relatives not living with them, in the past three months' (ASIB 2012, pp. 78-80).

Although these indicators reflect social connections and networks to a certain degree, they do not show the quality of these networks. A high number of contacts with family or friends may not necessarily mean supportive networks. The main objective of programmes such as the CFC and the BFO is to help isolated or 'excluded' families build supportive networks by connecting them to essential services or simply through various activities where they will form social networks with other families, parents or individuals. Many of the CFC activities also aim to strengthen parent-child bonds. On the other hand, social networks among children are less of a priority since many of the children attend the same schools and already know each other, but the activities give their parents more time and opportunities to know their children and to know other parents better. For the BFO programme, the aim is to connect families to local services rather than helping them build new social networks with other families. In both the CFC and BFO, specific types of social networks are encouraged while some of the existing ones are either ignored, not acknowledged or discouraged. The types of social networks that are being encouraged are implicitly defined and limited to those that will enable the individuals or families to accumulate productive social capital. Social capital as understood in this context follows Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social relationships that have an instrumental effect on the resources that individuals accumulate or expend over time. Since the social inclusion agenda defines social networks in a similarly instrumental manner, children's peer networks are often disregarded or perceived as negative or unproductive.

7.1.2   Children's Social Capital – Family as a Resource?

Unlike adults' social networks that may be institutionalised, children's peer networks rarely go through any formal institutionalisation process. Putnam (2000, p. 22) has identified two broad types of social capital – bridging capital that constitutes outward-looking and inclusive networks; and bonding capital that constitutes inward-looking and exclusive networks. As discussed in the previous section, adults are able and are encouraged to form strong bridging capital that enables them to form new professional partnerships. Children, however, possess less bridging social capital with people who are unfamiliar to them. This is also evident in another study on older children's experience of economic disadvantage in Australia (Skattebol et al. 2012, p. 95) where older children tend to maximise their inward-looking, exclusive networks or bonding

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social capital. They do so by relying on close social relationships to obtain practical support such as food or a roof over their heads (Billet 2012, p. 13). Policymakers often do not consider that bridging social capital is far easier for adults to accumulate than for children. Even with bonding social capital, it can be difficult for children to gain membership to certain peer groups because membership of specific peer groups is often challenging and exclusive, requiring children to be attired, speak or behave in a certain manner (Morrow 2001b; Ridge 2002). Social networks among children, perceived as 'unproductive' in terms of economic capital, are nevertheless instrumental in their accumulation of identity capital (Côté, 2002). Indeed, it is how older children see themselves and want to be seen that is central to their behaviour (Bottrell 2007). It is the production of self and group identities that form the basis of social networks among children. With some children where relationships with family or other adult authority figures are strained, this identity capital among peers becomes all the more crucial. In this way, social networks among children are not only an indispensable part of their developmental process, they are also useful in shaping a child's sense of self and how this self is related to others.

For Coleman (1994, p. 300) social capital is a resource that parents pass on to their children. However, as Holland et al. (2007) and Leonard (2005, p. 606) observe, the main theorists on social capital, Putnam, Coleman and Bourdieu, have all viewed children as passive recipients of their parental social capital, ignoring children's role in developing their own social capital. This research supports Holland et al.'s (2007) study which shows that children's bonding and bridging capital are interdependent. In particular, this research highlights that having close social networks may not always translate into social capital for children. In other words, it is not the number of social networks (or number of contacts) that children have, as measured by the social inclusion indictors, but the quality of these social networks that matter. Yet, the quality and function of children's social networks are dependent on the adult-child power relations that assign lower values to children's social capital than to adults' social capital (Leonard 2005).

Undoubtedly, children value their family social relationships. When asked to draw the people who were most important to them, Kyiesha (8), Dell (9), Nikketa (9), Liam (9),

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Jamie (11), Sara (8), Renée (7), Mason (7), Monique (8), Bianca (9) and Reece (7) drew their parents, grandparents, siblings, aunties, uncles and cousins as well as members from their step-families. The following are some examples that illustrate the relationships that are important to children.

Figure 7.1: Dell's Important Relationships

Figure 7.2: Bianca's Important Relationships
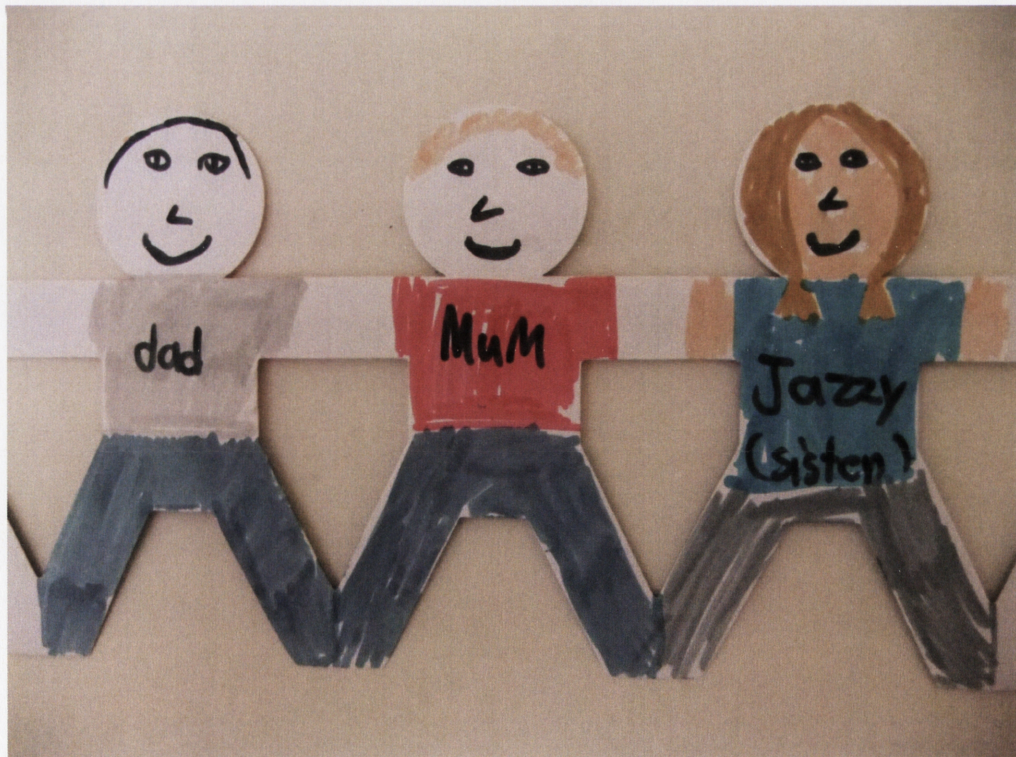
Among all the children who participated in this research, at least 14 out of the 30 no longer lived with both of their biological parents because their parents had separated. The number of children with separated parents is likely to be higher than 14 because not all the older children were keen to talk about their parents, unlike the younger children who were more forthcoming about their living arrangements. Among the younger children living with step-families, not all of them got along well with their new family members. However, the tensions they felt with their step-families were not acrimonious. For example, Jamie (11) said that she initially did not get along with her step-mum but was gradually warming to her. Likewise, Monique (8) found her younger step-sister annoying because they had to share a room and she felt her step-sister was too noisy when she was trying to sleep. Nevertheless, Monique indicated in her drawing that her step-sister was important to her.

Unlike the younger children, older children shared more negative experiences of their family members. In particular, Sky (15) spoke about being sexually abused when she was about three or four years old by her mum's partner at that time. Not only was Sky sexually abused, both her mum and her partner were drug users who tried to give Sky drug injections when they were intoxicated with drugs. As a result of the abuse, Sky was placed under a Guardianship Order by the State government and had not lived with either of her parents for most of her life. She maintained occasional contact with her biological father but lost contact with her younger brother who was living with a foster family. The sense of instability and disconnection with her family was palpable for Sky who showed me a collection of songs she had composed about her relationships with her brother, her mum, her dad and herself. When I asked her about her favourite song, she chose one about her mum which she sang to me and the most poignant line was, 'I see people around me with perfect families and I'm not part of them'. For Sky, being separated from her parents and her brother, as well as the experience of being abused, led to serious consequences that affected her relationships with other people. For example, she said that because of the abuse, she did not get along with male teachers and was wary of speaking to male workers at the youth home she was living in. Furthermore, she had a fight and broke up with her best friend whom she had previously trusted because she found out that her friend was telling other students in the school about her being placed on welfare. Clearly, Sky did not wish other people in the school

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to know about her being placed under a Guardianship Order as that would lead to speculations about her past. Not only did she lose a friend whom she had previously trusted, she ended up having to move to a different school because she got into fights with other schoolmates over the rumours circulating about her in school.

In the previous chapter, we saw that the social construction of an abused child as a victim meant that the child is perceived as being in need of 'fixing' or 're-wiring' through psycho-therapeutic interventions. Yet, the inter-related, domino-effects of a child's social networks being damaged through abuse are overlooked. These broken social networks refer not only to parent-child separations, but also sibling separations. In addition, being separated from parents has an effect on the child's own perception that they do not have a normal family life, with the corresponding shame of being placed under state guardianship, which further creates barriers for the child in forming strong, trusting relationships with peers and others. While psycho-therapeutic interventions may be useful in addressing the emotional issues the child may be facing, it is equally important to recognize the multiple effects brought about by the damaged parent-child relationship. In Sky's case, the abuse not only damaged her relationship with her mum and her brother, it created subsequent barriers for her to overcome in order to establish strong social networks with her peers and other male adults. Since Bourdieu (1986) argues that social and cultural capital are linked to economic capital that produce and reproduce class divisions, then children with damaged social networks and weak cultural capital are placed at a significant disadvantage in achieving the same level of economic capital as other children. This means that within groups of children facing severe multiple disadvantages, the types and quality of social networks differ for different children.

While other children in this research did not talk about parents who were abusive, some indicated that they did not have good relationships with their parents. For example, Dainess (17) moved out of the family home to live with her elder sister's family because she could not get along with her mum. Jack (15) got along with his mum well but not his step-mum. In contrast to Sky, Dainess, and Jack, both Kase (18) and Nee (17) were very close to their families. However, regardless of whether children are close to their families, they are selective in what they share with family members. While some issues

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require their parents' attention, children are clear that they may share different problems with different people depending on the nature of the problem they are facing, or the expected response they will receive. In this way, children exercise clear judgements about who is most likely take their problems seriously before they talk to them.

