How do politics, economics get ‘into the mind’?

A personal view from psychologist working with marginalised communities

Dr Sally Zlotowitz, Clinical & Community Psychologist
Nesta is the UK’s innovation foundation

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WHEN A FLOWER DOESN’T BLOOM, YOU FIX THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT GROWS, NOT THE FLOWER.

LEADERQUOTES • INSTAGRAM

ALEXANDER DEN HEIJER
Figure 2: Suicide rates before and after 2007 in the 12 post-2004 (EU12) and 15 pre-2004 (EU15) countries of the European Union

Sources: WHO Mortality Database\(^6\) and Eurostat (for France, Greece, and Luxembourg for 2010).\(^5\) No data were available for Italy and Denmark for 2010. Rate of suicide in 2007 = 1. Data were adjusted relative to countries' populations.
ANTIDEPRESSANT PRESCRIPTIONS IN THE UK

- 2006: 31 million
- 2009: 39 million
- 2012: 47 million
- 2015: 61 million
- 2018: 65 million

Source: NHS
What stories are getting told here?

What stories are not getting told?

1 in 4 people will suffer from a mental health problem.
Figure 1: Prevalence of any common mental disorder by household income, England 2007 (19)

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Base: all adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equivalised household income</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: Pale bars: women; dark bars: men
Figure 2.2 *Health and social problems are closely related to inequality among rich countries.*
2010-20 cumulative individual impact of changes in taxes and benefits (percentage of net individual income per annum by 2020) by household income groups, gender and ethnicity (selected)

Poorest 33%
- White
- Black
- Asian

Middle 33%
- White
- Black
- Asian

Richest 33%
- White
- Black
- Asian

Source: Women’s Budget Group 2017

11 Compared to what they would be receiving if 2010 rules still in place.
Video
“Living in poverty is like being punched in the face over and over and over on a daily basis.”

(Poor as Folk, 2014)
Five ‘Austerity Ailments’
• Humiliation and shame
• Fear and distrust
• Instability and insecurity
• Isolation and loneliness
• Being trapped and powerless.

Five indicators of a psychologically ‘healthy’ society
• Agency
• Security
• Connection
• Meaning/purpose
• Trust.
“Society sees you as a gang member. Everyone sees you like that. Like I was walking home and I had my hood up because it’s cold and you walk past a woman and she, like, clutches her bag tighter. Like I’m not gonna do anything, but that’s the way society looks at you. “

“You start to think this is who you are, this is the truth, you are no good and there’s nothing you can do about it, so you fall into their description... “
It’s not just about more NHS mental health services or other forms of individual self care
“Your Competitor May Already Becoming More Mindful”

Studying mindfulness is optional for business workers today, but perhaps not for long. The authors of One Step Ahead: Enhance Your Performance At Work With Mindfulness say 46.9 per cent of the time, our attention wanders from what we’re doing.
‘EQUALITY IS THE BEST THERAPY’

Psychologists Against Austerity
The Psychological Impact of Austerity

A Briefing Paper

Five ‘Austerity Ailments’

- Humiliation and shame
- Fear and distrust
- Instability and insecurity
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Five indicators of a psychologically ‘healthy’ society

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How can we design more of this ‘psychological value’ into our structures, policies & systems, especially for the benefit of marginalised communities?

Agency
Security
Meaning/purpose
Trust
Connection
Psychologically Healthy Streets & Community Spaces

Buen Vivir movement

What Are Healthier Economic Policies?

Universal Basic Income: A Psychological Impact Assessment
At service design level
more coproduction & peer support, MAC-UK

New visions for local & national economies & cities

Eg Community Wealth Building
Nesta’s ShareTown
Wellbeing Economy Alliance

How do they/are we include marginalised communities?
Mental Well-being Impact Assessment

A toolkit for well-being

Mental Well-being Impact Assessment (MWIA) enables people and organisations to assess and improve a policy, programme, service or project to ensure it has a maximum equitable impact on people's mental well-being.

Published by the National MWIA Collaborative (England)
May 2011

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