

An abstract painting with a complex, layered composition. It features several faces or masks in various colors (yellow, red, brown, blue) and textures. The faces are somewhat obscured by white, vein-like lines that crisscross the image. The overall style is expressive and somewhat somber. Overlaid on the painting is the title 'Policies for Reducing Social Exclusion: What Do We Know?' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the title is a subtitle 'A Companion to Inclusion Matters: The Foundations for Shared Prosperity' and the author's name 'By: Sarah Friedmann', both in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

Policies for Reducing Social Exclusion: What Do We Know?

A Companion to *Inclusion Matters: The Foundations for Shared Prosperity*

By: Sarah Friedmann

Introduction

Social exclusion “consists of a dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions - economic, political, social and cultural - and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country and global levels. It results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterized by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights which leads to inequalities....”ⁱ Social exclusion manifests itself in many different ways in societies all over the world, with excluded groups not obtaining the same level of rights and resources as “included” groups. Conversely, social inclusion consists of the “process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society.”ⁱⁱ

Many policies have been created and implemented to attempt to diminish social exclusion. This brief will discuss what works and what does not in inclusion-oriented policies, in hopes of providing guidance for future policymaking. The policy recommendations are framed in the context of markets, services, and spaces in accordance with the recommendations of the *Inclusion Matters* report; policies that effectively address social exclusion should cut across one or more of these designated areas.

Spaces

What Works: Shifting Perceptions and Paradigms

A vastly effective way in which social exclusion has been reduced is thorough the shifting of perceptions and paradigms. Social exclusion studies demonstrate that perception, both of oneself and other groups, contributes a great deal to exclusion. Various policies have reduced self-perpetuated social exclusion by increasing peoples’ confidence in themselves and their abilities. For example, when someone’s stereotype is not made salient, this helps diminish their feelings of exclusion. Relatedly, administering standardized tests that do not ask for identifying markers like gender or race causes students to perform better and not in accordance with “stereotypical expectations.”ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, having teachers actively encourage students’ individuality as well as try not to attribute stereotypical group characteristics makes them perform better and have enhanced academic confidence^{iv}. The same logic can likely be applied to employers and the workplace. Additionally, internal perceptions can also be altered outside of the classroom through informational campaigns. For example, a national College Board initiative distributed packets of information to low income U.S. students who scored well on their SATs; these packets informed them of colleges they qualified to attend, and also included admissions waivers for free applications to said colleges. These campaigns provided students with information and confidence necessary to apply to schools from which they had previously self-excluded due to their belief that they were under-qualified. The campaign substantially raised applications among the target group.^v

Shifting external perceptions is just as important as altering internal perceptions, and various policies have been implemented along these lines. Popular media can be used very effectively to diminish exclusion and reduce stigma. For example, “in Botswana, viewers exposed to a 2-year HIV story line in the soap opera, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, exhibited significantly lower levels of HIV stigma, measured by a validated 5-item stigma scale, compared to non-viewers”^{vi}. Additionally, youth in Nicaragua experienced “significant reduction of stigmatizing and gender-inequitable attitudes” and a “significant increase in interpersonal communication about safe sexual practices” following the introduction of *Sexto Sentido*, a weekly soap opera that perpetuated the gender-equalizing message of “we’re separate, we’re equal” through the storylines of its characters^{vii}. Furthermore, even short-term exposure to stereotype-defying behaviors can change people’s long-term perception of groups. For example, the mere presence of women succeeding at stereotypical male subjects such as math, physics, or politics, can increase *both* men’s and women’s confidence in women’s performance abilities in these activities and resultantly increase women’s educational performance and involvement in these fields^{viii}. Thus, policies that require diversity in



Advertisement for *Sexto Sentido*

employment practices (gender and race-wise) can relatedly also help reduce gender and race stigmas. Additionally, schools can change inaccurate perceptions by providing students with successful role models and mentors who are from their respective “excluded groups” by employing teachers who defy stereotypes (i.e. a female physics teacher), and by having successful former students returning to school to share their work experiences with students from all social groups.^x

What Does Not Work: Laws Without Implementation Strategies

While perception-changing constitutes an incredibly effective, long-term oriented way to reduce social exclusion, perceptions cannot be changed through simple passage of laws without effort to shift mindsets and veritably eliminate exclusion.

For example, in discussing why the Prevention of Atrocities Act, an act designed to protect members of scheduled castes and tribes in India from violence and exclusion, did not succeed, an analysis indicates that there existed “an utter lack of commitment to this legislation and lack of political will by state governments....rendering this legislation meaningless”^{xi}. Similar logic can be applied to *de facto* discrimination that still exists all over the world, despite discrimination being illegal (such as against stateless Romas in Eastern Europe and ethnic minorities in the United States). This merely demonstrates that while legal changes are potentially vehicles for altering perceptions, the buck does not stop there—every new anti-exclusion piece of legislation must also have a plan of action for implementation, especially in regards to perception alteration. Otherwise, people will merely view the law as imposing, and little long-term change will be effected.

Services

What Works: Early Childhood Intervention

Ensuring that all children have rigorous early childhood preparation constitutes one of the most effective ways to reduce long-term social exclusion by setting kids on an “inclusion trajectory.” Many studies demonstrate that the years zero through five are crucial for setting children on a path towards achievement in school and life. Thus, rigorous and early pre-kindergarten education coupled with active encouragement of parental involvement constitutes a primary means through which schools can make an enormous contribution. This ensures all children have a more equal start in life ability-wise, diminishing the possibilities for future exclusion^{xii}.