> For school related [issues], I go to my dad, who has friends on the school board…if it's relationship problem with your family, you probably wouldn't go to your family. Depends on the background of what you're talk'in about, then go to a friend then. (Nee, 18, 4 October 2011)

> I think [I will tell my] friends. I don't tell my family nothin'. (Dainess, 17, 4 October 2011)

> I never talk to my family about my problems because I know I won't get a decent answer out of them. (Troy, 15, 24 August 2011)

This means that having strong social networks with families may not necessarily translate into social capital for children because children may choose not to utilise family networks for various reasons. Similarly, children who have step families may have extensive family networks from both their biological and step-families but the number of family networks need not mean more positive social capital that children can call on when necessary. This does not imply that children are not close to their families or do not talk to their families on other matters. For example, Troy and Dainess were close to some members of their families, but felt that sharing problems with them could worry those family members or could lead to well-intentioned but unwanted intervention. This has implications for how social networks within the family are perceived as a social capital or as a resource that children can tap into because some social networks with family members are badly impaired, while other close or extensive networks may not translate to social capital due to the complex relationships within the family. Sky's story clearly shows that despite what had happened to her, her relationship with her mum was much more complex than a matter of completely severing their ties. There were many contradictory feelings that Sky had about her mother as was evident in the songs she wrote that expressed both the sadness of being separated from her mum as well as the pain she felt about the abuse by her mum and her partner. Similarly, Sky's relationship with her father was a mixed one because she was unsure if she liked his new girlfriend and whether she would like to live with them. For Sky and other older children, they are part of a complex network of family relationships where it is often difficult to consider these relationships as social capital. Instead,

children are selective about which social networks they will activate and make assessments based on the perceived likely consequences of activating such social networks.

7.1.3   Children's Friendships

Other than children's relationships with their family members, children's friendships are also integral to their lives. When asked to draw the people most important to them, younger children often included their best friends alongside parents or siblings. Nikketa (9) and Mason (7) had so many friends they wanted to show that they ran out of paper a few times. When asked if she had a best friend, Bianca (9) said, 'I don't have a best friend, I have many friends'. Indeed, 'meeting friends' was frequently cited as the main aspect of school life that children enjoyed.

> I like my friends, that's partly the only reason why I go to school. (Gnomi, 14, 23 August 2011)

> Meeting new people and getting along with everybody else [in school]. (Dainess, 17, 4 October 2011)

> I like socialising [in school]. Yeah, having friends around is good, makes it a little easier and helpful. (Kase, 18, 4 October)

Most of the children I spoke to said they had numerous friends and will hang out with them even after school hours. Hence, if they had been included in the social inclusion indicator measuring 'social participation', they would probably have high scores.

> Yeah, quite a lot [of friends]. I got one called Michael. He's really close to me and I've got a few others. (Max, 13, 30 September 2011)

> Yeah, I'ld see myself as pretty popular. Me and Ethan. (Nathan, 15, 23 August 2011)

> Yeah, heaps, heaps [of friends]. (Gnomi, 14, 23 August 2011)

> [E]verybody knows each other [in school] cos it's only like maximum of 20 kids there, instead of like five hundred or a thousand. (Troy, 15, 24 August 2011)

> Like everyone in my school is my friend. (Mason, 15, 17 August 2011)

In fact, children spend substantial amounts of time with their friends, whether it is playing sports together, hanging out in malls, or chatting on Facebook. However, younger children's time spent with their friends is mostly confined to school hours and their activities with friends usually include the presence of other adults such as parents.

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For some children, friends may become a source of protection and support when a child is threatened by others.

> [S]ome people get picked on, al'rite...this is what happened to this one kid, he gets picked on quite a bit. So he gets picked on and then people will tease him...they were teasing him and he said, 'I'm going to stab you!' because he was really upset, so then a couple of my friends just went up, like bash him. Just because he said that, but it was really unfair, there's about 20 people to one. And not all of them were fighting, but like obviously if our friend was losing, we're going to jump in. So it was really unfair. (Mason, 15, 17 August 2011)

As Mason's experience demonstrates, a child without friends is not only isolated, but that isolation may place the individual at risk of being bullied by others. At the same time, Mason was clearly aware that it was not a fair fight because his friends clearly outnumbered the kid who was beaten up. Yet, his sense of loyalty to his friends was stronger than his sense of fairness because the risk of losing his friends and the protection they provide might mean that he could end up being the next kid being beaten up by others. Like Mason, Jamie (11) talked about being friends with a girl in her class who is bigger and taller than the rest of their classmates because even the boys 'don't mess with her'. By being friends with this girl who was physically stronger, Jamie recognised that she had benefited from an indirect form of protection against potential bullies. For Jamie and Mason, the social capital they gathered through their friendship networks was accumulated less for the purpose of achieving better educational outcomes or better jobs, as would be understood by policymakers, but was a social resource critical to their safety and well-being. Hence, Mason concludes that he will hang out with big groups.

> [P]eople have tried to bash me up, I either bash them up or my friends will come and like crraaaaaaghhhh! I walk around in big groups. (Mason, 15, 17 August 2011)

Naturally, not all social networks are about protection and children's friendships are as much about sharing common leisure interests as they are about group identity. For example, Jamie had other friends who would help her with her homework and with whom she enjoyed doing 'fun and silly stuff'. However, social capital as a protective social resource or as identity capital for children are not considered by policymakers or service providers as being 'productive' in economic or educational terms (Côté, 2002). As noted by Leonard (2005), children develop and use their own stock of social capital within their family, peer and community networks even though they face many barriers

that prevent them from converting their social capital into other forms of capital. For those who face multiple adversities in both their public and personal lives, such as domestic conflicts, abuse, unsafe neighbourhoods or punitive school environments, friendships become one of the main types of social capital that they can access for a source of security as well as a sense of acceptance. Yet, friendships with other children who may also be facing multiple problems may not necessarily mean that their shared social capital will have positive outcomes. As Mason's story has shown, friends could be a protective resource against bullies, but this protection comes at a price since Mason felt obliged to repay his friends' protection by taking part in the group bullying of other children. Children's peers can act as both threats or protective support (Hill et al. 2006). Despite having many friends and spending a lot of time with them, it is less clear whether children will turn to any of their friends for help or whether they will talk to their friends about their problems. They may turn to friends for help regarding some types of problems but not for all types of problems. Friendships, like family social networks, are not always a form of social or identity capital that children choose to utilise because children recognise the limits of depending on these networks.

7.1.4 Children and Trusted Adults

The fact that children consider numerous factors before deciding who they wish to share their problems with is a further refutation of the traditional assumption that children make less considered decisions than adults. Family and friendship networks, while important to children, may not be the network they choose to turn to if they need help. Instead, some children chose to talk to either a trusted principal or a teacher, depending on how they assess the consequences of sharing their problems with these adults. For example, Dell (9) said that he would go to his principal for help because his principal always helped students in trouble. Some children shared Dell's views or chose not to talk to anyone at all.

> I go to the principal or go to someone, a close teacher. Teachers that I trust. No, I don't talk to my friends from that school about my problems because sometimes you get along more with [the teachers] than the students...and they won't say anything to anyone else. (Troy, 15, 24 August 2011)

> Some of the teachers will help me with whatever I need. Some of the teachers I do not get along with. And it's the male teachers that I don't get along with, than the females, because like the stuff that happened to me when I was younger when I was still placed under welfare. (Sky, 15, 5 October 2011)

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No, I don't really talk to people 'bout it, nah. (Tom, 14, 23 August 2011)

For Mason, talking to a teacher about an issue such as harassment took precedence over going to his friends because the social capital he has with his friends is one that needs to be used carefully. Seeking protection from his friends means that he would need to do the same for others in return, including being involved in undesirable activities such as bashing up a kid, something which he is clearly uncomfortable with.

> I try to talk to my teacher [if someone is trying to harass me] but obviously, I don't talk to some teachers because they don't like me...I try not to resort to violence or something. (Mason, 15, 17 August 2011)

As discussed earlier, children may not activate their social networks of friends or family despite having close or strong family or peer relationships. Indeed, it is argued that the close proximity and extensive social networks among family or friends may result in children hesitating to use these networks for support because of confidentiality issues or because they would not want to worry their closest family members. Moreover, their peers may face similar problems and thus may not be able to provide any advice or support. When issues are family-related, it is even more unlikely that young people will turn to their family for support. In contrast, children's relationships with other professional adults, such as social workers, teachers, counsellors or even principals become important when they are faced with problems they cannot resolve. Yet, children's relationships, especially with teachers or principals are mixed. Not every teacher, counsellor or principal is trusted or seemingly approachable. Hence, teachers, counsellors or principals who build a strong and trusting relationship with their students play a critical role in assisting children and young people deal with their problems because they are likely to confide in these professionals whom they trust, instead of their family or friends. Their professional distance and training also put them in a good position to provide the necessary help or advice.

7.1.5 Digital Social Networks – A New Frontier

The growth in digital computer technology has led to an expansion of social spaces in cyberspace as well as mobile networks. As physical outdoor social spaces become increasingly limited for children and young people, their social networks also become increasingly indoor, virtual or mobile (Gill 2008, pp. 136-137). Digital social networks

are now a part of almost every child or young person's life. In a recent survey comparing internet use among children and young people in Australia (aged nine to 16) with 25 European countries, it was found that Australian children started using the internet at an average age below eight years old, making them the youngest first-time internet users among the 26 countries (Green et al. 2011, p. 7). Furthermore, 65 per cent of Australian children have a social networking site (SNS) profile, which is slightly higher than the average of 59 per cent among the 25 European countries (Green et al. 2011, p. 8).

Facebook is a popular social networking site among the children in this research. However, while all the older children had a Facebook account and were regular users, younger children either did not have an account or, if they did, their usage was occasional. Liam (9) and Jamie (11) had Facebook accounts but were not regular users. Kyiesha (8) said she used the computer mostly for homework, while Mason (7) and Dell (9) liked to play games on the computer. For younger children, access to computers and mobile phones are more restricted since parents are more likely to supervise their online activities closely. Older children are more likely to own their personal mobile phones or computers and have relatively more freedom to use social networking sites such as Facebook. For example Jake (13) and Mason (15) (17 August 2011), talked about how often they use Facebook and what they use it for.

Jake:	A lot. Till my phone ran down.
Mason:	24 hours. (*Jake and Mason laughs*)
Jake:	Pretty much.
Mason:	Very much like talk to friends. If someone says something to you, you talk to them back…I usually see these people with images, 'cos I don't know who the hell they are…but like I only got Facebook couple of days ago. I'm just going through everyone's profiles, just trying to get all my friends back. I got *so* many friends.

For Mason, who only started his Facebook account recently, checking his Facebook and keeping in touch with friends was already part of his everyday routine. It is also worth noting that both Mason and his friends are careful about their online privacy. Some of his friends use images instead of photographs on their Facebook page and it is likely that their actual names are not used, which led to Mason spending a long time trawling

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through friends' Facebook pages to determine who they are. On Mason's part, he is also careful to check out Facebook pages to make sure that these are indeed the people he knows personally before communicating with them. Similarly, Sky (15) talked about having 'over a thousand friends' on Facebook, but knowing most of them personally.

> Sky: I wouldn't send a [friend] request to someone I don't know.

> *What if a stranger sends you a request to be your friend?*
> Sky: It depends on whether we have a mutual friend or not. Like, if I don't have a certain amount of mutual friends or something, I won't add them. They have to have at least over 30 or 40 mutual friends or else I won't add them.

