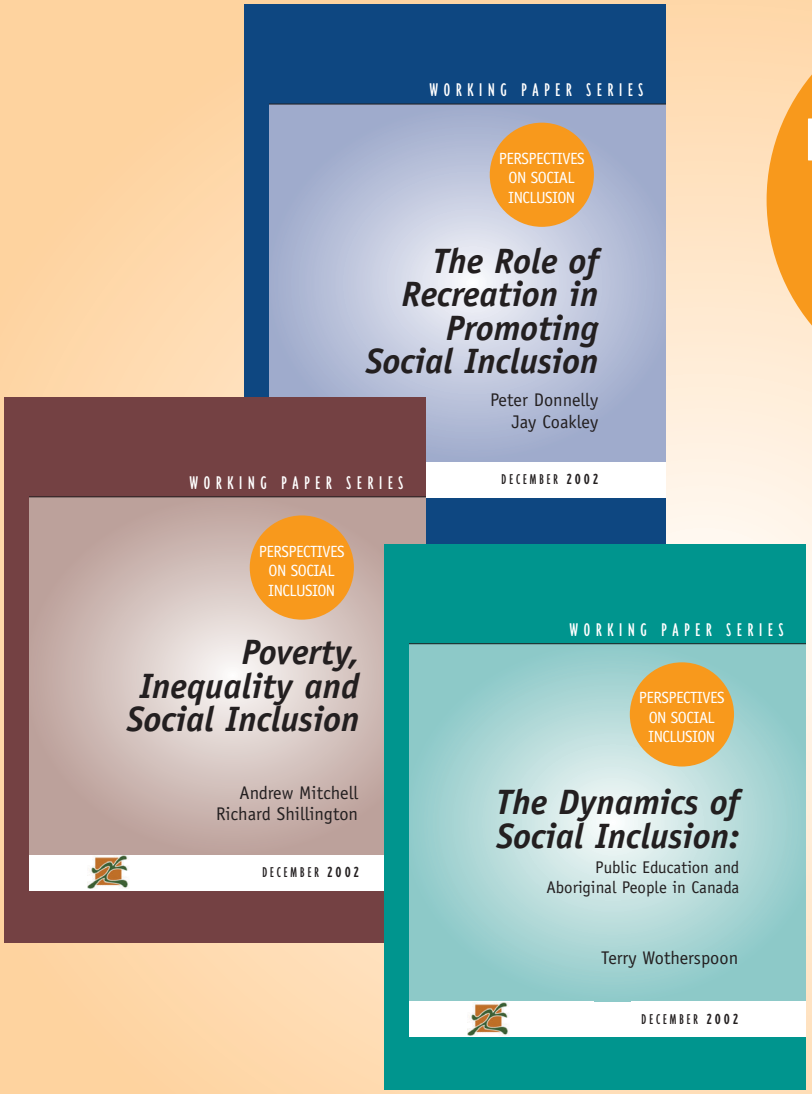
WORKING PAPER SERIES



PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL INCLUSION

DECEMBER 2002

Working Paper Series

PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL INCLUSION

Poverty, Inequality and Social Inclusion

by Andrew Mitchell and Richard Shillington

The Role of Recreation in Promoting Social Inclusion

by Peter Donnelly and Jay Coakley

The Dynamics of Social Inclusion: Public Education and Aboriginal People in Canada

by Terry Wotherspoon

SUMMARIES

December 2002

The papers summarized here are part of the Laidlaw Foundation's Working Paper Series, *Perspectives on Social Inclusion* (List attached).

The full papers include detailed citations in the text and extensive reference lists. Readers who are interested in this documentation should turn to the papers which are available from the Laidlaw Foundation's web site below.

The full papers in English and the summaries in English and French can be downloaded from the Foundation's web site at www.laidlawfdn.org (under Children's Agenda Programme). Paper copies can be ordered from workingpapers@laidlawfdn.org.

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The Context for Social Inclusion

Children have risen to the top of government agendas at various times over the past decade, only to fall again whenever there is an economic downturn, a budget deficit, a federal-provincial relations crisis or, most recently, a concern over terrorism and national security. While there have been important achievements in public policy in the past 5 to 10 years, there has not been a sustained government commitment to children nor a significant improvement in the well-being of children and families. In fact, in many areas, children and families have lost ground and social exclusion is emerging as a major issue in Canada. Examples abound and include these facts.

- the over-representation of racial minority families and children among those living in poverty in large cities, and the denial of access to many services by immigrant and refugee families;
- the 43% increase in the number of children in poverty in Canada since 1989, the 130% increase in the number of children in homeless shelters in Toronto, as well as the persistence of one of the highest youth incarceration rates among Commonwealth countries;
- the exclusion of children with disabilities from public policy frameworks (e.g. the National Children's Agenda), from definitions of 'healthy' child development and, all too often, from community life.

