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(eds.)

*Intersectional  
Challenges to  
Cohesion?*

On Marginalization in  
an Inclusive Society



Forschungsinstitut  
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## Foreword by Justin J. W. Powell

As the title of this volume quixotically suggests, the relationship between diversity, social cohesion, and marginalization in contemporary societies is complex—and contested. On the one hand, embracing diversity within community is essential for social cohesion. The human rights norms that support the building of pathways towards a more inclusive society are now legally binding worldwide. 190 state parties have now ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which establishes legitimacy for inclusion and facilitates the active reduction of barriers that disable. These general and specific goals of such human rights charters should be respected across political positions and perspectives. On the other hand, factors such as frequent social and political polarization, persistent educational, economic, and social inequalities, and myriad forms of discrimination challenge utopian visions of cohesion across the boundaries etched in individual identities and between social groups within stratified societies. Especially in our time of renewed ethnic conflicts and wars, which always produce vast trauma, impairment, and forced migration, the gaps between ideals, rhetoric, and lived realities extend, often to the breaking point.

Marginalization, discursive and physical, of vulnerable groups remains a significant obstacle to achieving fuller, expansive inclusion in any era. Types of discrimination—from ableism and ageism to homo-, trans- and xenophobia as well as that based on gender, race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or religious beliefs—result in barriers to (full) participation in society, unequal access to resources, services, and opportunities; to unequal treatment or even denial of rights; and frequent prejudice, hostility, and negative stereotypes. Often, such discriminations intersect and compound each other, resulting in complex experiences of marginalization for individuals or groups who may face multiple forms of discrimination simultaneously.

Reflecting these challenges in academic and social contexts, the editors rightly highlight the importance of understanding just how differently those in marginalized groups experience social cohesion—or the lack thereof. Collect-

ing a mosaic of perspectives, they show how this contributes to identifying the structures and the dynamics of building a more inclusive society. The arduous work of rooting out sources of discrimination, both explicit and implicit, and meaningfully displaying the humanity, solidarity, and specific bonds that bridge our differences, requires communication, commitment, and patience.

This book addresses these identified issues by providing a kaleidoscopic examination of social cohesion and marginalization drawn from diverse disciplinary perspectives. Incorporating theoretical and methodological discussions alongside empirical case studies, this plentiful volume sheds light on the indivisible complexities these social issues pose for understanding each other—and actively living together—now in an increasingly networked social (media) world. The editors have organized the chapters into sections that cover theoretical frameworks, specific contexts of marginalization, such as poverty, dis/ability, and migration, and collective action efforts aimed at addressing these intertwined issues. Leveraging their positionalities and experiences in a range of contexts, and helping the readers reflect on theirs, the contributors also help us cross the all too rigid boundaries between academia, policy, and practice, as they apply a range of theoretical frameworks, methods, and timeframes within their studies.

Emphasizing how key are communication and language(s), including sign; sharing identities and experiences of marginality; as well as inclusive educational and community-based (and emancipatory) research processes and results, these diverse contributions from different regions of the world show how each of us may facilitate inclusion by better understanding our own experiences of and complicity in exclusionary processes and that faced by others near and far. In reflecting on our own positionality and going beyond our comfort zones, we may find new common ground—and build more inclusive communities on that basis.

*Justin J. W. Powell; March 03, 2024*