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## Social Exclusion

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### Abstract

Social exclusion is a key concept in the effort to understand the dynamics of social and educational opportunity. Social exclusion is multidimensional, for in sociological literature it has reference to lack of employment access, lack of access to legal resources, political power, and general social and civic access limits. Furthermore the discourse of exclusion refers to unjust deprivations, which cause the above exclusions to be interactive and mixed. Here after a brief overview of exclusion boundaries, we will focus on those forms of exclusion pertinent to the relation between social stratification and educational access.

**Keywords:** *Social Exclusion*

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## **Social Exclusion**

The term social exclusion originated within the European sociological tradition, with the original emphasis on spatial exclusion; also there was a focus on social deprivation, political and vocational marginalization. Education was not originally a central topic.

Critical perspectives on this phenomenon begin with analyses of the division of labor in capitalism both historically and under current conditions. The social, economic and political dimensions of exclusion relate directly to the way exclusion becomes a political problem for regimes seeking to justify current policies aimed at fairly differentiating students through the academic process, for positions in the economy and political life. The political economics of the problem are then, centrally a problem of justification, and legitimation (Habermas, 1973). The question of social reproduction is also a key, where schools cooperate with business and political interests to develop “human capital” and disciplined bodies, regulated by school experience (Bowles & Gintis, 1986).

Central to this analysis is the process of exploitation. Prior to this analysis it is important to examine some dimensions of mainstream discussion on the problem. Sociologists who operate from a functionalist point of view, frequently discuss how poverty and exclusion are different domains; here exclusion becomes a neutral term, descriptive of boundaries which are “naturalized” in a discourse which takes social differentiation for granted, and where exclusion is not a value issue, rather an observed fact driven by neutral factors: personal choice, cultural history, accidents of modernization, immigration, migration etc. (Bhalla & Lapeyre, 1997).

Beyond this neutralized approach are critical liberal approaches which identify exclusions that are producing extraordinary problems for national political economies, particularly under current conditions of extreme and growing economic inequality, which have rocked the foundations of social democracies and the “welfare state” stabilization of the last two generations. This approach “enables social exclusion to inform analyses of stratification, segregation and subordination, especially within contexts of high or rising inequality. Three strengths of this redefinition of social exclusion are that it can be applied to situations: 1) where exclusions lead to stratifying or impoverishing trajectories without any short-term poverty outcomes; 2) where the upward mobility of poor people is hindered by exclusions occurring among the non-poor; and 3) to situations of inequality-induced conflict.” (Fischer, 2011).

It is important to understand the new social problems that have arisen as a result of the economic restructuring of advanced capitalist democracies since the mid-1970s. Silver identifies three conflicting paradigms within which different meanings of social exclusion are embedded – solidarity, specialization and monopoly. These derive from the political ideologies of Republicanism, liberalism and social democracy. Thus, while working toward a “definition” of exclusion, we must avoid being distracted from the way increasing inequality undermines universal approaches

to social protection (Silver, 1994). As such, the concept of social exclusion is contested terrain, in that it is often difficult to ‘objectively’ identify who is socially excluded, for this depends on the criteria used for discussion.

Any useful critical definition of exclusion circulates through analytical categories of class exploitation and class-consciousness, which refers to gaining awareness of the working classes regarding their exploitation. Therefore, the working class can only reach their freedom by gaining class-consciousness, and here, extreme possession of “exclusion from property and power will increase the gap between class conditions.” (Irmak & Güçlü, 2012, p. 1504).

Currently, we observe that despite the development of civil institutions moving toward more and more recognition of what the classical Enlightenment liberals called “natural rights,” so many identified groups have social condition of opportunity which are persistently narrow. Such persons’ “ascribed” characteristics- particularly gender and race, but also religion, nationality, ethnicity, and the interwoven fabric of those combined characteristics, are markers of persons and communities on the periphery of power (Hooker, 2005; Morrison, 2005).

Therefore, class formation and division occur on the basis of property ownership and control of surplus value. In a way, for Marx, social exclusion stems from the control of means of production. Those who have the private property and control surplus value, which he terms as bourgeoisie, exclude the lower classes from any truly meaningful political economic power over the means and purposes of productive activity. In this way we must understand exclusion generally, generates the wide variety of exclusions based on ascribed characteristics, including most importantly ways they play out in education, and its many means of social selection. But more fundamentally we must know that these categorical discriminatory exclusions are intertwined and not just subsidiary to the problem of exploitation and appropriation of surplus value. This is the problem of the concurrent tension between wage laborers, without significant property, and the bourgeoisie, who control the ideological superstructure, the means of production, condition the means of access to education rights through hyper discipline of the “debt economy.” (Irmak & Güçlü, 2012 p.1501; Piketty, 2014).

Any definitional effort in critical education must include forward movement to expose and change unjust physics of social power. (Brosio, 1994) We must actively resist exclusions reinforced by these deep intertwined structures of injustice which foster them. Only by active resistance to educational injustice, may we prevent their best purposes from being undone. This is possible the exertion of energies to re-establish and solidify the emancipatory purposes of knowledge; by “occupying” our school spaces with the language of meaningful justice, and by broadcasting loudly that student rights to fair opportunity they are not for sale, in a new “common sense” of market fundamentalism. They can and must be, sanctuaries of freedom and *inclusion*.

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