

Literature highlights – Social inclusion

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Compiled by Carole Jean, Librarian

Neighborhood influences on young children's conduct problems and pro-social behavior: Evidence from an Australian national sample. (2009). Edwards, B., & Bromfield, L. M. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(3), 317–324.

Research into neighbourhood influences on children's outcomes shows that greater levels of neighbourhood socioeconomic disadvantage are associated with increased social, emotional and behavioural problems in children and adolescents. However, most of this research has focused on late childhood and adolescence. Using data from *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*, a nationally representative study of 4,983 four-to-five-year old children growing up in 257 neighbourhoods in Australia, this article investigates the mechanisms through which neighbourhood socioeconomic status influences children's conduct problems and pro-social behaviour. After accounting for family demographic variables, children's conduct problems are found to be associated with neighbourhood socioeconomic status, neighbourhood safety and neighbourhood belonging. Perceptions of neighbourhood safety and neighbourhood belonging are found to mediate the relationships between neighbourhood socioeconomic status and children's conduct problems, and the associations of neighbourhood safety with conduct problems were mediated by neighbourhood belonging. A different pattern of results emerges for pro-social behaviour, which has direct association with neighbourhood cleanliness and neighbourhood belonging and no mediated associations.

Generation X-pendable: The social exclusion of rural and remote young people. (2009). Alston, M., & Kent, J. *Journal of Sociology*, 45(1), 89–107.

Many small communities across the vast interior of Australia are under pressure from ongoing rural restructuring and a long-running drought. Socioeconomic indicators suggest that rural people are significantly disadvantaged by comparison with their urban counterparts. While these factors are evident, less

well understood are the circumstances of rural and remote young people. In this article, the authors draw on research conducted in 2001 and 2004 on the employment and educational experiences of young people in these communities. Using Reimer's typology of relations associated with social exclusion—market, bureaucratic, associative and communal—the authors indicate that rural and remote young people are experiencing rising levels of social exclusion. Their access to education and employment is restricted through no fault of their own, and is in fact, obstructed by government policy. The need for sensitive policy to increase the social inclusion of young people in rural and remote areas is evident.

The changing context of Australian youth and its implications for social inclusion. (2009). Wyn, J. *Youth Studies Australia*, 28(1), 46–50.

Efforts to monitor and improve young people's school-to-work transitions have not generated a discernable change in patterns of social inclusion among young people. Educational approaches that promote social inclusion need to take account of the changing social and economic realities with which all young Australians engage, and address important aspects of young people's lives such as identity and wellbeing. Despite attempts to respond to the changes in young people's learning needs, there is a disjuncture between educational policies that continue to frame education within an industrial model and the requirements that young people themselves have for the capacity to be good navigators through new economies, to live well, and to engage with complexity and diversity.

Indigenous social exclusion: Insights and challenges for the concept of social inclusion. (2009). Hunter, B. *Family Matters*, 82, 52–61.

The terms "social exclusion" and "social inclusion" arose because the debate about the causes and consequences of poverty has moved away from the rather narrow historical focus on the lack of income. The new focus

on the dynamic social processes that perpetuate the lack of social participation in society is welcome; however, it is timely to ask what people are being socially excluded from or socially included in. Furthermore, do such distinctions matter? If social exclusion and/or social inclusion are important, how should policy be constructed to take it into account? Indigenous disadvantage is complex and multi-dimensional and the notions of social exclusion and social inclusion seem particularly relevant. However, a definition of social inclusion that includes local decision-making has not been implemented. It is theoretically difficult to achieve this when there is a wide cultural gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on the issues involved. There is little effective difference between social exclusion and inclusion as an organising principle for Indigenous policy. Notwithstanding, this article argues that it is important to attempt to reconcile these disparate perspectives to engage the Indigenous community so that problematic behaviours can be addressed in a constructive manner.

Governance and diversity: Encouraging and enabling participation from marginalised and minority community groups. (2008). Panousieris, G. *Just Policy*, 49, 90–93.

Discussing the importance of involving diverse community groups in organisational governance, this article considers corporate governance in the context of potential barriers to the participation of marginalised and vulnerable groups, and ways of overcoming them. It also provides an insight into embracing and valuing diversity and empowering people from marginalised groups as part of good governance. The article emphasises the importance of utilising successful models of involvement and participation established by other organisations.

Knowledge and education are universally empowering. (2008). Ahmed, B. *Australian Mosaic*, 18, 24–26.

Progress towards genuine social inclusion and empowerment for disadvantaged people

can pay profound social, financial and health dividends to comprehensively enrich Australian society. The achievement of this goal relies on vision, commitment and gifted leadership to promote change on the levels of individual, community and society. A survey of refugee young people showed that the young men believed that the only way to empowerment was through money, not education. They lacked the confidence or sense of self worth to believe that success could come through their own capabilities. Refugee adults in Australia often live underachieving lives, without optimism or encouragement for improvement. Inclusion in the mainstream is imperative to successful settlement and achievement. Refugee settlement and education services need to be structured to maximise contact with the mainstream and foster social inclusion.

Social inclusion: A policy platform for those who live particularly challenged lives. (2008). Hayes, A., & Gray, M. *Family Matters*, 78, 4–7.

In many developed economies there is currently a focus on how the lives of the most disadvantaged in society can be improved and the role that governments can play in this. A number of European countries have embraced a social policy approach that places a priority on those who are excluded from the opportunities that promote wellbeing. This article provides a brief overview of social inclusion and related literatures and some of the issues surrounding the

concept. It concludes that while social inclusion has been adopted as an organising principle for social policy in a number of countries, the experience of these countries is mixed and the extent to which the social inclusion agenda has been successful is contested. It concludes that it is important that Australia learns from the international experiences to take what worked and avoid some of the pitfalls. An overview of the other articles in the edition is also provided.

Back to schools: Human services workers increasing opportunities for early intervention and social inclusion from the school base. (2008). Winkworth, G., & McArthur, M. *Children Australia*, 33(4), 5–12.

This paper argues that Australia is lagging behind in recognising the important role social workers and other human services workers can play in schools to improve social and educational outcomes for students. It reports on a small, school-based, human services program, the Schools as Communities program, located in the Australian Capital Territory, and outlines key themes that emerged in interviews with principals and other school staff about the program's effectiveness. The program's outreach workers, who were mostly social workers, had a dual role working with individual families and facilitating community development initiatives of benefit to the school community. Case studies demonstrate how their presence contributed to earlier involvement and support of vulnerable families. They also illustrate that the

school setting enabled social workers to work more effectively to build social inclusion in local communities. The paper argues the case for using a wider range of human services professionals from the school base and calls upon education and human services systems to create more effective governance arrangements to make this possible. An expansion of the traditional disciplinary base of education to incorporate social workers and other human services professionals who are skilled at working across multiple domains is essential if schools are to maximise the impact of early intervention and prevention in working towards a more socially inclusive society.

Australian Government Social Inclusion website <www.socialinclusion.gov.au>

The Australian Government's Social Inclusion website contains links to several commissioned reports, including an overview of the key principles and debates prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies and a series of papers written by Professor Tony Vinson, University of Sydney. Publications are also available that discuss social inclusion in particular contexts such as children, disability and mental illness, jobless families, homelessness, indigenous disadvantage. The publications can be found at <www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Pages/Resources.aspx>