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Introducing the Social Inclusion Concept

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The concepts of social exclusion and inclusion emerged in the 1970s and 1980s and figured prominently in policy discourse, originally developing from the concept of poverty. While the exact origins of the expression "social inclusion" can be debated, according to Silver (in Rodgers et al., 1995, p. 63), "the coining of the term [Les Exclus] is generally attributed to René Lenoir, who … estimated that 'the excluded' made up one-tenth of the French population". The issue of exclusion was particularly focused on the inability to participate in the privileged section of the labor market, with the associated benefits of social protection. This chapter provides an overview of the general concept of social inclusion and how it evolved from the idea of social exclusion. Other terms and related concepts are also explored.

Poverty, social exclusion, and social inclusion in Europe

As Atkinson and Marlier (2010) rightly observe:

> The EU path has been a distinctive one, reflecting the history and culture of the countries involved. At the same time, the EU experience is that of multi-country cooperation, and, as such, may offer valuable lessons for other countries. The fight against poverty and social exclusion is a common challenge, and there is scope for mutual learning, despite the differences in circumstances and in levels of living. (p. 1)

Researchers focusing on poverty in Europe made the distinction between traditional "poverty", which they defined as a lack of resources, and "exclusion", which they highlight as a more comprehensive concept. Commins (1993) suggests that social exclusion should be defined in terms of the failure of one or more of the following four systems of integration: the democratic and legal system, which promotes civic integration; the labor market, which promotes economic integration; the welfare system, which promotes social integration; and the family and community system, which promotes interpersonal integration. One's sense of belonging in society depends on all four systems.

Within the definition above are other terms that require clarification. Civic integration means being an equal citizen in a democratic system, while economic integration means having a job, having a valued economic function, and being able to pay your expenses. Social integration means being able to avail oneself of the social services provided by the government and other non-profit organizations, while interpersonal integration means having family, friends, neighbors, and social networks to provide care and companionship as well as moral support when needed. All four systems are important and function in a complementary way,

whereby when one or two systems are weak, the others need to be strong. Those who are worst off in society are those for whom all of these systems have failed (Commins, 1993).

Social exclusion can also be conceived of as a denial, or non-realization of citizenship rights — namely, civil, political, and social rights. When working effectively, the four major social systems referred to above should guarantee full citizenship. Steps toward the avoidance of social exclusion will therefore involve ensuring that the systems operate effectively, preventing the exclusion of individuals and communities, with full citizenship as the result. Social exclusion became a frequently used term in the United Kingdom starting in 1997, when the government established a coordinating policy body called the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, 1998). The government has a wide view of social exclusion, defining it as "[t]hose people who do not have the means, material or otherwise, to participate in social, economic, political and cultural life" (Brennan et al., 1999, p. 4). In general, social exclusion focuses primarily on relational issues such as inadequate social participation, lack of social integration, and lack of power (Room, 1995). It manifests at both the national and community levels (Berman & Phillips, 2000). When viewed within the context of exclusion, inclusion in society can be defined as citizenship, having a job, home, or financial security according to the norms of society. It also includes being part of, and identifying with, a community. In our heterogeneous society, community may be a more relevant measure of "inclusion" than a national identity, which may be more amorphous.

Social inclusion was later defined in the EU Joint Report on Social Inclusion as

> a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy

> a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights. (European Commission, 2004, p. 10)

The aim of the social inclusion policy in the EU is "to prevent and eradicate poverty and exclusion and promote the integration and participation of all into economic and social life" (EU Commission Social Policy Agenda, 2000, p. 20). Thus, the concepts of poverty, social exclusion, and social inclusion are inherently related.

Researchers have also identified links between social exclusion and poor mental health. Burchardt et al. (2002a) have identified two broad schools of thought in relation to the links between exclusion and poor mental health. The first takes a rights-based approach, whereby social exclusion reflects the deprivation of rights as a member or a citizen of a particular group, community, society, or country. The second school of thought takes a participation-based approach. This approach assumes that social inclusion is the opportunity to participate in key functions or activities of the society in question. It was developed based on the traditional concerns of social science and especially social policy, by measuring poverty and deprivation (Townsend, 1979; Gordon et al., 2000). Table 1.1 combines the forms of integration published by Commins (1993) with these two broad approaches, which are arguably similar to the concepts of "demos" and "ethnos" (Berman & Phillips, 2000; Delanty, 1998; Huxley & Thornicroft, 2003).