These situations provide the context for the Laidlaw Foundation's interest in social inclusion. The Foundation's Children's Agenda program first began exploring social inclusion in 2000 as a way to re-focus child and family policy by:

- re-framing the debate about poverty, vulnerability and the well-being of children in order to highlight the social dimensions of poverty (i.e. the inability to participate fully in the community)
- linking poverty and economic vulnerability with other sources of exclusion such as racism, disability, rejection of difference and historic oppression
- finding common ground among those concerned about the well-being of families with children to help generate greater public and political will to act.

The Foundation commissioned a series of working papers to examine social inclusion from a number of perspectives. Although the authors approach the topic from different starting points and emphasize different aspects of exclusion and inclusion, there are important common threads and conclusions. The working papers draw attention to the new realities and new understandings that must be brought to bear on the development of social policy and the creation of a just and healthy society.

These are:

- Whether the source of exclusion is poverty, racism, fear of differences or lack of political clout, the consequences are the same: a lack of recognition and acceptance; powerlessness and 'voicelessness'; economic vulnerability; and, diminished life experiences and limited life prospects. For society as a whole, the social exclusion of individuals and groups can become a major threat to social cohesion and economic prosperity.
- A rights-based approach is inadequate to address the personal and systemic exclusions experienced by children and adults. People with disabilities are leading the way in calling for approaches based on social inclusion and valued recognition to deliver what human rights claims alone cannot.
- Diversity and difference, whether on the basis of race, disability, religion, culture or gender, must be recognized and valued. The 'one size fits all approach' is no longer acceptable and has never been effective in advancing the well-being of children and families.
- Public policy must be more closely linked to the lived experiences of children and families, both in terms of the actual programs and in terms of the process for arriving at those policies and programs. This is one of the reasons for the growing focus on cities and communities, as places where inclusion and exclusion happen.
- Universal programs and policies that serve all children and families generally provide a stronger foundation for improving well-being than residual, targeted or segregated approaches. The research and anecdotal evidence for this claim is mounting from the education, child development and population health sectors.

Understanding Social Inclusion

Social exclusion emerged as an important policy concept in Europe in the 1980s in response to the growing social divides that resulted from new labour market conditions and the inadequacy of existing social welfare provisions to meet the changing needs of more diverse populations. Social inclusion is not, however, just a response to exclusion.

Although many of the working papers use social exclusion as the starting point for their discussions, they share with us the view that social inclusion has value on its own as both a process and a goal. Social inclusion is about making sure that all children and adults are able to participate as valued, respected andcontributing members of society. It is, therefore, a normative (value based) concept — a way of raising the bar and understanding where we want to be and how to get there.

Social inclusion reflects a proactive, human development approach to social well-being that calls for more than the removal of barriers or risks. It requires investments and action to bring about the conditions for inclusion, as the population health and international human development movements have taught us.

Recognizing the importance of difference and diversity has become central to new understandings of identity at both a national and community level. Social inclusion goes one step further: it calls for a validation and recognition of diversity as well as a recognition of the commonality of lived experiences and the shared aspirations among people, particularly evident among families with children.

This strongly suggests that social inclusion extends beyond bringing the 'outsiders' in, or notions of the periphery versus the centre. It is about closing physical, social and economic distances separating people, rather than only about eliminating boundaries or barriers between *us* and *them*.

The cornerstones of social inclusion

The working papers process revealed that social inclusion is a complex and challenging concept that cannot be reduced to only one dimension or meaning. The working papers, together with several other initiatives the Foundation sponsored as part of its exploration of social inclusion , have helped us to identify five critical dimensions, or cornerstones, of social inclusion:

Valued recognition — Conferring recognition and respect on individuals and groups. This includes recognizing the differences in children's development and, therefore, not equating disability with pathology; supporting community schools that are sensitive to cultural and gender differences; and extending the notion to recognizing common worth through universal programs such as health care.

Human development — Nurturing the talents, skills, capacities and choices of children and adults to live a life they value and to make a contribution both they and others find worthwhile. Examples include: learning and developmental opportunities for all children and adults; community child care and recreation programs for children that are growth-promoting and challenging rather than merely custodial.

Involvement and engagement — Having the right and the necessary support to make/be involved in decisions affecting oneself, family and community, and to be engaged in community life. Examples include: youth engagement and control of services for youth; parental input into school curriculum or placement decisions affecting their child; citizen engagement in municipal policy decisions; and political participation.

Proximity — Sharing physical and social spaces to provide opportunities for interactions, if desired, and to reduce social distances between people. This includes shared public spaces such as parks and libraries; mixed income neighbourhoods and housing; and integrated schools and classrooms.

