Social Exclusion in Rural Areas: A Review of Recent Research

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1. Introduction

This paper reviews recent research on social exclusion in rural areas of England, giving an indication of how this has been addressed successfully in practice, and going on to suggest avenues for future research. The paper begins with a discussion of approaches to studying social exclusion in rural areas and of the meaning of the term "social exclusion". Following this, the paper draws on a number of recent empirical studies to illustrate how social exclusion operates in rural areas of Britain and how it has been addressed in practice.

2. Approaches to studying social exclusion.

Concepts: Poverty, Deprivation, Disadvantage, Social Exclusion and Marginalisation

Poverty is usually viewed as an outcome, denoting an inability to share in the everyday lifestyles of the majority because of a lack of resources (often taken to be disposable income). Disadvantage is essentially similar but is multi-dimensional, considering all aspects of a person's life and not only income or expenditure (Townsend 1979). The concept of deprivation is slightly different, focusing on the lack of certain essentials such as food, housing, mobility or services. In contrast, social exclusion is seen as a multi-dimensional, dynamic process which refers to the breakdown or malfunctioning of the major systems in society that should guarantee the social integration of the individual or household (Berghman 1995). It implies a focus less on "victims" but more upon the processes which cause exclusion. It also acknowledges the importance of the local context in such processes. Thus, while the notion of poverty is primarily *distributional*, the concept of social exclusion focuses primarily on *relational* issues (detachment from labour markets, low participation, social isolation, and especially the exercise of power).

In recent years, policy debates about inequality have tended to focus on social exclusion rather than on poverty. The concept developed out of the EU anti-poverty programme (Room 1995), and has been widely adopted. For example, in Britain tackling social exclusion was an immediate priority of the Labour Government in 1997 and its newly established Social Exclusion Unit.

The concept of social exclusion is contested, nevertheless, and no single agreed definition exists. The term has been used in three competing ways in UK policy debates (Levitas 1999):

- an "**integrationist**" approach in which employment is seen as the key integrating force, both through earned income, identity and sense of self-worth, and networks;
- a "**poverty**" approach in which the causes of exclusion are related to low income and a lack of material resources;
- an "**underclass**" approach in which the excluded are viewed as deviants from the moral and cultural norms of society, exhibit a "culture of poverty" or a "dependency culture" and are blamed for their own poverty and its intergenerational transmission.

These have been summarised as 'no work', 'no money' and 'no morals' respectively. This paper takes an amended integrationist approach in the belief that this offers the most potential for

developing an understanding of processes of social exclusion, but that these processes extend far beyond the labour market and indeed are multi-dimensional (Shucksmith and Chapman 1998).

A particularly fruitful way of viewing processes of social exclusion and inclusion is as overlapping spheres of integration (see Philip and Shucksmith 2003). In a similar approach to Kesteloot (1998), Duffy (1995) and Meert (1999), Reimer (1998) argues that it is helpful to distinguish the dimensions of social exclusion according to the different means through which resources are allocated in society. He proposes four systems, each with its own logic, which capture better the different processes which operate. They are as follows :

1. Private systems, representing market processes
2. State systems, incorporating authority structures with bureaucratic and legal processes
3. Voluntary systems, encompassing collective action processes
4. Family and friends networks, a system associated with reciprocal and cultural processes

One's sense of belonging in society, as well as one's purchase on resources, depends on all these systems. Indeed some have argued that these form the basis of citizenship. Accordingly, it may be helpful to conceptualise and analyse processes of social exclusion and inclusion (in both urban and rural areas) in relation to the means by which resources and status are allocated in society, in these four categories. In turn, this will require an analysis of the exercise of power.

Differing perspectives in rural research

Early research into disadvantage in rural Scotland (Shucksmith et al 1994, 1996), together with Cloke et al's (1994, 1997) rural lifestyles studies in England and Wales, identified processes of exclusion, marginalisation and disadvantage operating differentially in many rural areas of Britain. Labour markets and housing markets were instrumental in generating inequality and exclusion, with many respondents perceiving very restricted opportunities for well-paid, secure employment or for affordable housing, while at the same time these markets enabled affluent households to move into rural areas. Young people, older people and women tended to have the fewest options. These impediments to inclusion were closely bound up with failings of private and public services, most notably transport, social housing and childcare. Moreover, the welfare state was patently failing to reach potential recipients and the take-up of benefit entitlements was lower than in urban areas. Access to advice and information in distant urban centres was problematic, and respondents were often confused about the benefits available and their entitlement. To mitigate these failings of markets and state, there was a greater reliance on the voluntary sector (which was itself under pressure as volunteers – mainly women – declined in number) and on friends and family. However, migration and the loss of young people, also related to housing and labour market processes, ruptured informal support networks and left elderly people socially isolated. This analysis is elaborated in Philip and Shucksmith (1999, 2003).

Recent research has tended to develop our knowledge of social exclusion and related concepts from one of three contrasting perspectives: a predominantly structuralist approach; an experiential approach informed particularly by cultural geography; and a more instrumental approach based on statistical indicators. Each of these is now considered in turn.

The more structural approach begins from the premise that economies and societies of rural areas of Europe are changing rapidly in the face of globalisation, economic restructuring, migration, and other social and policy changes reviewed by Shucksmith (2001). These forces have different implications for different areas and different social groups, in a wide diversity of rural contexts, so producing advantage and disadvantage, inclusion and exclusion. While emphasising the role of these forces as the motors of change, this approach does not deny the importance of human agency in negotiating, mediating and resisting these structural forces, but it does seek to understand exclusion in terms of metanarratives. Thus, for example, Shucksmith (2001) draws attention to the effects on individuals in rural areas of the ascendancy of market processes, and

the waning of state systems, as a result of the neo-liberal hegemony which has hastened deregulation, privatisation, reductions in public expenditure and global capital's penetration of labour and product markets. The effects of these changes on particular social groups are elaborated by a number of writers. Furthermore, Shucksmith argues that the very processes which have supported the economic restructuring and gentrification of many rural areas, allowing rural areas to "share in the nation's prosperity", have also created social exclusion and inequality. Such studies have been pursued using 'mixed-methods', employing statistical analysis of large sets of microdata to seek evidence of patterns and causes of social exclusion (Phimister et al, 2000; Kempson and White 2001) and, in parallel to this, qualitative methods in case study areas or with particular social groups to explore the experience of disadvantage and exclusion.

