

**The (Radical) Role of Belonging in Shifting & Expanding Understandings of Social Inclusion for People
Labelled with Intellectual or Developmental Disability**

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Abstract

There is a gap between the desired outcomes of social inclusion policy and the everyday experiences of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability. Despite belonging rhetorically named in social inclusion policy and practice, belonging is often absent in the lives of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability and remains undertheorised in its relationship to social inclusion. In this paper we explore the role belonging might play in narrowing this gap. Drawing on critical disability and feminist relational theories, we outline a relational conceptualization of belonging and use it to 'crip' the construct of social inclusion, asking the question: *'Is belonging a useful construct in expanding and shifting understandings of social inclusion in ways that value crip and other non normative ways of being?'* We explore the synergies and tensions that surface when social inclusion and belonging are held together as discrete but interconnected constructs, naming four conceptual shifts and expansions that allow us to see social inclusion differently.

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Introduction

Social inclusion—commonly defined as varied interpersonal relationships and community participation—is named as an important right for people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability¹ (United Nations, 2006). Social inclusion is also an important element of well-being (Cobigo et al., 2012; Simplican et al., 2015) and is named as a desired outcome by people labelled with intellectual or developmental disabilities, their families, service providers, and policy makers (Cobigo et al., 2016; Schleiena et al., 2013; Simplican et al., 2015; United Nations, 2006). Belonging—commonly defined as a reciprocal experience of feeling valued and ‘in place’ in reference to one or more people, groups, or spaces— is increasingly rhetorically named as both a dimension and outcome of social inclusion in policy (see United Nations, 2006) and practice. Although belonging is rhetorically named, it is rarely adequately theorised in relation to social inclusion (Strnadová et al., 2018). That is, the moral presuppositions of each construct and how they produce both resonance and friction when held together are rarely surfaced.

For the greater part of the twentieth century, public policy in the global north supported the institutionalization of people labelled with intellectual and developmental disability. Today, in large part thanks to community living and self advocacy movements, adults labelled with intellectual or developmental disability, in these countries, are thought to enjoy greater overall quality of life, including opportunities to take on roles such as student or employee. Despite having increased opportunities to participate in community life, a sense of belonging is frequently absent in the lives of people labelled

¹ The authors take the position that disability is not something that someone has; it is not a condition, disease, or disorder but is better understood as an emergent property of the person-environment system as is reflected in our language choice of ‘people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability’ and ‘disabled people’. People are given the label of intellectual or developmental disability when, through the lens of normative expectations, they demonstrate significant limitations in intellectual functioning (e.g. comprehending, reasoning, planning, or problem solving) and adaptive behavior (e.g. social and practical skills for daily living).

with intellectual or developmental disability (Strnadová et al., 2018). Recent qualitative research illuminates the paucity of friendships and exclusion from “the world of interpersonal intimacy” people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability experience (Milner & Kelly, 2009, p. 51). It is not uncommon for people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability to report feeling segregated, excluded, and “treated like an outcast” in their communities (Merrells et al., 2018, p. 16). For example, Hall (2005) interviewed people labelled with intellectual and developmental disability and found people experienced intimidating and hurtful body language, looks, and verbal comments in public spaces. Similarly, Power & Bartlett (2018) found that people experienced bullying in their neighborhoods.

Human beings have a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Chronic absence of belonging and high rates of social isolation can have negative impacts on health, well being, and quality of life. People labelled with intellectual and developmental disability contend with an ‘othered’ identity which heightens the risk of social isolation, lack of meaningful activity, frequent anxiety, boredom, and loneliness (Schleiena et al., 2013). The following quote from a participant in a study by Milton and Sims (2016) brings careful attention to the internalized oppression cultivated through an ascribed, othered, identity:

“Growing up in this way, it can lead to feeling as though we are ‘wrong’ or ‘defective’, and for me that led to low self esteem and depression, as well as an intense need to find a way to improve myself and make myself acceptable to others” (p. 526).

This description resonates with research that links high rates of loneliness and low sense of community belonging with depression and suicidal ideation (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2014; McConnell et al., 2016). On the other hand, people who have a strong sense of community belonging typically perceive life to be more meaningful and enjoy better health, higher levels of happiness, and higher life satisfaction (Espelage et al., 2005; Jetten et al., 2009; Lambert et al., 2013; Schellenberg, 2004).

