

## INAUGURAL EDITORIAL

# Pushing forward the research agenda through shifting our scientific gaze

*Vulnerable Groups & Inclusion* is a new international, peer-reviewed Open Access journal that we have started on our own initiative together with Co-Action Publishing. The journal received seed money from the North Trøndelag University College (HINT), Norway and the Mid Sweden University (Mittuniversitetet), Sweden, both of which encourage and financially support national and bilateral cooperation programs.

To our knowledge this is a unique way of organizing a journal. Rather than focusing on a specific subject area, as a point of departure we have taken the concept of inclusion, with an aim to increase and collate scientific knowledge regarding the processes behind the inclusion of people who are either at risk of becoming marginalized or who are already marginalized (e.g. due to health, in working life, socially, as citizens, in public life, etc.). Marginalization and exclusion are studied from the perspective of numerous social groups and by researchers situated in different scientific and social scientific disciplines. The Journal seeks to bring together these perspectives and groups to achieve a broader dialogue and a more solid empirical basis for generating knowledge. We also look to push forward the research agenda

through framing new questions in the Journal.

Marginalization is often studied from within a problem-based framework, leading to the identification of barriers as a research result. In the best case, authors make suggestions for inclusion policies on the basis of the problems identified. This approach has resulted in two ironies. First, we know more about that which excludes people and groups in a population than about what factors and mechanisms contribute to inclusion. Second, policies are often based on what we know about exclusion and marginalization rather than on what we know about inclusion. While there is clearly a relationship between the phenomena of exclusion and inclusion, we would argue that it is time to balance out our knowledge of them. With this Journal, we wish to shift our scientific gaze from barriers (exclusion and marginalization) to identifying paths to inclusion as research results. We would argue that by doing so we will generate results that can be translated into practical policies and measures based on scientific evidence.

We know that marginalization can be based on different factors or an interplay among factors. There is a need to further investigate these factors and

interplays among them from the perspective of inclusion. Such factors might be specific to a group, but often come into play in relation to many types of social groups. As such, the Journal welcomes research from across disciplines and subject matter including health care sciences, rehabilitation science, public health, social work, philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, disability research, gender studies, gerontology, research on indigenous populations, migration studies, and so on. Qualitative as well as quantitative studies are welcome, just as theoretical and methodological studies and case reports. The editors are particularly interested in stimulating the publication of research results from different countries and on different topics of inclusion related to a global perspective. By developing a forum for discussing and presenting results on inclusion across a wide field of inquiry, we can contribute to cross-pollinating successful practices and measures grounded in empirical evidence. Some individuals are particularly vulnerable because they represent several fields of vulnerability such as disabled immigrant women or the unemployed youth of a native population. We especially welcome articles that address issues of relevance to such individuals and believe the multidisciplinary forum of *Vulnerable Groups & Inclusion* provides a needed outlet for these manuscripts.

*Vulnerable Groups & Inclusion* in a way begs for Open Access. The research results published here ultimately aim to impact upon the lives of those we study in a positive way, through bringing

needed information to policy makers, practitioners, health care personnel, educators, and others. It would be unethical to hide this kind of research behind tolls—and it is, therefore, only natural that we should choose a publishing format that provides immediate free access and free use of content for all.

All manuscripts are peer-reviewed and edited to the highest standards. In addition, all articles published in *Vulnerable Groups & Inclusion* will be freely accessible online immediately after they have been accepted for publication and can thereafter be linked, read, downloaded, stored, printed, used, and data-mined by anybody with a computer and access to the Internet. Moreover, an Open Access model offers additional multimedia benefits such as videos, audios, links to full datasets, unlimited color budgets, and interactive features, all of which the printed medium cannot provide.

The editorial team and Co-Action Publishing aim to provide authors with short publication times. As editors we will work with the editorial board and reviewers to provide as rapid review as possible, while our publisher will ensure that articles are published online after approximately 3 to 4 weeks of acceptance.

Publication of an article in *Vulnerable Groups & Inclusion* is so far free of charge, thanks to our funders. In addition, publishing in the journal serves the interests of all: readers, authors, teachers, students, libraries, universities, funding agencies, and ultimately governments and citizens. It increases the visibility of individual authors' work,

key resources are equally accessible to rich and poor, the mission of most universities to disseminate and share knowledge is facilitated, and funders (including governments) are given a return on their investment. Can we afford not to offer Open Access to *Vulnerable Groups & Inclusion*? We think not—and hope you agree. We welcome your contribution!

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