addiction and Social Exclusion

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Social Exclusion (SE) refers to “processes by which entire communities... are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources... that are normally available to members of... society, which are key to social integration.” (Todman, 2008.) Some of its dimensions include poverty, unemployment, homelessness, crime, political disempowerment, social alienation, marginalization and stigma, mental and physical disease and lack of access to healthcare, education and basic nutrition.

Empirical studies of SE suggest that it is a discreet and unique psychological experience. Several laboratory experiments simulated brief episodes of SE and found that subjects reacted with numbness, followed by deconstructed states in which time perception and self-awareness were altered, meaninglessness and lethargy exacerbated, self-regulation impaired and self-defeating behaviors facilitated. (Baumeister, 2005; Twenge, Catanese and Baumeister, 2002; Twenge, 2003.) These studies also drew on animal research indicating that challenges to social connections are threats to physical safety within one’s group and that the systems that process physical pain mediate these experiences. (MacDonald and Leary, 2005.) These researchers all concluded that social belonging must represent a fundamental human need, if not drive.

Given this framework, is the socially deviant and self-defeating behavior of addiction another dimension of SE? In answer, one theory proposes that SE is a social representation that dominant groups promote in order to maintain their positions in society; and, as such, it often focuses on issues related to self-control. Particularly in Protestant-Calvinist based societies, the perceived failures of addicts and alcoholics to exercise socially-desired self-discipline over drugs and alcohol relegate them to out-group status. (Jaffe and Staerkle study in do Amaral Madureira, 2007.) More broadly, societies and cultures that incompletely incorporate the use of drugs and alcohol into accepted social bonding or religious rituals (primarily Western cultures) stigmatize substance abusers, viewing them as threats to the social order and defining them as deviants, to whom a disease model may or may not apply. (Durrant and Thakker, 2003; Denzin, 1993.)

Epidemiological statistics regarding addiction among some otherwise frequently socially-excluded populations suggest that the presence of other SE factors may exacerbate the consequences and stigma of substance abuse. In the U.S., Hispanics and African-Americans are over-represented in measures of drug-related harm, but differences in the reported prevalence of use do not appear to explain this phenomenon. (Durrant and Thakker, 2003.)

National data sets indicate that alcoholism prevalences are actually highest for white Americans and lowest for African-Americans, with Hispanics falling in the mid-range. Yet data also show consistent and significant racial/ethnic differences in such alcohol-related health outcomes as cirrhosis of the liver and fetal alcohol syndrome. These same groups also demonstrate significantly higher rates of drug-related emergency room visits, drug-related arrests and incarceration. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2001; Wallace, 1999.)

Some researchers argue that, while these disparities have often been attributed to individual and interpersonal risk factors, only community-level structural factors, including socioeconomic status and “contextual-level risk factors to which black and Hispanic-Americans are disproportionately exposed” can explain them. (Wallace, 1999.) These factors include high levels of drug availability (“hyperavailability”) and disproportionate levels of liquor marketing and advertising in minority neighborhoods; differential application of laws regarding substance abuse; and racial profiling accompanied by heavier policing in socially-disadvantaged areas. One conclusion is that:

“if the various kinds of harm associated with the use of drugs are related to factors such as neighborhood disadvantage, stress, poverty and discrimination, then because minority groups tend to be differentially affected by these factors, they can potentially account for cultural disparities in drug-related problems...” (Durrant and Thakker, 2003.)

A vast literature that seeks to capture and articulate the subjective and qualitative aspects of addiction seems to bolster this more empirical argument. The concept of the self is central to these accounts, which explore the personal, psychosocial, cultural/historical, and even biological experience of addiction (i.e., its inner experience). As one study explains:

“All theories of drug use...whether implicitly or explicitly, involve the notion of selfhood. Regardless of what level of analysis... is emphasized, what ultimately needs to be explained is why individuals choose to initiate drug use, continue to use drugs, give up or start using drugs again after a period of abstinence...” (Durrant and Thakker, 2003, italics original.)

This extensive body of writing on addiction and the self comprises four categories: a narrative literature illustrating the need for the “spoiled” addictive self to possess a story linking the individual to society; a sociological/anthropological/
ecological literature placing the addicted self within the cultural fabric; a psychoanalytically-oriented literature exploring etiology; and a political/philosophical literature that questions the nature and view of the self needing restoration.