An alternative perspective derives from the "cultural turn" in human geography and has produced a large body of academic work which is relatively less known to research users, for a variety of reasons. Such studies tend to be "written for and consumed by academics" (Milbourne 2000) often in "a language that made sense only to the cognoscenti" with "little if any talk of the political purchase of critical ideas beyond the walls of the classroom or the pages of academic journals" (Blomley 1994, 383), although Milbourne (2000) has called for 'critical' geographers to seek out new audiences beyond the walls of the academy. The seminal work was Philo's (1992) paper on "the rural other", which showed how people in rural areas might be "othered" or marginalised through cultural practices in everyday life, and particularly through the social construction of identity and symbolic capital in social and lay discourses. Cloke, Little, Milbourne and many younger members both of the RESSG and the RGS-IBG have followed this approach in revealing and elaborating "othering" processes in rural England and Wales, primarily through qualitative work and increasingly through ethnographic studies which seek to give voice to marginalised people and groups (Cloke and Little 1997; Milbourne 1997, Hughes, Morris and Seymour 2000). Indeed, despite its insularity this is by far the dominant style in current rural research and has produced many exciting and potentially policy-relevant insights.

To illustrate how these approaches differ, without necessarily contradicting one another, consider recent research into young people and social exclusion in rural Britain. A number of studies funded by JRF as part of their Action in Rural Areas programme (Rugg and Jones 1999; Storey and Brannen 2000, Cartmel and Furlong 2000) and an EU project on Policies and Young People in Rural Development (Jentsch and Shucksmith 2003) have pursued the former approach, employing a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods to reveal the many ways in which exclusion amongst young people derives from the operation of labour markets, housing markets, individualisation and local political processes, as well as social class and gender. For example, Storey and Brannen showed that in rural England the age at which young people first gained access to a vehicle, and the age at which they gained their driving licence, was two years later for working-class than middle-class young people, and also two years later for women than men. As an example of the latter approach, Leyshon (2003) has recently studied youth identity, culture and marginalisation in the countryside to reveal how everyday social interactions in the pub and in the village marginalise young women and many young men through a process of "othering". Thus, young men drinking in village pubs gain affirmation of their rural identity from peers and older males through adopting an exclusive, hierarchical, homophobic and sexist discourse which serves to marginalise young women and other young men whose identity as "rural" is thereby called into question. Marginalisation also arises from being denied one's own space for social interaction, not because of physical distance and lack of transport but as a result of power-laden interactions with peers and adults within the village. "For rural youth, marginality is in part founded upon adult surveillance and regulation of activities and spaces within the countryside" (Leyshon 2003, 236). These examples illustrate not only the difference between these two perspectives but also the complementary merits of each, each shedding light on different aspects of exclusion.

A third approach to studying social exclusion is through the construction of statistical indicators, often with the purpose of informing and guiding resource allocation or of supporting a case for resource targeting. This indeed was the origin of the term "rural deprivation" in the 1970s, as a

counter to the threat of loss of funding to urban authorities, leading to several attempts to measure rural deprivation through what became known as the "arithmetic of woe" (McLaughlin 1986). Attempts to construct indices of deprivation which can be applied usefully to both rural and urban areas have been fraught with difficulty, however, partly because of the different meanings in rural and urban contexts of frequently used indicators such as car ownership, and the urban bias inherent in other indicators such as high-rise accommodation, but mainly because area measures are less relevant to the scattered incidence of rural deprivation, disadvantage or exclusion. The ecological fallacy is even more evident in rural areas of socially heterogeneous population. This, together with a lack of relevant small-area data, has frustrated attempts to construct robust "rural" indicators of deprivation, and has led many to call for measures targeted less at areas and rather at individuals and social groups in rural contexts. It should also be noted that the recent research on exclusion in rural areas is highlighting social, cultural and symbolic processes which are very difficult to measure in such indicators, such as those noted above in relation to young people.

Thus, the proposed Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (ODPM 2002) has been criticised by the Countryside Agency and representatives of rural areas for including domains which reflect and capture urban experience (eg. crime and physical environment) and neglecting the rural. Moreover, the scale at which it is proposed (wards) is deemed insufficiently detailed to capture deprived rural areas, if such a concept is helpful at all. Instead, during 2001 the Countryside Agency prepared, and consulted on its own Indicators of Rural Disadvantage which drew upon many of the same data sources as the IMD but adding additional data sets and focusing on intra-rural differences (data presented according to quintiles and deciles). This advice will shortly be updated. The Countryside Agency also plans to continue seeking better ways to measure rural deprivation, including a review of the appropriateness of area-based statistics, beginning with an analysis of Census Rehearsal data on incomes and income variation within small areas. One element will be identification of qualitative research necessary for interpretation of the indicators.

In reviewing these three approaches, it is evident that there are insights to be gained from both of the first two perspectives, in that each sheds light on different processes and sources of social exclusion, all of which are important in rural societies. Each may also offer avenues for policy and practice to address exclusion. The third approach, that of indicators of deprivation, is most problematic even though it may be most valued by policy and practice communities competing for resources and keen to target these effectively on the basis of hard evidence. A particular challenge, returned to below, is how to bring together 'hard' and 'soft' evidence to inform policy.

A challenge for researchers is to transcend these different disciplinary perspectives and to draw together insights from both structure/agency and experiential approaches. This might be pursued by placing social exclusion within the broader study of processes of local-global interaction, involving grounded working in specific (rural) localities as part of a mixed-methods, multi-level approach which also includes analysis of large data-sets and surveys, so allowing an examination of the iterative nature of the connection between the local and the global. Such an approach would draw on theories of global restructuring, governance and social change as well as theories of identity, resistance, power and social justice. Inevitably this will also involve problematising the issue of working with apparently complementary methodologies which derive from conflicting epistemologies (Shucksmith et al. 2002). Conceiving of social exclusion in this way holds out the hope of being able to connect the macro-level forces which operate to structure disadvantage and inequality with the micro-level experience (and voices) of individuals in rural areas – that is, of being able to relate history to biography (Byrne 1999).

The remaining sections of this paper review recent research in a number of arenas, or domains, which illustrate the operation, and interaction, of these systems of inclusion and exclusion. While some headings echo those used in the IMD, this is not always appropriate.

3. Incomes in Rural England : Poverty amongst Affluence.

Since 1997 we have learned a huge amount about incomes and poverty in rural areas. Before then, most research into rural poverty sought only to count the numbers of poor or disadvantaged people at a point in time, but even this was not achieved definitively. Yet, it is not enough to count the numbers and describe the characteristics of such people. It is necessary to understand and monitor the *processes* of social exclusion and to identify the factors that can trigger entry or exit from situations of exclusion (Leisering and Walker 1998), using quantitative analysis of longitudinal panel surveys and/or qualitative methods to follow the dynamics of change.

In the last five years, following identification of this as a research priority by Shucksmith et al (1997) in a report to the RDC, research has begun to be conducted on dynamic processes, and the identification of "bridges and barriers" to exclusion and integration. In rural areas there had previously been very little, if any, research of this type. For example, we had no knowledge of whether those individuals found to be experiencing poverty by McLaughlin in rural England in 1980 were the same people identified by Cloke et al. in 1990. Were we dealing with short spells of poverty experienced by many people in rural society, or long spells of poverty experienced only by a small minority? This is of fundamental importance not only in terms of individual strategies, but also in terms of the degree of solidarity within rural society.