Like Mason, Sky is careful in adding 'friends' on Facebook and while she is open to adding a stranger as a friend on Facebook, she makes sure that the person is known to a significant number of her other friends. In this way, Sky is able to meet new people on Facebook, expand her social networks, yet maintains a degree of caution by not including total strangers. The cautious approach shown by Mason and Sky is consistent with 14 and 15 year olds in a UK study who preferred to use online social networks to strengthen existing networks of friends and family (Awan & Gauntlett 2013). In addition, younger social network site users, aged 16 to 32 years, are more aware and able to use privacy settings to control their online profiles compared to older users, aged 40-62 years (Brandtzæg et al. 2010). In fact, it is worth noting that in Green et al.'s (2011, p. 23) survey of 400 children and their families in Australia, a higher proportion of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds chose private settings (68%) for their online profiles compared to children and young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds (59%). This cautious attitude that children have towards socialising with strangers online as well as their awareness on privacy settings runs counter to the traditional belief that children are ignorant about privacy issues and therefore place themselves at great risk of 'stranger danger' online.

The belief that children are at great risk of 'stranger danger' online has led to children's online activities being monitored by their parents or teachers. About three out of five Australian parents adopt various monitoring strategies on their children's online activities but monitoring strategies are also children's least favourite type of adult mediation on their internet use (Green et al. 2011, p. 44). Gnomi (14) (23 August 2011) who logs on to Facebook the moment she gets home everyday from school, talks about

her mum who also uses Facebook, but does not monitor her activities, while Tom (14) (23 August 2011) does get supervised sometimes. However, both their activities on Facebook are monitored by someone from their school such that what they say on Facebook can sometimes get them into trouble from the teachers.

Tom: [T]here's a person that watches all students on Facebook.

Gnomi: Yeah.

Tom: You're always watched.

Gnomi: Some stuff that could happen on Facebook, they can pinpoint you saying you did, even if you didn't.

As noted in Chapter Six, Gnomi's Facebook fights often get her into trouble. We saw that cyber-bullying often spills over to physical spaces where fights may take place. For children, digital spaces are neither an extension nor an alternative space to socialise with friends, but enable them to develop layers of bonding with their friends and family through heightened interactions that flows between their online and offline worlds (Awan & Gauntlett 2013). This means that relationships with close friends and family, as well as people with whom children do not get along, becomes intensified through social media. At the same time, social media is not just about socialisation but is inextricably tied up with children's sense of self and identity through maintaining digital profiles that they may create to represent who they are at different points in time. Instead of looking at the rich, varied layers of meaning that children place on both their online and offline interactions, the dominant public discourse on children's use of the internet is that of a risky behaviour. For example, children's use of the internet and social networking sites are described as 'obsessive'[17] or 'excessive'[18]. It is worth noting that one of key studies on children's online activities in Europe, EU Kids Online Project (Livingstone & Haddon 2008), is framed in terms of the specific risks associated with children's internet use and does not ask how and in what ways children perceive online risks. Similarly, despite acknowledging that online risks and opportunities are linked,

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[17] Robinson, N 2013, 'Children's net use "obsessive"' , *The Australian* (online edition), 22 May, viewed online 22 May 2013, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/australian-it/childrens-net-use-obsessive/story-e6frgakx-1226647941355>.

[18] See Green et al. 2012, 'Excessive internet use among Australian children'.

Livingstone and Brake's study (2010, pp. 79-80) nevertheless concentrates on the risks and management of risks in online interactions rather than examining the opportunities online interactions provide for children. As Boonaert and Vettenburg (2011) observed, the dominant discourse on young people's use of the internet is focused on the acquisition of information with a tendency to treat all young people as a homogenous group that should invariably conform to a set of 'proper' internet behaviour. This dominant discourse ignores the diverse views that young people may have about the internet and little research has been done to find out the different dimensions of internet use by young people (Boonaert & Vettenburg 2011, p. 59). Given the importance of digital spaces for children, the policy discourse on social inclusion is silent on the potential for these digital social networks to be sites where children's social, civic, political and even educational participation may occur. As Theocharis (2012) pointed out, students are increasingly using online social media to mobilise, engage and reach out to their peers for political and social causes. Yet, the main public response towards children's use of online media is that of monitoring, restriction and control, while the social inclusion policy agenda does not consider any form of digital social participation.

7.2 Children's Participation – What Does It Mean?

Although the social inclusion agenda outlines various dimensions of participation such as economic, social, civic and political participation, children are expected to participate predominantly in education. The predominance of educational participation in children's lives overshadow other forms of children's participation such as workforce participation or civic participation, where they are able to gain practical skills and knowledge. In particular, children's school to workforce transition is difficult because children who graduate from high school lack the necessary working experience or relevant skills that will enable them to find stable, full-time, higher-paying jobs. At the same time, exclusionary school practices, such as school suspensions, place additional barriers to children's learning. The following sub-sections examine the exclusionary nature of school suspensions, as well as children's participation in the workforce and civic projects.

7.2.1 Compulsory Education and School Suspensions

Laws against the employment of children under a certain age, as well as laws against children voting or joining civic or political organisations, make educational participation the main legitimate and indeed, compulsory, form of participation for children. However, the instrumental nature of educational policies treats children as products to be taught, rather than as learners (Mayall 2005, p. 80). When childhood is treated as a preparatory stage rather than a participatory stage, children become confined in institutions and programmes geared towards children's conformity (Mayall 2000, p. 251). Therefore, children who do not conform to school rules face various disciplinary punishments, some of which place unnecessary barriers to children's learning and exclude them from educational participation. For example, a common disciplinary practice for schools is to suspend the student from school following misconduct or misbehaviour. Primary school children in this research did not experience school suspensions but children in high schools frequently talked about being suspended.

> I told them it was self-defence, breaking up the thing was self-defence. They pushed me into a door and that kinda got busted. [Well], I was on the verge of suspension anyway. It's because, I have no idea. I don't remember. (Alcy,13, 17 August 2011)

> You argue and then you get suspended. (Jake, 13, 17 August 2011)

> One of my teachers actually doesn't like me, like he's made the decision that he doesn't like me...and he told me that. So, I'm in one of his classes and that's a bit of a struggle. He'll get me suspended whenever he can. So like if I do one thing [wrong], he'll get me suspended...I got suspended for five days [because he claimed] I 'assaulted him, when I tapped him on the shoulder. (Mason, 15, 15 August 2011)

The practice of suspending children from school not only excludes them from learning and their participation in education, it also makes it even more difficult for them to catch up with their peers, especially if they have been suspended multiple times.

> I think engagement in school is a *huge* issue...we're noticing more and more young people being excluded from school and suspended a lot. And it's starting to happen in primary school, children as well. We have had one client at [our agency] who had been suspended 45 times in primary school. And by the time she got to high school, she was a nightmare. And when we got her assessed, we found out that she had a learning difficulty and the person who assessed her said that it was because she'd been suspended so much from school, she missed some really key learning steps. So, here's someone who has a disability that's been created – a

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learning difficulty that's been created by the Education Department. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

Not only will suspension affect a child's learning, sometimes it may also strain parent-child relationships at home, especially when the family is already trying to cope with other problems such as unemployment or unstable employment, low income or domestic conflicts.

> [A] bit of that zero tolerance stuff going on in the schools, which often mean that what happens is that young people are sent home. If it's a single mum who's working and she doesn't want to leave her child at home on their own, that means she can't go to work, she got to look after the child which causes more conflict within the family and fighting, so it becomes this on-going cycle. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

Sometimes, the problem is not resolved when schools try to place the suspended child in other services instead of sending them home because these services may further exclude them as well.

> So this suspension thing…a lot of our clients get put in to behaviour management type services or learning centres and they get suspended from there as well, it's never actually made sense to me how that can happen. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

While the most common disciplinary measure used by schools for all kinds of student transgressions is suspension, it is doubtful that suspension is effective in managing students' behaviour. Often, children who have been suspended multiple times no longer care if they will be suspended again.

> [I]t's quite often young people are quite happy to be suspended. Like what's the big deal in being suspended? (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

The indifference shown by Alcy, who said that she was unclear as to the reason why she was suspended and was nonchalant about it, is consistent with Michail's study (2012, p. 8) on school suspensions among students in New South Wales. Not only are multiple suspensions likely to affect the educational participation of the young person, the downward spiral of the young person's self-confidence as well as learning milestones will also affect their chances of finding a stable or better paid job after leaving school.

> If a young person doesn't get through school, their chances of employment at the end of it are really low, especially for young men and if you're going to keep suspending young people, they're not going to get through the system. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

In this way, school suspensions have a negative impact on the educational participation of children who were suspended, but also have an indirect effect on their future economic participation as well, especially if their learning progress is substantially affected by multiple suspensions or long suspensions. Furthermore, there is evidence to show that school suspension may actually worsen the students' behaviour with increased tendency to non-violent anti-social behaviour and association with anti-social peers that may lead to more suspensions (Hemphill et al. 2012). In addition, suspensions are likely to worsen the student's relationship with the teacher who suspended him. In Tom's (14) own words, 'my school didn't want me anymore so they sent me to this [detention centre]'. Nevertheless, short or long-term school suspensions are a common practice among schools because they enable teachers to conduct their lessons without disruption and this justification for suspensions is likely to receive strong support from the rest of the students, as well as their parents.

However, for students being suspended, they often felt that they have not been given the opportunity to explain themselves and even their parents' views are not heard. As Mason puts it, it is this disregard of his and his father's views that made him feel that his suspension was unfair.

> [The] teachers at my school they will hear your opinions, but some will just be like, 'nah, I've made my decision and I'm going to stay by that decision' and I think that's quite unfair and needs to be changed. 'Cos like I said before, I got suspended, I did not have a voice in that. So, if only my dad had a voice in that; so it's pretty much like teachers are so cool, they rule over everybody. (Mason, 15, 17 August 2011)

As noted by Morrow (1999a), children's poor relationship to school and teachers is linked to their feelings of exclusion. Instead of suspending students, alternative strategies that allow students and their families to have a voice in how a particular issue is resolved, may be more effective in getting the students to be more responsible for their actions, while at the same time not excluding them from learning. Working closely with service providers and youth centres is one way that schools can explore alternatives to suspension but not all schools are willing to do this.

> And at [our agency], we're just trying to keep them in school, all we're trying to do, so we do things like, every client who is disengaged from school, we get an educational assessment done so we know what the problems are...Working with school around, 'if their behaviour is bad, ring us instead of suspending and we'll come up and put different strategies in place on how to deal with it'. And some

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schools do that well and when that happens it's great. And others are not much interested in working with us. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

For example, a recent research project by UnitingCare, 'Children, Young People and Families' (Beauchamp 2012, p. 3), showed that in New South Wales, long-term suspensions (between five to 20 days) increased by 36 per cent from 2006 to 2011. One spokesperson from the NSW Department of Education was quoted in The Sydney Morning Herald as saying, 'suspension is not intended as a punishment', defending the use of suspension as one of the strategies used by schools to protect its students, teachers and other staff from violent students (Patty 2012). On the other hand, in a survey of 250 youth workers in NSW, an overwhelming majority (74%) of respondents felt that one or more of the suspensions they came across were unfair to their young clients (YAPA 2012). Both the reports by Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA) and UnitingCare are of the view that suspensions are ineffective in managing students' challenging behaviours, calling for other behaviour management strategies, more involvement of students and their families in the process, amongst other recommendations. There is also some evidence that shows that suspensions are associated with other non-violent anti-social behaviour later on (Hemphill et al. 2012). It is also found that students living in low socio-economic areas are more likely to face school suspensions, which means that the negative consequences of suspension may exacerbate the problems that the students are already facing, such as academic difficulties, crime or family conflicts (Hemphill et al. 2010). Perspectives from children themselves further suggest that suspensions are not effective in addressing their behaviour in schools (Michail 2012).

