

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES – expanding our analytical framework

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A Historical Context

- Social hierarchies are not new – they have evolved for thousands of years around the ways in which social power, privilege, and resources are distributed between individuals and social groups.
- What *has* changed, evolved, and advanced over time is our capacity to analyze these inequalities,
- Human civilization is engaged in a long, long struggle to create more egalitarian and just societies
- The concept of social exclusion is the most recent advancement in our understanding of social power and hierarchy, and builds on both material and non-material theories in a profound new way.

What is Social Exclusion?

- French philosopher Rene Lenoir first used the term (in 1974) to refer to the significant percentage of French citizens who were unable to access government services because of particular forms of vulnerability and discrimination, not all of which were because of economic poverty
- The groups he identified as being “socially excluded” are very important, because they shared characteristics that were not based solely on economic status, viz; “the mentally and physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, substance abusers, delinquents, single parents, abused children, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial persons, and other social ‘misfits’.”*

*As quoted by Hilary Silver 1994, “Social Exclusion and Social Solidarity: Three Paradigms”, International Institute of Labour Studies Discussion Papers, No.69, Geneva, ILO.

What is social exclusion?

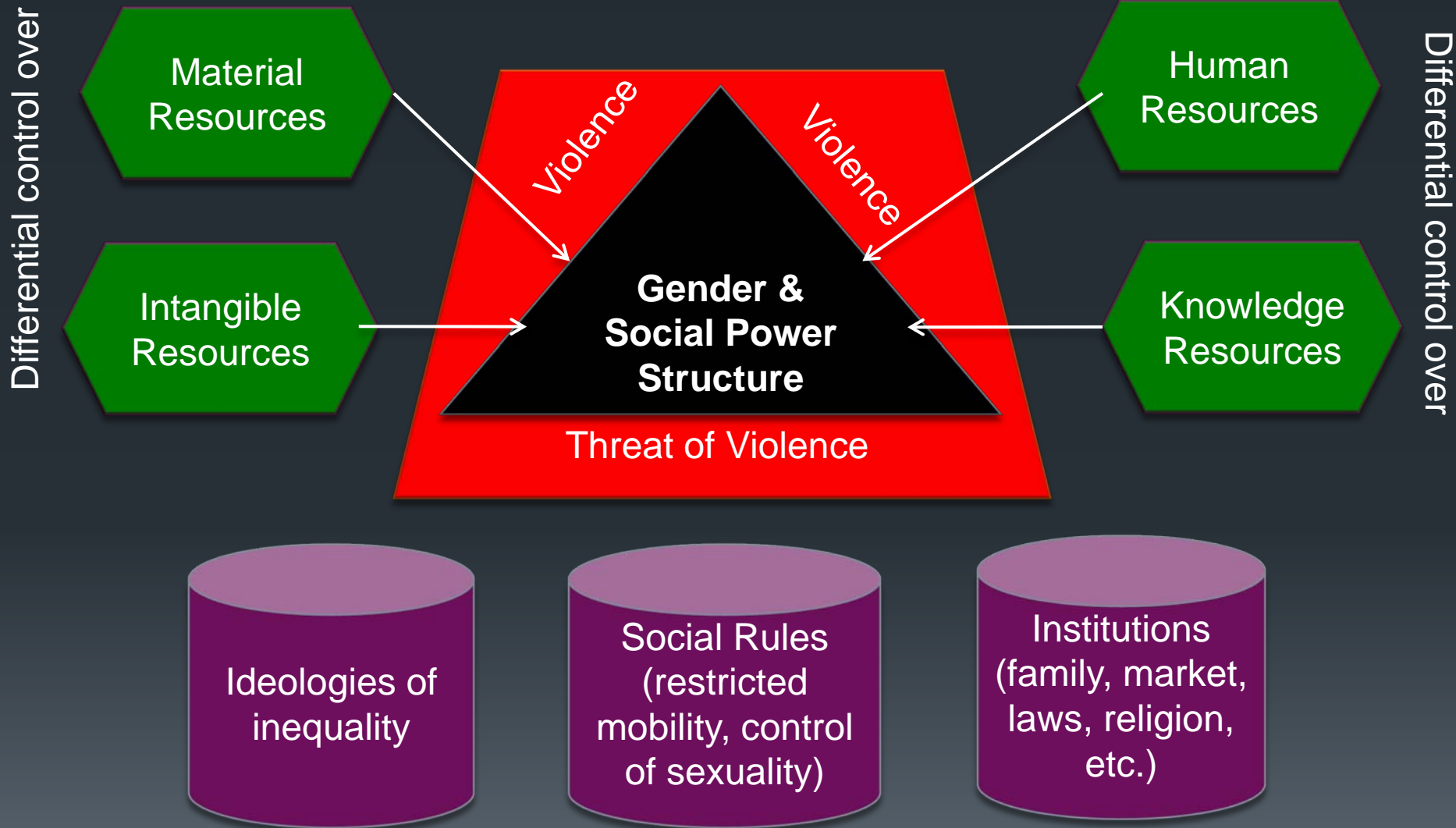
the process by which individuals and groups are wholly or partly excluded from full participation in the society by virtue of particular biases, poverties, locations, or identities...