As part of JRF's Action in Rural Areas programme, the first work to help answer these questions, an analysis of rural households in the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)[1], followed the same randomly-selected 7,164 individuals each year between 1991-96 (Chapman et al. 1998). A similar, more recent study by Kempson and Noble (2001) was able to analyse a larger number of years (1991-1999) in the BHPS, using the same postcode-based definition. Work by the New Policy Institute (Harrop and Palmer 2002) defines rural England mainly at district council level and uses data for only one year from the Family Resources Survey, with occasional analysis of the BHPS from 1997-99. Each of these gives slightly different results, as one would expect.

Chapman et al found proportionately fewer individuals affected by low income in rural areas and that spells of low income tend to be shorter with the proportion of those who are 'persistently poor' significantly less. Despite this favourable comparison, prosperity was far from universal in rural Britain : a third of individuals in rural areas had experienced at least one spell where their income fell below half mean income, and 54% experienced a spell with income below three-quarters of mean income during 1991-96. Moreover, gross income inequalities intensified in both rural and non-rural areas over that period, which was characterised by major economic restructuring and cuts in public spending. Harrop and Palmer confirmed that in 2000 a smaller proportion of people in rural areas lived in low income households: 21% of people in remote rural districts, 17% in accessible rural districts, and 24% in urban districts lived in households with incomes below 60% of the British median. However, Kempson and Noble, with their longer series of data, found that there was no difference between the incidence of income poverty between rural and urban Britain during 1991-99: poverty "is just as much a feature of rural life." Harrop and Palmer, though found that poverty was more persistent in remote rural areas than in either urban or more accessible rural districts. "More than half the households on low income in rural districts in 1997 remained on low income throughout 1998 and 1999" (p.21).

Chapman et al's work indicated no difference in the probabilities of escaping from low income between the rural and non-rural areas, but that those in rural areas were at less risk of falling back into low income once they have left it than those in non-rural areas. Kempson and Noble confirm the similarity of rates of entry into and exit from poverty. "Over the course of a year, broadly similar proportions of rural and urban populations move into poverty and similar proportions move out. Children and women are especially susceptible to entering poverty and, once poor,

[1] More details are given in Chapman P et al (1998) and in Kempson E and White M (2001).

find it hard to escape. Single people of all ages are vulnerable to poverty, but while elderly people and lone parents face long-term poverty, for other single people it is often short-lived."

Both studies agreed that the "people who were most vulnerable to long-term poverty included elderly people (especially those living alone and widows), lone parents, families with three or more dependent children and people who had no academic or vocational qualifications. These four groups of people not only had the highest risk of entering poverty but, having done so, also had the least chance of escaping. Women had a greater vulnerability to long-term poverty than men," largely because they were over-represented among elderly single people and lone parents (Kempson and Noble 2001, 83). Shorter-term poverty, though, "was associated with young people, aged under 25, and single people under the age of retirement."

Chapman et al. had also found that there are significant rural/non-rural differences in the demographic and economic events associated with escape from and entry into low income, raising the question of what other 'triggers' and 'trampolines' might operate in rural areas. Kempson and Noble found, on the contrary, that "similar triggers operate in both rural and non-rural areas". Loss of earned income was the main trigger for those of working age, and changes in benefit payments were associated with many of the moves into poverty of those over 65.

Kempson and Noble found that "two life events increased the risk of entering poverty more than ten-fold: becoming a lone parent and a big drop in the number of weeks worked… Other important triggers included job termination, enetering unemployment and a fall in the number of earners in the household," each quadrupling the risk of entering poverty. Entering retirement or becoming an independent household each tripled the risk. The events that most increased the chances of leaving poverty were a big increase in the number of weeks worked (six-fold), leaving unemployment, entry into a job from either unemployment or economic inactivity, becoming self-employed, getting married or otherwise joing a larger household (each trebled the chances of leaving poverty). These factors had a similar effect in urban and rural areas alike.

The presence of children in a household was found by Kempson and Noble to be strongly associated with moves into poverty. Children's fates were inextricably linked with their mothers', most obviously through marital break-up and lone parenthood but also in terms of employment, if their mother's earnings fall. Once poor, children are likely to experience poverty for extended periods of time. Harrop and Palmer (2002) show not only that half of lone parent households in rural districts are on low incomes but that there are fewer lone parents in rural districts. Looking at child poverty in general they found that 26% of children in remote rural districts, and 22% in accessible rural districts, live in low income households, compared to 33% in urban districts. The risk of children being in low income households is affected mainly by economic circumstances, and for any given economic status the risks are similar in urban and rural districts (p.44).

Chapman et al.'s analysis also revealed that the relative prosperity of households in rural Britain is not so much the result of strong rural economies but rather of selective migration. Richer people are moving into, and poorer people are moving out of, rural areas so causing a progressive gentrification of the countryside. Far from showing that rural people are part of an increasingly prosperous "one nation", rising rural prosperity is an indication of an increasing spatial divide within Britain, described even in 1973 as "this very civilised British version of apartheid" (Hall et al. 1973). Related research by Bate, Best and Holmans (2000) confirms that there is a socially-selective and age-selective drift out of the towns and cities to the suburbs and rural areas, with only the relatively wealthy achieving the widespread dream of a house in the country, while the less well-off can only move to the outer or inner suburbs, or remain in the inner city. This issue, and the power relations which underlie it, are discussed further in section 6 below. Kempson and Noble (2002, 85) confirm that "rural areas are exporting poor people who move to look for work and that, without this movement, entry to poverty in rural areas would be even higher."

Low incomes in rural areas have often been blamed on low pay, related to small-firms, lack of unionisation, and low skills. Chapman et al's research found only a weak relationship between low income and low pay, and far more association between poverty and detachment from labour markets, despite the low levels of registered unemployment. Few of those on low incomes in rural areas are low paid, because few are in work. The greatest number are older people. Of those of working age on low income in rural Britain, only 22 per cent are in employment; 23 per cent are self-employed (far more than in non-rural areas); 13 per cent are unemployed; and 41 per cent are detached from the labour market in other ways (e.g. long-term sick (male) or family carers (female)). The composition of low income households differed significantly between rural and non-rural areas with, for example, the self-employed a much more significant component of rural low income households than is found in non-rural areas. The processes behind these statistics are discussed in detail in the next section.

The principal groups experiencing poverty in rural Britain are, therefore :

- elderly people living alone (predominantly elderly widows) and elderly couples, often relying solely on the state pension - this is by far the largest single group;
- children, especially of lone parents, or of workless households;
- low-paid, manual workers' households : rural areas do contain a disproportionate number of people in low-wage sectors, notably agriculture and tourism, and in small workplaces;
- those detached from labour markets, either formally unemployed, or registered as long-term sick or disabled : half of all males in this category are aged 55-64;
- self-employed people : a major source of rural poverty among those of working age.

