OUTCASTS:
THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EXCLUSION

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Abstract:

This article explores diverse cases of social exclusion across time and space aiming to uncover its essential production processes. Special attention is paid to the various ways in which exclusion originates and how it becomes ingrained into the structure of society. Cases of exclusion are drawn from the U.S., Japan, China, India, and Jamaica. The study found that social exclusion is a phenomenon which derives primarily from ethnocentric dispositions which express through a variety of discursive and social practices aimed at keeping certain groups relegated to the bottom of society. Also, that some excluded communities are able to develop collective identities and adversarial cultures which translate into politicized identities. The article ends by pointing out to some of the difficulties present in the social deconstruction of exclusion.

Key words: Social exclusion, Collective identity, culture, discourse, social movement.

INTRODUCTION

To belong to the socially excluded is well beyond the mere experience of being poor. Whereas poverty is essentially an economic concept mainly denoting lack of disposable income, exclusion entails a relative loss of social rights. These generally include limited access to essential services such as education, adequate housing and health care as well as the benefits of representation in the political system. These are groups typically deprived of the same social rewards and resources as other groups and often find themselves disempowered and oppressed. In modern times, exclusion has meant incomplete citizenship and various forms of disenfranchisement. Furthermore, excluded life-styles invariably draw pejorative moral judgments from mainstream society. It is frequently the norm for the excluded to be treated with disrespect: their rights are routinely violated or have no rights, their views are ignored and their lives are subject to a series of humiliations and denials seldom experienced by other groups in society. In addition, the privileged tend to draw up rules and practices to purposely keep the destitute segregated from the general population.

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The aim of this study is to reveal the essential processes that lie at the core of the phenomenon of social exclusion. I contend that exclusion is an occurrence grounded in ethnocentric dispositions of privileged in-groups which express through discursive and social practices whose contents differ according to cultural context, space and over time. Drawing on different historical cases I further aim to disclose the socially constructed nature of exclusion; that exclusion unfolds as a consequence of a recurrent interaction between privileged groups who are very efficient at creating prejudiced social categories and the excluded who, in the face of limited rights and opportunities, deal with their adversity either through submission or by developing adversarial cultures and identities. A related issue of relevance to the study is to determine how exclusion becomes progressively ingrained in the structure of society.

This article is divided into six sections each one dealing with a different aspect of the excluded experience. The first focuses on the dynamics of in-group formation, the resulting ethnocentric dispositions and the ways in which these regularly involve discriminatory practices against outsiders. Avoiding pollution and disorder seems to be at the center of in-group's practices who fully exploit morality so as to strip some groups of their social worth and leave them in a state of moral disempowerment. The second section explores the various discursive and social practices through which exclusion operates. The third section concerns the nature of the culture and identity of excluded groups. The fourth touches upon the collective and political responses of the excluded to perceived inequities. The fifth summarizes the key findings of the research and offers some insights into the outcomes of exclusionary discursive and social practices. The conclusion explores some of the difficulties present in the task of socially deconstructing some of the essential components of the excluded experience.

ETHNOCENTRISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF EXCLUSIONARY SPACE

Sumner's notion of the in-group and the out-group serves as a first step in our theoretical approximation to the social construction of exclusion. In his view, groups form out of a feeling of likeness and identification among members. Individuals come together as a group through kinship, alliances or commercial exchange which brings them together and differentiates them from other groups. We also find among insiders feelings of pride, loyalty and superiority that in the long run may turn into an attitude of contempt towards outsiders. Sumner argues that the intensification of communal sentiments among the members of an in-group is directly connected to the attitudes of hostility which they share towards the out-group. This feeling of superiority Sumner (1959: 27) calls ethnocentrism, a phenomenon which "leads people to exaggerate and intensify everything in their own folkways which is peculiar and which differentiates them from others."

Park's sociological thinking is valuable in complementing and enriching the above considerations. He claims that people interact only because they prove useful to one another (the symbiotic relation); otherwise they are prone to keep social distances in spite of geographical proximities. The communities where people do come together are likely to have their own standards, their own conception of what is proper, and their own views on what is decent and worthy of respect. The search for status as a differentiating principle becomes a strong driving force for communities and the individuals living within them. As Park (1967: 67-68) puts it: "Every individual finds himself in a struggle for status: a struggle to preserve his personal prestige, his point of view, and his self respect… status turns out finally to be a matter of distance- social distance." Contemporary analysts of identity formation, such as Jenkins, Dudley and Hylland hold a similar view concerning the formation of in-group identities. Like Sumner's, Jenkins' (2000) approach sets out by recognizing two modes of social identification: self or group identification and the categorization of others. These are interdependent processes of classification and operate through the specification of similarities and of differences which are implicit in one another. Social identification continues Jenkins consists of knowing who we are, and is both a prerequisite and a result of social interaction. Dudley (2003), for his part, argues that identities, especially collective identities, are shaped in the course of clashes between concepts of the self and the other that crystallize in antagonistic social categories. According to Hylland (1993: 60) humans tend to classify others so as to reduce the complexity of social life. The reduced number of social categories helps humans "to order the social world and to create standardized cognitive maps over categories of relevant others."