Social exclusion is:

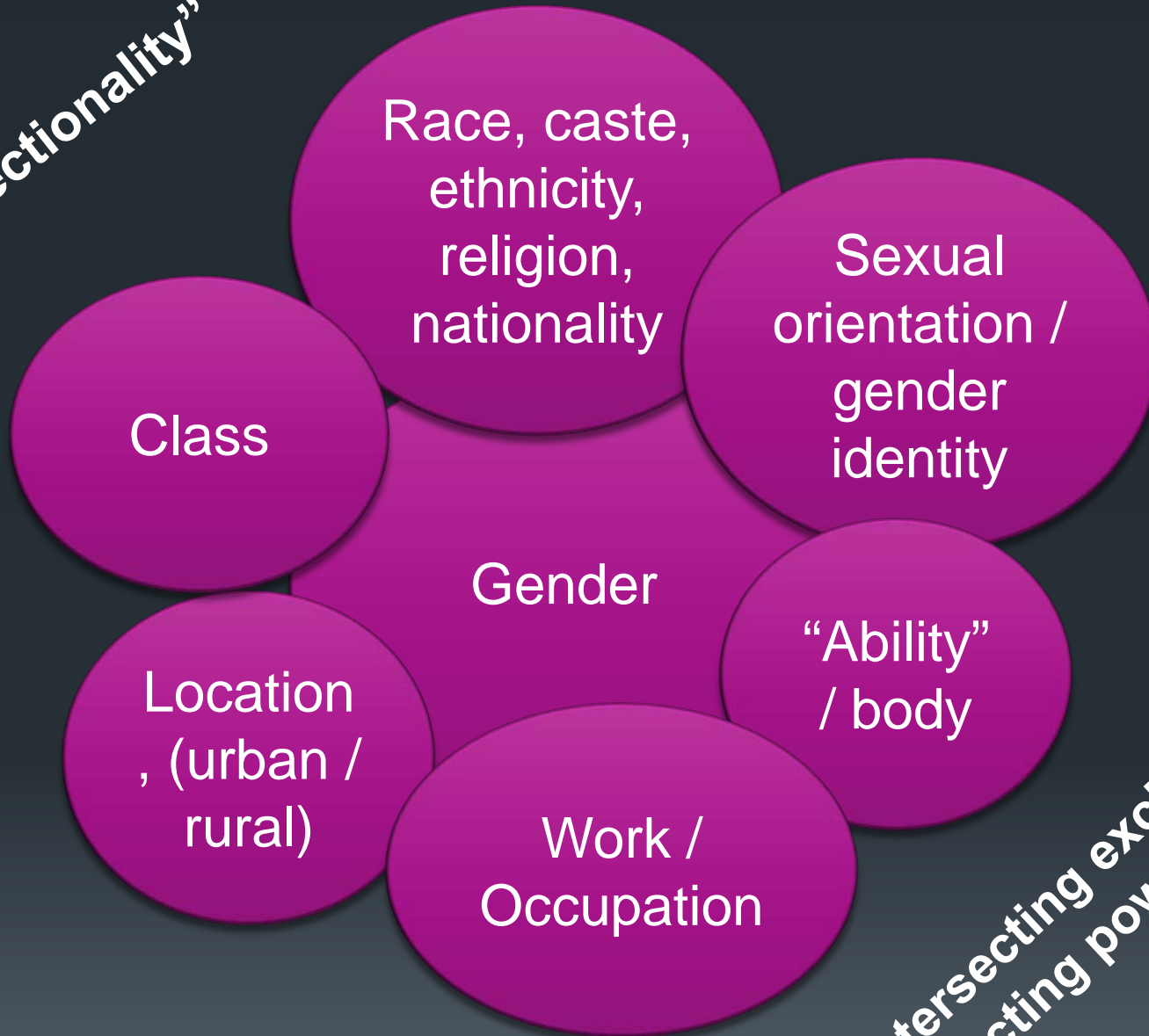
- A multidimensional concept, related to the relative position of an individual or a group (or a region) in the entirety of society. Each type of societal ‘disadvantage’ can cause social exclusion.....
- The outcome of a complex set of forces, rather than just poverty or lack of material resources alone.
- the concept of social exclusion moves beyond earlier notions of material disadvantage, or “poverty”, to include a number of other resources, privileges and rights that have been less recognized but equally important forms of social power.



