

Propagating Justice: Using participatory action research in a community food growing setting to identify risks of exclusion in seldom-heard populations

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People on the margins, particularly those with learning disabilities, experience exclusion in many areas of daily life, whether it be choices routinely made on their behalf without consultation, or a missed opportunity to express a need or desire. In this study, through participatory action research (PAR) and critical ethnography, it was identified that there are three key characteristics to occupational exclusion. These are warning signs of a more embedded experience of occupational injustice.

Objectives: The concept of occupational exclusion is discussed as a precursor to occupational marginalisation, with examples taken from a doctoral study based in an urban community food growing setting.

Recommendations are made relating to reducing occupational exclusion and promoting a collective awareness of how to address the early signs of occupational injustice.

Approach: PAR and critical ethnographic methods were utilised in this qualitative study. The capabilities approach (Nussbaum 2011), use of permaculture design (Holmgren 2011) and consideration of the role of occupational justice (Stadnyk et al. 2011) in creating inclusive environments enabled the examination of adverse action that at times created exclusive groups within a wider community.

Practice Implications: Identifying the signs of occupational exclusion in a setting allows us to reduce the reinforcement of previous experiences of marginalisation within populations where this experience is common.

Conclusion: Creating opportunities for active and non-tokenistic engagement of people with learning disabilities in leadership and decision-making within an inclusive community organisation enables an openness and understanding that will help to prevent an occupationally unjust culture.