Some notion of pollution or impurity is always present in the negative attitudes expressed toward outsiders; also in the privilege's struggle for social standing. Douglas (2002) argued to this respect that human groups long for purity meaning that they long for clear and stable categories and reject and fear the experience of an anomalous and differentiating world. Purity, she says, "is the enemy of change, of ambiguity and compromise. Most of us would feel safer if our experience could be hard set and fixed in form." (Douglas, 2002: 200). People come to recognize danger in most marginal states including the margins of cultural and social lines. When the marginal condition is bestowed upon human beings their status turns indefinable, they are left placeless and truly out of the patterning of society. Difference, according to Douglas, is generally perceived as sates of chaos and pollution which must be removed and excluded if a sense of order is to be maintained. Hence, punishing transgression has as its main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience.

The processes of differentiation referred to above entail the creation of social categories where an agent can locate the outsiders he meets. States are among

those agents actively engaged in constructing systems of social classification with the aim of allocating or withholding social, political and economic resources. For instance, Chinese immigration into the U.S. during the latter part of the XIX Century turned into an intricate labeling exercise. Immigration authorities never expected to face the difficulties they did in the tasks they were performing, neither did they anticipate the administrative disarray resulting from their category-making procedures (Mckeown, 2003). Similarly in present day India the government confronts many difficulties in deciding whom to include in the so-called scheduled castes and tribes for the purpose of assigning them quotas in public employment, in higher education and guaranteeing them political representation in legislative bodies (Dudley, 2003). These cases additionally suggest that problems to define and categorize people are likely to emerge creating unexpected categories which, according to Hylland (1993), are usually lumped together with other groups at the bottom of the social hierarchy thus intensifying the complexity of the presumed pathology of destitute life.

Advantaged social groups and the state employ diverse categories to discriminate against outsiders. The raw material out of which these categories are made, consist of social traits such as race, class, occupation, religion, culture, ethnicity, and place of residence. These traits are used to establish presumptions of fundamentally divergent moral qualities among peoples and take their significance from the fact that they are categories of social and political practice deployed by social agents in the course of everyday life (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). The privileged will also legitimize social differences by lending support to narratives, rumors, legends, myths, and vague apprehensions about outsiders. For centuries, the Japanese have considered Burakumin people as descendants of Korean prisoners of war, even though there is no evidence that they are racially different from them. Nevertheless on account of this racist perception they were, and still are, subjected to social discrimination and relegated to performing menial and socially defined polluting work. They were seen and dealt with as a separate category of people somewhat similar to the untouchables of Indian society (Hane, 2003). Likewise, Chinese commoners had the notion of dan (or boat) people as not being completely human: they thought of them as water animals that came to life with six toes on each foot. Dan people were for the most part bound to their ships and in some areas the hostility on the part of commoners made it practically impossible for them to leave their floating homes (Hansson, 1996). Thus hegemonic narratives and micro-histories have both played key roles in the development of exclusionary social practices which work by representing some people as if they were demons, monsters or devils and the source of all dreadful things which can happen to a community of insiders.

Park's notion of the relationship between urban spatial patterns and the moral order has acquired new and powerful meanings and become evident in

novel empirical manifestations. The social ecology of the city referred to by Park, has now turned into what some scholars call geographies of exclusion or territories of urban relegation. By this they mean the institution of material or symbolic boundaries that attempt to "purify" public spaces by minimizing social difference (Mohan, 2002). In line with Park's argument about the establishment of social distances is Newman and Paasi's (1998) theses which sees boundary construction as part of an in-group's aspiration to secure socio-spatial and ethnic homogeneity. These authors further contend that boundaries are not static, but fluid confines through which dominant social groups try to exclude and marginalize outsiders; they are an expression of power relations that operate to maintain sameness, exclusiveness, and social distance. Thus the expectation of an in-group to live in socially and culturally uniform spaces frequently translates into various forms of discrimination and even into open racism against outsiders. According to these authors, boundaries are "both symbols and manifestations of power relations and social institutions, and they become part of daily life in diverging institutional practices. As institutions, they embody, implicit or explicit norms and values and, therefore legal and moral codes" (Newman and Paasi, 1998: 194).