Rights-based conceptions of social inclusion may be particularly important in the context of mental health, since a denial of rights or access to the means to realize entitlements has historically been a feature of the treatment of people with mental illnesses. However, the participation-based conceptions of social inclusion are also important, especially where comparisons with the general

Table 1.1 Rights, participation, and integration

	Rights (demos)	Participation (ethnos)
Democratic-legal	In law, to be consulted, voting	Voting, membership, having a say
Labor	To work, withdraw labor	Work, occupation
Welfare state	To benefits, health insurance, equality of opportunity	Access services
Family, community	Privacy, environmental (noise, nuisance, etc.)	Family and community activity, volunteering

population are sought. Some authors have attempted to integrate the two approaches. For example, Room (1995), Abrahamson (1998), Kronauer (1998), and Littlewood (1999) argue that social exclusion is the reinforcement of accumulated social disadvantages through the denial of civil, social, and economic rights. Reimer (2004) goes on to propose that the social inclusion and exclusion processes are rooted in four types of social relations: market (exchange and barter), bureaucratic (rational-legal), associative (common interest), and communal (complex reciprocity and shared identity). Beside the four systems of integration, there are several levels at which social inclusion can be addressed. These are the individual level; family and close networks; local community, employer, leisure activities, and availability; government policies and initiatives to promote personal and community integration; and the responses of wider society.

Despite these divergent theoretical standpoints, there is considerable overlap between the definitions of inclusion, which have emerged over the last 20 years (Burchardt et al., 2002a) (see also Table 1.2). According to Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud (2002b), there are four aspects of social exclusion: consumption (where individuals do not have the capacity to purchase goods and services),

Table 1.2 Definitions of social inclusion

Author(s)	Definition
Sayce (2001)	[Social inclusion is] a virtuous circle of improved rights of access to the social and economic world, new opportunities, recovery of status and meaning, and reduced impact of disability. Key issues will be availability of a range of opportunities that users can choose to pursue, with support and adjustment where necessary.
Bates & Repper (2001)	[Social inclusion requires] full access to mainstream statutory and post-sixteen education, open employment, and leisure opportunities alongside citizens who do not bear these [mental health] labels.
Council of the European Union (2003)	Social inclusion is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision-making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights (as defined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU).
Marino-Francis & Worrall-Davies (2010)	Social inclusion is about each person taking part in society and having control over their own resources. It is also about a community that cares for its members, makes them feel welcome and is willing to adjust to fit their various needs.
World Bank (2013)	[Social inclusion refers to] promoting equal access to opportunities, enabling everyone to contribute to social and economic programs and share in its rewards.
Killaspy et al. (2014)	Social inclusion refers to the opportunities that individuals have to participate in key areas of economic, social and cultural life.

Source: Table 4 of O'Donnell et al. (2018) (Creative Commons License)

production (where individuals are unable to find employment), political engagement (where individuals are not able to involve in local and national politics and organizations), and finally, social

interaction and family support. Moreover, social inclusion is widely agreed to be:

- relative to a given society (place and time);
- multi-dimensional (whether those dimensions are conceived in terms of rights or key activities);
- dynamic (because inclusion is a process rather than a state); and
- multi-layered (in the sense that its causes operate at individual, familial, communal, societal, and even global levels).

With regard to the relationship between social inclusion and social exclusion, the point has been made that a person can be included in smaller, closer family or peer groups, yet at the same time be excluded from mainstream society, or vice versa. Furthermore, the definitions of social inclusion and exclusion have been said to overemphasize the objective assessment of social participation but overlook the invisible feeling of being socially included or excluded, respectively (Davey & Gordon, 2017). An exploratory study conducted in New Zealand highlighted participants' experiences of social inclusion and exclusion (Gordon et al., 2017). They concluded that social exclusion and inclusion are distinct subjective experiences. Exclusion is typically a feeling of acute alienation, and for youth in particular, social exclusion (along with discrimination) is experienced as pervasive. The experience of inclusion is described as feeling as if you are where you should be, with the people you should be with, and as the person you really are.

