

Social inclusion

Mark Hayward, Elizabeth Holford and Peter Kinderman introduce the special issue, which addresses how we can help those who are being left behind

Is there such a thing as society? Do we have a collective responsibility towards people who may be excluded from the social settings/circles where we feel valued? Articles within this special edition explore social exclusion from a range of perspectives, with an emphasis on the needs of people who experience mental health problems. Authors speak of our collective responsibility to enable inclusion across the range of domains/roles in which psychologists find themselves.

questions

How included are you within your family, community, workplace, etc?

How would you feel if you were consciously or unwittingly excluded from valued social roles within these domains?

What can you do to facilitate the social inclusion of others?

resources

Mental Health and Social Exclusion – report from the government's Social Exclusion Unit – <http://bit.ly/3QTORB>
National Social Inclusion Programme – www.socialinclusion.org.uk/home/index.php

Capabilities for Inclusive Practice – <http://bit.ly/cqoUA>

BPS Discussion Paper – *Socially Inclusive Practice* – <http://bit.ly/3wWcQ9>

Berry, C., Hayward, M. & Porter, A. (2008). Evaluating socially inclusive practice: Part 1 – A tool for mental health services. *Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice*, 3, 31–41. Available from <http://bit.ly/Lvacl>

Social Exclusion Task Force – <http://bit.ly/eumYC>

BPS Social Inclusion Group – www.bps.org.uk/socinc

In 1988 Margaret Thatcher said: 'There is no such thing as society'. In contrast, psychologists believe that human beings are quintessentially social animals. We all need to play a full and active role in society. All around us is visible evidence of people's wish for inclusion – the young people who join gangs or carry knives to impress, the late Jade Goody's determination to 'count', the explosion of Facebook.

So how important is inclusion to you – within your family, community, workplace? How much value do you place upon your identity as a family member, a friend, a neighbour, a team mate, a colleague, a citizen?

What resources enable you to actively engage with and develop these roles – money, education, work, physical health, mental health?

If your resources were diminished for any reason – for example through mental health problems or unemployment – and you were not able to engage with some of these roles and identities, how would your perception of yourself change? Furthermore, how would you feel if consciously or unwittingly, individuals and society acted to exclude you from some of the places and roles that once defined you?

The links between mental health problems, discrimination and social exclusion are well established. And the importance of valued social roles in promoting recovery is becoming better understood. What seems newsworthy is the growing realisation that facilitating the inclusion of people with mental health problems within neighbourhoods, workplaces and communities is no longer the sole province of clinicians; as educationalists, colleagues, community members, friends and neighbours we each have a role to play.

This special edition explores these multiple perspectives on mental health and social inclusion by considering the roles played by the government, young people, employers, prison workers and psychologists. In the first article Fabian

Davis sets the broader context as he interviews Naomi Eisenstadt, former Director of the government's Social Exclusion Task Force. Naomi speaks beyond the impact of mental health problems as she candidly describes the way that government initiatives to improve the health of the nation in the last 10 years may have actually disadvantaged the people who had least sense of inclusion to start with. What can applied psychologists do to bridge the gap – be less 'precious' and roll up their sleeves on the front-line of services?

Concern for the most excluded people is articulated further as Geoff Shepherd explores the shocking discrepancy between the scale of demand for mental health services in prisons and their availability. Most prisoners experience a lifetime of social exclusion, and Geoff wonders what psychologists can realistically do to prevent further exclusion for prisoners upon release.

The third and fourth articles focus upon places where discriminatory attitudes can cause and perpetuate exclusion.

School is a place where young people may either experience exclusion for the first time, or encounter the irresistible social psychological forces that can lead them to discriminate. Catherine Sholl and colleagues describe a successful

intervention that utilises the contact hypothesis to raise awareness of mental health issues within an east London secondary school. Workplaces can both exclude and perpetuate exclusion through their harmful environments, practices and cultures, but they can also, with the right policies and practices, be the key to inclusion and fulfilment. David Carew and colleagues from the Department of Work and Pensions explore some of the dilemmas and the initiatives developed by the present government – before the credit crunch hit.

In the final article Fabian Davis looks back on his career as an applied psychologist and searches for the 'magic' ingredients that can facilitate the 'bounce' that marks the end of an individual's passive acceptance of 'second class' status and acquisition of the will and means to recover.

So, whatever your role within education, the workplace, mental health services or the applied psychology workforce, social inclusion seems to be your business. Want to do more? Then join the BPS Social Inclusion Group (see www.bps.org.uk/socinc) as it seeks to facilitate inclusion in relation to employment, children and families and prisoners.

"how important is inclusion to you – within your family, community, workplace?"



As applied psychologists, we need to use our knowledge and skills to promote the mental health of communities. This will involve us working beyond the consulting room to play an active role in building bridges between the marginalised members of a given community and the key stakeholders who can create opportunities for inclusion within that community.

Dr Mark Hayward
is a Clinical Psychologist with the University of Surrey & Sussex Partnership NHSFT
m.hayward@surrey.ac.uk

Social inclusion is about belonging. It means contributing and accepting. For me, this is achieved through flexible employment, having a loyal immediate family, being part of the Catholic church, being a governor of the local mental health trust and taking part in cycling, an amateur choir and campaigning.



Elizabeth Holford
is a member of the BPS Division of Clinical Psychology's Service User and Carer Liaison Committee



Psychology, as the study of human thought, emotion and behaviour, continually emphasises the connectedness of each individual to the wider society – we are social animals. For me, then, support for fundamental human rights (the agreed basic rules of human societies) and social inclusion (the active facilitation of participation in those human societies) are necessary and legitimate goals for professional psychologists.

Professor Peter Kinderman
is Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Liverpool