Virtually all of this literature speaks to the ways in which subjective experiences of addiction and structural factors interrelate. For example, one seminal work, anthropologist and participant-observer Phillipe Bourgois’ “In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio” (1995), reveals a culture in which a changing global economy and limited employment options restrict jobs for minimally-educated Puerto Rican males living in New York City’s East Harlem. Their situation prevents them from living out culturally-dictated “macho-proletarian dreams”—so that they find themselves propelled headlong into an explosive confrontation between their sense of cultural dignity versus the humiliating interpersonal subordination of service work.” (Bourgois, 1995.) Without the professional capabilities, social skills, knowledge of dress codes or mores requisite to the office culture of the service economy to which they are relegated, these men find that their “oppositional street identity is dysfunctional…. Street culture is in direct contradiction to the humble, obedient modes of subservient social interaction that are essential for upward mobility in high-rise office jobs.” (Bourgois, 1995.) In this situation, drug dealing, with attendant use, becomes an alternative career path, a route to maintaining one’s dignity as well as earning a living. The author interprets:

"[D]rugs are not the root of the problems;… they are the epiphenomenal expression of deeper, structural dilemmas. Self-destructive addiction is merely the medium for desperate people to internalize their frustration, resistance and powerlessness…. The problem of substance abuse in the United States is… because of a polarization of the structural roots that generate self-destructive behavior and criminal activity. The economic base of the traditional working class has eroded…. Greater proportions of the population are being socially marginalized. The restructuring of the world economy,… as well as the exhaustion of social democratic models for public sector intervention on behalf of the poor, have escalated inequalities around class, ethnicity and gender.” (Bourgois, 1995.)

In advocating for a reduction in the “economic dynamism” of the drug economy and transformation of the “fragility and hostility” of the legal entry-level labor market, Bourgois (1995) states: “The alternative, of course, is to lock everyone up.”

This way of looking at addiction resonates with that of policymakers in countries outside the U.S. that have embraced SE thinking. It implies that appropriate social responses to the “drug problem” increase social inclusion when addiction is coincident with exclusion, so that repair of the addicted self involves incorporation into social participation and belonging. British models of "joined up" programs to address addiction exemplify this philosophy well and use a language that emphasizes concepts of self, meaning, belonging and social capital. The assumption that, as suggested by the experimental studies on SE mentioned, belonging is a fundamental human need is integral to them. In turn, inclusion or belonging depends on “feeling useful, having a role and being treated with respect” thoughtout the life cycle. (Bonner, 2006.) One is then able to construct a coherent narrative, linking the self to society at large—i.e., to achieve meaning. Thus, in responsible societies,

"… a wide range of physiological and psychological factors contribute to effective individual functioning, a prerequisite to belonging to a community. Clearly these biopsychological factors interact with a plethora of social and community factors that facilitate inclusion into society. For many vulnerable people, their living conditions, educational opportunities, employment prospects and involvement in the community mitigate against inclusion. In a civil society, an appropriate community response would involve an awareness of the needs of its members, and a response would provide appropriate support…” (Bonner, 2006.)

Under this model, cessation of addictive behavior and associated criminal or antisocial behaviors alone (i.e., social control) would be viewed as an incomplete outcome for an excluded individual treated for addiction. Treatment programs would have to be integrated with other social services addressing and resolving the factors that exclude the individual and would need to reflect the ethic of social capital formation; moreover, at a meta-level, programs would also need to confront the social factors driving exclusion.

Several writers argue that, historically, drug policy in the U.S. reflects a wrenching tension between the conflicting values of personal responsibility and communal obligation. Many, including this writer, would assert that late 20th century/early 21st century policies in the U.S. tip almost exclusively to the side of individual responsibility (incarcerate and blame the addict) with insufficient public resources devoted to rehabilitation, much less social integration. Two researchers summarize:

"…[H]ealth psychologists…[and other social scientists] have directed their attention to ‘downstream’ mechanisms through which social experiences ‘get under the skin’ and create disparities in physical and mental health…. [T]hey have emphasized the role of [individual] psychosocial factors,… particularly stress, coping, health behaviors and their physiological correlates,… with little attention given to their [upstream] and structural origins … (Schnittker and McLeod, 2005.)