As elsewhere, the principal axes of inequality are social class, age and gender. The main causes of entering poverty are loss of earned income (for those under 65) and changes in benefit regulations (for those over 65), and these are considered in the next two sections in more detail.

The most challenging finding of the research on disadvantage in rural Scotland (Shucksmith et al 1994, 1996) was that rural people's own assessment was at odds with official definitions of poverty. Most looked back on the improvements since their own childhood, when they lacked running water, electricity and TVs, and so could not conceive of themselves as poor. This is reinforced by the obstacle of the rural idyll, as widely acknowledged (Little 2002).

> "The rural idyll conceals poverty....the poor unwittingly conspire with the more affluent to hide their poverty by denying its existence. Those values which are at the heart of the rural idyll result in the poor tolerating their material deprivation because of the priority given to those symbols of the rural idyll: the family, the work ethic and good health. And when that material deprivation becomes so chronic by the standard of the area that it has to be recognised by the poor themselves, shame forces secrecy and the management of that poverty within the smallest possible framework.... [At the same time] newcomers do not want to see poverty because it is anathema to the rural idyll which they are seeking to preserve" (Fabes, Worsely and Howard, 1993).

The rural idyll may therefore be an obstacle both to attempts at empowerment and to encouraging people to take-up benefit entitlements without stigma or loss of self-esteem. Overcoming resistance to these entitlements is a fundamental task for those seeking to tackle social exclusion, and this is discussed further in section 5 below.

Despite this wealth of data on income poverty in rural areas, we remain less well informed about the survival and coping strategies which people on low incomes in rural areas adopt. Shucksmith et al (1997) called for qualitative work to investigate this in parallel to that already undertaken in

urban areas, and this need remains, notwithstanding all the ethnographic work undertaken by critical geographers with 'other' groups in rural areas.

4. Employment and Labour Market Integration.

According to Berghman (1995), the three major "bridges" towards inclusion are gaining employment, changes in family or household composition, and receiving welfare benefits, but are these the same in rural areas? Kempson and White (2001) suggest that these are also the principal means of escaping low income in rural England. Increases in income could be achieved either through gaining a job, by increasing the number of hours worked, by an increase in the number of earners in the household, or through changes in benefit entitlements and levels.

Low pay is a particular problem. The BHPS analysis of low pay and unemployment (Chapman et al. 1998) revealed further significant rural/non-rural differences. Persistent unemployment is less common in rural areas but persistent low pay is more widespread in rural than in non-rural areas. Analysis of the key characteristics associated with low pay in general revealed only a few significant differences. The relatively low escape rate from low pay for individuals employed in small rural workplaces, combined with their dominance in rural employment, suggested that a lack of mobility from small employers in rural areas may be an important explanatory factor and this was confirmed in the qualitative studies in the JRF programme (see below). The introduction of the minimum wage in the late 1990s should have played an important part in keeping households that depend on low-paid employment out of poverty (Phimister 2001), and the new Working Families Tax Credit will have raised the incomes of people with children who have low-paid jobs. Harrop and Palmer (2002, 23) have shown that the proportion of working age adults in receipt of in-work means-tested tax credits is higher in remote rural districts (4.4%) than in either accessible rural or urban districts, particularly in respect of couples with children.

In terms of the aggregate dynamics over the period 1991-1995, a number of features were observed, such as the closing of the rural/non-rural male unemployment gap; a significant growth in female hours worked; and finally, for rural women sufficiently strong, and for rural men sufficiently weak, aggregate wage growth to reverse the gender wage gap such that by 1995 this gap was larger for the rural than the non-rural sample. These reflect broader changes in society.

The bridges and barriers to employment were investigated in greater detail in a number of the projects in the JRF programme, and especially by Monk et al (1999) who looked at two labour markets in Lincolnshire and Suffolk with varying degrees of rurality. They found :

Barriers to finding employment:

- Structure of local labour markets – mismatches between jobs and skills
- Employers' behaviour and attitudes – recruitment through informal social networks
- Accessibility between home and workplace, and especially car-dependency
- The costs of participating in the labour market – childcare, eldercare and the benefits trap
- Specifically rural issues – tied housing, gang labour and seasonality

Bridges to labour market participation:

- Formal job search strategies or linking into local networks
- Self-employment – a risky strategy but perhaps one deserving of more support
- Transport solutions – eg. a works bus, car sharing
- Training – but often a mismatch between local training opportunities and jobs
- Childcare solutions – usually informal (eg. shift-working, home-working, friends, relatives.)
- Support networks and the informal economy

Eliminating low pay, for example by raising the National Minimum Wage, is important for those in work, but this will not in itself assist most low income households. For some, integration into paid employment can resolve their poverty, perhaps with help from the extension of the New Deal to people over 50 and the New Deal for Lone Parents, together with related policy initiatives from the state and voluntary sectors directed at transport, childcare provision and care services. For others it is the level and take-up of state benefits which offers the only prospect of escaping low income (see the next section below).

Work by Beatty and Fothergill (1997,1999) for the Rural Development Commission found evidence of substantial hidden unemployment in rural areas, especially among men. Much of this took the form of premature early retirement and (in particular) a diversion from unemployment to long-term sickness. Distinctively rural dimensions to the problem of joblessness included the difficulties of 'getting to work', the narrow range of jobs available, the low level of wages on offer, and ageism among employers.

More recently these authors (Breeze et al, 2000) have investigated in what ways the New Deal programme needs to be adapted to rural circumstances. Their principal conclusion is that while New Deal addresses the supply side, it is demand-side problems which remain deeply entrenched in rural labour markets. "Put simply, the main reason why so many men remain out-of-work is that there aren't enough jobs to go to." What is needed most in rural areas is job creation, they argue. Moreover, the jobs which are available offer low wages which provide no incentive to come off benefit, even with the newly-introduced Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC). The other distinctively rural barrier to finding work, found in this study, is transport, experienced by those without regular access to a car and especially by those without a driving licence. The authors suggested that New Deal in rural areas should support access to cars among those looking for work. Encouragingly, while Job centres attracted "a torrent of criticism", New Deal advisors were regarded much more positively by those who had personal interviews.

Kempson and White (2001,89-90) were able from their analysis of the BHPS to identify a number of policy areas that would "be key to improving people's chances of getting better-paid and more secure jobs". These were largely supply-side measures including more skills training to reduce the vulnerability of those with few vocational or educational qualifications who were especially susceptible to a cycle of poorly-paid, insecure and often part-time work alternating with periods of unemployment. They also suggested retraining to reflect changes in rural labour markets. Their findings also demonstrate "a real need to improve women's participation in adequately paid full-time jobs, if we are going to tackle child poverty. This, in turn, will depend on improvements in child care, which is notoriously poor in rural areas." However, Mauthner et al (2001) found that parents in rural areas felt it important to look after their children themselves, particularly during the pre-school years, and therefore adjusted their paid work to meet the demands of childcare and childrearing often by taking "flexible" but less secure, part-time jobs. No connection was made in this ethnographic study with issues of child poverty.

