Editorial

Welcome to this issue and apologies from the editorial team for the delay in the processing and production.

As discussed often within this journal, Social Inclusion is a complex phenomenon.

How dynamics between exclusion and inclusion are challenged, mediated, corrected and / or resolved, takes into account many factors, including values, concepts, personal agency and structures.

However, along with these considerations, contextual issues can have significant impact on particular groups of people – impact often overlooked by researchers, strategists, policy makers, planners and practitioners of Social Inclusion. The articles in this issue provide an interesting suite of such contextual issues. The authors show that whilst Social Inclusion, as a phenomenon, is regularly considered for individuals with particular characteristics (e.g. disability, ageing, homelessness) with degrees of access to opportunity, constraints to positive outcomes can be embedded in contexts of identity, place, pace, and the construction of meaning and representation.

Nora Amath explores complex issues in regard to Social Inclusion and Australian Muslim communities. With a predominant discursive focus on fundamentalism, radicalisation, militancy and terrorism, Amath argues that little is known about the larger number of political actors engaged in civil society, particularly those committed to Social Inclusion. In addressing this, she outlines the contribution of three main theorists of social capital who contribute to conceptual understandings underpinning Social Inclusion – Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam. Following on, Amath provides an important discussion about the different ways Social Inclusion has been conceptualised and defined internationally and within Australia. Against these backgrounds, she discusses how Social Inclusion in regard to Muslims in Australia has been contextualised; and how such understandings fall short in recognising how the Australian Muslim community's role and agency seek to

address social exclusion. In order to highlight this, a research project using descriptive phenomenology was undertaken; whereby participants were purposively selected for interviewing, "based on their qualities, experience and relevance to the research". From these interviews, four particular themes were revealed: supporting participation in education and training; facilitating participation in employment and voluntary work, connecting community with other people and resources and assisting with advocacy. Amath concludes that whilst these themes are clearly identified in Social Inclusion Policy, for members of the Muslim community, the proactive agenda for Social Inclusion is motivated by their personal identity and faith; and that these aspects require further recognition.

Aspects of place impact Social Inclusion outcomes, especially when combined with particular characteristics of individuals or a collective group. In their article, Fiona Andrews, Julia Shelley, Stephanie Rich and Alexandra James report on a research study which compared social connectedness amongst parents of pre-school age children in inner and outer suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. They found that although parents in both areas identified a similar number of contacts, they had "differently structured networks". Networks differed according to site with mothers from the outer suburbs having fewer stronger social connections, and less network members that they had known for over a year. Relationships with immediate neighbours also differed between the two groups because of aspects such as visibility and opportunity to build connections and relationships. Where, in the social context, connections were made and how networks were experienced also differed, along with the diversity of contacts within networks. With clear differences then between the make-up, diversity and importance of social connections between the two groups of parents, the authors suggest the findings of the research have "implications for service delivery and social planning of new developments across Australian cities as well for early childhood professionals".

Accessing health care and the barriers faced by children with intellectual disabilities living in Uttar Pradesh, a state in the north of India is discussed in the article by Jubin Varghese, Nathan Grills and Kaaren Mathias. From a study undertaken to identify health-seeking behaviours of families, the authors provide a grim account of not only the identification of barriers, but also the significant impact on the children, their

families and communities. Three types of barriers are highlighted: financial barriers, structural barriers and cognitive barriers. Encompassing factors such as poverty, costs and lack of financial benefits, lack of suitable transport and access to specialist professionals, along with lack of understanding about their child's disability results in a poor quality of life for such children. How these issues are responded to locally and internationally presents a significant challenge for practices of Social Inclusion.

Whilst there has been a "rapid development and diffusion of information technology" over the past decade, Farooq Mubarak contends in his article that there is an uneven distribution of progress and access between developed and developing countries. Such a disparity leads to a 'digital divide' whereby not only is there a difference in access but also to the benefits of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Mubarak undertakes a systematic literature review to examine the complexity of the concept of the 'digital divide' and to highlight implications for inclusion and exclusion. He argues that understanding the 'digital divide' requires recognition of it as a multifaceted concept to be understood as "a wide and complex subject with multiple layers of content ranging from individual to country and global issues". Issues of effective access, usability and a variety of social and cultural variables differ in impact when coupled with poverty, illiteracy and limited opportunity as is often the experience of ICT in developing countries.

Homelessness is a global phenomenon commanding complex and effective responses around the world's nations. However how homelessness is created and experienced in the midst of mining communities in a climate of prosperity and wealth is the focus of the article by Shane Warren, Donna McDonald and Donna McAuliffe. They identify contributing social issues such as levels of unaffordable housing for people on low incomes, access to health and community services, substance abuse and family breakdown. The authors also particularly critique "the evidence, research literature and theories about urban-centric homelessness and assess their relevance to homelessness in mining communities". Hence, they ask questions about a lack of appropriate social policy planning for such communities and the dearth of homelessness research particular to this context and the community dynamics associated with the boom and downturn of mining cycles.

The pace of change also subtly impacts opportunities for Social Inclusion. Patrick Okonji, with supporting authors Mima Cattan, Monique Lhussier and Catherine Bailey, report on a study investigating the experiences of visually impaired older people aged 60 years and over. Five themes were identified from the findings: "Keeping in touch, Barriers to internet use, Maintaining independence and Social inclusion, Coping with vision impairment and Hopes and fears". They conclude that whilst the "internet could be a potentially enabling tool for visually impaired older people", the rapid pace of technological change creates fears about access and useability of such changes. Therefore, this results in older people with visual impairment both not being able to experience the benefits of such developments; and also increasing the risk of social exclusion.

Many aspects and barriers can be identified to the degree that Social Inclusion is achievable or not. How meaning and representation are constructed in regard to particular groups of people are important considerations, especially in regard to not only how people are perceived, but also how social policy responses and interventions are planned and implemented. In their article, Kathy McKay, Stuart Wark, Virginia Mapedzahama, Tinashe Dune, Saifur Rahman and Catherine MacPhail highlight how language "framed as derogatory names and symbols can have implications for people and their life experiences". Specifically, they look at the three examples of language use in mainstream society: "retarded", "gay" and language around "suicide"; and identify how these words can be used to hurt or harm. Importantly, they highlight how language is passed on and underpins cultural knowledge; consequently impacting social inclusion or exclusion.

In the final article of this issue, Ian Goodwin-Smith and Claire Hutchinson examine "the dominant 'work first' unemployment intervention narrative" in Australian social policy. From qualitative research undertaken across fourteen programs within one organisation, the authors highlight how "narratives which cast job seekers as unmotivated, lazy and too fussy are shown to be ill-conceived'. Similarly, a focus on economic productivity and short term outcomes seem unsustainable to address workforce exclusion. Rather, this research shows that a focus on 'life first' approaches and the identified characteristics will have more durable employment outcomes.

As previously stated, Social Inclusion is a complex phenomenon that is further complicated by deep contextual issues. Appreciating and paying attention to such issues can only contribute to more positive outcomes for groups of people. The authors of the articles in this issue highlight a range of important contextual aspects that not only further our understanding, but also show us avenues for change. I commend this issue to you.

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