Evidently there is a gap between the desired outcomes of social inclusion policy and practice and the everyday experiences of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability (Grung et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2020; Strnadová et al., 2018). In this conceptual paper we explore the (radical) role belonging might play in narrowing this gap. Drawing on critical disability and feminist relational theories (Goodley, 2017; Goodley, 2013; Mackenzie & Stoljar, 2000), we outline a relational conceptualization of belonging and use it to ‘crip’ the construct of social inclusion, asking the question: *‘Is belonging a useful construct in expanding and shifting understandings of social inclusion in ways that value crip and other non normative ways of being?’*.

The Relational as Radical—‘Crippling’ Social Inclusion

Critical disability studies emphasise “the complex social, cultural, material, and economic conditions that undergird the exclusion of disabled people” and offer different directions forward in theorizing disability and inclusion (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2016, p. 2). Crip theory, a branch of critical disability theory, emerged from activist and artist disability communities and draws upon queer theories in its conceptualization of disability as a cultural construct (McRuer, 2006). Cultural or ‘crip’ models of disability oppose predominant medical conceptions of disability that reduce disability to pathology, diagnosis, cure, or elimination and build upon and extend social models of disability that suggest disability is not located in the bodies/minds of disabled people but rather in inaccessible environments (McRuer, 2006). Cultural model theorists “have exposed the reliance of the normal body on the disabled body, the myth of the disabled/abnormal body” (Goodley, 2017, p. 15). They problematize these binaries, illuminating the ways in which they are implicit in perpetuating people’s oppression and marginalization. In a cultural model of disability, ‘normal’ is interrogated and disability is understood as a “desired cultural phenomenon” for its ability to challenge, resist, and create opportunities for (re)imagining the status quo (Goodley, 2017; Michalko, 1998). As Goodley, (2017) puts it, “disability might be desired as an opportunity for thinking about our relationships with one another in the world.

Disability sparks moments of reflective wonder as disability troubles the normative, mundane patterns of everyday life.” (p. 16). ‘Crip’ is a term used to describe disabled identity within some cultural models. Historically used as a derogatory term, it has since been reclaimed by some disabled people. It is intentionally provocative and rebellious, reflecting a boldly anti-assimilationist and prideful disability identity. ‘Crippling’ is the *process* of using disability to trouble and (re)imagine constructs in ways that work for all people (Chandler, 2012; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2016; Mcruer, 2006). To ‘crip’ a construct is to illuminate both the disruptive and generative potential of disability—troubling taken for granted ideas of what it means to be a normative person and sparking opportunities for shifting and expanding constructs.

Feminist relational theory is an umbrella of theory that broadly attends to the ways we “exist and develop within a web of relationships” (Sherwin & Stockdale, 2017, p. 9). This relational aspect of life is often absent from social inclusion policy in palpable ways but is a critical component of enacting social inclusion as envisioned by people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability, their families, and allies. In this paper we explore the *relational as radical* – radical as it has the potential to trouble the fundamental assumptions underpinning common conceptions of social inclusion and illuminate both the disruptive and generative possibilities of disability.

(Some) Shortcomings of Social Inclusion Today

Social inclusion policy has often focused on the “formal and contractual”, emphasizing a “public morality” that is regulated and underpinned by the values of self determination, individual choice, and equal rights (Reinders, 2002, p. 3). This public and formal inclusion creates ‘institutional space’ – affording people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability equal rights and opportunities, for example, to become students, tenants, employees, and more broadly citizens (Reinders, 2002; Strnadová et al., 2018). This public and formal inclusion also enables the creation of paid supports,

accessible built environments, accessible transportation, and income assistance – all essential to the inclusion of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability.

Some scholars suggest this emphasis on the “formal and contractual”, although essential and having resulted in many important improvements to the quality of life of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability, is not sufficient on its own (Reinders, 2002; Strnadová et al., 2018). A shortcoming of a public and formal inclusion underpinned by rights is its inability to nurture and support informal relationships, often resulting in people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability being physically present but socially distant in their communities (Clapton, 2009; Power & Bartlett, 2018).

Another shortcoming highlights the ways rights-based conceptions of social inclusion (over) emphasise independent living and economic participation as key indicators of inclusion (Hall, 2010; Hall, 2005; Hall & Wilton, 2011; Wilton et al., 2018). Problematically, this places onus on disabled people to adhere to a set of normative practices and obscures the “role of institutional structures, social and individual discrimination, and deep-seated abjection towards people of mental difference” in producing social exclusion (Hall, 2010, p. 50). Furthermore, this has been identified as exclusionary to people labelled with “severe” or “profound” intellectual or developmental disability for whom independent living and employment are sometimes not realistic nor desired goals (Hall, 2010). In this narrow conception of social inclusion there is little room for (re)imagining what (inter)dependent living and contribution might look like from the perspective of disabled people.