The Evaluation of the Countryside Agency's Rural Social Exclusion Programme 1999-2002 (Morris 2002) was able to identify some successful ways of working to address these supply-side issues of labour markets in rural areas. Particularly remote rural areas benefited from dedicated support, suited to local circumstances, to enable those detached from labour markets to thrive and find unemployment rather than drift to cities. For example, projects in South Derbyshire, West Devon and Yorkshire added value and scope to New Deal programmes through, for example, a rural coordinator, a dedicated Intermediate Labour Market officer, a rural access fund, or through outreach work with young people in their own villages.

This evaluation also demonstrated a need for small business support services for self-employed people in rural areas – both at the time when they are entering self-employment and for those in financial difficulties. Micro-finance schemes and small business advisory services would be especially helpful, as demonstrated in a pilot project in the Yorkshire Dales. This was also a

recommendation from Kempson and White's (2001) analysis of the BHPS, where it was noted that promoting and supporting the growth of small businesses in the hotel and catering sector could assist rural diversifcation while also helping women and children escape poverty. While self-employment was found to be an important route for women wishing to return to the labour market, the analysis also showed that "self-employment appears to be a much less satisfactory option for women than it is for men" and that this merits further research.

5. *Welfare Entitlements*

The majority of those of working age facing low incomes in rural Britain experience poverty for relatively short spells, during which the level of benefit and other welfare payments may be crucial in assisting them to cope (Chapman et al. 1998). There is no evidence of welfare dependency in rural areas, and on the contrary people are eager to find work. There is, though, evidence that low levels of wages combine with means-tested benefits and other costs (transport and childcare) to create significant disincentives to accept work. Breeze et al (2000) found that jobs at the national minimum wage (NMW) may be a realistic option for single men and women, especially if living with their parents, but that they would leave those with families financially worse off. Men with significant family responsibilities "typically receive a package that includes income-based Jobseeker's Allowance for themselves, their partner and children, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and free school meals." All these are means-tested and, even with the WFTC, they would be substantially worse off accepting a job at the NMW. To address this benefits trap they conclude it is insufficient to focus on the supply side of the labour market : the creation of better quality jobs in rural areas, with higher wage rates, is required.

Access to Advice and Information

Receipt of welfare benefits is of crucial importance to households of working age during their typically short spells of poverty or unemployment, then, and for older people who form the largest group experiencing low income in rural areas. However there is clear evidence that take-up rates are lower in rural areas (Bramley et al. 2000), and that there is a pressing need for better access to information and advice about state benefit entitlements. The study of disadvantage in rural Scotland (Shucksmith et al. 1994, 1996) found that the uptake of benefits was much lower than would have been expected, given the low incomes of many respondents. Respondents were often confused about the benefits that were available and their entitlement. Access to advice in urban centres was problematic, with benefit offices seen as highly intimidating quite apart from the social stigma of claiming. Other studies have confirmed these findings.

The culture of independence and self-reliance in rural areas would appear to be an important factor mitigating against the collection of state benefits. Individuals were reluctant to claim benefit, seeking instead a second or third job, or preferring to live a more spartan existence. Apart from culture, there is a lack of anonymity in collecting benefits (usually at the village post office) and a greater distance to, and general paucity of, information and advice about eligibility for benefits. Social housing is lacking in rural areas, whereas in urban areas it offers an effective channel for information on benefits and rights to reach those eligible for state support. There is therefore a considerable challenge in attempting to increase the uptake of benefit entitlement in rural areas. Equally, improved uptake could make a powerful impact on poverty in rural areas.

Pensions

One of the most striking findings of the BHPS analysis (Chapman et al. 1998) is how many of those on low incomes in rural areas are beyond working age and reliant largely on the state pension. Analysis of the 2000 Health Survey for England (HSE) for the Countryside Agency found that, when people in care homes are included as well as those in private households, 41% of all people aged over 60 in rural areas "are dependent solely on a state pension and few claim welfare benefits". Kempson and White (2001) found that, for those aged over 65, "year-on-year

changes in benefit payments appeared to be associated with many of the moves into poverty" in rural areas. The level of the pension is therefore of overwhelming importance to their income levels and to their quality of life. Increasing the basic level of pensions is the single measure which would have the greatest impact in addressing poverty and social exclusion in rural areas. In addition, a special effort is required to reach elderly people relying only on state pensions and unaware or unconvinced of their welfare entitlements, and to inform them of these in a sensitive and appropriate way. Harrop and Palmer (2002) found, for example, that the proportion of pensioners in long-term receipt of the Minimum Income Guarantee "is much lower in rural districts than in urban", despite similar proportions experiencing low income. Specific policy changes also impact adversely on elderly people in rural areas, such as increased fuel prices and the diversion of business from sub post offices, and thought should be given to how to mitigate such effects as part of rural-proofing. Indeed, policy makers need to consider older people as a distinct community within rural areas and to make a coordinated policy response. It is apparent that this social group is particularly reliant on state systems, and (to a decreasing extent) on informal support from friends and family.

6. Housing

The supply of affordable rural housing, whether through market, state, voluntary or kinship systems, has long been identified as essential to the vitality and sustainability of rural communities. It is also crucial to the life chances of many of the less prosperous members of rural societies, and to the socially inclusive character of the countryside. Unfortunately, affordable housing is sadly lacking in many rural areas of Britain. The Countryside Agency and many others have identified the lack of affordable housing as one of the most important issues facing rural communities in England.

A recent report from the Rural Development Commission (RDC 1999) begins in this way:

> "Everyone should have access to a good quality, affordable home, but increasingly this opportunity is denied to people on lower incomes in England's rural areas. Lack of affordable housing not only affects individuals and families, but also undermines the achievement of balanced, sustainable, rural communities. The RDC believes that there is an urgent need to tackle the problems of providing affordable housing in rural areas to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of suitable housing for rural people. Without action now rural England will increasingly be home only to the more affluent, and living, working villages will become a thing of the past."

This is confirmed by the analysis of the BHPS (Chapman et al. 1998) which, as noted above, reveals progressive gentrification of rural areas as the more affluent dominate the housing market. To understand better the lack of affordable housing in rural Britain, and the related social exclusion and social changes, one needs to consider the nature of, and influences on, the demand, supply and stock of housing in rural areas, and the roles of all four systems of market, state, voluntary, and family and friends. While there are variations from one area to another in the ways in which these forces operate (documented in a classification of housing markets in rural England for DoE by Shucksmith et al. 1996b), it is possible to summarise the general position.