Material well being — Having the material resources to allow children and their parents to participate fully in community life. This includes being safely and securely housed and having an adequate income.

Next steps: Building inclusive cities and communities

Over the next three years, the Children's Agenda program of the Laidlaw Foundation will focus on *Building inclusive cities and communities*. The importance of cities and communities is becoming increasingly recognized because the well-being of children and families is closely tied to where they live, the quality of their neighbourhoods and cities, and the 'social commons' where people interact and share experiences.

The Laidlaw Foundation's vision of a socially inclusive society is grounded in an international movement that aims to advance the well-being of people by improving the health of cities and communities. Realizing this vision is a long-term project to ensure that all members of society participate as equally valued and respected citizens. It is an agenda based on the premise that for our society to be just, healthy and secure, it requires the inclusion of all.

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Paul Zarnke
President and Former Chair, Children's Agenda Program, Laidlaw Foundation

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This series is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Jennifer Keck who died on June 12, 2002 after a long battle with cancer.

Jennifer was a key member of the editorial committee, an insightful and passionate reviewer of the working papers, and an unwavering advocate for social justice and the social inclusion of all people.

Summary of

Poverty, Inequality and Social Inclusion

by Andrew Mitchell and Richard Shillington

Overview

Social inclusion, like poverty, is a contested concept. Depending on the intentions of policy-makers, inclusion can be reduced to employability and be used to justify coercive welfare-to-work policies to undo dependence on social assistance. The outcomes of such policies are often lower levels of well-being for individuals and families living in earned poverty on the margins of the market economy. However, the concept of inclusion can also be used to expand understanding of the conditions for well-being, which go beyond income poverty and employment. To that end, the paper presents a framework for operationalizing exclusion for children, which begins to explore and track the processes and societal institutions that create unequal outcomes — needy children in the midst of a wealthy society.

Rethinking the Poverty Debate

Society has an interest in monitoring the well-being of its citizens. High on the list of indicators of disadvantage and well-being is how many people are "poor". Poverty is an intensely contested term in Canada. For some, poverty has meaning only in absolute terms — the minimum necessary for physical survival. For others, it can only be understood in relative terms, compared to the living standards of the society in which the person lives.

In Canada, we have tended to operationalize the idea of relative poverty by drawing an income line that is some fraction of the average income. But whether the poverty line is drawn higher or lower, there is mounting evidence that inequality itself has effects on outcomes of well-being. The

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relative gap accepted by a society (apart from who is officially defined as poor) can in itself generate negative consequences.

We contend that all concepts of poverty are inescapably relative and that the choice of measure is really a choice among policy objectives. To begin with what we should measure before knowing what outcomes we are seeking is to put the cart before the horse. What is the public policy objective to which poverty statistics are addressed — enough resources to meet physical needs for health? equality of opportunity? equality of outcomes?

Asked another way, do we see no need for a policy response as society increases in wealth and the living standards of the poorest among us fall farther away from the norm — as long as they have enough to survive? Or is there reason for concern in the widening social distance between those who are worst-off and the rest of society and the inequality of opportunity and civic participation that characterizes life at the bottom? Our answer to the latter question is clearly yes.

Canada might set a goal of eliminating poverty that implied providing only enough funds to meet basic needs. A broader social goal would be equality of opportunity, which would be tracked on the basis of income inequality or relative poverty. Even more ambitious would be a policy goal that included social inclusion, which has implications for citizen participation, capacity and agency.

Poverty, inequality and social inclusion are not interchangeable concepts, but they are interdependent. To be included across the different dimensions of well-being (physical, economic, human, social, political) requires sufficient resources and rights and capacity to participate within the environments and structures of the society in which one lives.

A new understanding of relative deprivation is closely related to the concept of social inclusion. Amartya Sen distinguishes between the mere possession of certain goods or the income that can obtain them (what is traditionally considered income poverty) and that which is truly significant — individual capabilities to meet social conventions, participate in social activities, maintain self-respect, and lead a life one has reason to value.

Capabilities go beyond income to include health and the capacity and freedom (economic and political) to influence one's environment. Capabilities consist of sets of possible functionings, which constitute a person's well-being. Being poor in a rich society may be more limiting than being poor elsewhere because it takes so much more to achieve the normal level of social functioning.

Sen's work helps us understand that income, health and education are all building blocks for capacities for basic survival, but also for capacity to live in good health and provide for oneself and one's family. And because the outcomes of one generation shape the opportunities of the next, it is meaningless to try to separate equality of opportunity from substantive equality of outcomes.