Various successful examples of early childhood interventions exist. For example, the Perry Preschool Project was an initiative carried out in Michigan from 1962 to 1967 that “provided high-quality preschool education to three- and four-year-old African-American children living in poverty and assessed to be at high risk of school failure”^{xiii}. It included 2.5 hours of pre-school every weekday morning plus a 1.5 hour teacher home visit every week to “involve the parents in the educational process and help implement the preschool curriculum at home.”^{xiv} Results of the project indicated that at 27 years of age, former Perry Pre-School students had completed almost 1 more year of schooling than non-students, had spent 1.3 fewer years in special education, and had a 44% higher graduation rate than non-Perry preschool students.^{xv} Another example, the Harlem Children’s Zone, a New York City non-profit dedicated to ending generational poverty and advancing education, created a Baby College for children zero through four years and full-time pre-kindergarten classes, both of which have dramatically increased parental involvement in children’s educational and social development, and put students on a college trajectory.^{xvi xvii}



Perry Pre-School Project Classroom

What Does Not Work: Lack of Follow-up

While early childhood education and parental involvement are crucial to diminishing social exclusion, it is important that inclusion-oriented education occurs throughout the student’s education. A comprehensive report evaluating government-funded

Head Start pre-school programs in the United States demonstrated “that providing access to Head Start has benefits for both 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds in the cognitive, health, and parenting domains...however, the benefits of access to Head Start at age four are largely absent by 1st grade for the program population as a whole”^{xviii}. Thus, follow-through is crucial in continuing to diminish social exclusion. While early childhood interventions are absolutely necessary to set children on a path towards inclusion, ensuring that they are not placed back into educational and social environments that precipitate exclusion following these interventions is key for ensuring all advancements made early in life are not erased.

This is not to say that later interventions should be made in lieu of early childhood intervention—early childhood intervention is crucial to reducing exclusion because there are certain ability genes that can only be activated or deactivated in children until the age of five; thus if educational interventions miss this threshold, they have much less impact^{xix}. However, it is nonetheless incredibly important to continue to promote inclusion through education throughout the child’s lifetime; this will prevent a regression to exclusion-oriented environments and their related consequences.

Markets

What Works: Cash Transfers

In terms of economics, social inclusion policies must recognize that money can reduce exclusion if used properly. Money-oriented policies that have proven effective at reducing social exclusion consist of conditional cash transfers (CCTs), programs that make cash receipt conditional on participants’ actions. CCTs are especially effective in the realm of education. For example, a 2013 study of 43 different CCT programs in developing countries found that CCT programs in developing countries are “particularly effective at improving secondary schooling outcomes that include enrollment, attendance and dropout” and that “lower payment frequency and more stringent conditions for transfer receipt are associated with larger impact estimates”^{xx}. Additionally, another study comparing CCTs and unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) determined that “both CCTs and UCTs improve the odds of being enrolled in and attending school compared to no cash transfer programs,”^{xxi} with CCTs improving education outcomes even more strongly than UCTs. This is evidenced by the fact that, “while interventions with no conditions or some conditions that are not monitored have some effect on enrollment rates, programs that are explicitly conditional, monitor compliance and penalize non-compliance have substantively larger effects (60% improvement in odds of enrollment)”^{xxii}. CCTs have also been effective at



A recipient of a health/education CCT in Brazil

reducing exclusion through improving health outcomes. According to the World Health Organization, CCTs have successfully raised health service utilization; for example, the provision of CCTs recently boosted health clinic visits up by about 20 percentage points in Honduras and Mexico. They have also been successfully used to encourage regular prenatal care and children’s vaccinations in exchange for cash transfers to parents^{xxiii}.

Unconditional cash transfers have also more recently been proven to have positive impacts on diminishing exclusion. For example, a UCT trial in Vietnam in 2006 “gave one-off handouts to 550 households; two years later, local poverty rates had fallen by 20 percentage points.”^{xxiv} UCTs

are determined to be most effective when the focus is on diminishing exclusion immediately through provision of capital (i.e. they work best when “lack of money” is the main problem).

What Does Not Work: Money without Consideration for Circumstance

Despite both CCTs and UCTs being effective at reducing exclusion, it is important to note that in all of these cases, intensive consideration was given to circumstance and matching best policies to the situation at hand. As indicated previously, UCTs work best when provision of funds will help to immediately rectify exclusion; however CCTs almost universally work better otherwise. CCTs are more long-term oriented, tend to deal with the root causes of exclusion, and are thus more apt to eradicate the problem of exclusion for future generations. Thus, in sum, what works in cash provision is careful, thoughtful application of funds that is situationally-based, not blanket solutions to exclusion problems. Indeed, the most ideal way to combat exclusion through cash transfer

seems to be a combined approach, providing UCTs for immediate needs and CCTs to ensure that paradigms are shifted and exclusion is actually diminishing in the long-term.

Conclusion

Overall, what works in reducing social exclusion are multi-dimensional approaches and follow-through. The successful policies described above overwhelmingly indicate that social exclusion is not one-dimensional; often each exclusion problem has a variety of solutions that successfully address different aspects of it. The examples above describe ways to address aspects of inclusion problems; however only a combination of successful inclusion policies like the ones described here will veritably remedy exclusion—these policies should cut across markets, services, and spaces. Finally, these policies must have follow-through; this consists of carefully thought out implementation, evaluation, and/or continuation of services. Thus, social exclusion will only be reduced in if thoughtful, multidimensional, long-term consideration is given to all inclusion policies; policies should not be temporary, singularly focused fixes, but instead comprehensive packages that get at the heart of the exclusion problem.

Endnotes

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