As in the rest of Britain, the growing number of single person households and the increase in elderly people living apart from their families has increased the demand for housing. The demand in rural areas has, in addition, been augmented by the desire of many town-dwellers for a house in the country. At the same time, supply restrictions (notably planning controls) have permitted relatively few to realise the widespread desire for rural home ownership, and the resulting increase of house prices has caused problems for a sizeable proportion of the indigenous rural population and for potential low income rural dwellers. The evidence suggests that 40% of new households in rural areas are unable to afford home ownership through the open market. The

Countryside Agency's State of the Countryside report includes a map of affordability which shows the areas (rural and urban) in which these problems are most severe.

The planning process has become the arena for a political conflict between those who favour countryside protection and those who seek 'village homes for village people' and this has become more acute in recent years. Paradoxically, it may be that those most avidly protecting (their own) perception of the 'rural idyll' are, by token of the effect on the housing market, inadvertently threatening the social, cultural and economic sustainability of what they are so keen to preserve. In this way the operation of state systems of bureaucracy and authority, manipulated by powerful interest groups, works through housing markets to systematically force up house prices and thus exclude less wealthy households from many rural areas.

A recent study for DETR (PIEDA 1998) confirmed that the majority of new housing in rural areas is built by the private sector for the upper end of the market. The combination of increasing demand, restricted supply and insufficient stock of rented housing has resulted in a deficit of rural housing both in quantitative terms and also in terms of affordability for lower and middle income groups. The study concluded that these trends were likely to continue.

Very little private housing in England is rented, and research suggests that this stock is unlikely to increase. As a result, the vast majority of those unable to afford house purchase in rural England must depend on social housing provision by the voluntary sector (housing associations) and local authorities. In each case this is allocated according to assessed need. However, social housing in rural areas is lacking, accommodating only 15% of households. Partly this is a historical legacy of the dominance of rural areas by conservative councils who tended not to build council houses to the same extent; partly it is the result of social housing investment being concentrated in urban areas by the state bodies which finance voluntary sector housing (the Housing Corporation); and partly it is a result of the Conservative government's policy during the 1980s and 1990s of mandatory council house sales at substantial discounts which has transferred the social housing stock to the private market at much higher rates in rural areas. This clearly privileges those with ability to pay to the exclusion of those who exhibit housing need.

A number of studies have found that the problems of affordability in rural areas have worsened over the last decade. One clear reason for this has been the substantial shortfall of provision of social housing. Compared with an estimate that 80,000 affordable homes were needed in rural England between 1990-95, from 1990-97 only 17,700 new social housing units were provided, largely through the Housing Corporation's Special Rural Programme (RDC 1999). Even this contribution was offset by continuing discounted sales of social housing under the right-to-buy.

Pavis et al. (2000), echoing the other studies in the JRF programme, found that the young people they studied "were neither wealthy enough to buy, nor were they poor enough to qualify for the limited public sector provision." One result of these difficulties is delayed household formation, with by far the majority of young people in rural areas, in contrast to elsewhere in the UK, remaining in the parental home. Although most were initially happy living with their parents, close to friends and family, problems became apparent later as they sought to assert their independence or when they found partners. At this stage their local housing opportunities were so limited that they had to leave, and Rugg and Jones (2000) found that "almost all ended up living in urban areas." At the age of 22, only one or two of the 60 they interviewed in North Yorkshire had succeeded in achieving any level of independence while staying in a rural location. For the great majority, here and in the other study areas in the JRF programme, the only solution to their housing and employment problems was to leave the countryside. The operation of market and state systems thus combines in this case to rupture kinship and friendship networks.

Bevan et al's (2001) study of social housing in rural areas confirms the very limited opportunities for affordable housing in most rural areas. "The scarcity of alternatives to owner-occupation in

many rural localities combined with high prices, particularly in areas with an intense demand for housing, meant that even households on quite moderate incomes are priced out of the market." In this study, tenants of social housing reviewed their previous housing experiences and searches, emphasising not only that they were unable to buy a home anywhere in their area but also that private renting was prohibitively costly and too insecure for families. For a fortunate few, social housing enabled them to stay within a particular village where they had lived for some time or had kinship ties. There were instances where new housing association developments had had a key role in enabling extended family networks to survive in a particular village. Respondents emphasised the importance of social networks in providing an opportunity to go to work while friends or relatives took on childcare responsibilities. For other respondents, social housing in the village offered them the chance of a fresh start in life, perhaps after a marital breakdown which meant they needed to find alternative accommodation but also to stay near to family and friends for support. This illustrates how state and voluntary systems can work together with friends and family networks to redress the effects of market processes, so ameliorating exclusion.

It was also clear that such housing could play an important role for households without any particular local ties, perhaps helping them to overcome an immediate crisis. This raises the issue of how far there is an acceptance of the legitimacy of broader housing needs within rural social housing schemes, and in many ways this mirrors the ongoing debate about the development of mixed communities and the role of allocations systems in addressing this. One local authority refused to rehouse someone who owned a garage in the village because he had not had a local connection for 5 years: as a consequence he moved away, shutting the garage and making two people unemployed. Bevan et al. suggest that more sensitive allocations policies, looking beyond solely housing need, may be sufficient to achieve a balance between meeting local households' requirements and allowing flexibility to enable people to move into settlements if they so choose, even if they lack local connections. This may also require much more joint working between registered social landlords, local authorities and others.

7. Participation, Exclusion and Governance

People living in rural areas are not merely passive recipients of broader forces affecting their lives, and indeed one important dimension of social inclusion relates to the individual's ability to 'have a say', to 'shape history' as it affects them, and to exert some control over market, state, voluntary and reciprocal systems. Rural development policy has recently placed greater emphasis on enabling and empowering rural people to take greater control over their own destinies through 'bottom-up' development approaches that owe much to earlier traditions of community development, whether to compensate for the withdrawal of the state or to pursue synergy between these systems. At EU level the LEADER programme is a clear instance of this approach, and in England the Rural White Paper (2000) has emphasised the goal of empowerment. Yet a number of recent studies have questioned how well current practice works in achieving this goal, and to what extent this approach tends to exacerbate rather than address social exclusion.

A related issue is the changing governance of rural areas (Murdoch and Abrams 1998; Goodwin 1998; Mackinnon 2002), which itself may hinder civic integration. Local authorities no longer coordinate and lead, in the way that they once did, and instead we find a whole host of agencies involved in rural governance, drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors, in a "nobody-in-charge-world". This decline in local authority power, and the associated fragmentation of responsibility and resources, along with privatisation, deregulation and the growth of non-elected bodies, has necessitated the construction of a range of partnerships which increasingly govern rural Britain. Important questions arise of how well these work, how local ownership of the development process can be achieved within this model, and how rural people themselves experience this process. Above all, do such partnerships empower and assist active citizenship?