Perspectives on Inclusion/Exclusion

Should policies change the structures and conditions that create exclusion or should the marginalized be integrated into the existing mainstream? Perspectives on social inclusion reflect differing assumptions about its root causes and solutions (Silver , 1994, Levitas, 1998). The different approaches to inclusion are based in differing ideological preferences.

One common view sees unemployment as the main cause of social exclusion. The main concern is typically social cohesion, built on the norm of employment. The goal of policy tends to be reduced to employability. The excluded or marginalized are to be lifted over the minimal threshold of exclusion through paid work. They are to be incorporated into existing norms. This focus on the paid labour market results in ignoring the role and value of unpaid work and caring responsibilities. It also obscures gender, race and other inequalities in the labour market.

Another variant on social exclusion focuses on the perceived moral and behavioural deficiencies of the excluded themselves. The central concern of this approach is the avoidance of dependence, seen as a side effect of income support which is thought to destroy initiative and self-respect. Work is viewed as a moral necessity. The policy response is typically to increase restrictions on eligibility for and the benefits paid by income support programs. This avoids looking at whether programs like social assistance foster exclusion because they are designed that way. If non-work is socially unacceptable, it is in part because social and economic arrangements and policies make it so.

Such anti-exclusion policies actually reinforce exclusion by recasting their subjects as somehow separate and different from the rest of the hard-working population, defective in skills or other personal attributes. Moreover, the limitations of inclusion through work are evident. In Canada as unemployment has declined significantly, poverty has remained high, many working families have remained poor, and low-wage and precarious employment is fast becoming an entrenched feature of the economy.

In the absence of any comprehensive view of inclusion, it appears that policy in Canada is drifting towards an understanding firmly rooted in promoting social inclusion through work, and implemented through welfare-to-work programs, despite their well-documented problems. Jobs attained tend to be low-skilled, low paid and unstable. Former welfare recipients continue to experience critical hardships, living on the margins of the market economy, and family stress seems to be growing.

Policy solutions that focus on inclusion through the labour market risk simply exchanging one form of exclusion for another: exclusion from employment versus exclusion through marginal forms of employment.

There is another approach to social inclusion which focuses on poverty and inequality and the impacts of exclusion on people's lives. This view of the concept of inclusion puts greater emphasis on the responsibility of the larger society to create inclusive conditions. In France, for example, a comprehensive government package designed to combat exclusion covers a broad range of initiatives: employment and training, income support, housing and homelessness, health care, education, social

services, citizenship, political rights, and culture. Employment policies tackle both the supply and demand side, and they promote equality in the labour market and a balance of work and family life.

Operationalizing Inclusion/Exclusion for Children

If there are concerns about narrow definitions of social inclusion/exclusion to serve ideological ends, there are also possibilities in exploring the concept from a comprehensive perspective. Social exclusion directs attention not just to the fact of exclusion or to its consequences, but also to the institutions and processes that create exclusion. It begins with what we really care about — individual well-being — and asks who is affected and how. Losing one's job, for example, does not necessarily have to lead to poverty and marginalization; policies affecting employment, income support, education and health can turn disadvantage into exclusion. They can sustain individual capabilities or undermine them.

A framework of dimensions of inclusion and exclusion developed by de Haan (1998) has been adapted by the authors to children in Canada. We have tried to focus on the results or outcomes of exclusion, to avoid indicators that are subject to administrative manipulation (e.g. social assistance caseloads which are subject to eligibility rules), and to capture both current conditions of exclusion and opportunity-oriented factors that affect children's risk of exclusion in future.

Physical and economic dimensions are foundation conditions for the inclusion of children. That is, they are necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for maximizing the capabilities of children. Economic aspects include an indicator of inequality based on the argument that inequality itself matters in key areas of well-being. Physical aspects include housing and transportation infrastructure. Human assets include health and education systems, while social assets reflect individual characteristics as well as community measures. The political dimension reflects the value placed on the capacity to choose as an element of well-being.

The framework allows us to focus on those responsible for excluding, for creating impoverishment and marginalization. The concept goes beyond the description of deprivation to focus on the social relations and the processes and institutions that underlie it. This helps move the debate away from the attributes of the marginalized (e.g. dependent welfare recipient) and towards a focus on mechanisms, institutions and actors. It explicitly makes possible a discussion of power and inequality.

The framework shown next is an illustration how these ideas might be put into practice.