Boundary making and pollution avoidance have become tasks that consume much public and private energy. Whereas the state guards and constructs social boundaries through housing and service provision, public policy, courts, certificates and census, the private sector plays its part through the explosive construction of residential gated communities. In these startling ghettoes the new middle classes around the globe seek prestige and also refuge from the chaos and moral degeneracy they see sprawling all around them (Snyder and Blakely, 1997). Holston and Appadurai (1996) have revealed, for their part, how even democratic means are used to construct exclusionary boundaries. Middle-class home owning associations typically use urban incorporation to control local government; then they proceed to privatize or dismantle public spaces and services, and to put into effect zoning regulations to keep the undesired out. The key role that prejudiced moral judgments play in the production of social exclusion resides in their motivationally efficient character. This means that moral judgments cannot be evaluated by their form alone but by the practical and strategic choices about what should be done in each case. Accordingly, the high echelons of society having the power to categorize and judge will define certain customs, trades and behaviors as lowly or deviant and proceed in consequence (Brink, 1997).

Yet, keeping up institutionalized moral standards can be a very complex and troublesome endeavor. Generally, the excluded do not have access to the material and cultural means to look and act respectable. The Skid Rower, for instance, did not bathe, eat regularly, dress decorously, care about voting, value

education or own property. In referring to the experience of the Hobo Allsop (1967: 316) points out that "The casual migratory laborers are the unfinished product of an economic environment which seems curiously efficient in turning out human beings modeled after all the standards which society abhors."

DISCURSIVE AND SOCIAL PRACTICES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF EXCLUSION

The main argument of this section is that social exclusion operates through two axes of power relations which reinforce one another.

The first axis concerns the nature of the discursive formations employed to legitimate the asymmetrical distribution of material and symbolic resources in society, and how hegemonic discourses work so as to construct subjects who are in a state of moral disempowerment.

At one end of this axis we find narratives of an historic, territorial or religious content. By narratives I signify, following Rosenau (1991), a dense form of discourse containing alleged universal truths, totalizing views and master-codes with which to explain and understand almost every aspect of social life. These narratives play a central role in the construction of physical and symbolic boundaries and it is through them that groups come to know and understand the social world and constitute their social identities. Hindu sacred texts such as the Rig Veda concerning beliefs and practices with respect to hierarchies of purity and pollution represent one of the most emblematic narratives legitimating social and spatial segregation. These narratives can be understood as texts composed by a complex set of codes and conventions through which the privileged try to present their world-views as universal and hence valid for the whole of society. These totalizing views, as Barthes (1972) contends, make a particular representation of the world seem so natural that an outsider cannot be imagined except as perverse or abnormal. At the other pole of the discursive axis we come across micro-histories or local codes. As compared to narratives, micro-histories make fewer globalizing claims; offer one interpretation among many, concern small empirical descriptions, can emphasize local folklore and traditions and even encompass the stories of the disenfranchised (Rosenau, 1991). Understood in the context of the construction of social exclusion micro-histories operate in the course of a dominant groups' moral repudiation of unconventional life-styles; indeed they reflect the privilege's bias about certain customs and behaviors of outsiders which they define as deviant or immoral. The homeless drunk, for instance, has customarily posed as a highly suspect character in the eyes of well-to-do citizens. He seems to them the personification of failure in a society that praises individual achievement and success. The discourse about the so-called underclass represents yet another powerful contemporary micro-history

where the destitute and racially discriminated are presented as deviant and undeserving; as people who thorough faults of their own became excluded from the economic, social and political life of the city. Undeniably, the ghetto configures in the eyes of mainstream society the very image of the forsaken city that has absolutely nothing economic, social or cultural to offer (Marcuse and Van Kemplen, 2000). Among the inhabitants of this segregated space we find one which is particularly stigmatized and despised by mainstream society: I refer to the single black teen-mother on welfare that is presumed to exhibit definite signs of a stained moral character. The single mother is a victim of the "good mother" micro-history and is portrayed as immoral and neglectful and even charged with contributing to the breakdown of moral standards and the nuclear family (Bullock, et al 2001). The Japanese Burakumin, for their part, had their origins in people commonly labeled as eta (much-filth) and hinin (non-people). The prejudices against this group had their origin in the Buddhist intense aversion to death which translated into a condemnation of butchering and the consumption of flesh. The Burakumin were originally limited to performing jobs perceived as lowly and highly polluting such as disposing of dead people and animal bodies, and handling waste. But the range of trades considered unclean enlarged with time and came to include all occupations dealing with substances derived from dead animals: bow makers, hair dressers, and tanners. Initially, Burakumins' outcast status was not hereditary, but when the Tokugawa rulers established their authority in the seventeenth century they froze the social order dividing the population into four main classes: samurai, peasants, artisans and merchants. Out of this classification stood the Burakumin who were restricted in relation to where they could live, the mobility in and out of their hamlets, hairdo style, and type of foot wear and clothe. They were also forbidden to leave their homes from sunset to sunrise and to enter the city at night. They could not buy land and, in a notable expression of space politics, their communities' locations were not shown on maps (Soja, 1989; Hane, 2003).