The new partnership culture requires collective negotiation and, while this can be inclusive and empowering, it can also lead to problems, notably the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities, creating difficulties for the public in identifying which agencies are responsible for policy delivery, and raising issues of accountability (Edwards et al. 2000; Shortall and Shucksmith 1998). Meanwhile basic questions concerning which communities, and which interests, are being represented and by whom are rarely raised. "Often the deployment of the concept of 'community' obfuscates rather than clarifies. Places tend to be socially heterogeneous, with different people having varying, and at times competing, interests. Community development can often mean different things to people in the same place – it too is a contested concept. This reality of 'divided places' needs to be confronted explicitly" (Bennett et al. 2000, 45).

Researchers have often found only tokenistic attempts at involving people, usually in the form of 'communities'. "Most funding agencies will demand community involvement in order for a partnership to win, or even take part in, the bidding process for competitive funds. Often however, this can amount to little more than the co-option of key individuals… [The] much vaunted 'community engagement' is simply used by many partnerships as a 'resource' which must be enrolled and demonstrated in order to secure funding, rather than as a necessary system of accountability and capacity building" (Goodwin et al. 2000).

Goodwin et al (2000) argue that "full empowerment would require the development of a rural policy programme designed specifically to enhance both community and individual capacity. A number of studies have now shown that an emphasis on partnership alone assumes a level of capacity - local knowledge, skills, resources and influence - and an availability of support, which may well be lacking in isolated and small rural communities", and amongst the most marginalised groups. It is now well established that without proactive measures, such as animation, those who already have the capacity to act stand to gain the most from rural development initiatives, which often supplement the capital resources of the already capital-rich (Commins and Keane 1994; Shucksmith 2000b). Building capacity for civic integration means developing programmes which improve the skills and confidence of individuals, especially the marginalised; and strengthening the capacity of local groups to develop and manage their own rural regeneration strategies.

Recent work by Ellis (2002), exploring power and exclusion in rural community development in the context of the LEADER2 programme, has added much to our understanding of how social exclusion almost as a matter of course occurs in the practice of rural development. Exclusion occurred at a number of levels, she found, in the definition of 'communities' by the development agencies, in the displacement of existing organisations and community groups, in the mobilisation and enrolment of individuals, and in the mechanisms for participation and involvement. The research suggests policy making has been naïve in assuming that bottom-up rural development will necessarily lead to more extensive and more equal local participation that will empower and build the capacities of all those living in rural communities. Rather the study shows that even bottom-up development will still be controlled and shaped by external gatekeepers, and will also serve the needs and interests of the more powerful sections of the rural population, unless practice becomes more sensitive to processes of exclusion and power relations in rural society.

Rural areas and people subject to restructuring need strong support from national government and the EU, as well as from regional agencies and the private sector. But formal, 'top-down' programmes alone are insufficient : policies must be formulated, implemented and managed to facilitate local people to use their own creativity and talents. Too often, external agendas, formal requirements for partnership working, competitive bidding regimes, short-term funding and existing power structures limit the effectiveness of regeneration initiatives (Shucksmith 2000a). This finding is echoes by Morris (2002) who found that "local community and voluntary groups need better support to develop the capacity for local action," and that where successful such initiatives "are hampered by poorly developed networks and management structures, reliance on volunteers, high travel costs and operational costs and the constraints of time-limited funding." If

state and voluntary sectors are to work together to promote civic integration, more enabling structures and more sensitive community development measures are required.

8. Social Exclusion through the Life-Course

This review has touched on the experiences of different age-groups in passing but it is useful to summarise briefly our current knowledge of how social exclusion affects children, young people and older people in rural areas, in particular.

Children

As noted above, in many respects children's fates were inextricably linked with their mothers', most obviously through marital break-up and lone parenthood but also in terms of employment, if their mother's earnings fall. Once poor, children are likely to experience poverty for extended periods of time. Beyond the material issue of child poverty, we are relatively poorly informed about children's lives in rural England because very little research has reported children's voices. Even the recent report by Mullins et al (n.d.) for the NCH on behalf of the Countryside Agency, subtitled 'Children and Families speak out about Life in Rural England in the 21st Century' is dominated by the voices of adults and older teenagers. Only occasionally a child is quoted, for example expressing their fear of bullying on school buses, or recounting their experiences of being told off by adults for playing in the park, and having nothing to do and nowhere to go. The need for a more qualitative, ethnographic understanding of childhood experiences in rural areas is apparent, although there are severe practical and ethical issues to be overcome.

There is also surprisingly little evidence, beyond performance indicators, about education in rural areas and yet there are many questions which arise. For example, recent research on pre-school education in rural Scotland (Copus et al, 2002) revealed that parents, providers and local authorities face major decisions not only over employment or non-employment of teachers (and the use of volunteers) but also relating to finding, training and retraining staff at all levels, and forms and locations of provision. There was little consensus on what constituted quality.

Young People

The issues facing young people in rural areas are in many ways similar to those in urban areas: access to education and training, employment, housing and welfare are all national issues (Jones 1997; Jentsch and Shucksmith 2003). Young people are disadvantaged as an age group, being unable to access many of the facilities and structures open to adults. But young people are also a heterogeneous group: some are privileged and others further disadvantaged by gender, by ethnicity[2], by social class, or by disability. Young people in rural areas may be additionally disadvantaged and excluded, and for them in particular access to transport and leisure, issues of identity and the visibility of living in small communities should be added to the list.

Davis and Ridge (1997) argue that "in rural areas, children and young people find themselves in a very particular social environment where there may be powerful adult groups [affluent incomers and early retirers seeking and idyllic rural lifestyle] who can dominate in a struggle for space and resources; where children and young people can be socially very visible and yet find their needs both invisible and unmet." For those on a low income, these effects are heightened. Often there is a lack of social space for young people within their own communities. "One of the consequences of the lack of sanctioned space to play and congregate is that children and young people become highly visible in their communities, and subject to adult scrutiny and in many cases disapproval. This can result in a situation whereby children and young people are seen as a problem rather than as contributory members of their communities." As noted above, Leyshon's recent work

[2] The situation of ethnic minorities in rural areas is reviewed by Dhillons (1995) and De Lima (2001).

goes beyond this to show how exclusion is produced within the village not only as a result of adult surveillance but also by the everyday social interactions of young people.

Two particularly striking findings emerged from JRF's Action in Rural Areas programme in relation to young people (Rugg and Jones 2000; Storey and Brannen 2000; Furlong and Cartmel 2000; Pavis et al 2000). The first is that young people from rural areas become integrated into one of two quite separate labour markets – the national (distant, well-paid, with career opportunities) and the local (poorly paid, insecure, unrewarding and with fewer prospects). Education, and of course social class, are the elements which allow some young people to access national job opportunities, in the same way as those from urban areas. But for those whose educational credentials trap them within local labour markets, further education and training are much less available than for their counterparts in towns, and their life-chances are reduced.