Table 1: The institutions and processes of exclusion

Aspect	Indicator	Institutions/agents	Processes
Location	• Geographic isolation • Access to public parks and spaces	• Local government planners • Neighbourhood and ratepayer associations	• Municipal zoning practices and planning process. • NIMBYism
Infrastructure	• Access to public transit • Availability of public library	• Transportation planners/ government officials	• Local and senior government budget processes
Housing	• Children in 'core housing need' • Children in shelters or temporary accommodation • Tenure • Shelter costs	• Landlords • Politicians • Administrative restrictions; by-laws, lease, restrictions associated with social housing	• Discrimination • Evasion of tenancy laws • Budget priority-setting process
Income	• Child and family poverty • Duration of poverty • Gini index of income inequality • Intra-family distribution of income	• Labour market • Government authorities • Culture and custom • Men	• Macroeconomic policy • Income security policy • Local economic policy (i.e. labour matching, training policy) • Gender discrimination
Labour market	• Parental unemployment • Youth unemployment	• Labour market • Government authorities • Employers	• Macroeconomic policy. • Local economic policy (i.e. labour matching, training policy) • Discrimination
Assets	• Wealth, home ownership		• Security against financial mishaps
Health	• Low birth weight • Infant mortality • Child mortality • Disability • Access to health services – coverage by supplementary health care insurance	• Public health system • Private/public health insurance	• Access to needed health care services, devices, drugs etc.

Aspect	Indicator	Institutions/agents	Processes
Education	• Educational attainment • Drop-out • Educational streaming • Integration of children with special needs	• Public educational system	• Tuition, user fees for education, access to student loans and child care
Social background	• Gender • Race	• Systemic sexism and racism	• Sexism and racism
Civic engagement	• Participation – sports groups, clubs, other organized groups	• Community and school based sports, volunteer and community groups	
Psychological	• Self-esteem		
Agency	• Economic, civic and personal autonomy	• Multitude of public and private institutions	• Capacity (including legal protections, voting, economic and social autonomy)

Adapted from de Haan (1998b: 21).

Conclusion

Institutions, agents and processes can be used for inclusion or exclusion, depending on policy intent. For example, housing policies can create marginalized ghettos or economically and socially diverse neighbourhoods. Employment and income support policies can be used to create a low-wage labour pool or foster a high-wage, high-skill economy that values equality and recognizes the need for work-family balance. The process of policy-making itself can promote exclusion if citizens experience a lack of voice in issues that directly affect them or it can foster civic participation.

We need policies that promote people's capacities to act as citizens with equal freedom to conduct a life they have reason to value. An agenda of inclusion will require supports that not only provide the income necessary to purchase necessities, but facilitate the conditions to create equality of outcomes in employment, education and health and span the full dimensions of well-being.

Summary of

The Role of Recreation in Promoting Social Inclusion

by Peter Donnelly and Jay Coakley

Overview

This paper examines whether physical recreation can promote social inclusion. Recreation is seen as having evident potential to combat social exclusion, but there are major structural barriers to participation that must be overcome. And while there is no inclusion without participation, simple access to recreational opportunities does not automatically create inclusion. Recreational programs may create forms of exclusion through imposed codes of conduct or competition, for example. Strategies are proposed to address systemic barriers to access, particularly for at-risk groups (e.g. fees, transportation) and also to emphasize inclusive practices in the nature of recreational programs (i.e. focus on the needs of youth development).

Benefits of Physical Recreation

Play and recreation constitute one of the key contexts, along with home/family and school, in which children live. Play and recreation are widely accepted as being fundamental to children's health, well-being and social and physical development. However, much less attention is paid to this context in research and policy, perhaps because of the common assumption that play is somehow natural to children.

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Jay Coakley is Professor of Sociology at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs, and since the mid-1970s has done research and written widely on the social and cultural dimensions of sports.

There is also an assumption that "good" parents, communities and schools will provide play and recreational opportunities for their children. When they are not so "good," so many other problems are created for the well-being of children that play and recreation tend to disappear from consideration. Thus, some school boards in the U.S. have abandoned recess to make more time for the classroom, as well as to avoid playground safety and liability concerns. Parents are apparently expected to fill the gap in play time for their children.

This paper focuses primarily on physical recreation and sport rather than, for example, music, arts and crafts, because our expertise lies in those areas. Physical recreation includes all forms of recreational physical activity, from gardening and hiking to exercise, dance and sports. It involves formal and informal, organized and casual participation. However, most of the research deals with organized programs, and the more casual forms of recreation are much more difficult to measure.

A recent review of literature indicates consistent findings of benefits from physical recreation and sport in the areas of childhood and lifelong health, learning and academic achievement, citizenship and democratic access, leadership and motivation (Donnelly, McCloy, Petherick, Safai, 2000). Economic benefits are also attributed to recreation. Health Canada estimates that for every dollar invested in physical activity, there is a long-term saving of $11 in health care costs.

The benefits of recreation are particularly important for children. In addition to stimulating physical and motor development, recreational opportunities can help children learn valuable skills related to quality of life, such as confidence, communication, determination, leadership and goal-orientation.