How are gender power relations constructed and sustained?



“Intersectionality”



**Intersecting exclusions /
intersecting power structures**



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What are the spaces and opportunities from which one can be excluded?

- A livelihood
- Secure, permanent employment
- Income / wages
- Property, credit, or land
- Housing
- Basic consumption
- Public goods
- The welfare state
- Education, training
- Cultural capital / cultural life
- Citizenship and legal equality
- Democratic participation
- The nation or the dominant race or social group
- Family and sociability
- Humanity, respect, fulfillment and understanding

Social exclusion and inclusion are not mutually exclusive ...

- No one is ever *entirely* excluded or included, since one may be excluded from one set of rights or resources but included in others.
- Example: while women of a privileged caste, class or race may be excluded from decision-making power or ownership of assets within their own group, but are more advantaged in comparison to women and men of another caste, class or race.
- Example 2: rich lesbian or disabled women may be more excluded by their families than by poorer families

Social exclusion is about power

- Social exclusion is a result of power relations between individuals and social groups
- Exclusion occurs in three realms in which power operates –
 1. **The public** - the government, military, police, judiciary, corporations, etc.
 2. **The private** - within institutions like the family, clan, ethnic group, or in marriage, friendships, and other relationships
 3. **The intimate** – the way we feel excluded within ourselves, expressed usually in terms of low self-confidence, self-esteem, control over our bodies, etc

Three forms of power are wielded to exclude or include:

1. **Visible power** - determines who participates – and who is excluded from – decision making in the public realm. Decisions, for instance, about what a country's development priorities should be, or how the village council's budget will be spent.
2. **Hidden power** – or **agenda-setting power** - is about who influences or sets the agenda behind the scenes, and the barriers and biases which determine which issues can be addressed, whose voices are heard or who is consulted on a particular issue.
3. **Invisible power** - the capacity to shape people's self-image, self-esteem, social attitudes and biases, without any apparent role in doing so.. E.g., social stigma – rendering some people as “different” “abnormal” or “inferior”.

Exclusion is a dynamic process

- Social exclusion is a process, rather than something static or unchanging
- It is not an absolute state, but in a constant state of flux and negotiation - no one is ever completely excluded or included.
- Because of this, marginalized groups can challenge their exclusion, or gain the right to be included in spaces and processes from which they were formerly kept out.

A multi-dimensional process

- Social exclusion is rarely the product of a single form of discrimination or disadvantage.

“... people are often deprived of different things at the same time... in the economic, social and political sphere. People can be excluded by many different sorts of groups, often at the same time: ... minorities may be excluded from expressing their identity; labour markets, and also some trade unions, exclude ... (non-members) from getting jobs; and so on. Exclusion happens at each level of society...” De Haan

Key practices that create exclusion

- 1. *Mobilization of institutional bias*:** this means “a predominant set of values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others
- 2. *Social closure*:** This refers to how “social collectivities seek to maximize rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles”
- 3. *Unruly practices*:** the huge gap between the laws and policies on paper and their implementation is the result of how even seemingly progressive laws and policies are distorted in the hands of biased officials.

Social Exclusion is created through four interactive subsystems

1. **Politics** (as the democratic distribution system);
2. **Economics** (labour market and other instruments of economic integration);
3. **Social system** (welfare and social integration) and
4. **Community and family systems** (social capital and support, emotional wellbeing)

“It is increasingly being realised that poverty is much more than a lack of adequate income: it is most fundamentally the deprivation of a person’s ability to live as a free and dignified human being, with the full potential to achieve her or his goals in life.” **Economist Jayati Ghosh**