Social exclusion policy addresses this imbalance, however, in that it offers a framework for understanding addictive behavior as one response to structural social disadvantage. Addiction then becomes both a cause and a result of SE.

References
As noted in Volume 1, Issue 1, social exclusion is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon. Therefore, efforts to address it must be informed by a wide range of perspectives. For instance, they must be informed by what is known about exclusionary processes and structures in the fields of sociology, political science, economics, law, urban planning, medicine, public health, psychology, linguistics, environmental sciences, theology, philosophy, theater and the fine arts, to name a few.

One of the barriers to transdisciplinary approaches to addressing exclusion is language. In our analysis of the literature, we have noted innumerable references to exclusionary processes and structurally-induced social disadvantage. We have also noted that the language used to refer to these phenomena varies across professions and perspectives, often obscuring common themes and potential points of collaboration, synergy and coalition building. As part of our effort to encourage a more transdisciplinary approach to addressing social exclusion, we have developed this graphic that highlights the language used in various disciplines and professions with the aim of helping to forge ideological linkages that can serve as the basis of coalition building around efforts to address the problem of social exclusion.
"Digital divide" refers to the inequitable distribution of information technology precipitated by low socioeconomic status, spatial segregation, inadequate educational opportunities, poverty and a host of other socially constructed barriers. Coined in the mid-1990s, this term describes the absence of access to technological software and hardware, as well as the lack of necessary education, training and experience required to use and derive benefit from all available information resources.

Individuals who are excluded from the digital world are similarly excluded from the so-called knowledge society. That is, they are denied access to myriad online information related to health care (e.g., telemedicine), distance learning, job offerings and a variety of social services. Unable to develop social networks, barred from acquiring social capital and relegated to living on the wrong side of the chasm created by the "divide," people marginalized by digital illiteracy confront a plethora of exclusion-based problems – e.g., diminished career prospects, impaired life trajectories and socioeconomic immobility. Consequently, those who are adversely affected by the "Digital Divide" commonly live in environments marked by concentrated poverty and disproportionate minority disparities that are unknown to people living in the digitally-connected world.

Today, principles of social justice require that we substantially increase efforts to close the social gap caused by the "Digital Divide": Importantly, many socially responsible activists now believe that providing all residents of the United States with access to the digital world is an achievable goal.

Indeed, there are many potential opportunities for addressing the "Digital Divide" within our local communities. For example, currently there are groups in the Chicagoland area working diligently to bring the fruits of the information age into the lives of ordinary people. As Corinne Reynolds reports, Erie Neighborhood House is one such organization. Operating as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation and reaching more than 4,500 individuals annually, the Erie Neighborhood House empowers local residents to build better lives for themselves while strengthening the entire community.

Closing the "Digital Divide" using local organizations, however, may not suffice when one considers the breadth of social exclusion flowing from technological inaccessibility. That’s the reason some people favor mandating inclusion of sophisticated digital resources – including broadband – in all new or refurbished public housing units. Taking such bold action could propel disadvantaged individuals toward realization of economic self-sufficiency and otherwise permit them to engage in mainstream society to even greater degrees.

ERIE NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

Corinne Reynolds

For 138 years, Erie Neighborhood House has been working toward social justice for Chicago’s low-income and immigrant residents. Located in Chicago’s West Town, Humboldt Park, and Little Village neighborhoods, Erie House empowers Latino and diverse low-income communities to reach their fullest potential with a range of award-winning educational programs for all ages. In its community technology program, Erie House partners with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (IDCEO) to bridge the digital divide among Chicago’s low-income Latino population.

Erie House has found technology to be a critical tool in addressing the issues of poverty, low educational achievement, low employability and limited English proficiency that its community faces. In 1996, Erie House established one of the first community technology centers in Chicago. In 1999, Erie founded Technology Promoters, an innovative initiative that provides free information technology training to low-income adults while at the same time training those adults to become community technology educators to their peers. Since the program began, over 200 graduates have taught computer classes to over 1200 of their peers, and the Technology Promoters curriculum has been distributed to over 100 partner organizations throughout Chicago.