It is worth noting that cases exist where narratives and micro-histories coexist and play a role in producing and strengthening social exclusion. The Chinese Duomin -a subcategory of a wider population officially cataloged as fallen people, beggars or ruined households- were seen as inferior and condemned to bear low status on account of a number of beliefs prevailing among mainstream society. The narrative concerns a creational myth which asserts that the Doumin were closely related to Chinese ethnic minorities like the She and Yao and that all these groups shared the belief in Pan-hu, a common dog ancestor. As to micro-histories, we run into different stories which state that the Doumin were either: (a) Descendants of Song Dynasty traitors, deserters or prisoners; (b) Remnants of antique non-Chinese ethnic groups; (c) Foreigners who adopted the customs of Chinese lower social strata; and (d) Descendants of domestic slaves. Yet in all cases the Doumins' excluded and outcaste status

came about as a punishment society bestowed upon them. They were reduced to performing polluting occupations (ox head lanterns making, ironwork, barbers, care-takers, frog-catching, entertaining, among others) and limited to live in segregated quarters outside town. Furthermore, the Doumin were not allowed to study or take public office, nor serve as officers and were obliged to marry among themselves. This suggests that their social identity was a result of the legal status imposed on them and not the other way around. As Hansson (1996: 87) expresses it: "Once fallen people had been labeled as beggars, they had little choice but to conform to the behavior expected from people who had the social identity associated with their legal status."

The second axis of exclusion relates to the nature of the social practices and concerns whether open violence is customarily employed by the privileged to institute their social and moral ascendancy. In relation to this issue I contend that social exclusion may be constructed through subtle means leading to internalized oppression or by sheer force. Foucault's (1980) work proves highly relevant to the task of understanding the construction of exclusion by subtle means. He contended that power is relational and that those subjected to it are, to a large extent, constructed as subjects by the powerful. In other words, when we try to reveal the "truth" about abnormal identities we are helping to create and control the very objects we claim to know. A newer rendition of this crucial argument is that which maintains that in those cases where identity may have been first constructed by outsiders, its practical effects depend greatly on some acceptance by those to whom it is applied (Polleta and Jaspers, 2001). Harvey (2000:187), for his part, depicts this pathway to social exclusion stressing its surreptitious nature: "Moral disempowerment and unjust exclusion on a scale that can wreck lives often arise via a relentless series of inappropriate but tiny interventions and omissions, none of them maliciously intended, and most of them entirely unnoticed by the agents… Confused perceptions the privileged may have, may still be taken as accurate just because of their social standing, whereas the victim, once marginalized, loses all prestige value and therefore credibility." One insidious consequence of the exploitation of derogatory labels and practices is that they may be shared by the members of the stigmatized in the form of biases towards their own group with adverse consequences to their community and to themselves (Dasgupta, 2004). What gives unity to the varied explanations of internalized oppression is a shared theoretical assumption that social facts are constructed by first proclaiming the existence of some phenomena and second by the concerned agents' own efforts. The construction of the Indian untouchable is surely one of the best examples of exclusion where punishment is built into the categories themselves. The Jatavs, an Indian untouchable caste who have remained for the most part illiterate, poor and almost powerless, have been relegated to leather working and disposing the carcasses of dead animals as their main occupation. Since they are supposed to

be polluting, the Jatavs are forced to live in the periphery of cities and villages or in separate hamlets (Lynch, 1969). Yet exclusion can also be constructed through sheer or open force. As early as 1530 the British authorities drew up the first statute defining beggars as criminals; related punishments were increased and new categories of unlawful behavior and deviance came into being. By 1535 vagrancy came to be a capital offence and beggars became enemies of the state (Wardhang, 2000). Similarly, in XVI Century Augsburg unlicensed beggars were punished by means of whipping and branding. Conversely, official welfare recipients were not physically punished but were required to show the City's badge on their vest. Either way, the destitute were subject to derogatory practices intended to portray them as dishonorable people (Stuart, 1999). Flynt's (1969) account of tramp life in XIX Century United States, also exemplifies the path to exclusion by open force. He relates how residents of small cities and towns punished vagabonds with the so called timber lesson. This was making the tramp run through the city while residents clubbed and threw rocks at them. The destitute studied by Wallace (1965) were also dealt with severely making use of by and large unconstitutional laws and statutes. Citizens would hit them with stones, clubs and whips aiming to teach the bums to stay away from their towns.