Related concepts

Looking beyond the links with poverty and exclusion, there are also various concepts that overlap significantly with social inclusion, as

well as others that are linked but distinctly different in meaning and application. These concepts include citizenship, social cohesion, social capital, social support, social participation, social networks, quality of life, and well-being. These are explored in the following sections.

Citizenship

Stewart (1995) distinguishes state citizenship from democratic citizenship. The first of these, state citizenship, involves the identification of citizenship with the elaboration of a formal legal status, co-terminous with the emergence of nation-states and their diverse lineages. The second conception, of democratic citizenship, involves the shared membership of a political community, in which citizens are political actors. Community citizenship refers to the possession by members of a community of a range of social and cultural rights and responsibilities by virtue of their membership of that community and as a distinct element of their national citizenship rights. Further, Roche (1997) suggests that citizenship can be seen as the core of what it is that social exclusion processes exclude people from, and the core of what social inclusion policies promise to include people in.

Social cohesion

According to Forrest and Kearns (2001), the domains of social cohesion are: common values and a civic culture; social order and control; social solidarity and reduction in wealth disparities; social networks and social capital; and place attachment and identity. Some definitions of social cohesion are closely linked to that of social capital (see next section). For example, Stanley (2003) defines social cohesion as "the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper. Willingness to cooperate means they freely choose to form partnerships and have a reasonable chance of realizing goals." Others are also willing

to cooperate and share the fruits of their endeavors equitably. Friedkin (2004) argues that social cohesion is the causal system that determines individuals' membership attitudes and behaviors. Thus, social cohesion is a property of communities and groups, whereas "being socially included" is an attribute which an individual may or may not have.

Social capital

Social capital is a multi-dimensional concept that encompasses a number of theoretical distinctions. The most widely cited definition of social capital comes from the Harvard political scientists Robert Putnam et al. (1993, p. 35), who explain social capital as "a set of horizontal associations among those who have an effect on a community, and these can take the form of networks of civic engagement" and "features of social organizations such as networks, norms and truths that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit". Based on the description established by the Health Development Agency (1999), the components of social capital are: participation in the local community; reciprocity; feelings of trust and safety; social connections; power; and community perception. Nevertheless, community perception is regarded by others as a psychological concept in its own right (McMillans & Chavis, 1986; Perkins et al., 2002; Pooley et al., 2005), as is community participation (Burchardt, 2000; Pantazis et al., 2006). Forrest and Kearns (2001) provide a slightly different list of social capital components: empowerment; participation; associational activity; supporting networks and reciprocity; collective norms and values; trust; safety; and belonging. Thus, it appears that only participation and associational activity are widely regarded as the primary social capital components.

Social capital can also be understood as a process of deliberately constructing sociability in order to acquire the benefits of being

part of a group. That is, social connections are not a natural given and must be constructed through investment strategies, which are grounded in the institutionalization of group relations. The latter are useable as a source of other benefits. Focusing on this understanding, Bourdieu (1986) suggests social capital is comprised of two elements. The first element refers to the social relationship that enables individuals to gain access to resources possessed by their associates. The second element refers to the amount and quality of those resources.

In addition to the different definitions and elemental composition of social capital, Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2002) suggest there are two types of social capital: structural and cognitive. Structural social capital facilitates information sharing, collective action, and decision-making through established roles, social networks, and other social structures supplemented by rules, procedures, and precedents. As such, it is a relatively objective and externally observable construct and relates to the participation element of social inclusion. In contrast, cognitive social capital refers to shared norms, values, trust, attitudes, and beliefs. It is, therefore, a more subjective and intangible concept.

Social support

Veiel and Baumann (1992) have created a useful conceptual framework in which they distinguished everyday social support from crisis support, instrumental support from psychological support, and subjective from objective appraisals of support. Some support measures have been reported (Sarason, I. G., et al., 1983; Sarason, B. R., et at., 1987; Veiel & Baumann, 1992) mainly in the fields of psychology and social psychology. For example, Sarason et al. (1987) suggest that various measures of perceived available social support in general attempts to assess how much an individual is accepted, loved, and is able to enjoy open communication in the relationships.