For additional information regarding the work of the Erie Neighborhood House, contact: Ms. Alex Montgomery, Director of Development & Communications, Erie Neighborhood House, 1701 West Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60622 (Tel. 312-432-2237) www.eriehouse.org.
Recent ISE Spring Conference
ARTIST: Christy Schoenwald  
MEDIA: permanent marker on canvas  
DESCRIPTION: It is a response piece to the 20/20 episode on prostitution in America. I wanted people that weren’t able to view the show to know what these women were going through, in their words - which is written throughout the piece.

ARTIST: Jenny Arbaugh-Korotko  
TITLE: "Arbaugh vs. Y&H Corporation"  
MEDIA: 4x5 camera, archival ink jet print  
DESCRIPTION: I created a series of photographs of myself as a documentation of my sexual harassment lawsuit that was tried before the U.S. Supreme Court. I manipulate the appearance of my own body to represent the exploitation I experienced after my grievances were put to stage in several courts. I re-exposed myself on my own terms in order to regain control of the situation.

ARTIST: Amy Joseph  
TITLE: "Gray Matters"  
MEDIA: hot glue, acrylic on canvas  
DESCRIPTION: "Gray Matters" is an abstract representation of the mental processes of black and white thinking. Engaging in this type of thinking many times leads to systemic barriers and biases. The gray in painting is made by mixing black and white and painting over the black and white. Symbolically the gray represents "gray thinking," in the sense that one must try and see past black and white and conceptualize their experiences in gray.

ARTIST: Renee Melton  
TITLE: 1. "The Ghost of Red Cloud"  
2. "Ms. Chief"  
3. "LaDonna"  
MEDIA: acrylic on canvas  
DESCRIPTION: This piece was created as a response to the book, "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee." I wanted to capture Red Cloud’s sense of loss and hopelessness and I did so through his expression, which tells of systematic oppression and extermination of Native American tribes.

ARTIST: Christine Berghausen  
TITLE: "Breaking the Silence"  
MEDIA: oil on canvas  
DESCRIPTION: My piece is oil paint on 3 5” canvases. The piece is about the individual journey some people go through to break out of the "box" that our culture sometimes puts us in, such as the stereotypical role of women, or even racial stereotypes. The piece is about the feeling of liberation that happens when we realize we don’t have to stay in that box – that we can create new boundaries for ourselves according to our personal beliefs, should we choose to do so.

ARTIST: Jay Very  
TITLE: “Make A Nest”  
MEDIA: wooden palette, electrical wire, light bulbs

ARTIST: Jenny Arbaugh-Korotko  
TITLE: "Arbaugh vs. Y&H Corporation"  
MEDIA: 4x5 camera, archival ink jet print  
DESCRIPTION: I created a series of photographs of myself as a documentation of my sexual harassment lawsuit that was tried before the U.S. Supreme Court. I manipulate the appearance of my own body to represent the exploitation I experienced after my grievances were put to stage in several courts. I re-exposed myself on my own terms in order to regain control of the situation.

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The Right Honorable Hilary Armstrong, MP, will deliver the keynote address at the third annual conference of the Adler School of Professional Psychology’s Institute on Social Exclusion. Armstrong, a Member of Parliament since 1987, served as Minister for the Cabinet Office and Social Exclusion during the New Labour government of Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The gathering, for which members of the general public may register without charge, will be held on Friday, October 3, 2008, in the auditorium of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, 610 South Michigan Avenue in Chicago beginning at 10:00 AM.

Evincing a strong commitment to fairness, equal opportunity, and social justice, Blair appointed Armstrong to the cabinet post to lead his administration’s attempts to tackle disadvantage and deprivation in British society. In his letter of appointment, Blair directed Armstrong to coordinate a new cross-government effort to break down the barriers for those excluded from society and to expand ways in which government works with volunteer organizations.

Recognizing that this social exclusion agenda represented the government’s ‘core values,’ Armstrong immediately proved to be an able advocate for children in care, teenage parents, families confronting complex socioeconomic problems, and persons affected adversely by mental illness. Armstrong emphasized the need for the state to be an empowerer instead of simply an enabler, and she consistently brought a message of hope to the British citizenry, urging that “no one should be written off, no one is too hard to reach.”

Building upon her exceptional reputation for credibility on community issues, Armstrong favored government prevention and early intervention when dealing with social exclusion issues, saying:

“If we are serious about breaking the cycle of disadvantage, then we need to look carefully at how we anticipate the challenges faced by many families, not simply react to them. Continuing in a similar vein, she urged that:

“If we fail to intervene early enough, we risk slamming the door of opportunity in people’s faces.”

