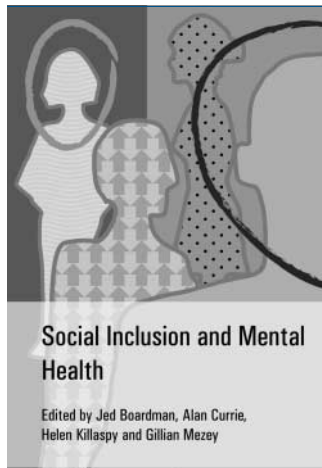


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode
and Rosalind Ramsay



Social Inclusion and Mental Health

Edited by Jed Boardman,
Alan Currie, Helen Killaspy
& Gillian Mezey.
RCPsych Publications. 2010.
£30.00 (pb). 410pp.
ISBN 9781904671879

Nearly 30 years ago I wrote my first book review. I did not like the book and made this plain. What I did not know was that the book's author was on the Editorial Board of the journal for which I was reviewing. He was given a page-length opportunity to respond: the nature of our interaction was well summed up by the author's opening sentence. In response to my complaint of 'clotted jargon-ridden prose', the author thundered: 'Jargon is the language of science'. I learnt two valuable lessons from this early experience. One was not to agree to review a book about a topic that I did not have much understanding of. The other was the rather obvious fact that authors of academic books deserve respect, since they will have invested hard hours that will likely earn little or no reward.

I had always seen the concept of social inclusion/exclusion as the rather better-grounded sibling of the recovery movement. The fact that people who are involved with mental health services experience multiple social disadvantages is intuitively obvious and very well documented. It is also obvious that mental health services should be working to help people overcome the effects of experiencing mental illness on their life chances. This aspiration could easily be reworded as facilitating a move from a state of social exclusion to one of social inclusion. *Social Inclusion and Mental Health*, in the words of its publicity material, is 'concerned with . . . the steps that psychiatrists and mental health workers can take to facilitate the social inclusion of people with mental health problems'.

There is no doubt that enormous effort and considerable erudition has gone into *Social Inclusion and Mental Health*, which is the product of a Royal College of Psychiatrists' working party, and like pre-Roman Gaul is divided into three parts.

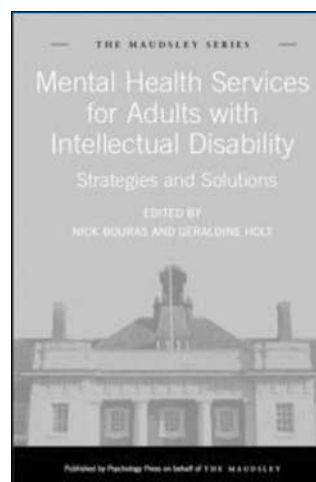
The book is very copiously referenced in the academic and 'grey' literature surrounding a topic that turns out to be complex and contested. Part 1 – 'What is social exclusion?' – exhaustively delineates these difficulties. It includes a chapter on policy and social exclusion that is a rather poignant reminder of the well-meaning policy preoccupations of the previous UK government and the times before our current era of austerity. Part 2, 'Social exclusion: the scope of the problem', provides empirical data and more discursive accounts of social exclusion in the general population and among people in contact with psychiatric services.

Service user and carer perspectives are included here. Part 3, 'Working towards inclusive psychiatry', seeks to offer solutions to the very obvious disadvantages that people with mental health problems experience. The more glamorous recovery paradigm often takes over the narrative here, and there were perhaps less practical ideas about what the practitioner and local services could do to foster social inclusion than one would expect.

Although its motivations are exemplary and the scholarship is sound, this book is not perfect. Occasionally opinion goes beyond any possible evidence base. Not all concepts are clearly elucidated (at least for this reader). The final chapter sets out a clarion call for socially inclusive practice and psychiatry in the 21st century. The editors, in writing this chapter, were clearly aware that times were changing. It will be interesting to see how relevant their proposed solutions will be to the 2010s.

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Mental Health Services for Adults with Intellectual Disability: Strategies and Solutions

Edited by Nick Bouras
& Geraldine Holt.
Psychology Press. 2010.
£22.46 (hb). 168pp.
ISBN: 9781848720404

The specialism in the psychiatry of learning disability is only available in the UK and most of the recent advances in the clinical care of individuals with intellectual disabilities have occurred in the UK. That is not to say that developments of great consequence have not happened elsewhere, but it is my view that we have, perhaps, one of the better alignments of health and social care, with significant research output in this domain. Leading lights in promoting the mental health needs of people with intellectual disabilities have been Nick Bouras and Geraldine Holt.

This volume is meant to summarise years of academic and clinical endeavour and collect the advances that have been achieved in practice, underpinned by the research and audit completed under Professor Bouras' leadership.

I found the book informative and interesting. The first part was a history lesson in how our mental health service philosophy and provision has developed since de-institutionalisation to the present day. The style is flowing and discursive, which helps to attract the reader to what could otherwise be a stale litany of data.

I have only minor reservations stemming from the fact that one or two chapters do not help the central argument of the book, which is to discuss services and strategies for solving service problems and setting new directions (e.g. chapter 4 and 7).