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Junior Sociologists meet Senior Sociologists

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Abstract

My PhD is designated to the didactics of social science education. I have a student centered view on education and learning in social science. I examine whether the concepts of alienation is useable in understanding active citizenship and its absence. In addition to this I keep an incredulous eye on if the active citizenship that is emphasized in the curriculum is desirable. Swedish education is known to let students influence their education in a quite large scale. Still our society has a modest level of activists and politically engaged citizens. Rather what we see is an "unconnectedness" with society, the society is regarded as "the other". I believe I can find signs of this unconnectedness within the empirical field of social science education in Swedish schools. I also strive to pinpoint some of the sources to this phenomenon. I will examine the privileged students such as above-average achievers. I see prosperous groups – such as white, male and rich – as an interesting focus since alienation theory mostly is used to describe those who define themselves as being outside of society, in school seen as skipping classes, failing tests, defying rules etc. Those groups are already examined and problematized in a large scale and I'm not sure that this has resulted in a better understanding of the alienation in form of unconnectedness to society that I am interested in. I think those "at the top" might be as alienated as those "on the bottom" – or even more so. And that this is a key to seeing a fuller picture. In other words: One of the sources of alienation might be the current power structure in society. I see it as troublesome to make the power structure visible without regarding those who limit the space for others to take place and act. Further on I also see a relevant aspect in examining middle-class categories of students, often seen as the "normal" student. I think alienation is a relevant force also in this context. Otherness is widely spread, as I see it, and in my view inequality can be understood through an alienation rooted in several areas.