On setting forth the New Labour government’s proposal for addressing exclusion, Armstrong stated:

“Thousands of people in our country will literally inherit a life with countless obstacles and barriers to taking advantage of opportunities most of us take for granted. The Social Exclusion Action Plan launched today is our attempt to break this cycle once and for all.”

Educated at the University of Birmingham, Armstrong is a former social worker and college lecturer who spent two years with VSO teaching in Kenya prior to beginning her political career. VSO is an international charitable organization that works through volunteers to carry out its vision of a world without poverty in which individuals work together in harmony to fulfill their maximum potential. She is the daughter of the late Ernest Armstrong, MP, former Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and the wife of Paul Corrigan, a university professor.

Although Armstrong left the British Cabinet when Prime Minister Blair resigned, she remains a Member of Parliament representing the district of North West Durham. Recently she was named a trustee of VSO.
At this event, lawyer/activist for prisoners’ rights Jim Chapman will discuss ongoing efforts to improve the conditions and oversight of Tamms CMAX, a “supermax” prison located in southern Illinois where inmates live in solitary confinement for 24 hours a day, everyday, with no human contact, no phone calls, no communal activity. Opened in 1998, Tamms was originally intended as a short-term “shock treatment” for the worst of the worst of Illinois prisoners. Now, ten years later, more than one-third of the original prisoners are still there. The speaker will discuss the misguided and inhumane policies at Tamms CMAX and the growing call for an end to the psychological torture.

Jim Chapman, LLB is a graduate of Harvard Law School and a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and the International Academy of Trial Lawyers. For the last 35 years, while maintaining his law offices in the Loop, he simultaneously devoted substantial efforts in the low income communities of Chicago. In 1976, Chapman helped to organize the Uptown Peoples Law Center in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood to work with former coal miners and their families. The center is run essentially by people of the community with some lawyer supervision. It has thrived to this day and is a model of its kind. Chapman also organized the Prison Action Committee (PAC) and founded the Illinois Institute of Community Law and Affairs, both of which focus on issues relevant to prisoners, the formerly incarcerated, their families, organizations, and officials. Chapman also serves as a consultant to the federal courts in prisoners’ rights cases and teaches communication skills to prisoners at Stateville Correctional Center and to young people on probation at Probation Challenge of Olive Harvey City College.

Coval is a hip-hop poet and author of poetry books, Slingshots (A Hip-Hop Poetica) and Everyday People, poems about people who are societal outsiders (June 2008). Coval has performed and taught hip-hop poetics at universities, high schools and theaters on four continents in seven countries. He has performed on Russell Simmons’ HBO Def Poetry Jam, for which he serves as artistic consultant. Coval’s writing can be heard regularly on Chicago Public Radio, where he is resident poet and hip-hop correspondent. He is also the founder of Louder Than A Bomb: The Chicago Teen Poetry Festival, the largest youth poetry festival in the world, a faculty member at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago and Minister of Hip-Hop Poetics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Ms. Armstrong is a Member of Parliament (MP) in the United Kingdom. Her immediate past positions were Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and, most significantly for us, the Minister for Social Exclusion in Tony Blair’s Cabinet. She stepped down from these positions when Blair stepped down from the Prime Minister position last summer. Armstrong started her career more than 30 years ago as a social worker and remains, to this day, deeply rooted in the Labour government traditions of a strong commitment to public service; government responsibility for society’s most vulnerable; insurance that all members of society have the opportunity to fulfill their potential, and to contribute to and benefit from wider society; and the critical role of government in “…delivering social justice and tackling social exclusion.”

As Minister for Social Exclusion, she was responsible for coordinating cross-departmental efforts to address multiple forms of social disadvantage with the ultimate goal of improving the life chances of the most vulnerable and excluded from society. Though health and education were major programmatic foci of Government’s social exclusion agenda and consequently her work as Minister, her portfolio was all-encompassing and included the domains of education, health, housing, employment, justice, and other areas that impact quality of life.

Ms. Armstrong will visit with the Adler students and faculty at the School on October 2nd. She will be the keynote speaker at the October ISE Conference on October 3rd.