It is not possible (not without unethically depriving interested children of participation) to rule out, with complete certainty, a selection effect whereby those participating already have the potential for positive outcomes. However, the overwhelming weight of evidence across a range of studies and cultures, supplemented by strong anecdotal evidence, suggests there are likely to be educational, social and health benefits from participation in recreation.

Relevant research has rarely focused on socially excluded populations, but when it has, improvements have been found in behaviour and self-esteem at least in the short term. (Offord & Jones, 1983)

Recreation and Social Inclusion

Is physical recreation a good way to promote social inclusion? Recreation has evident potential to combat social exclusion if it can help children develop their skills, talents and capacities and fully participate in the social and economic mainstream. But recreation can be a double-edged sword. The purpose and nature of the recreational program, as well as its accessibility, will affect whether or not it promotes inclusion.

Researchers involved specifically in sport policy are deeply suspicious of the potential of organized sport, as opposed to other forms of recreation, to promote social inclusion. Sport, by its very nature, involves competition, usually in hierarchical and competitive structures (leagues). An emphasis on competitive success, over-conformity to the norms of the sport ethic as a basis for identity reaffirmation, moving up as an individual to the next level, all combine to make exclusion and marginalization a normative part of the sport experience. Continued participation often depends on winning while losing signals the end of participation. In this way participants themselves become complicit in fostering processes of social exclusion. In addition, sport pits one group against another, and there are numerous examples of such groups being formed along lines (e.g. ethnocultural) that may not promote social inclusion.

Physical education in schools has historically been associated with character-building for the private school elite and mindless drill for the rest. There is a tradition of urban recreation programs being used as instruments of social control, particularly in supervision of adolescents. Midnight basketball for youth at risk is an inexpensive, short-term, band-aid initiative to address social problems that require long-term, serious, structural solutions.

Recreation has also been used for assimilation of immigrant children through programs that ignored or dismissed their cultural heritage. In some cases, the assimilation facilitated by sports cuts immigrant children off from the sources of support needed to assist them in their long-term cultural adjustments.

Any recreation program is not necessarily better than none. A paternalistic, culturally-insensitive, overly-controlled program may reinforce exclusion for the very children and youth that the program is trying to reach.

The benefits of participation in physical recreation are clear, but they are not automatic. Children and youth may be exploited, abused, bullied or dominated in all kind of ways in organized programs; they can be taught poor values and inappropriate or dangerous (i.e. injury producing) skills; they can be made to feel alienated, isolated, and humiliated.

However, when individuals are able to become involved in creating and transforming the meaning of their physical activities, and determining the form and circumstances of their participation, the effects can reach beyond health and quality of life issues to the capacity to transform communities. People may experience the benefits of acting on shared values and developing individual and community initiative and responsibility.

While there are no studies that specifically test the ability of physical recreation to promote social inclusion, some U.S. studies are achieving positive results from some progressive programs involving young people living in poor urban neighbourhoods. Programs that involve individual and community development seem to foster resilience in young people, as evidenced in the development of autonomy, optimism, positive skills, social competence and hope. Another positive consequence of participation in organized sport programs is that it may connect a young person with an adult who is in a good position to advocate his or her interests in the larger community.

In trying to measure inclusion, if and when it occurs, some questions should be kept in mind: Has the program established a form of exclusion with imposed codes of conduct? Can inclusion occur in competitive sports programs? Is inclusion limited to the period of participation or is it a longer-term consequence? Does inclusion in recreation spread to other contexts in which children live?

Access and Democratized Participation

If socially excluded groups have little or no access to recreational opportunities, promoting social inclusion is a non-starter. And there are many structural barriers to access.

Social class is the major variable. The link between low income of the family and children's participation is clear. The Canadian Council for Social Development (2001), using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, found that younger children in families from the lowest 25% of income were almost three times more likely to have never participated in organized activities (sports, music, arts or clubs) than children in the highest income group.

The increasing inequity in the distribution of wealth among Canadians, particularly during the last decade, may be the single most important barrier to inclusive access to physical recreation. Initiatives that attempt to increase access to physical recreation without taking into account the overall living and working conditions of the target populations are unlikely to be successful. Furthermore, as programs become increasingly privatized, inclusion across social class lines becomes increasingly problematic.

Donnelly and Harvey (1996) have developed a comprehensive list of issues that must be addressed to overcome structural barriers to participation in recreation, including, for example:

1. infrastructure — fees (low or none), handy location and transportation, convenient scheduling, welcoming facilities, appropriate communications, suitable security (e.g. safe for women, children and persons with a disability);

2. superstructure — equity and harassment policies, culturally sensitive activities, active outreach, inclusive language, open dialogue that invites individuals and the community to overcome barriers together;

3. procedural — wide consultation, social support, accessible resources, rights awareness.