A final shortcoming, discussed by Meininger, (2013) is that rights-based conceptions of social inclusion fail to critically examine the problematic, normative assumptions—rooted in institutionalization, eugenics, and normalization—underpinning many inclusion policies and practices. Although social inclusion has been moved ahead in political arenas, there continues to be a failure to

“deconstruct the mental representations of deviance that foster social resistance against and exclusion of people who are different” (Meininger, 2013, p. 31). Put another way, common conceptions of social inclusion maintain current social ordering rather than create space for alternative social ordering that values the lives and experiences of disabled people (Meininger, 2013). This failure has resulted in the persistence of exclusionary practices, in albeit different forms, under the guise of inclusion (Drinkwater, 2005; Graham & Slee, 2008; Meininger, 2013).

In response to these shortcomings, Reinders, (2002) suggests a second type of morality, one that is intimate, informal, and concerned with “human fulfillment” is required (in addition to the public morality previously described) if an experience of belonging is a goal of social inclusion policy and practice. Calling for a broadening of the politics of inclusion to also encapsulate a relational “politics of culture”, Reinders, (2002) articulates the need to cultivate a particular “moral culture”, enacted through informal relationship, that supports the belonging of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability. Although not outrightly defined, the “moral culture” Reinders, (2002) describes: permeates spaces, places, and relationships (both private and public); is underpinned and shaped by values inclusive of the disabled experience (e.g. interdependence, diversity); shapes actions, practices, and processes, within a space; and ultimately shapes how a space is experienced by people. A concrete example of this moral culture might be “encounters, places, and events where ‘being with’ persons with intellectual disabilities is emphasised instead of ‘doing something for’ them” (Meininger, 2013, p. 36) or where people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability are invited into someone’s life as a friend, out of a desire to live in relationship with them rather than a perceived need to ‘help’ or ‘fix’. Similar calls to (re)imagine social inclusion in ways that foster belonging are put forward by others including Hall (2010; 2005), Cobigo et al. (2012), Meininger (2013), and Phelan and Reeves, (2021).

A Relational Understanding of Belonging

The literature on belonging is vast and spans numerous disciplines (Antonsich, 2010). For example, in a transdisciplinary review of the literature on belonging, Mahar et al., (2013) found 8000 unique studies on belonging published between the years 1990 and 2011. The construct is discussed as lacking conceptual clarity and often being “treated as an explanatory term and therefore left undefined by scholars” (Antonsich, 2010, p. 644). Amongst diverse definitions in the literature, commonalities include reference to reciprocity, a feeling of value, and an external attachment to a person, place, space, or activity (Mahar et al., 2013). Belonging can be conceptualised on multiple levels (e.g. simply feeling ‘in place’ or feeling a deep connection) and within multiple ‘spheres’ (e.g. experiencing belonging to your family; your neighborhood; your city; your country; or in the broadest sense, to humanity) (Antonsich, 2010b; Yuval-Davis, 2006). One can also belong to a multitude of external attachments (e.g. a relationship, a physical space, a geographical location, or a historical event) (Mahar et al., 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

The experience of belonging has been identified by people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability as an important area to focus attention and research (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Schleiena et al., 2013). Despite this, there has been limited research explicitly exploring an experience of belonging from the perspective of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability (Robinson et al., 2020). Nind & Strnadová, (2020) summarise three recent studies exploring belonging from the perspective of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability conducted in Canada and Australia (Renwick et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2020; Strnadová et al., 2018). Across these three qualitative studies, people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability identified belonging as “being a member of the community who is valued and who contributes” (p. 202), “having friends with similar experiences, including experiences of having a disability” (p. 202), and places that are “safe, comfortable, and friendly” (p. 202). In another qualitative study, Amanda, who is labelled with intellectual or developmental disability describes her experience of belonging this way:

“When I meet my people, I know, because I feel it....Autscap has meant I see my differences as part of the difference that make up the whole of humanity and as something to be celebrated, not something I need to get away from....there was no fear or ridicule. I had never before experienced such a feeling of coming home” (Milton & Sims, 2016, p. 529).

