Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of the second volume of the *Journal of Social Inclusion.*

It is now one year since the release of the inaugural issue. It is true to say much has happened in that year across the world. Of particular note is the range of disasters that have struck with profound impacts on humanity, including in Australia. One is left to ponder how a stated Social Inclusion agenda is sustained through such disruption. When disaster strikes, what is the impact on Social Inclusion visions, such as that outlined by the Australian Commonwealth government of a socially inclusive society "in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society."[i] Personal, family, community and societal costs are high. Not only do individuals suffer, but so do nations and the global community.

Disasters remind us of our vulnerability, and of the limitations of our capacity to control. They also remind us of the nature and effects of phenomena such as unpredictability, disruption, the unseen and the unaccounted for. Arguably though, these phenomena are not exclusive to disasters. They are present in other contexts as well.

As I have read the articles contributed to this issue, it strikes me that this is what these articles have in common. Their content alerts us to one of the hidden considerations of Social Inclusion; and that is the issues of boundaries, borders and transgressions. Whether one is 'in' or 'out' implies boundaries. As Inclusion sits within a dualism with Exclusion, there must also be a point of 'crossing over'. But what and where are such unseen points; and how firm and predictable are they? Who has formed them? And from what positions of power and control? What is the propensity for disruption and transgression? And how does Social Inclusion, as a concept, encompass such consideration?

It is therefore useful to explore this further.

Boundaries are constructions which form points of connection and solidarity but they also demarcate, define and contain. As I have explored elsewhere about the Inclusion – Exclusion dualism (Clapton, 2009), in excluding 'others', boundaries tend to protect a particular hegemonic socio-symbolic order. This is an order that has normative power to define identities as included or excluded, as insiders or outsiders; and that sets the conditions of change and pre-determined or legitimated transformation.

With disruption to such control however, boundaries are also points of both transgression and refiguration: of looking beyond to new horizons, imagining new possibilities, seeking new outcomes, articulating new language, and embracing new metaphors. They can facilitate a

process of transformation that is created from the unknown, the unpredicted and the non-determined; that comes from an openness to redefine and re-establish.

Rosie Braidotti (2006) tells us that boundary spaces are active spaces of transformation. They are spaces where discrimination, oppression and social justice are confronted and resisted; where pain, fragility and vulnerability are recognised and attended to; and where new affirmed identities are constituted. Boundaries, Braidotti (2006) says, are complex sites of becoming, of negotiation and re-negotiation.

The papers in this issue highlight some of these actions and activities. Though not written to be philosophical, they nonetheless raise important philosophical considerations. They reflect aspects of negotiation and transgression, preparedness and unpreparedness, predictability and unpredictability, vulnerability and fragility. They highlight foreseen and unforeseen impacts, and recommend further research.

Brian Thomas reports on research undertaken in the United States to examine consumer agency in obtaining food. Comparing choices made by food secure and food insecure households, Thomas says he seeks to "shed light on some of the factors that lead to the relative ability of each group to successfully and reliably obtain food." Examining the relationship between food security and shopping behaviours, results indicate commonality and differences. Contrary to suspected patterns of choices, it was found that there is some similarity in food shopping perceptions between food secure and insecure households. There are no clear ideological differences of values in terms of types of retailers; rather the apparent differences arose from capacity to *act* on the values. This article shows the blurriness of boundary spaces, where complex decisions are made; and where perceptions and predictions based on the status of food security in terms of retailer choices are not so clear cut. What became apparent are deliberations undertaken by food insecure households to mediate structural issues such as cost and quality, rather than cultural influences. Distance and convenience are also notable aspects, with the study finding that "food insecure households are more likely to shop at deep discounters and more likely to travel farther to obtain food." Therefore, based on the findings, Thomas offers advice for practitioners utilising educational programs to seek solutions to poverty-based nutritional problems. Rather, he advocates that constricted options in purchasing items are a result of limited resources, and that change may occur on further exploration of this phenomenon. Further research can be undertaken as to how the retail system is serving segments of the population differentially.