Social inclusion remains an elusive concept in the sphere of physical recreation. It should not be assumed that the provision of opportunities equals participation, or that participation equals inclusion. But removing barriers to participation in the substantive ways described above will develop the potential of recreation programs to foster social inclusion.

What we call "democratized" participation seems best suited to further the development of social inclusion. The main support for inclusion is found in settings where young people are part of

a club structure that is non-hierarchical, and where activities are not exclusively based on power and performance models, where pleasure and participation sports are the dominant activities, and where age integration is common.

Physical recreation should serve the primary needs of positive youth development by creating a context in which young people are and feel physically safe, personally valued, socially connected, morally and economically supported, personally and politically empowered, and hopeful about the future (Coakley, 2001).

In addition to finding out what works to foster inclusion, we need to know how to find or educate the "right" people. It seems that almost any program will work with the right people running it. We may need to train a corps of idealistic young people who are prepared to develop socially inclusive programs of physical recreation, like Bruce Kidd's Canadian Sports Leadership Corps or Olympic Aid's Coach-the-Coach program in refugee camps.

A well-led, creative and carefully-monitored program for Innu children in Labrador would be a good place to launch a community-based initiative in social inclusion through recreation in Canada.

Summary of

The Dynamics of Social Inclusion: Public Education and Aboriginal People in Canada

by Terry Wotherspoon

Overview

In this paper, inclusion and exclusion are seen as dynamic processes that take diverse forms in different contexts. Public education is a gateway for inclusion into citizenship, work and other spheres of social participation. But inclusive education cannot be achieved without simultaneous attention to the conditions that contribute to fragmentation, exclusion and inequality in society. Educational advantage and disadvantage are realized through complex interactions among social contexts, institutions, resources, and individual learners and families. The history of Aboriginal education illustrates the importance of connecting schooling to the everyday lives and cultures of families and communities. Necessary actions to promote socially inclusive education for all children and youth in Canada are identified.

The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion

At a time of social and economic change and uncertainty, new questions are emerging about what it means to belong, to be included. The concept of inclusion and exclusion can help to frame discussions about solutions to societal problems. But there is also a danger that a superficial understanding of inclusion may obscure fundamental social divisions, like class, gender and race.

Inclusion and exclusion are not simply opposites to one another or counterparts to social cohesion and disintegration, respectively. Instead, they have meaning in relation to specific contexts and practices. They are best understood as processes, rather than outcomes. They are inter-related and multi-dimensional and take diverse forms at different times and places.

Terry Wotherspoon is a Professor of Sociology and Head of the Department at the University of Saskatchewan.

They describe how people's opportunities for meaningful participation in social, economic, political and cultural life can be differentially facilitated or blocked, contributing to unequal prospects to achieve resources, capacities and credentials that are valued by society.

Just as social differences or diversity do not themselves produce inequality, inclusion entails more than the right to belong to an institution or society. It is important to examine how particular forms of difference give rise to social boundaries and distances and contribute to enduring kinds of marginalization.

Inclusion and Public Schooling

Public school is a site for the near-universal inclusion of children and youth. It is also a gateway for inclusion into citizenship, work and other spheres of social participation. Education is centrally involved in the transitions that individuals undergo in their life cycles. To be included, people need to be equipped with the autonomy, resources and capacity to manage diverse challenges throughout their lives.

Educational advantage and disadvantage are realized through the complex interactions that occur among social contexts, institutional requirements and responses, social, fiscal and cultural resources, and the relative ability of learners and their families to draw effectively on such resources.

Inclusion and exclusion operate through schooling in both transitional and more enduring ways. Serious temporary or periodic absence from school may have no long-term effects, while apparently trivial school practices may contribute to student alienation, dropping out, limited achievement or failure.

As disruptions and polarization in school and family life become increasingly prevalent, as the numbers and proportion of children and youth in designated "at risk" categories expand, and as the navigation of life transitions becomes more uncertain, it becomes more critical to explore how schools can ensure that particular "moments" of exclusion do not take on longer-term significance for individuals or groups.

Shifting Boundaries and Contradictions

A longstanding goal of public education has been to include students from diverse backgrounds and to reduce the inequalities in opportunities they may experience outside school, thereby promoting equality of educational results.

It has had some success in overcoming marginalization experienced by women, visible minorities, people with disabilities, "at-risk" learners, and other groups whose members have typically had restricted opportunities.

However, schooling has also imposed or been confronted with boundaries and obstacles that limit its effectiveness in fostering inclusion. Notions of who is eligible for citizenship rights, access to post-secondary education and other social opportunities, and the values, skills and knowledge transmitted through schooling involve political choices and unequal power relations. Consequently, several groups continue to be denied full participation and voice both within schooling and with respect to the benefits associated with educational credentials.