CULTURE AND IDENTITIES OF EXCLUSION

Culture can be defined as the ensemble of material artifacts and techniques pertaining to a definite group, the nature of their social relationships and their ideas, insights and values (Lofland, 1995). However, in order to study exclusionary processes we must circumvent a unitary or monolithic understanding of culture and acknowledge the existence of incongruous perceptions of its various symbolic and material manifestations. One way of making these differences is to recognize the existence on the one hand of a dominant culture which is the set of values, conventions and practices which are shared and cherished by the privileged; values which are usually sanctioned institutionally and which exert social authority over subordinate groups (Hebdige, 1979). On the other hand, there are sub-cultures and adversarial cultures which comprise those orientations which challenge the validity and legitimacy of dominant values and practices and that shape through a dynamic process of social production. The most important among these productions are interpretation and subversion.

Interpretation occurs when dominant culture is undermined with inconsistencies and contradictions leading to challenges that arise from fissures in its templates. Contenders may accept what is culturally given and produce transmutations of it. According to Johnston and Klandermas (1995) interpretation is likely to ensue when the privileged believe that the codes, values and norms of

dominant culture are widely shared when the truth is that, these traits are far from consensual and hegemonic when viewed closer up. The Jatavs, for example, have tried to advance their interests through producing new versions of Hinduism which open a place for them in the caste system (Lynch, 1969).

Subversion, for its part, is a process in which human conglomerates produce innovative and dense cultural forms. In this case, we come across strong oppositional values, iconic leaders, deeply emotional stories and counter-narratives, and specialized social roles that express these productions against a challenging group (Lofland, 1995). Rastafarians engaged in the formation of a powerful subversive culture. The movement was, and to some extent still is, an active cultural and political response to black oppression based on a counter-narrative which radically rejects Western values and the belief in the virtue of re-appropriating an African Identity. According to Barrington (2003) the economic recession of the 1930s had strong repercussions in Jamaica where it increased the feelings of discrimination and oppression among the destitute black population. Rastafarians mounted a formidable cultural assault on the West by dubbing it Babylon, a notion which designates a symbolic space comprising all those "civilized" institutions which conspire to keep blacks and colored people oppressed throughout the world. They resented economic hardship yet simultaneously protested against a deeply felt sense of not belonging, of being culturally and socially alienated. Hence, Rastafarianism developed its own religion, its own language, its own music, its iconic figures, its own fashions, its celebration dates and a number of tribal ceremonies which taken together transformed its members into the image of the bongo man, the precise image that Jamaicans feared about its black destitute population (Barrington, 2003).

Social and collective Identities are strongly rooted in these cultural templates and as such are relevant for understanding how the excluded perceive and differentiate themselves. Social Identity refers to a person's self concept as a member of a particular group. The person shares certain cultural values with the rest of the community; has a clear perception about his membership in the group and there are strong beliefs about the group's boundaries, central practices and dispositions (Stryker, 2000). Hoboes formed a society with a culture that had its own language and form of organization. In the so-called jungles (encampments usually protected by booby traps) men had to adhere to definite rules yet they were welcoming places. The jungle was the space where Hobo traditions, customs, slang and songs of the road were transmitted but since their sense of geographical permanence was hindered, the Hobo developed an attitude of reserve about his personal life. The Hobo was particularly interested in gambling, women and liquor, yet work issues figured in his conversation (Anderson, 1998). Hobos and residents of Skid Row developed their own micro-history about the moral hierarchy of the excluded community: at the top were the drunk, then the

alcoholic, the Hobo, the beggar, and finally the mission stiff (the Skid Rower that took refuge in the Christian mission). This was, from the perspective of mainstream society, a truly inverted moral order where the matter was to work one's way downhill (Wallace, 1965).

Collective identity refers instead to an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional relation with respect to broad and external communities, categories, practices, or institutions. Collective identities are strongly relational: they emerge out of interactions with a number of different social collectivities and are fluid rather than fixed (Polletta and Jaspers, 2001). Hylland (1993: 59) coincides with the notion of the fluid nature of identity pointing out to the fact that "aspects of the person which have conventionally been held to be unchangeable, inner and private may fruitfully be studied as symbolic aspects of social processes." Among the diverse excluded groups I have scrutinized for this work, the Jatavs represent the clearest case of a fluid collective identity. It is a group who deals with exclusion through a sustained strategy of interpreting the hegemonic Hindu culture. In pre-independence days the Jatavs aimed to gain status within the traditional caste system. They developed counter-narratives to claim Kshatriya status and aspired to be recognized as a sacred race and not as untouchable. They stressed further that caste status should be achieved and not ascribed. Jatavs declared theirs a case of mistaken identity and tried to become a group within Hinduism. Nevertheless, the advent of the Scheduled Castes System in Post- independence India drove the Jatavs to stress their deprived and marginalized identity and their low status, as part of an untouchable caste (Lynch, 1969).