From the children I spoke to, perhaps the problem is not school suspension itself, but how it is carried out, what it represents in terms of the power that adults have over them, and whether they are given the opportunity to make a case for themselves. This supports both the YAPA and UnitingCare's positions that alternative strategies should consider including students in the decision-making process and changes in strategies that build trusting relationships with the students. Indeed, it is through education that values such as trust can be fostered among the young (Hughes et al. 2000). School suspensions that fail to consider children's own views not only fail to change children's behaviour, but

also exclude them from learning and create barriers that further exclude them from being engaged in school.

7.2.2 Labour Participation – Children Planning for their Future

In the previous chapter, it was shown that children engage in a variety of paid and unpaid work. Unsurprisingly, older children in this research talked about their career aspirations and future plans more than younger children as they head towards their high school graduation and they were aware of the close link between doing well in school and finding a good job when they leave school. They recognise that their career aspirations are dependent on having good grades in school.

> So, I want to get to the army, yeah, I want to help my country out so that's the reason I'm going to the army so I want to get like good grades. 'Cos you need good grades to get to the army. (Mason, 15, 17 August 2011)

> [E]ver since I was little, I always wanted to be either a singer or a lawyer. But like, lawyer doesn't seem very fun anymore. Or I've always wanted something to do with welfare and like, young people in need and stuff like that, because I've been in that situation and I know how I probably understand it a little bit more than what other youth workers [would]…[So] I have to get good grades and go to the uni and stuff, tho' uni doesn't sound so fun. But it's what I guess I have to do, I'll do it. (Sky, 15, 5 October 2011)

Other than having good grades in school, children recognise that they may need other skills that will help them to achieve their career goals. Children are often resourceful at finding ways to gain practical skills through different activities outside of school, such as being involved in volunteer work to gain skills or work experience. For example, Mason tried to volunteer or work for free at the ice-skating rink in order to improve his chances of securing a paid job there once he reached an employable age.

> [I] was actually gonna, where I live at the moment [there's] actually an ice-skaing arena. So I go ice-skating recently, regularly…you can't work there, but you can volunteer there because I was actually gonna get a job there. Still trying to get a job there. Yeah, I tried to get a job there and I could only volunteer there. (Mason, 15, 17 August 2011)

Similarly, Jack (15), decided to join the dance and music group organised by the local youth centre in order to learn more about handling music equipment that would eventually help him move into a career in sound recording and engineering.

> Yeah, I'm probably gonna just do my Year 11, 12 studies then go straight to uni and get my degree on sound engineering, recording and stuff. 'Cos I want work experience at the moment here, like I'm not, well, I'm sort of am involved in [this

music and dance group], but I was coming here for work experience, like there's all the recording facilities and stuff they have here. (Jack, 15, 4 October 2011)

Like Mason and Jack, Dainess (17) had plans about what she would like to do after high school graduation. She said that she would probably have to make do with a low-end job, such as working at the local supermarket, that would allow her to earn and save enough money for her to take up vocational training courses at TAFE[19] (Technical and Further Education). The plans that these children shared about their future after high school graduation show that children understand the difficulties in finding their first job. They are aware that they may have to settle for relatively low-paying jobs as a temporary occupation before they acquire more relevant work experience or qualifications that enable them to move to better paying jobs. Mason and Jack were willing to take on unpaid work in order to gain relevant work experience, while Dainess saw her first job as a means of enabling her to pursue further vocational qualifications.

These stories highlight the fact that job opportunities for new high school graduates are limited and some jobs that are available to them might not be paid at all. In fact, youth unemployment for those aged 15-19 has increased by 3.2 per cent from the period of June 2008 - July 2009 to June 2011 - July 2012 (Parliament of Australia 2012). In a survey conducted by Mission Australia (2011), there was a substantial increase in the percentage of young people aged 11 – 24 (22.7%) in 2011, who valued finding a job compared to the same survey (16%) conducted a year ago. In another report on young Australians by Foundation for Young Australians (FYA 2012, p. 11), it is found that the proportion of unemployed teenagers aged 15 – 19 (15.6%) is far higher than the proportion of unemployed young adults aged 20-24 (8.6%). These reports suggest that teenagers who desire to work face difficulties in finding employment. Among teenagers aged 15 – 19 who are not in education, about one in five is looking for a full-time job but most are only able to find part-time rather than full-time jobs (FYA 2012, p.11). Young adults, aged between 18 and 24, cite barriers such as not having the necessary skills and not having relevant information or suitable training options as reasons for not being engaged in education or work (FYA, p. 73). This means that the transition

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[19] TAFE is a vocational training institute in Australia that offers professional certification in various industries.

between high school and work presents several challenges for older children who do not have the required skills for full-time jobs or are not aware of the training pathways that will enable them to secure full-time jobs.

7.2.3   Civic Participation – Children Contributing to their Communities

Although educational participation is the predominant form of participation for children endorsed by the social inclusion agenda, children also contribute to their communities through various activities. Activities for older children that incorporate social, civic and educational aspects of participation, are popular among those who live in areas considered to be disadvantaged. For example, SPM06 talked about the Sayouth Riders Committee[20] that they have set up, comprising a youth worker, the local council and the young people[21] in that community who try to engage and work with other young people who regularly use the local skate park.

> It's called the Sayouth Riders' Committee, it's awesome…they've done mentoring, training on how to mentor other young people in the community, the skate park, a lot of the kids access the skate park in some capacity. They work through the skate park with young people, like they're helping with the seminar next Wednesday, like putting the packs together. So anything that we do here, that particular groups of young people would…[be] involved in…helping others, learning skills as they go along the way. When we have our Youth Week event out here every year with ourselves and the council, those young people are instrumental in the planning, they're involved in the consultation, they're involved on that day, so they take on a lot of responsibility and learn a lot of new skills through that process. (SPM05, 14 September 2011)

There are multiple dimensions of participation in this committee – social participation where young people get to know other young people through fun activities; civic participation where young people contribute to their local community in the planning of activities at the skate park; educational participation where young people learn practical skills such as event-planning, time-management, presentation skills and so on. In fact, the Committee was so successful that other local councils in South Australia had invited them to present their experience and were even paying them to do so.

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[20] The name of the youth committee has been changed to 'Sayouth Riders Committee' to prevent identification of the service provider involved in this research.

[21] Young people in this committee are aged between 12-22 years old.

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And that particular group of young people are going to do a road trip early this year, together with three workers and they're producing their model to other councils...they're being paid to present that information, so they're really engaged in not only our own community, but the model is so good that now we're going to share it with other councils and youth development officers in other areas. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

The young people who have participated in Sayouth Riders Committee have developed self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.

[T]hat young person has moved, almost mountains at times, to get to where has got to. He is a mentor now, he assists in running other activities for other young people, he's taken on some responsibilities and when he takes them on, he's committed to that. He does that. He's an adult, he behaves like an adult when he's running things and he's 15 or 16 maybe. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

Other young people who were in the Committee have since also moved into other programmes and the programme sustains itself by having a constant flow of young members joining and being mentored by the senior members.

[S]ome of the young people in that programme are moving out to other programmes, they're moving on, they're starting to work, getting apprenticeships, so bringing in younger people in so that the more experienced members of that group are now mentoring new ones coming in. So it's certainly sustainable. (SPM06, 14 September 2011)

The example of the Sayouth Riders' Committee illustrates that when given the opportunities and environment where young people are able to take ownership over their activities and be involved in their community, they will participate actively. However, children's civic participation is seen as secondary to their educational participation and is not widely promoted by the social inclusion agenda. The Sayouth Riders' Committee, for example, is not recognised as a social inclusion initiative by the Federal or the South Australian governments. As a result, similar local programmes involving children's civic participation are not well-funded and while the Sayouth Riders Committee is a success story, many more of these programmes face the risk of closure.

7.3   'Have a Say!' But is Anyone Listening?

Other than social, educational and civic dimensions of participation, the social inclusion agenda has a component of 'having a say' in its framework of participation. The focus on partnerships between different government and non-government organisations means

that open communication, active listening and the exchange of views are important to the success of the relationship. At the service provision level, adult service users appreciate opportunities to participate in different forms of feedback, ranging from evaluation surveys, independent research, informal feedback to joint decision-making in casework. Other than getting feedback from adult service users, service providers who work with children as clients are also increasingly involving children in consultations and decision-making processes. The following sub-sections look at how children are being involved in decision-making processes and argue that following up on children's views is as important as giving children the opportunity to give their views.

7.3.1   Children's Views, Adults' Decisions

Obtaining feedback from children and giving children opportunities to participate in decision-making processes are a regular feature at all the youth agencies I visited. Although the processes of involving children in decision-making vary across different service providers, frontline children and youth workers express the importance of listening to what children have to say.

> Their voice...[is included] in decisions. Particularly when young people say they need this or that, really, it's not what they need that is the underlying issue. So probably a voice will be the main thing. (SPF09, 3 August 2011)

> [J]ust having forums and steering committees where you invite the young people on board to be part of the board, so to speak, or the steering committee and give them the opportunity to voice their concerns. (SPM02, 3 August 2011)

> [W]e do term consultations with the young people around what they like about last term's project, what they want to do this term, so we're constantly consulting with the client because this is their service, so they need to take some ownership of that and when you work with a young person, it's not about, 'what I'm going to do for you, this is about what you want us to help you with'. So that really in itself is consultation. You're saying, 'what is it we need to do together to help you get through this situation'. (SPM06, 14 Sep 2011)

However, this consultative approach is less evident in the school setting which is where children spend most of their time. As noted by Black (2011, p. 469), the education policy in Australia often employs the language of democracy without necessarily serving democratic purposes. Schools do make some effort to give students some opportunities to provide feedback or to be represented by the Student Representative Councils (SRC) or other student groups.

Yeah, we've got a group called Students' Voice where a representative or there's a representative from each Year level...they all come together for meetings, like discuss what could be better, like what things you can improve in school and make it more enjoyable and what some things we can do such as how to stop kids from fighting and like, actually doing something good. (Kase, 18, 4 October 2011)

Similarly, Ethan (16) and Nathan (15), who were from the same school, talked about exercising their right to vote for the design of their new school uniform. The new design, however, was pre-selected by the school and the students only voted on whether they wanted to adopt it as the new school uniform.