Unpredictability is also apparent in *Carol Hamilton's* article on Community Members' Responses to the Elective Hysterectomy of an Intellectually Disabled Girl. Hamilton's article "reviews comments posted by male and female contributors to a BBC Have your Say website about a mother's request for a hysterectomy for her 'severely disabled' daughter." Five categories of UK contributors are identified: General Community Member (GCM), Family Member, Carer of Disabled Person, Disabled Person and Friend / Acquaintance. The review focuses on the responses made by the category of General Community Members, who were deemed not to have direct involvement with an intellectually disabled person. Three questions are considered: Should the mother have the right to make the decision without the

permission of her daughter? Do you think she has made the right decision? Do you share Scope's [disabled charity] concerns or have a personal experience to share?

Contrary to contemporary protections and practices about sterilisation within a disability rights context, general community members expressed other views. From the postings, Hamilton reveals interesting tensions that emerge between at least three dualisms: differing ideological positions such as biomedical considerations versus rights; male and female responses; and location of the issue by the respondents between public and private spaces. For example, in regard to the latter, 42 men and 3 women remarked that this was not a suitable topic to discuss on such a 'Have Your Say' site of the BBC. One could assert from the analysis presented that again, these blurred considerations are embedded in the hidden boundaries of dualisms that have the capacity to challenge and distort established disability perspectives.

In the third article, *Jen Couch* "gives voice to refugee young people experiencing homelessness." This article exemplifies tensions actually experienced within boundary spaces and the barriers resisting transgression. By utilising a participatory research framework, Couch's study undertaken in Australia, "aimed to provide a forum through which homeless young people could share their stories in order to inform service provision." The young people in the study, originating from Sudan, Ethiopia, the Congo, Liberia, Burma and Afghanistan, were between 19 and 25 years of age; and comprised five females and four males. They reflected complex identities. As refugees often having experienced significant trauma, their identities were also being refigured in a new country. However, their ongoing subjection to entrenched stereotyping ,impacted other experiences ranging from issues of dislocation, exclusion, risk, powerlessness and voicelessness. Significant barriers such as a lack of adequate income, education, job opportunities and language, confronted the young people and have contributed to the resulting homelessness. Yet Couch states that despite these barriers and the experiences of exclusion and suffering, the boundary space is also a site of negotiation to seek hope and belonging for the young people. However, not only is more research required, there is a pressing need for new interventions and education and training in homelessness agencies.

David Scott's article "Trends in Social activism across Australian Minority Communities" explores the relationship between social activism and indicators of social cohesion over a ten year period (1999-2009). It asserts that "participation in social activism is an important indicator of political empowerment within the dominant political structure, and could suitably enrich research into social cohesion in Australia." Three criteria were nominated by which seven communities were chosen. The communities chosen for this research were Tamil, Assyrian, Burmese, Sudanese, Somali, Fijian and Iranian communities. Not only did the study explore the levels of social activism, it also indicated different foci, media and political party support for such activism based on differing political concerns of a minority community. This article similarly portrays activity within boundary spaces. These activities include activism to give voice, to seek change and attract support. How complex identities are experienced and negotiated in this space is also highlighted, and the nature of support and

collaboration that is explored also provokes considerations of transgression, refiguring and solidarity.

The final article written by *Adrienne McGhee* and *Pat Dorsett* presents a contemporary issue that is requiring increasing attention: "Ageing of People with an Intellectual Disability: Effective Training for Frontline Workers", as people with intellectual disability have longer life expectancies. McGhee and Dorsett undertake a Literature Review of "training needs analyses and 'ready-to-deliver' training programs for frontline disability services staff who work with older adults with an intellectual disability." Subsequently the training programs are assessed as to whether improved outcomes can be identified. The implications for training needs in regard to working with ageing people with intellectual disability are identified and discussed; however the authors describe the difficulty they had in locating material about training effectiveness; and therefore argue that more research is required in order to create an evidence base for effectiveness. This article highlights how complex identities are not static, and can change over time; and therefore there is a need that service structures have the capacity to establish dynamic and effective service provision.

As indicated above, the articles in this issue are confronting and challenging; and like the opinion piece offered by *Lyn Bender*, remind the reader of the complexity of social inclusion. They do not offer typical considerations of quantitative measures of improved outcomes, increased valuing, and claims of improved quality of life. Rather, they help the reader to appreciate the important impacts of boundaries, ever present within a Social Inclusion agenda, yet often unacknowledged.

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Notes

[i]As outlined on the Australian Government Social Inclusion website (http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/SIAgenda/Priorities/Pages/default.aspx, accessed April 2011)

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