THE POLITICS OF EXCLUSION

According to Stammers (1999) social movements build up and are sustained by social actors who have developed a collective identity in opposition to some sort of adversary. The specific nature of the collective action of social groups will depend on the kind of opposition they confront, the resources at their disposal, the existing constraints in the context for social action, their potential allies, and the social networks of which they are part. In order to act, collective actors take it for granted that their distinction from other actors is constantly acknowledged by them, even in the extreme form of denial. Hence, identity provides the basis not only of social exclusiveness but also of rootedness. The cases scrutinized for this study point to variations in the degree to which excluded groups were prepared to mobilize symbolic or material resources in order to challenge dominant definitions of the situation. Whereas some groups developed a strong collective identity and were prone to participate in adversarial social movements, others developed a well defined social identity but not an evident or potential collective identity.

Bradley's (2000) three way categorization of the relationship between identity and social action proves a valuable instrument for analyzing this complex issue. Bradley distinguishes between three levels of identity which she terms passive, active and politicized.

Passive identities refer to identities that are firmly grounded in everyday social relationships, but they are not acted upon. This category resembles that of social identity. Active identities are those which individuals are conscious of and which provide a base for their actions. They may be a positive resource in an individual's self-identification although they will not think of themselves in terms of this single identity. The Japanese Burakumin and Yama groups and the Chinese Doumin fall close to Bradley's category of passive identity. Even though these groups' posses a highly visible culture marked by the performance of supposedly defiled trades, denied social and economic rights, clothing and segregated living, historically, were not able to effectively challenge the excluded status mainstream society conferred upon them. The attempts to better their condition were assumed mostly by the State. The legal discrimination of the Burakumin ended in 1871 by a government decree. This official move toward social equality failed to end discrimination and as a result the Burakumin have resorted to hide their identity from the rest of society (Hane, 2003). In the case of the Duomin, the Chinese state abolished the registration of beggars' households in 1723, and in 1912 issued an Order freeing "lazy and fallen people" of their "mean" status and giving them full civil rights (Hansson, 1996). Yama men - Japanese casual day laborers also called anko or one who idly waits for a job on the street- developed an excluded social identity in a self-conscious way. Gill (2001:153) refers to their neighborhoods or Yoseba as an "oasis of proletarian culture amid an arid desert of bland middle-class conformity." These are men who have abandoned their kin, have few friends and are ostracized by society. They are homeless in the sense of being both roofless and rootless and consume alcohol in excess (Fowler,1996). Yama men place themselves at the center of an alternative moral universe shaped by three major principles: freedom of choice associated to the need for high mobility to look for jobs, force of destiny associated to a pervasive fatalism and a belief in destiny, and finally egalitarianism which is associated to a high degree of in-group social solidarity. Law enforcement, policing and sentencing in the Yoseba differ greatly from what is customary in regular society. They are in fact in the most danger of bodily harm and constitute an easy prey to criminals. Despite their clear excluded consciousness, the fatalistic orientation and the strong disposition to the present which characterizes Yama culture, inhibits the translation of a strong social identity into adversarial forms of collective action. Their support and defense is usually undertaken by weak and ineffective unions, voluntary organizations and to a lesser degree by the state (Gill, 2001).

Active identities tend to occur when some group defends itself from the pretence of out-groups or when the in-group is generally defined in negative terms. The political responses of the Hobo fit close to Bradley's concept of active identity. This is a group who developed a strong social identity but whose political responses tended to be relatively inarticulate, intermittent, and somewhat anarchic. Wallace (1965) reports that before the advent of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) the Hobo had no option but to protest simply walking out the job. Occasionally, the Hobo exerted violence against farm owners seeking higher wages and better working conditions. They also attacked train employees that treated them badly. From 1905, the Hobo held the red card of the IWW which had some successes protecting their members. Yet the Hobo leadership was much more radical and active than the rank and file; the nomadic and transient character of Hobo work and Hobos' praise of individuality, independence and privacy worked against their sustained participation in a social movement capable to accomplish more satisfactory outcomes (Allsop, 1967).