The second key point is the interplay between transport, employment and housing. Young people in rural areas, earning low wages, must have a car to get to work, but this together with the shortage of affordable housing leaves them unable to afford to live independently. There is also an initial problem of needing a job in order to afford a car, which they need to secure a job, and help at this crucial stage in the youth transition, for example from Wheels2Work schemes, was invaluable. The class and gender dimensions of access to transport have already been mentioned. These issues are both crucial to young people's labour market integration and opportunities.

In navigating these landscapes of opportunity and exclusion, young people and children in rural areas nevertheless exhibit agency as competent and active members of society, despite often being treated merely as "human becomings" (Valentine 1996). Thus Panelli et al. (2002) show how young people negotiate their roles and spaces within rural communities, whether through simply maintaining activities in spaces shared with others or through actions which directly or indirectly challenge established social/power relations, in order to "make their own fun".

Older People

Older people have been comparatively neglected in rural research, compared to the US for example (Glasgow 1998). Yet older people are disproportionately present in rural England, and they are particularly prone to poverty, deprivation and exclusion. The average age of rural residents is 50 compared to 42 for residents of towns and cities, and the number of older people living in rural areas continues to rise due to the in-migration of older people. A quarter of these older people in rural areas are living on low income (Harrop and Palmer 2002) and this proportion rises to 29% in the remoter districts. As noted above, when both private households and households in care homes are included, half of all people over 60 in rural areas are dependent solely on a state pension and few claim welfare benefits.

Service availability in some rural areas is a concern for older people as many rely on local shops, post offices, public transport and primary care services (40% say access to a service is difficult). Fewer older people receive help from social services to live at home in rural areas than urban. There is also evidence that older rural people may be reluctant to take-up benefit entitlements, and that they may not have full access to information about support and financial help.

Recent research (Age Concern 1996; Help The Aged 1996; Wenger 2001) has pointed to the need for an appreciation and understanding of the different 'groupings' within the older population:
- Different age groups, for example, 50-65; 65-74; and 75+.
- Various types of rural area, notably accessible, remote and rural coastal towns.
- Length of residence

There is certainly a need for further research into the experiences, and voices of, of older people in rural areas; the potential effects of the long-term ageing of the rural population; and what

works in providing services and facilitating opportunities for older people in rural areas. In addressing exclusion, priority areas would be benefit take-up and social isolation.

9. Conclusion and Future Research Priorities

Social exclusion is not confined to the most visibly poor council estates, nor even to the cities and towns. Despite the relative affluence of many rural areas, one in three individuals in rural Britain experienced at least one spell of poverty during 1991-96, albeit typically of short duration. Low pay is more common and more persistent in rural areas than elsewhere. There is considerable inequality hidden amongst the apparent affluence of rural Britain, and those who are socially excluded in one way or another may face particular difficulties because of their very invisibility.

In relation to market processes, this paper has highlighted the barriers which face those seeking integration into changing rural labour markets, and especially the shortage of well-paid, better quality jobs. In the course of globalisation, international capital seeks to exploit those rural areas characterised by low wages, a non-unionised workforce, and lower levels of regulation, leading to increased casualisation and job insecurity, and this necessarily causes exclusion for some (for example, on the basis of age, lack of social connections or credentials). Other rural areas, and other individuals, are able to compete on the basis of quality through continuous innovation, cultural and social capital, and enjoy greater power and command over resources. This is one instance of the intersection of history and biography which this paper has set out to explore, as market forces hold greater sway in relation to individual lives and life-chances.

Another illustration of this may be found in the difficulties many face in finding affordable housing, whether through market or state, to such an extent that they may be spatially excluded from living in many rural areas of Britain. The voluntary sector has been placed under increasing pressure as a result, while also becoming steadily incorporated into state systems though reliance on state funding and new forms of regulation. These intersecting spheres of social exclusion in turn have consequences for kinship networks and social support, as young people have to move away in search of affordable housing, higher education and better-paid employment. In these ways different dimensions of social exclusion interact to reinforce inequalities within rural areas, and between rural and urban areas.

Perhaps most interestingly, the effects on individuals can be seen of the ascendancy of market processes, and the waning of state systems, as a result of the neo-liberal hegemony which has hastened deregulation, privatisation, reductions in public expenditure and global capital's penetration of labour and product markets. These effects vary from place to place, and from person to person, but in rural Britain a substantial number face social exclusion as a result – whether from casualisation and job insecurity, from eroded pensions, from blurred accountability of agents of governance, or from delayed household formation and a lack of access to affordable housing. These changes in market and state systems also place considerable strain on voluntary systems, for example through additional reliance on volunteers alongside broader engagement in paid work, and on friendship and kinship networks, as noted above. One high priority for future research should be to elaborate further how the changing relative importance of these systems, by which resources are allocated, impinges differentially on people and places, urban or rural.

A number of more specific priorities for further research have emerged from this review of the literature. These may be summarised as follows:

- *Survival and coping strategies of people experiencing low incomes*. Qualitative work is required to gain an understanding of the strategies adopted by those on low incomes in rural areas, so that where appropriate these can be supported by the state and voluntary sectors. This might be a step away from provider-led approaches towards more enabling support.

- *Older people's experiences and voices: benefit take-up, availability of services and social isolation.* Those most prone to social exclusion and poverty in rural England are elderly people, and yet there has been little research into their experiences and the processes by which they are excluded/included beyond changes in benefit regulations. Such research could usefully also investigate how to improve take-up of benefit entitlements.
- *Low income farm households*. Changes in the profitability of agriculture, and in the basis of subsidies, together with other changes in rural economies impact unevenly on different farm households (and members of each household), and research is required which examines low income farm households (cf. Frawley et al 2001). This is a highly visible instance of social exclusion, and yet this issue is rarely analysed from a social exclusion perspective.
- *The demand side of rural labour markets: leading and lagging rural economies*. The need for a better understanding of the factors which underlie differential economic performance is also fundamental to addressing social exclusion deriving from uneven development.
- *More inclusive rural development practice*. Research should examine in what ways area-based, endogenous rural development initiatives may exacerbate social exclusion, and explore ways in which more inclusive rural development practice might be adopted. In this respect there may be lessons available from other countries and from urban experience.
- *How to facilitate resistance: inclusion as empowerment*. What lessons can be learned on how to build capacity and social capital among the least advantaged; how the new structures of rural governance can be made more transparent and accountable; and how these can encourage resistance, innovation and enterprise. This should extend to consideration of the potential effectiveness of new participative mechanisms in rural contexts.
- *The nature of evidence and how to combine soft and hard data*. Much recent research, and almost all of the evidence about 'what works', is in the form of 'grey literature' which does not usually give sufficient information to establish its validity and reliability. This is not a reliable "evidence-base", and this issue needs to be addressed by research funders. At the same time there is a challenge in how to combine 'hard and soft' data in ways which are both scientifically defensible and convincing to research users.

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