Importantly, across all these definitions produced by people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability, there is an emphasis on being accepted for *who they are, as they are*. Additionally, the experience of belonging is not contingent upon the ‘nature’ of the space, activity, or people but instead upon the “moral culture” that is produced within that space. Said another way, belonging as expressed by people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability can be experienced in spaces labelled as ‘congregated’² as well as those labelled as ‘inclusive’. Belonging can also be experienced in relationship with other disabled people as well as in relationship with nondisabled people.

Aligned with how people labelled with intellectual and developmental disability identify belonging and drawing on feminist relational theory (Mackenzie & Stoljar, 2000), we offer a relational conceptualization of belonging as a personal, intimate, and emotional experience that encapsulates feeling safe, valued, respected, and ‘at home’ (Hall, 2013; Mahar et al., 2013; Power, 2013). This experience is an ongoing, dynamic, and fluid negotiation derived from a reciprocal relationship to one or more people, places, spaces, or activities (Hall, 2013; Mahar et al., 2013; Probyn, 1996).

In recent decades there has been increasing interest in the meaning and implications of a relational belonging as it relates to the social inclusion of people labelled with intellectual and developmental disability (Nind & Strnadová, 2020). Belonging has been a part of the shift in the social inclusion literature from community presence towards community participation with an emphasis on

² Note the use of ‘congregated’ here is intentional. ‘Congregated’ spaces are different than segregated spaces and refer to spaces where disabled people can gather on their own terms. ‘Congregated’ spaces have also been referred to in the literature as “crip community”, “safe havens”, or “alternative spaces of inclusion” (Chandler, 2012; Chandler, 2013; Hall, 2010; Hall, 2005; Power & Bartlett, 2018)

meaningful participation (Power, 2013). However, the relationship between belonging and inclusion remains debated. Some scholars discuss belonging as a desired outcome of social inclusion (Cobigo et al., 2016; S. A. Hall, 2009; Simplican et al., 2015). Other scholars discuss belonging as a third component or dimension of social inclusion sitting alongside community participation and interpersonal relationships (Cobigo et al., 2012). This increasing interest in belonging has also surfaced reassessments by some, of the value of the construct of social inclusion altogether (Simplican & Leader, 2015). For example, Hall, (2010), asks if belonging is “perhaps a more useful way of thinking about what people with [intellectual or developmental disability] want from their spaces of support and care and, further, how they can relate to and find a place within wider society” (p. 52)? However, swinging the pendulum too far in this direction—replacing social inclusion with belonging—also may not produce the outcomes desired. As Simplican et al., (2015) articulate, replacing social inclusion with belonging risks losing sight of the “actual level of involvement of people with disabilities in their community or their social networks” (p. 21). Furthermore, as Nind & Strnadová, (2020) discuss, focusing on the felt experience of belonging alone can result in negative consequences, for example, women remaining in abusive relationships because of a perceived sense of belonging (Pestka & Wendt, 2014 as cited in Nind & Strnadová, 2020) or perpetuating harmful segregationist practices such as institutionalization based on reports of individuals feeling a sense of belonging while living in institutional environments.

Taking into account the scholarly debates aforementioned and using the concept of ‘cripping’ from critical disability studies, we propose exploring social inclusion and belonging as discrete but interconnected constructs that can challenge, trouble, and strengthen one another. In doing so we hope to create space for both constructs to maintain their complexity and nuance, something that can be lost when the constructs are collapsed. This configuration may also offer more space for different and multiple approaches to supporting inclusion and belonging to emerge (i.e., an approach to nurturing

relational belonging might look different than the approach to securing rights and opportunities but both are required).

The (Radical) Roles of Belonging in ‘Crippling’ Social Inclusion

In the previous sections we explored the constructs of social inclusion and belonging – their shortcomings, their strengths, and their relationship to one another. Next, using the *relational as radical*, we explore the ways relational understandings of belonging trouble and ‘crip’ some of the fundamental assumptions underpinning social inclusion and name four shifts and expansions that emerge when the constructs collide.

Shifting social inclusion from ‘assimilationist’ towards ‘relational’

As Graham & Slee provocatively pose, when it comes to inclusion it is important to consider “into what do we seek to include?” (2008, abstract). The construct of social inclusion has almost exclusively been defined as disabled people’s “acceptance and achievement of the dominant societal values and lifestyle” (Cobigo et al., 2016). There has been less work that critically examines the normative assumptions that permeate rights-based conceptions and enactments of social inclusion for people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability. This emphasis on achieving nondisabled norms, places onus on people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability to change to make themselves ‘fit’ and often results in an experience of exclusion in spaces and activities labelled as inclusive (Hall, 2010; Hall, 2004; Reeves et al., 2020). This may be, in part, because social inclusion theories and practices have commonly been developed and directed by nondisabled people (Cobigo et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2020).