Finally, politicized identities are those that provide a source for adversarial action and where individuals persistently think of themselves in terms of this identity. Politicized identities are shaped through intense political mobilization and may take on either a defensive or affirmative nature. Rastafarians and Jatavs fall neatly into Bradley's category of politicized identity. Rastafarian political resistance has undergone three phases: the first was characterized by street meetings in which activists denounced the wickedness of white people and predicated repatriation to Africa. They called for an uprising against official society and asked not to pay taxes. They also refused to work for Western enterprises preferring to subsist by hustling, subsistence farming or setting up communal ventures. The initial response of the Jamaican government was to characterize Rastafarians as a gang of dangerous lunatics and declared enemies of work and proceeded to destroy their communities. The second phase was one of accommodation and assimilation where Rastafarians sought to legitimize their beliefs and their right to exist without persecution. Rastafarians were able to present themselves as peaceful and non-violent citizens. The third phase was one of cooptation and commodification. Rastafarians became a group exploited by politicians in their race to gain influential positions. Simultaneously, Rastafarian images, symbols, and music, became goods commercialized internationally for economic gain (Barrington, 2003). As to the Jatavs, they became followers of the Buddhist leader Dr. B. Ambedkar in 1956. Jatavs rejected whole parts of Hinduism and adopted instead a hybrid symbolic construction that combined the belief system of Buddhism and the ritual system of Hinduism. This made it possible for them to seek purity through practices which were undisputedly Indian but strongly anti-caste (Lynch, 1969). Hence, the bureaucratic categorization of people on the basis of caste, race or religion may have unexpected consequences for identity politics "for not only do categories

influence groups, but groups may also organize to reshape official categories" (Dudley, 2003: 2).

DISCUSSION

In this article I have explored the origins and the nature of the phenomenon of social exclusion. I argued that at the core of the phenomenon of social exclusion lies a set of ethnocentric dispositions which the privileged exploit in order to claim superior status. Also that once feelings of moral superiority toward outsiders are in place, any real or imagined social attribute can be employed to construct persons as outcasts. Indeed, exclusion becomes ingrained in the structure of society through the vilification of social traits such as a determined race, ethnicity, culture, religion, occupation or place of residence. The excluded tend to perform trades perceived as defiling or polluting, are pressed to live segregated in the deteriorated quarters of the city; their opinions and perspectives are systematically ignored, are denied certain rights and, under modernity, never acquired full citizenship.

It was also found that social exclusion proceeds through two reinforcing axes of power. The first axis is discursive and has at one of its ends hegemonic narratives and at the other micro-histories or local codes. The second axis refers to social practices which create and strengthen exclusion and proceed either through internalized oppression or openly violent means.

The research showed that some excluded groups develop adversarial cultures and identities which shape through feelings of oppression and segregation and some have a tendency to challenge, either through interpretation or subversion, the validity and legitimacy of mainstream values and institutions. These cultures generate their own means of identification, their own narratives, songs, traditions and practices. However, subversive productions are strongly adversarial and gain strength from political mobilization itself. Some excluded communities develop strong collective identities that translate into social movements whose aim is to seek access to various kinds of material resources, but also to demand social respect. I relied on Bradley's model of identity categories to examine and compare the cases included in the study. These identities are the passive which I associated with submissive cultures, the active which may display some degree of political organization but is inclined to resort to intermittent and anarchic protest, and the politicized, which includes features that bear a resemblance to those we can encounter in social movements actively engaged in identity politics.

Diagram 1 summarizes the main relationships between discursive and social practices in the construction of exclusion.

Diagram 1

The Social Construction of Exclusion

| _Ethnocentric Dispositions_ | _Type of Hegemonic Discourse_ | |
	Narratives	_Micro-histories_
Internalized Oppression	(a) Jatavs (Hindu narrative, Politicized Collective Identity, Cultural Interpretation)	(c) Duomin, Burakumin (Genealogical micro-histories, Passive and Social Identity)
Open Force	(b) Rastafarians (Eurocentric narrative, Politicized Collective Identity, Cultural Subversion)	(d) Hobo, Yama (Homeless drunk micro-histories, Active Identity)

(Row label at left spanning both rows: Type of Social Practice)

Diagram 1 presents the diverse pathways that lead to social exclusion. It is worth noting, though, that the Diagram does not presuppose the existence of clear cut cause-effect relationships in the production of exclusion, nor does social constructionism seek to establish these types of linear associations. It simply presents a number of insights into the possible outcomes of the combination of discursive and social exclusionary practices as they emerged in a limited number of historical cases. Thus, what is at issue is to offer some reference points which may be valuable in the task of directing further comparative research on this important topic.

Quadrant (a) suggests that hegemonic narratives are able to fully display their legitimating power within the context of ancient and rigidly stratified societies. In these societies each group accepts the definitions imposed upon it as if they were part of the order of nature. Excluded groups are left with few opportunities to advance their interests except by challenging dominant institutions through developing politicized identities and the sustained interpretation of dominant cultures.

Quadrant (b) suggests that when hegemonic narratives exert their influence upon societies undergoing rapid social transformation, the privileged are likely to resort to open violence in order to claim superior status. Excluded groups may challenge open force and oppression by developing strong collective and politicized identities and by taking advantage of ongoing changes to engage in cultural subversion.