For example, First Nations and Aboriginal people note the presence of a significant education "gap" in their experiences, linked to restricted opportunities. Parents of special needs children cite the failure of school integration strategies to ensure that education will provide these students with a proper grounding for equitable life chances.

Education systems are marked by dynamics that contribute both to social inclusion and exclusion, and schools operate within social, economic and political contexts that affect those dynamics. Part of the current context is the threat to public education as a major universal social program. Provincial and territorial governments are under pressure to support private schools, charter schools, and other alternatives to the public system.

Many educational contradictions are being sharpened by competing currents in educational reform. The promotion of socially just, learner-centred models of education faces severe challenges from market-oriented educational reforms that view schools as businesses or economic tools.

The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in schooling involve a complex range of interconnected factors, such as job opportunities for parents and graduates, neighbourhood environments, education and social policies, the impacts of poverty, disability, and family relations on students, and school characteristics, including curriculum, staff and resources.

The development of inclusive schools requires an integrated approach to understanding and acting upon the relationships among these factors. Schools, when constituted as "inclusive spaces" must situate and involve students in a manner that connects their ongoing life transitions with engagement in the community and wider social environments.

Canada's Aboriginal People

The history of Aboriginal education illustrates how superficially inclusive strategies can produce exclusion. The residential schools which deliberately separated Aboriginal children from their families, communities, language and traditions is a now-infamous example of how to create a legacy of social marginalization and economic exclusion under the guise of providing "mainstream" education.

While the residential schools were an extreme example, there are implications for current educational policy, namely, the importance of cultural preservation and the linking of students' lives at home to their school environment. Inclusive schooling requires that schools engage with cultural issues, understood in terms of students' traditions, sense of identity, and daily life concerns.

Two parallel developments offer Aboriginal people future prospects for improved educational participation and achievement – First Nations' self-government, including Band-controlled schools, and new initiatives connecting provincial and territorial schools to Aboriginal community, identity and culture.

Theoretically, Aboriginal self-determination could reduce the capacity to be engaged in Canadian society more generally. But in practice, Aboriginal people tend to approach self-government as a strategy whereby they can regain control over and stabilize their lives, identities and communities as a precondition to broader participation in Canadian society. Culturally-appropriate schooling is a vital way by which indigenous people can regain a sense of their own heritage.

The Aboriginal experience shows that inclusive education cannot simply be achieved by dismantling or overcoming exclusionary practices. To make school an "inclusive space" requires conditions in which children, youth and parents feel comfortable to become fully engaged as participants rather than treated as outsiders or clients.

A real understanding of culture and community will affect what is taught, how it is taught and how school is organized. Successful schools have implemented such innovations as youth leadership programs, classroom discussions of everyday life matters, and invitations to elders and others to act as cultural resource people.

Implications for Educational Policy and Practice

Public schools continue to hold considerable potential to foster social inclusion insofar as they remain universal in nature (even if specific and varied in form), enabling diverse social groups to experience social acceptance and gain credentials and opportunities for participation beyond schooling.

Educational research points repeatedly to the observation that the most successful schools are those that demonstrate the ability to provide simultaneously a caring, supportive environment, a commitment to high standards, and a mutually open relationship with the communities they serve.

Inclusive schools are those in which all students (including non-traditional learners) are actively encouraged, guided and supported to gain socially valued skills, knowledge, capabilities, and credentials. These schools are equipped to attend to a wide range of needs and capacities, both physical and emotional, that accompany the diverse populations of children and youth they serve. They are organized as safe and secure places in which students are assured a voice and validation, regardless of background, while encouraging high aspiration and achievement. They are integrated with the community and other service providers as sites that can be drawn upon as a community-building resource.

Five main policy implications follow from the preceding analysis:

1. There is a need to generate more effective, large-scale, systematic data bases concerning education and life transitions in Canada, and to coordinate existing knowledge about educational innovation and outcomes.

2. Strategies are required to promote greater coordination and service integration among schools and other agencies, and to link programs and services for children and youth at federal, provincial and First Nations levels.

3. Public funding is required to support quality educational services accessible and responsive to all children, youth and adult learners. At the same time, special attention, investment and programs must be implemented for learners who experience particular difficulties during key life course transitions.

4. Universal public education must include provisions for flexibility and responsiveness to community concerns. These arrangements are not to be based on narrowly defined performance indicators or conceptions of schooling as a market, but as resources to be employed by and through the communities in which schools are located.

5. There is a need to create stronger linkages between education and the wider policy environment. It must be recognized that inclusive education cannot be achieved without simultaneous attention to the conditions that contribute to fragmentation, exclusion and inequality in society.

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