Nathan: I don't like it, they said they were going to make it newer, that it'll make us look good, but...

Ethan: It came out like this (*demonstrates on his t-shirt*), looks a bit like Salisbury's but with different colours and different emblem...

Nathan: Yeah, like I wanna tell them to be more creative?

Ethan: Yeah, not like sort of copied with different colours.

For Nathan and Ethan, even though they had an opportunity to vote, the pre-selected design meant that they were not consulted on the actual design of the uniform. The opportunity for them to 'having a say' is limited to a voting slip and as a result they felt that the school had only sought their endorsement of the new school uniform without finding out their views about the design of the uniform. Gnomi (14) and Tom (14), on the other hand, simply hated their school uniforms and in fact got into trouble for not wearing them to school.

Tom: I like the school top, but not the school pants or shorts.

Gnomi: The pants, girls' pants are urrrgh.

Tom: I don't see the point of having school pants, it's not like a private school.

Gnomi: Yes, it's not a private school so kids should be able to wear whatever they want...I don't even wear it anyway. We got sent home yesterday, yeah, for not wearing it, but our mums came in so.

Tom: But I'll spend loads of money on school uniform. They're close to $300! Jacket's $63, top's $32 and then these [pants] are $42. I reckon I spent 'bout $300 for uniform. Expensive. If you don't wear the school pants but you wear the school top, you get sent home. So they stopped me from learning just for not wearing the school pants.

For Gnomi and Tom, the school uniform was both expensive and the design of the pants not to their liking. By refusing to wear their school pants, they were expressing their views on the expensive and unappealing design of their uniform. However, not wearing their uniform was not accepted as a legitimate way of expressing their views, which could only be done through school sanctioned ways such as the Student Voice or SRC. As a result, Tom and Gnomi's actions were interpreted as a breach of school rules and they were suspended from school. Without finding out from Tom why he did not wear his school uniform, his view about the high cost of school uniforms went unheard. When I asked Tom if the school had schemes to help students who were unable to afford the uniforms, he said, 'they won't like give us funds…like never!' Tom felt unfairly being excluded from class just because he was not wearing the full school uniform, which he felt was unaffordable.

In another example, Kase (18) talked about the seemingly arbitrary influence that the Student Voice has in her school.

> We've got a few things changed. Some of the things they don't [change], they think it's too big of a job so they don't bother to put in their hard files. But something like, we didn't have toilet paper in our actual cubicles, we have toilet paper outside the cubicles, so we got them to put into [the cubicles] and soap. (Kase, 18, 4 October 2011)

However, other issues brought up by the Student Voice were not implemented, such as a proposal to have a double gate for the incoming and outgoing traffic in the school, or the suggestion to bring back radio-playing during lunch-time.

> Like, in our student car park, there's only one gate and it's like for in and out traffic and we're trying to get it so that it's a double date, so we don't have to line up for an hour just to get out because so many cars are coming in. Yeah, they haven't really done anything about it…And stuff like the Radio Room, we used to have in school where we have a radio playing during lunch and it's been taken away due to fights and stuff. And, we want it back but they just won't let us. (Kase, 18, 4 October 2011)

Perhaps, like Kase said, if the school considers the student proposal is 'too big of a job', they will choose to leave it aside or not even bother to 'put in their hard files' for school meetings. Even with groups such as Student Representative Councils or Student Voice, the range of issues that students are able to bring up and be considered for change or further suggestions are usually limited. It is often unclear what issues are negotiable and what issues are non-negotiable. Furthermore, how decisions are made and the reasons

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why some proposals are implemented but not others, are often not explained to the students. Therefore, students may have some say in their school matters, through their student representatives, but not all their views or suggestions are met with a response or explanation if they are not taken up. Other studies on school and youth councils show that young people often felt that these youth councils or committees were tokentistic, unrepresentative and ineffective in implementing young people's views (Alderson 1999; Holdsworth 2005; Stafford et al. 2003; Tisdall & Davis 2004). As Holdsworth (2005) noted, providing a 'voice' for students may literally limit possibilities of actual participation by emphasising the opportunity to speak rather than actual outcomes of actions taken resulting from students' opinions. Student representation in schools may also mean only a selected group of students are given opportunities to be heard, with the majority being excluded from meaningful participation (Holdsworth 2005).

7.3.2   The Value of Being Heard

Even though children understand that they often do not have the final say in decisions, having the chance to be heard is still valued. Having a structured and rigid format of feedback such as the Student Voice or Student Representative Councils may not work best for children. In another example, a youth home had to abandon its weekly feedback sessions with its young residents because the rigid format was not working well.

> We used to have house meetings at [the home] where the clients would get together and the feedback that we keep getting from them was, 'Well, it's completely bloody useless 'cos you never agree to anything we want anyway, you know, like you don't do junk food, you don't let us smoke'. So, they say, 'Why bother having them, we wouldn't have them at home'. So actually, we stopped having those meetings 'cos the young people said they hated going to them. Because it didn't make sense, because at home, [they don't have group meetings]. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

The Residents' Committee meetings did not work well because of its rigid and fixed feedback process. It is also at odds with the informal and 'homely' environment that the youth workers were trying to create for the youth home. In addition the meetings became an avenue where the young residents tried to negotiate on the non-negotiable house rules. Since these rules are non-negotiable, the meeting outcomes disappointed the residents and engendered a sense of cynicism among them. Even so, youth workers make it a point to explain why these rules were non-negotiable and to listen to all forms of feedback, including seemingly trivial requests.

> [A] lot of the feedback that we get is about, 'I don't like the food', 'I want to smoke', 'more outings', 'I want bean bags', a lot of that. I think for young people, that's what is in their lives at the moment but it's also very easy to then write that off as being 'silly', so we have to ensure that we take that information back [and give] the reason we don't have junk food is because we're worried about your health, we're not going to change that...you always got to be able to explain why you do something and why you don't do something...they might not like it but they will understand why you're doing it. (SPM04, 15 August 2011)

The youth home set clear non-negotiable rules for its residents, especially rules regarding the health and safety of other residents. For other rules such as bedtimes or suggestions to improve the environment, young residents were able to negotiate with the staff and their parents. Hence, drawing of boundaries of what can be negotiated and what cannot be negotiated is important to young people. After doing away with the rigid weekly Resident Committee meetings, young residents were given the understanding that they could talk to any staff at any time on matters that bother them or to give feedback to staff. The youth workers felt that building a close and trusting relationship between the staff and the residents will enable the young residents to give their views more comfortably than rigid feedback processes. As noted by Matthews (2001, p. 316), this relinquishing of power by adults opens up structures that allow the young residents to have greater control over outcomes, which is critical in fostering meaningful youth participation. At the youth homes, a fair chance to give their opinions is important even in extreme situations where a young person has clearly breached a rule and has threatened or caused harm to another resident. When such a situation occurs, a follow-up action is necessary to allow all parties involved to talk about what happened and discuss the outcomes or consequences.

> We also might follow-up with a round-table conference, which is something that we do when there's quite a serious matter. It's a whole concept around it, the manager would be there, I would be there as a facilitator and the counsellor would be there as a support person, the young person would be there, who have committed the crime, there might be the victim and then the family would be there as well. We'll actually talk through what had happened and there'ld be outcomes to it. There'ld be another meeting to follow-up on the outcomes...So, it's about people, it's about us stepping back and not getting all worked up about it, but the young person taking responsibility more. And once it's resolved, we move on from it, we don't re-visit it. (SPM01, 10 August 2011)

This approach, based on a restorative justice principle, is similar to an increasingly favoured Family Group Conference (FGC) model adopted by social workers and practitioners for children and their families. It is aimed at enabling the child to

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acknowledge and take responsibility for his/her actions, with the support of his/her family as well as the practitioners working with him/her. At the same time, if a victim is involved in the incident, the victim and family will also have a say in the outcomes expected from the perpetrator. In many ways, this model encapsulates all the principles to which the social inclusion agenda aspires, with strong emphasis on engagement, partnership, participation and collective action. Under the FGC model, when a child commits a transgression, the primary objective is not to punish or reprimand, but to rehabilitate and give all parties involved, especially the victims, a more active role in determining the consequences of the transgression. Such a restorative model is growing in popularity in some juvenile justice and child protection systems as well as among practitioners working with children. However, this restorative model of practice is not without limitations. For example, Kiely (2005) noted that balancing child and parental rights, as well as determining who the group facilitator should be are potential areas of conflict in the implementation of FGC. In addition, the FGC processes are often time-consuming and resource intensive. Most schools simply do not have the resource or the support or training required to implement similar approaches in their school disciplinary systems. Even if some schools in Victoria have used similar restorative models instead of suspension, it is unclear if it works well in these schools and has raised concerns that these schools are 'going soft' (Hemphill et al. 2012, p. 314). This means that the barriers to schools adopting less punitive approaches not only include limited resources but also, the prevailing mindset that some children are troublemakers that require punitive disciplinary methods.

7.3.3 Including Children Seriously

While older children are more articulate and vocal in making their views heard, younger children sometimes find it difficult to 'have a say' without the necessary language skills or might feel pressured to conform to what they feel adults expect from them rather than indicating their actual preferences. This means that it is often more difficult for a child aged seven to run for Student Representative Council in schools than a child aged 11 or 12. In addition, as seen in Chapter Five, some children may say or decide on something against their own interest because they are caught between the different expectations of the adults around them. This is not to say that young children are not able to articulate their wishes and many of them do so verbally, but that they may also express

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themselves using non-verbal means or may feel pressured into expressing views that adults expect them to give. If the social inclusion agenda is serious about children's participation, then 'having a say' needs to take into consideration the different ways in which children, especially younger children, may express themselves, as well as the constraints they face in doing so. Standard feedback processes that adults are familiar with, such as feedback forms, may not work well with young children.

> We provide feedback forms and things to adults but when you think [about it] a lot of the stuff we get from the children, their spoken word isn't there. (SPM07, 14 Sep 2011)

This means that the onus is on adults to design and devise other ways in which younger children are more comfortable in expressing themselves. More importantly, it means that adults need to be aware of the power differential that stands between them and children, hence the pressure on children to conform to adults' expectations of them. Children's ability to participate is not only dependent on their evolving capability in expressing themselves, but also on whether they can do in their preferred means of expression, without pressure from grown-ups and on fair, equal terms. Yet, children's participation and ability to express their views are framed and limited by the kind of environment and rules set by adults. Parents' consent, the participation format, rules and guidance are frequently pre-determined for children such that any other type of involvement or activities beyond these permitted frameworks are considered 'deviant' or 'anti-social'.

As Bessant (2003, p. 98) noted, youth participation is confined to specific legitimate activities that do not challenge the political power of policymakers. At the same time, it is also ethically inappropriate to place the full responsibility for participation and decision-making on children and young people. Similarly, Fattore and Turnbull (2005, p. 55) note that we cannot expect children to be involved in public life in the same way as adults, but there needs to be a child-oriented communication between adults and children that requires adults to translate children's perspectives into public discourse. Furthermore, not all children are keen to use their valuable time to take part in consultations that are set up by and for the interests of adults (Borland et al. 2001; Christensen et al. 2000). Children's workers reflect the need to consider children's developmental changes, children's interests and adults' interest when seeking children's

opinions. For example SPM07 spoke about the courts allowing children of a certain maturity to state their preference in cases of custody disputes.