Holding the constructs of social inclusion and belonging together conceptually shifts social inclusion towards being “a mutual exchange, rather than the acceptance or achievement of norms and standards defined by typical members of the group” (Cobigo et al., 2012, p. 79). The relationality and reciprocity of belonging creates a shared onus between the person seeking belonging and the

corresponding attachment. Rather than people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability feeling as though they need to change themselves, or professionals feeling like they need to change people to 'fit' in, there is a recognition that all parties involved in the relationship must work together to find a 'fit':

"we all need to develop skills...everyone involved in a relationship...needs to make the decision to decrease relational distance and create a place within each other's minds" (Nind & Strnadová, 2020, p. 204-205).

Supporting and nurturing inclusion is an "emotional, cognitive, and physical labor" (p. 84), a "process and learnable skill" and can thus be developed by disabled and abled individuals alike 'through asking and respecting [disabled individuals'] knowledge'" (Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 252 as cited in Valentine, 2020, p. 82).

Incorporating relational belonging 'crips' social inclusion by shifting focus from assimilation, towards a re-negotiation and re-shaping of norms that are more genuinely inclusive. Relational belonging demands a *shared* shaping of norms involving people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability in the theorizing, directing, and enacting of social inclusion. There are several different imaginings in the literature as to what this 'shared shaping' might look like. For example, Shotwell (2012) challenges traditional approaches to normativity calling them "simplistic and reductive" and puts forward the idea of open normativities—"collectively crafted ways of being" (p. 990). Using open normativities Shotwell (2012) suggests it is possible to contest current norms, reshaping them to create "new, more capacious norms—normativities friendlier to the proliferation of many kinds of embodiments, subjectivities, and ways of being in the world" (p. 991). Goodley & Runswick-Cole (2016) have also begun to imagine what a re-negotiation of norms might look like. In their elaboration of DisHuman studies they explore the ways disability can be used to "trouble the normative, rational,

independent, autonomous” construction of what it means to be human and create space for alternative imaginings of community life (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2016, p.2). Similar to Shotwell (2012), Goodley & Runswick-Cole (2016) grapple with the following tension: on the one hand norms have pragmatic and political value (e.g. in maintaining order) while on the other hand they can be exclusionary and need to be troubled so that they can be more inclusive of crip and other non normative ways of being. Goodley & Runswick-Cole (2016) reconcile this tension by suggesting people can simultaneously desire and disrupt existing norms. Meininger (2013) and his elaboration of heterotopic spaces is a final example of what re-negotiating norms might look like. Meininger (2013) describes ‘niches’, relational spaces where a reordering of social norms can occur through dialogue and encounter. Foundational to heterotopic spaces being “nurseries for social change” is their devotion to dialogue and participant willingness to “be confronted with and changed by one another’s otherness” (Meininger, 2013, p. 32,33).

Expanding social inclusion from ‘objective’ to also encompass the ‘experiential’

A common critique of social inclusion is the construct’s overemphasis on “select indicators that are usually objective and associated with dominant societal perspectives rather than the views of individuals from the marginalised group” (Cobigo et al., 2016, p. 229). Measures of social inclusion commonly include counting the number of relationships a person has or the frequency and nature of activities in the community (Cobigo et al., 2016). This overemphasis on what is ‘objective’ and quantifiable, does not adequately account for a relational belonging. It contributes to a façade of inclusion – labelling people as ‘included’ when an *experience* of inclusion may be absent (Graham & Slee, 2008).

Belonging is felt and emotional (Nind & Strnadová, 2020). It involves feeling safe, valued, and respected (Mahar et al., 2013). Bringing a relational belonging into the construct of social inclusion ‘crips’ it by deepening and expanding the ways it can be ‘measured’ or ‘assessed’ (Cobigo et al., 2012). For example, it becomes not just about the quantity of relationships a person has but also about the

quality and *meaning* ascribed to those relationships (Cummins & Lau, 2003; Edward Hall, 2005; Simpican et al., 2015). We would suggest, as others have, that it is important to incorporate both objective and more qualitative (for example interviews or arts based) ways of ‘measuring’ or ‘assessing’ social inclusion in the lives of people labeled with intellectual or developmental disability (Cobigo et al., 2012, 2016).