Quadrant (c) suggests that in ancient and stable societies, lesser narrative forms and even micro-histories can produce elite supremacy and the control of excluded populations, without resorting to violence. The excluded adapt through both submission and the development of strong social and passive identities.

Quadrant (d) suggests that under modernity micro-histories are not powerful enough in themselves to produce submission and order among destitute populations hence violence is regularly employed to establish insider supremacy. Under these conditions, the excluded are prone to develop marginalized social identities and cultures which produce a sense of insider solidarity but which prove politically ineffective.

CONCLUSIONS: THE SOCIAL DECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Taylor (1989) sees in the acute social polarization and inequities inherent in the phenomenon of social exclusion both a source of human suffering and an obstacle to achieving a livable society. Bhalla and Lapeyre (1999) convey a similar concern when they pose as the crucial issue of our times the human hardships caused by exclusion and the threat they represent for the prospects of social cohesion and solidarity. My own response to this problematic is that both the State, through wide ranging social policies, and the civil sector have an important responsibility in reducing social inequalities and in providing access to the resources that guarantee true citizenship. We can expect that the collective action of excluded groups will push in this direction also. However, as I have argued all through this article the social construction of exclusion is built to a large extent upon a set of discriminatory moral judgments which are difficult to eradicate. Also, that morality does not limit itself to providing a guide for living, but implies the appraisers' beliefs about the moral properties of persons, actions and institutions. Thus, how can we make morality lose its biases and be sensitive towards the needs of others? Habermas (1990) has presented us with the doctrine of *dialogical morality* which suggests that the identification of the correct principles of morality must be arrived at collectively by all those agents likely to be affected by their adoption. In a like-minded idea McGee (1999) has conveyed the notion that morality can express itself in either reactive or integrative ways. The first expression translates into indifference and hostility, even resentment, to others. It

works through categories of exclusion and produces an angry rhetoric that limits the scope of moral sentiments to the in-group. The second expression translates into the principle that "morality is the ideal demand that anyone's well-being should count in our moral deliberations if our actions may affect it" (McGee, 1999: 89). Integrative morality is non-divisive: it is concerned with feelings of sympathy and sensibility towards one's own and other collectivities. The diffusion of these moral principles, says, McGee, should be attained through a learning process he labels *aesthetic education*. The likelihood of success for such an instructional process is highlighted by Dasgupta's (2004) contention that the route from bias to discriminatory practice is not inevitable, and that people's awareness of their own prejudices and their potential motivation to control them can determine whether these moral preconceptions will translate into exclusionary actions.

Nonetheless, the moral doctrines advocated by McGee and Habermas face a number of practical difficulties. It is the case that exclusionary moral judgments are moving to the very center of the privileged classes' quest to assert their superior status. In the U.S., for instance, the influential New Middle Class is asking the state to reassert some degree of authority and limit many types of excesses in social life. Moreover, liberal practitioners among this class reject massive centralized programs as those associated to the welfare state (Brooks, 2000). A sign of this class' negative attitudes toward excluded persons is that by the 1990s barely 20 per cent of its members showed significant interest in reducing income inequalities (Hodges, 2000). Zafirovski (2001), for his part, has expressed his preoccupation at the shape the contemporary culture of the U.S. is taking. He argues that this culture, a synthesis of laissez faire economics and strong moral control -he calls authoritarian conservatism- is destined to further erode social tolerance and to regulate and punish growing dimensions of private and public life. Even Wilson (1993) who defends the need to cultivate sympathy to outsiders and to be sensitive towards the misfortune of others is worried about the weakening of the moral and cultural standards to relativism, that is to say about the prevalence of commitment to choice over duty.

In writing about some of the forces that militate against the weakening of the judgmental dimension in the social construction of exclusion, Hylland (1993) manifests his concern at U.S. citizens' propensity to create new forms of self-awareness established on roots and origins. The same differentiating trend has been observed in a number of Asian countries. In South Korea, for example, traditional elites and the New Middle-Class are eager to establish status superiority resorting to real or imaginary claims to Yanban ancestry. Even professionals who come from commoner backgrounds wish to achieve social status not only through professional qualifications and consumption but by asserting aristocratic background. Moreover, their presumption of superior moral

qualities is largely based upon the idea that excluded groups' views and values are worthless (Portrzeba, 2002).

The foregoing should not be interpreted as constituting an insurmountable barrier in the way of deconstructing social exclusion. It simply points to some of the difficulties inherent in that fundamental task. Far from being a utopian solution, McGee's aesthetic education and Habermas' dialogical morality, are helpful means to correct the strong moral bias concerning the character of social exclusion and to understand that the excluded predicament is not a natural outcome but, as McGhee contends, is the result of conditions that we may ourselves be implicated in.

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