> [T]he system says that a child has to be a certain age before their opinion is actually taken, it's like they can make the decision like where they want to live there's no specific limit. I think they make a judgement on the maturity of the child. Really, what's wrong with the system that says, 'right, OK' to a five-year old? I mean that's probably young, but to give them a little bit more say and for the system to say, 'well, you parents have to be flexible about this, 'cos, kids can't work that out, like knowing two days here and two days there'. But we don't allow for that changeability in the child's developmental stages. (SPM07, 14 September 2011)

On one hand, it is important to allow children to have a say on important matters such as which parent they wish to live with, but, on the other hand, such a decision is a difficult one that may place the child in an impossible position of choosing between parents whom they care about equally. In addition, young children are unlikely to be able to work out the finer details of decisions such as how many days a week they would like to see their parent in these dispute cases. As argued by another children's worker, children should not be expected to make all the compromises when they are caught in between competing adults' interests.

> Because [children] shouldn't have to weigh up the consequences. Adults should. [Children] shouldn't be the ones having to compromise. The adults should be. But they should be able to be given a choice to say, 'that's how and what I'm going to do' and have that voice. (SPF18, 14 September 2011)

Hence, respecting children's views means more than giving them a choice because sometimes none of the options presented to children has desirable outcomes. In these situations, it is more important to find out why children are rejecting the options given or are not participating, than to conclude that they are disengaged or that they are incompetent in giving their views. As Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-de Bie (2006, p. 137) warn, not all children choose to verbalise their feelings and, in fact, verbal expressions favour more privileged children. Thus, children's silence is an expression that needs to be considered as much as children's articulated views. Indeed, Lewis (2010) goes further by proposing that children's silences require careful examination because children's silences may not necessarily mean that the child does not wish to respond. Children's silences are neither neutral nor empty and listening to children better requires understanding the context and meanings of the silences from children's perspective (Lewis 2010, p. 19).

This chapter shows that the social inclusion dimensions as defined by policymakers, such as 'participation', 'engagement' and 'having a say' have different meanings for children who are considered to be socially excluded. It is argued that these policy concepts are loaded with adult-centric understandings of what social networks and participation means. Policymakers and service providers have been encouraged to build on their existing social networks to develop stronger collaborations on policy initiatives within the social inclusion policy framework. However, such joined-up approaches in government thinking only seek to engage with adults, and children are included only experimentally, 'in the gaps between adult structures and the reach of these policy areas' (James & James 2004, p. 218). Similarly, children are not considered as part of the partnership networks that the social inclusion agenda actively promotes. As Bessant (2003, 2004) argues, taking children and young people's views seriously means making a commitment to change actual practice, policies and legislation, rather than relying on a pervasive rhetoric of 'participation'. In terms of the processes of participation, policies and services need to address the tension between adults' wish to control children and children's own autonomy (Davis & Hill 2006, p. 13). Hence, child-inclusive participatory processes need to involve children's own understanding of what participation means for them (Davis & Hill 2006).

Addressing the tension between adult-child relationships is critical for children's social participation as this chapter has shown when children who have problems turn to trusted adults in situations where they feel that they cannot talk to their family or friends about their problems. Trust, as many researchers have argued (see Fukuyama 1995; Misztal 1996; Putnam 1995), lies at the heart of social as well as economic capital. The role of trusted adults such as teachers, principals or counsellors is underestimated by policymakers in conceptualising social inclusion for children. In particular, the professional distance that characterises the relationship between these trusted adults and children means that these adults are potentially better placed to give the appropriate advice or help to children when they are in trouble compared to their family or friends. These trusted adults play the role of 'specialist workers' as suggested by Macpherson (2008, p.376) who engage with marginalised children through less formal mechanisms that focus on building positive relationships and understanding their particular needs. In this way, social capital for children is better understood as a set of processes and

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practices that are integral to the acquisition of other types of capital, rather than something to be measured in and of itself (Morrow 1999b). In addition, this chapter shows that children use their social networks of family and friends differently from policymakers or service providers. Close social networks with family and friends may not necessarily translate into useful social capital for children, especially for children whose relationships with their family members are strained or if their friends' support would bring them more trouble. At the same time, mobile digital technology has transformed the way people communicate with one another and among older children, social networking sites such as Facebook have become increasingly popular as a way of communicating with existing friends as well as making new friends. Issues such as bullying that children grapple with are now inter-linked between the digital spaces and physical spaces. This aspect of digital social inclusion or exclusion has not been considered under the social inclusion policy agenda.

Rethinking children's participation is about as much as understanding ways of empowerment as it is about understanding the limits of that empowerment, from the perspectives of children themselves. As pointed out by Evans and Spicer (2008, p. 69), making children's participation a requirement in policy initiatives may end up pressuring service providers to brand their activities as 'participative preventive services' to secure funding without any meaningful engagement with children in decision-making. Children in this research talked about being excluded from learning because of school suspensions. School suspensions contravene the principles of social inclusion not only through excluding children from learning, but also through disempowering children by excluding them from being involved in decisions on the management of their behaviour. As noted by Black (2011), the role of schools in developing students' democratic participation is undermined by tensions and contradictions within school practices with the consequence that children from low socio-economic backgrounds are further marginalised. While educational and economic participation predominate the policy discourse of social inclusion, older children face various multiple challenges when they make their transition from high school to employment. These children often find themselves without the requisite work experience or skills and hence, have to settle for low-paid, part-time or even unpaid work in order to gain relevant skills that enable them to move to better paid, full-time

jobs. Some of these practical work skills can be gained through children's participation in civic or community projects. However, civic participation among children is irregular and inconsistently promoted as it is dependent on the availability of local communities' resources.

As Prout and Tisdall (2006, p. 235) argue, social inclusion agendas need to recognise children's potential to contribute to their communities and create conditions that enable children's active participation. This means that children's participation is not only about providing opportunities for children to give their views, but to involve children as collaborative partners in devising the solutions to the problems that children face. Children as policy stakeholders should be treated with similar importance as other stakeholders and not as a good-to-have, dispensable group during policymaking processes (Tisdall & Bell 2006). Similarly, Bjerke (2011) notes that children do not necessarily ask for increased independence from adults, but to be recognised as 'differently equal' partners in shared decision-making processes where their views are valued and treated with respect. The engagement processes of children's participation are equally important as the outcomes of participation (Pinkerton 2004). In addition, sustainable participation means that children's participatory processes must move beyond one-off consultations to become firmly embedded within organisational cultures and structures for decision-making (Sinclair 2004). In particular, children from low-income families and who are considered to be socially excluded face more barriers than other children in being involved in decision-making processes (Ridge 2006). If the social inclusion policy agenda is concerned about children facing multiple disadvantages, policymakers need to involve these children as one of its key stakeholders and collaborative partners.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

This thesis began with the question of what the social inclusion of children means in Australia. In particular, this thesis asks these questions, 'how is social inclusion understood by policymakers, service providers and children facing multiple disadvantages?' and 'how do these different or similar interpretations of social inclusion shape policies and services for children facing multiple disadvantages?' By comparing the differences and similarities in these multiple interpretations of social inclusion, this thesis traces the social and power structures that shape policy thinking, as well as the micro-level contestations that sometimes challenges these structures. It is these contestations of what social inclusion means, especially from the very individuals who are deemed to be socially excluded, that are likely to realise the potential of the concept to bring about policy changes that address the fundamental issues faced by those individuals who are regarded as socially excluded. The first and second sections of this concluding chapter outline the key findings and arguments of this thesis. The third section of this chapter draws some key implications for children's policies and services. The last section proposes a reframing of the social inclusion agenda using a rights-based approach that may resolve some of the contradictions in the current framing of social inclusion.

8.1 Structures and Institutions of Power

The positive labelling of 'social inclusion' is one of the key differences between how Australia defines the concept in comparison with the UK, Europe and the US, where use of the term 'social exclusion' is more common. Hence, this research began by tracing how the concept of social inclusion gained traction in Australia and how the policy discourse was constructed. This investigation is the focus of Chapter Four and takes the form of a discourse analysis of the key policy documents, speeches and other publications about social inclusion by government agencies, politicians and service providers. The discourse analysis addresses the following research sub-questions:

    a)   How is the policy discourse of social inclusion constructed by policymakers and service providers?

    b)   What language, narratives or symbols are employed in these discourses?

c)   Who are the socially excluded as defined under these discourses and in particular, how are children portrayed?

From the discourse analysis, it was found that the key narrators of the story of social inclusion are primarily the policymakers, service providers, academics, researchers as well as social advocates. Between them, they publish policy documents, write speeches, conduct research, argue and discuss what social inclusion is or is not. This exclusive group of experts not only shape the policy discourse of social inclusion in Australia, they are also the key audience of the discourse. Together, these narrators tell two main parallel policy narratives – the over-arching, grand narrative of a socially fair and just Australia, and the underlying story about economic growth. Both narratives work alongside each other, reinforcing the credibility of each and justifying the policies or programmes that are promoted or supported by the narrators. In this way, economic and social objectives are conflated such that paid employment becomes the key to social inclusion for those facing poverty or multiple disadvantages. Economic growth which results from a greater labour force participation, in turn, creates a fairer social condition that supports funds for programmes that help the poor or socially excluded.

Both the policymakers and the service providers do not differ much in terms of their main narratives of social inclusion which reflect the fusion between the social and economic aspects of social inclusion. However, they do differ in terms of the emphasis they give to the economic or social narratives. Policymakers tend to focus on the economic rationale for social inclusion, while service providers tend to give more emphasis on the values that they champion, such as human rights or social justice. The difference in emphasis between the policymakers and service providers means that policymakers usually pay more attention to the learning and earning aspects of social inclusion, while service providers concentrate on engagement, or giving service users more opportunities to air their opinions. In contrast to the policymakers and service providers, the people who are considered socially excluded are frequently absent, either as the main narrators, or the audience, in the social inclusion discourse. Among the socially excluded group, children's status as future citizen-workers (Lister 2003) mean that they are being singled out as one of the top policy priorities under the social inclusion agenda. Within the social inclusion discourse, socially excluded children are talked about as passive subjects whose lives require extensive intervention, instead of

being featured as co-narrators alongside policymakers and service providers. Hence, children's policies become a form of pre-emptive social control, geared toward creating ideal adult citizens who are actively engaged in paid employment as well as in other social and civic activities.

The way in which discourse defines what is known and knowable is what Foucault (1980 p. 113) would refer to as the 'discursive regime' where the discourse itself constitutes certain power relations. The social inclusion discourse is not only a new framework to understand the older problem of poverty, it also shapes new policy structures that reconfigure power relations between policymakers, service providers and children considered as socially excluded. Hence, Chapter Five of this thesis addresses the following research sub-questions:

a)   How does the discursive power of social inclusion shape the institutional structures within the government?

b)   How does the discursive power of social inclusion shape the policy and service approaches in relation to people who are deemed to be socially excluded?

c)   What are the contradictions·and tensions brought about by the changes to the power structures and to the services approaches?