Shifting from social inclusion as ‘static and attained’ towards social inclusion as ‘fluid and negotiated’

Social inclusion has often been conceptualised as ‘static’ – as something to be ‘attained’ or ‘achieved’. Defined as the ‘opposite of institution’ (Ben-Moshe, 2011; Meininger, 2013), ‘attainment’ of inclusion is commonly associated with the “extent to which disabled people are able to engage in activities alongside, form relationships, and be present in spaces occupied by, nondisabled others” (Wilton et al., 2018, p. 232). These rigid assumptions about what is ‘inclusive’ devalue what Chandler, (2013) calls the ‘communitizing practices’ of disabled people, practices that provide important opportunities for disabled people to be together, organise, and rest on their own terms.

In contrast, belonging is conceptualised as the ‘opposite of loneliness, isolation, and alienation’ and so is not associated with the ‘nature’ of an attachment but instead with how that attachment is experienced (Antonsich, 2010). A relational belonging is conceptualised as dynamic, moving “beyond the strict boundaries of who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’” (Nind & Strnadová, 2020). A relational belonging encapsulates an individual “who enters and exits multiple communities” and recognises the diverse attachments people have to multiple spaces, people, and activities and the way those attachments shift and change over time (Simpican & Leader, 2015).

A relational belonging ‘crips’ inclusion by conceptually shifting it from a static construct towards inclusion as a fluid, ongoing negotiation. Belonging shakes loose the strict boundaries of ‘mainstream’ versus crip notions of ‘congregated’ space, and creates space for ‘communitizing practices’ (Chandler,

2012, 2013; Hall, 2010; Hall, 2005). As Nind & Strnadová (2020) suggest, we believe the “valuing of social inclusion should not mean eradicating ‘safe spaces’ which include spaces shared by people with similar life experiences” (p. 202).

Expanding social inclusion from ‘formal and public’ to also encompass the ‘intimate and informal’

“We create space and include people with [intellectual or developmental disability] as citizens in our institutions, but do we also include them in our lives as human beings?” (Reinders, 2002, p. 2). As explored earlier in this paper, dominant conceptions of social inclusion are centered around a ‘formal and public’ inclusion. Underpinned by rights, they reflect collective actions to include people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability within our public institutions. Although this has resulted in important advancements in the recognition of rights and opportunities of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability in the minority world, it has often failed to address the role culture and individual values and attitudes play in shaping an experience of inclusion.

Belonging, on the other hand, is centred around an intimate and informal inclusion. Underpinned by a supportive moral culture, it reflects individual actions to include people labelled with intellectual or developmental disability within our informal relationships inviting them in as neighbors, friends, and colleagues (Reinders, 2002). A relational belonging ‘crips’ inclusion, expanding social inclusion to encompass both a formal, public, inclusion as well as an intimate, informal inclusion. This has implications for the ways social inclusion is enacted. It demands, that in addition to securing rights and opportunities, we also address social, cultural, and attitudinal barriers that hinder a sense of belonging. Furthermore, it moves past “attempts at equalizing or accommodating...[towards] the development of individual and collective (re)orientations, ways of being responsive to our primary interdependence” (Valentine, 2020, p. 78).

Conclusion

Social inclusion and belonging are both important constructs in improving the lives of people labelled with intellectual and developmental disability. Although they are often rhetorically discussed in relation to one another in policy, their different, and at times competing, moral presuppositions are rarely surfaced. Dominant, rights-based conceptions of social inclusion can underemphasise relationship, experience, and meaning, while conceptions of belonging can lose sight of important political rights and opportunities. This creates barriers to enacting social inclusion in ways that foster belonging. In contrast, when social inclusion and belonging are held together and their moral presuppositions collided, a synergy is revealed—surfacing tensions and illuminating opportunities for conceptual expansions and shifts that value crip and other non-normative ways of being. Belonging helps us see social inclusion differently, *shifting* social inclusion towards relationality and fluidity, *expanding* social inclusion to encapsulate a felt experience and intimate, informal inclusion.

Deepening and extending this conceptual work and the work of others in this area, there is a need for research that continues to build our understanding of belonging. How does belonging show up in the lives of people labelled with intellectual or developmental disabilities? How is it experienced? What shapes, hinders, and supports it? Furthermore, research exploring the relationship between social inclusion and belonging, the ways the constructs are discrete and yet interconnected, and the implications of this relationship on policy and practice is warranted.

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