The fusion of both the economic and social justice narratives is reflected in the way central social inclusion units are being set up to coordinate policies among different government agencies. Ironically, the emphasis on a decentralised, 'joined-up' model of government requires the central coordinating units to be invested with considerable power and authority. Similarly, 'whole-of-community' approaches that focus on giving communities and local agencies more autonomy to handle social inclusion issues face problems of inconsistent capacities across local agencies.

At the same time, the positive language of aspiration and personal responsibility used in the social inclusion discourse has implications in the implementation of services to individuals who are identified as socially excluded. Service models that are tailored and personalised to the unique circumstances of each service user are encouraged. This approach decentralises power through aligning personal goals with policy targets and structuring the policy processes in ways that leave few options for the users except the

one that policy favours. This form of governance is less reliant on punitive measures to compel individuals to comply with policies than a form of discipline that creates an illusion of individual freedom or choice (Rose 1999, pp. 69-78). Furthermore, the flexible approaches that customise services according to each individual's needs mean that there is little reason not to comply. However, not all policies employ such positive power approaches, nor do all these positive power approaches work on all individuals. Children's policies, in particular, continue to employ a largely authoritative approach that treats them as passive and dependent beings. The inequitable power relationship between children and adults also means that children's access to services and freedom to make choices about their participation in programmes are limited. In situations where children's preferences compete with adults' preferences, children usually have to make compromises. Therefore, although the social inclusion agenda attempts to decentralise power within its policy institutions, processes and programmes, it has created other areas of contradictions and tensions that continue to disempower those deemed to be socially excluded.

This means that although the social inclusion agenda favours a more personalised approach to services and programmes, it is the needs of the parents or family that are prioritised before children's needs. In such cases, the role of children's workers become critical in enabling children's access to services. Unfortunately, working with children is often considered a form of emotional labour (Hochschild 1983). Furthermore, frontline children's workers are not well-paid nor adequately recognised because the work is associated with women (England & Folbre 1999). Developing strong relationships with children based on trust and respect also requires a considerable amount of time and frontline professionals who are skilled in providing different forms of support. The constraints of time and money limit the processes of having an integrated model of participation among typically excluded service users (Hernandez et al. 2010, p. 731). Professions, such as social workers, face increasing commodification of their work that has altered their relations with funders, other service agencies as well as their clients (Dominelli 1999). Hence, frontline professionals find themselves having to both defend the boundaries and principles of their caring work, as well as the interests of their clients. A sense of powerlessness not only affects service users but also all the social workers who work with these users (Ferguson & Lavalette 2004).

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8.2   Values and Agency of Children

Within the policy discourse on social inclusion, policymakers and service providers draw upon different entrenched social constructs of children that shape the way they formulate or implement children's policies. These social constructs of children mask the problems that children face. Thus, Chapter Six of this thesis addresses the following questions:

a)   How are children being socially constructed by policymakers and service providers?

b)   What are the implications of these social constructions of children on policies and services for children who are considered as socially excluded?

c)   As social actors, how do children deal with the problems that they face and how do they value their own relationships with the adults around them?

The way in which children are constructed as policy problems to be fixed or as risks to be managed undermine children's social inclusion. Some of the entrenched social constructs of children and childhood are not only contradictory, they also result in a discontinuity of policies for children. Therefore, we find a more protective policy approach towards younger children where they are treated as vulnerable victims and a more punitive policy approach for older children or young people, where they are treated as troublemakers to be controlled. Such and Walker (2005) observe that these contradictions in children's policies led to conflicting models of responsibility for children - they are primarily not responsible for themselves in the family but in policies on crime, they are granted the agency of adults. These contradictory social constructs of children result in policies that treat children as problems-to-be-fixed instead of addressing the problems children are facing. In contrast to the social constructs of children as passive beings, children as social actors find different ways to deal with problems such as bullying, even though some of these means are not approved of by adults. Children talk about the importance of being treated with respect by adults and having a fair hearing when they are in trouble. These values of fairness and respect are mirrored in the values espoused by the social inclusion discourse, even though children often feel they have not been treated with respect by the adults around them.

Not being respected as social actors means that children's participation continues to be limited or not taken seriously by the adults around them. Chapter Seven of this thesis

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examines the following questions on children's participation and social networks formed between policymakers, service providers and children under the social inclusion agenda:

a) What kinds of social networks or social capital are formed among policymakers and service providers?

b) What are the social networks that children value and how useful are these networks as social capital?

c) How is children's participation being understood under the social inclusion discourse and what does participation mean for children?

While it is not difficult for policymakers and service providers to accumulate bridging capital, and indeed are encouraged to do so under the social inclusion agenda, children are neither encouraged nor expected to form social networks with strangers. For children, social networks with family members and friends are of particular importance. However, it is less clear whether these networks can be translated into social capital that children can turn to when they need support. This is especially so in cases where children's ties with their parents have been damaged through child abuse or when children's peer relations may bring them more trouble. Indeed, children may choose to turn to trusted adults such as teachers, principals or counsellors for help rather than to burden their families or friends with their problems. The relationships that children form with trusted adults then act as bridging capital that is especially important for children whose relationships with family members may be acrimonious and whose peer support is unreliable.

Although the policy definition of social inclusion includes different domains of participation, such as social, civic, political, educational and economic participation, children's participation is predominantly confined to educational participation. As future citizens, the state invests substantially in children's education to reap their future employment value as workers. However, schools commonly use disciplinary measures such as school suspensions that exclude students from learning when students misbehave or break the school rules. Other than educational participation, children also participate in civic engagement projects as well as take on part-time or unpaid work. These forms of non-educational participation are not often recognised or acknowledged by policymakers. Despite increasing attempts to involve children in decision-making

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processes, many of these attempts are perceived as a 'favour' for children who are treated more as consumers of services than stakeholders (Tisdall & Bell 2006). It is important to consider the context of children's participation, to be aware of the constraints on children's ability to participate, ensuring that the processes of obtaining their views are fair, treating children's participation as a right, rather than an obligated tick in the checkbox of participation.

8.3   Implications for Social Inclusion Policies and Services

There are several implications that can be made from the findings of this thesis but three key implications will be highlighted here. The implications featured here are broad sketches, to avoid giving any formulaic prescriptions on how social inclusion policies or services may be reviewed. However, these broad implications suggest that fundamental reforms are needed, rather than minor tinkering of the social inclusion framework, to address issues of inequitable power between policymakers, service providers and children who are considered to be socially excluded.

8.3.1   Frontline Workers and Discretion as Resistance

As discussed in this thesis, service providers' narrative about social inclusion is similar to policymakers' narrative, but service providers emphasise values such as human rights, fairness and social justice in addition to economic reasons for inclusion. As co-experts of the social inclusion discourse, service providers play a critical mediating role in giving practical meanings to theoretical concepts within the policy framework (D'Cruz et al. 2009). This means that while policymakers may interpret social inclusion in a certain way, service providers may challenge this interpretation with their own understanding, changing how policies are ultimately implemented. In particular, frontline workers who have close and trusting relationships with marginalised service users are well-placed to challenge prevailing social constructs. At the same time, service providers are part of the web of 'tutelary complex' (Donzelot 1979) that subject families to the perpetual surveillance of the state in order to correct or normalize their conduct. This paradox faced by service providers is highlighted by Gilbert and Powell (2011) who observe that social work is simultaneously a means of disciplinary surveillance that perpetuates the objectification of the marginalised groups, as well as a potential means of resistance that challenges the status quo of these groups. This tension within service

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provision agencies is highlighted in Chapter Three where the general manager and the centre coordinator have different views on children's involvement in this research. However, the centre coordinator's ability to challenge the organisational view on children's research highlights the 'microphysics of power' (Foucault 1979) between practitioners and managers that offer opportunities for bottom-up resistance. Practitioners are able to use their professional discretion as a means to bargain and negotiate over responsibility (Evans & Harris 2004). Indeed, it is the shifting networks of power relations operating at mundane levels between managers, practitioners and service users that open up spaces where contestations of meanings about social inclusion can occur. Several scholars have noted the potential of social workers to contest the negative social constructs of their marginalised clients (Beresford 2001; Evans & Harris 2004; Hodge 2005; Pease 2002) although social work is itself a discipline about normalising the behaviour of their clients (McLaughlin 2005; Stepney 2006). Yet, as this research has shown, within the various corrective disciplines, there are differences and contestations of how best to provide help to their clients. For example, the frontline workers in Chapter Six did not agree that children with behaviour problems should be 'fixed' through a medical model, or that homeless teenagers were troublemakers. Instead, they challenged these social constructs of children with their own construction of children as professionals of their lives. By emphasising flexible, strengths-based approaches, the social inclusion agenda has laid bare this continuous tension among service providers and the complex micro-politics involving different levels of service provision bureaucracy and service users. Recognising this inherent tension is the first step to understanding how frontline practitioners can adopt a position of reflexivity to their work (Taylor & White 2000) that allows them to acknowledge their power position in relation to their clients and use this position to address the marginalisation of their clients.

8.3.2   Children as Beings and Becomings

This thesis has highlighted the fact that when policy frameworks treat children as future citizen-workers (Lister 2003), children's current concerns become hidden. Furthermore, when children are conceptualised as future beings or 'becomings', this reinforces other social constructs of children as problems to be 'fixed', placing emphasis on children's vulnerability and incompetence when measured against the assumed completeness of

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adults (Lee, 2001). Furthermore, the construction of children as future beings has the effect of neglecting groups of children who are not perceived as good investments and overlooking the importance of mothers' welfare (Lister 2006). In fact, the social inclusion agenda, as defined by policymakers, is largely framed in adults' terms even though children's welfare has been used as a political rhetoric to justify the government's investment in new policy initiatives and social programmes (Dobrowolsky 2002). Politically and morally, it is difficult to argue against children's social inclusion even though what social inclusion means to children is unclear in the policy discourse.

Despite children being used as a political rhetoric in the social inclusion discourse, their inclusion in the discourse has the effect of bringing children's issues to the foreground of social policies. Federally funded social inclusion initiatives such as Communities for Children (CFC) have provided much needed support programmes for parents and children living in low socio-economic areas. Similarly, state-funded programmes such as the Innovative Community Action Networks (ICAN) have provided flexible learning options for students that enabled them to stay engaged in schools. The economic narrative of social inclusion that projects children as 'becomings' or future beings is important even though this thesis has demonstrated the problems that accompanies this conceptualisation of children. The findings of this thesis also support studies on the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout 1997; James et al.1998; Mayall 2002) that emphasise the competency of children as 'beings' or social actors in their own right. However, as argued by Uprichard (2008, p. 305), it is precisely the opposition between the concepts of the child as a 'being' or a 'becoming' that reinforces the hierarchical adult/child dualism. Therefore, theorising children as both 'beings' and 'becomings' recognises that children as social agents take part in constructing their present as well as future lives (Uprichard 2008). This is supported by children's views in this research that highlight children's agency in managing their day-to-day concerns as well as their concerns about their future. For example, in Chapter Seven, children in high school had begun to look for part-time employment opportunities or to take part in other unpaid activities in order to prepare for their transition from school to work. The policy discourse on social inclusion concentrates on the economic participation of children in the future and this narrative is important to children. At the same time, other narratives

about social inclusion are important to children and children see these different dimensions of social inclusion as interrelated rather than separate. The limitation of the social inclusion discourse is not in its conceptualisation of children as 'becomings', but that the discourse overemphasises this without understanding that children's future is inextricably tied to their agency as social actors who are constantly negotiating and co-constructing their childhoods with adults.

8.3.3   Children as Co-narrators and Experts

Understanding children as both competent social actors and future citizens means that the temporality of childhood needs to be addressed. The present discourse of social inclusion where every individual has an opportunity to 'learn, earn, engage and have a say' is an adult-centric one as it is framed upon the assumption that the concepts of learning, earning, engagement or having a say have the same meanings for all children regardless of age. While older children in this research have some shared understanding on these aspects of social inclusion with policymakers and service providers, younger children find this framing of social inclusion less relevant to their lives. This is not to say that younger children do not understand the different dimensions of social inclusion, but that the way these dimensions are being framed by the policy discourse does not resonate with them. To a large extent, this is because the discourse of social inclusion presumes the freedom of individuals to learn, earn, engage and have a say. In fact, social inclusion would be considered as a technology of responsibilisation, a strategy deployed through the government of freedom (Rose 1999, p. 74). However, younger children do not enjoy as much freedom as older children in terms of choosing what they wish to participate in. For example, younger children are given less choices on what they wish to learn in schools, they are not allowed to participate in paid employment, if they participate in social or civic engagements, they are supervised by adults and often, they are not given a say at all, whether at home or at school.

For social inclusion to be relevant to younger children, the issues of power and freedom to make choices need to be addressed. This means that the framing of social inclusion as learning, earning, engagement or having a say needs to be reviewed through the perspectives of younger children. Younger children in this research have provided glimpses of the aspects of social inclusion that are important to them. For example,

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social relations with peers and family dominated our discussions rather than discussions on school experiences or their aspirations for the future. It is also observed in this research that younger children do not distinguish between learning, playing or working as clearly as adults or older children do. As shown in Chapter Three, younger children simultaneously treat their involvement in this research as a fun activity, as well as being serious about providing accurate information. In the process of playing, children are also learning about themselves, co-constructing their identities and their sense of social order (Cobb-Moore et al. 2009; Danby 2005). Similarly, younger children talk about performing housework as part of their responsibility as a member of their families, but babysitting their younger siblings also means doing fun activities with them. In addition, important social relations for younger children occasionally extend to their pets or even fictional characters, where values such as humour, empathy and imagination are emphasised alongside values of trust, respect or fairness. Therefore, instead of viewing social inclusion through the adult lens of learning, earning, engagement or having a say, younger children are perhaps suggesting that social inclusion is also about social relations, empathy and having a laugh together.

This means that if policymakers and service providers are serious about reframing the discourse of social inclusion through the perspectives of children, new research needs to begin by discarding the present understanding of social inclusion and focusing on what social inclusion means for different age groups of children. Therefore, instead of referencing children as one of the socially excluded groups, children should be co-narrators of the social inclusion discourse. As argued by Bang and Esmark (2010, p. 268),

> Political decision and action can, and should, be studied from below as well as from above, concentrating on both the emergence, consolidation, and change of political hegemony and the creative potential for change inherent to the political practices of the so-called marginalised, repressed, and excluded.

For a start, child-led research on social inclusion should be encouraged and the findings of these studies need to be treated as credible contributions to policies. Child-led research not only acknowledges children as actors, it will achieve a more balanced adult-child power relation (Mason & Hood 2011). However, one needs to guard against research practices involving children as researchers that are exploitative or that lead them to be misrepresented (James 2007, p. 268). If children are seen as partners and

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stakeholders in the social inclusion agenda, they will need to be involved in the collaborative processes among policymakers and service providers, not merely to have their views heard, but to have those views published and communicated. This supports the citizenship and rights-based framework of participation proposed by Wearing (2011) that emphasises the lived experiences and heterogeneous identities of excluded children and young people. Similarly, Needham (2007, p.209) advocates for a co-production model between public services and service users in public service reforms. As co-producers of policy and service reforms, children become co-experts of their own policy narratives and are actively engaged in challenging or shifting the entrenched social constructions of themselves as passive or incompetent beings.

8.4   Social Inclusion: Bringing in the Human Rights Narrative

The concept of social inclusion has shifted the narrow view of poverty as a problem of material deprivation by uncovering the multi-dimensional nature of economic and social disadvantages. Its broad and amorphous character lends itself to multiple discourses and parallel narratives that may be interpreted in various ways. To a large extent, this characteristic makes it a slippery concept for policymakers and service providers to grapple with. Its critics use this aspect of social inclusion as their main argument against adopting it as a specific social policy agenda. However, it is this open discursive nature of social inclusion that opens up new spaces for policy debates and discussion. The fact that social inclusion allows for multiple interpretations means that alternative narratives, especially from marginalised groups, have a greater chance of joining the policy discourse. In this way, social inclusion carries the potential to compel policymakers and service providers to rethink existing assumptions about the most disadvantaged groups or individuals that may no longer be valid. As a dynamic policy discourse, social inclusion is able to capture changing issues, needs and problems across different social groups and across time.

However, as this research has shown, this conceptual potential of social inclusion has not been realised fully. Existing power relations, entrenched social constructs, norms and values continue to perpetrate some of the narrow interpretations of what constitutes poverty and deprivation despite the new language of social inclusion. In particular, social inclusion continues to be about a relatively small group of individuals who are

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constructed as 'socially excluded', instead of treating social inclusion as the right of every citizen. A new narrative that is anchored on the right of all citizens to be socially included is needed to reframe what social inclusion means (Szoke 2009). As Freeman (1998, pp. 441-442) argues, rights are not about 'having' but rather, about 'being'. For children, this means that their rights should not be tied to their competency or capacity, which children 'have' in different and changing levels, but rights are tied to them by virtue of their being as children (Freeman 1998, p. 442). More importantly, rights of 'being' are concerned with dignity and decency (Freeman 1998, p. 442), values which children in this research have consistently expressed as being important to them. Dignity, respect, fairness are also values espoused in the social inclusion policy discourse, but these values are often used as symbolic, rhetorical devices than as guiding principles in practice. As Williams (2004) argues, the centre-staging of children in social policy needs to consider children's place in society through developing values such as respect, trust and entitlement, rather than framing children as 'risks' or 'opportunities' for the future.

If children are treated as co-narrators of the social inclusion discourse, they may introduce a new narrative that suggests ways of translating the values of dignity, respect and fairness into policy practice. When social inclusion policies are based on rights of 'being', the policy shifts from changing individuals' behaviour to removing structural barriers that prevent people from exercising their rights. Similarly, a children's rights perspective on social inclusion will focus less on control or disciplining children into ideal citizens and more on creating opportunities within structures that enable children to exercise their right to participate in matters important to them. As Such and Walker (2005) note, the contradictory policies on children's welfare by the New Labour in the UK brought debates on children's rights and responsibilities to the foreground. Similarly, although the social inclusion agenda in Australia overemphasises children's future as employed citizens, the rhetorical function of the moral grand narrative on fairness allows policymakers and service providers to construct new frameworks that treat children with fairness and respect.

Yet, the discourse on human and children's rights is usually paired with the discourse on personal responsibility, which is another way of framing rights as 'having' instead of

'being'. Under the discourse on personal responsibility, rights become conditional upon the individual behaving responsibly, whereby the definitions of responsible behaviour are determined by the state. More often than not, responsible behaviour under the social inclusion discourse means being in paid employment; or for children, attending school. As Melton (2008, p. 913) argues, rights should not be contingent upon the fulfilment of a responsibility since the concept of rights is useless if it is only applied to good, responsible individuals. Indeed, being treated with dignity and respect is particularly important to individuals in poverty, more so than for these individuals to be given a 'right' to participate in decision-making (Nevile 2008). Thus far, this research has suggested that a person's right to be treated with dignity and respect should be realised before an individual can feel responsible for his or her own circumstances. When individuals have had their right to be treated with respect breached on repeated occasions, they no longer see themselves as valued members of their community and may then resort to irresponsible behaviour. By focusing on children who are facing multiple disadvantages, this research has provided a glimpse of how the gradual erosion of self-respect may begin early in childhood, where children's views or problems are often ignored or not taken seriously. As argued by Giesinger (2012), children who have been encouraged to see themselves as legitimate bearers of claims, and have their views taken seriously, will have a better sense of self-respect. However, for some of the most disadvantaged children, not only do they face a violation of their right to be respected, they are also witnesses to the lack of respect that their family members face. This is worrying because the lack of respect that these children face comes from multiple sources, as a direct or indirect experience. As observed by Ridge (2011, p. 82), the personal and relational aspects of multiple disadvantages bring severe burdens of stigma, shame, sadness and fear of being identified as different for children.

The current policy assumption that personal responsibility comes before rights can be realised runs counter to the findings of this research which suggests that the right to be treated with dignity and respect must be realised (indeed it begins with children being treated with dignity), before an individual can see the social and economic benefits of acting responsibly. Yet, the discussion on responsibility is an important one within any human rights discourse. Although the claim on rights should not be contingent on the fulfilment of certain responsibilities for an individual, rights can only be realised if they

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are recognised by those whom the claims are made against. It is for this reason that international human rights instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children, are tied to obligations of state governments. Children's rights, therefore, are as much about adults' responsibility to recognise children's rights as it is about children's well-being. Indeed, discussions on children's rights need to include adults' obligations to support children in their claims or realisation of their rights. In this way, policymakers and service providers play critical roles in the social inclusion of children. Just as policymakers and service providers reproduce the culture of control on children, the increasingly complex, hybrid and contradictory modes of governance mean that there are spaces for contestation of this control (Muncie 2006). In this research, frontline workers in service provider agencies who recognise children's right to be heard, have made a difference by respecting the views of the children in their agencies and by giving them various opportunities to take part in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Policymakers who articulated the importance of treating service users with respect in their work showed that the value of respect is not only used as a rhetorical device in the policy discourse on social inclusion. In their own small but significant efforts, these policymakers and service providers have taken on the responsibility to challenge old narratives of social inclusion and construct new narratives that respect the dignity of those who have been deemed to be socially excluded.

Social inclusion is an on-going policy project that has the potential to challenge and shift current discourses that disempowers the most disadvantaged groups in society. By incorporating a rights-based perspective in the policy discourse of social inclusion, a new narrative can then be told that enables the most excluded groups to participate in the policy conversations that will make a difference to their lives.

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