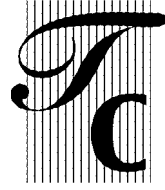


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Cannibalism and bulimia:

Patterns of social control in late modernity

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Abstract

The transition from the modern world of the postwar period into late modernity involves a movement from an inclusive to an exclusive society. This is concomitant with a change in tolerance from a society which abhors difference and attempts to reform difficulty to one which celebrates difference and attempts to exclude the difficult. Two motifs of exclusion coexist uneasily in late modernity, the actuarial and the demonizing: one calculative and cool, the other essentializing and judgemental.

Social exclusion is concerned not only with the social control of deviance but with its genesis. The two deficit models, cultural and economic exclusion, are criticized. Instead, the Mertonian notion of inclusion followed by exclusion as the source of discontent is developed into the notion of a late-modern bulimia. Using the black underclass as an example, the manner in which a series of inclusions and exclusions generate disaffection is traced and the fashion in which social exclusion is facilitated and self-fulfilled by essentialist depictions both of the self and the other is analysed.

Key Words

actuarialism • difference • essentialism • late modernity
 • multiculturalism • social exclusion • underclass

Above all we should realise that certain of our customs might appear, to an observer belonging to a different society, to be similar in nature to cannibalism, although cannibalism strikes us as being foreign to the idea of

civilization. I am thinking, for instance, of our legal and prison systems. If we studied societies from the outside, it would be tempting to distinguish two contrasting types: those which practise cannibalism—that is, which regard the absorption of certain individuals possessing dangerous powers as the only means of neutralizing those powers and even of turning them to advantage—and those which, like our own society, adopt what might be called the practice of *anthropoemy* (from the Greek *émeîn*, to vomit); faced with the same problem, the latter type of society has chosen the opposite solution which consists in ejecting dangerous individuals from the social body and keeping them temporarily or permanently in isolation, away from all contact with their fellows, in establishments specially intended for this purpose. Most of the societies which we call primitive would regard this custom with profound horror; it would make us, in their eyes, guilty of that same barbarity of which we are inclined to accuse them because of their symmetrically opposite behaviour.

(Lévi-Strauss, 1992 (1955): 287–8)

Anthropophagic and anthropoemic societies

A generation of social commentators have been fascinated by the categories of inclusion and exclusion suggested by Lévi-Strauss (1992 (1955)) in *Tristes Tropiques*. ‘Primitive’ societies, he argues, deal with strangers and deviants by swallowing them up, by making them their own and by gaining strength from them. They are anthropophagic, whereas modern societies are anthropoemic; they vomit out the deviant, keeping them outside of society or enclosing them in special institutions within their perimeters.

Such a viewpoint was quickly embraced by radicals perhaps because it involves a dystopian transition (so attractive left of centre), from a tolerant Arcadian world of the past to the intolerant, sickening and ensickened modern world of the present (see Cooper, 1967; Young, 1971). There is little doubt that such a contrast was Lévi-Strauss’s intent, although it is debatable whether the swallowing rather cannibalistic world of anthropophagy is any more tolerant than the anorexic, expelling world of anthropoeia. I doubt it, but the concepts themselves, without the gross conflation of all pre-modern societies into one or the evocation of an inevitable downward decline in tolerance, I think are eminently useable. Particularly if, as embellished by Zygmunt Bauman (1995: 234), we can acknowledge that all societies have both swallowing and ejecting aspects and we take on board Stan Cohen’s (1985) observation that different sections of the population can be included or excluded in the same process. Thus the middle class can be counselled and cosseted into remaining in their job when personal difficulties occur whilst the lower working class can be speedily consigned to prison and sink estate at the first signs of lawbreaking.

From inclusive to exclusive society

In *The Exclusive Society* (1999) I trace the transition from an inclusive to an exclusive society. Changes in the market place (both in the spheres of production and consumption) give rise to an increase in levels of crime and disorder and, also, a problematization of order itself. Rules are more readily broken but also more regularly questioned. Civil society becomes more segmented and differentiated: people become more wary and appraising of each other because of ontological insecurity (living in a plural world where individual biographies are less certain) and material insecurity (a world of risk and uncertainty). The combination of a rise in *difficulty* (crime, disorder and incivilities) and of an increase in *difference* (that is a diversity and debate over rules themselves) results not only in a qualitative change in civil society but in a change in the system of social control, in particular the rise of an actuarial system of justice. Thus exclusion in the market gives rise to exclusions and divisions within civil society which give rise to quantitative and qualitative changes in the exclusion imposed by the State. And, finally, the responses of the State have repercussions in reinforcing and exacerbating the exclusion of civil society and the market place. The strange anthropoemic machine of late modernity generates a resonance of exclusion throughout its structure with the main motor being the rapidly developing pitch of market relations.

The long-term decline in tolerance?

Let us rid ourselves of the notion of a long-term decline in tolerance. For exclusion is not based on a simple rise in intolerance as many liberals would have us believe. The contrast that Lévi-Strauss makes is a clear calumny on the contemporary world: for there can be little doubt that the modern urban dweller has a tolerance far in excess of the average pre-industrial society or indeed the present day country dweller. The city spins with a kaleidoscope of subcultures whilst the electronic media deliver daily a menu of extensive cultural variety, albeit truncated and hybridized, to match the locality of listener or viewer. Difference and diversity are the staples of lifestyle, consumerism, of late modernity: we eat our evening meal from a world menu, our supermarkets exhort us to extend our repertoire from the Caribbean to the Mediterranean, the market for popular music makes stars out of the rap dissidents of the Los Angeles ghettos, gay sensibilities imbue our chat shows and enhance our comedians, every diverse nuance of marriage, lifestyle and sexual relations are debated daily on the chat shows.

Late-modern societies *consume* diversity, they do not recoil at difference but recast it as a commodity and sell it in the local supermarket or magazine. What they are less willing to endure is *difficulty*. The transition from modernity to late modernity, I wish to argue, involves a remarkable

change, almost a reversal of structures of tolerance. The modern world is intolerant of *diversity* which it attempts to absorb and assimilate and is relatively tolerant of *difficulty*, of obdurate people and recalcitrant rebels which it sees as more of a challenge to rehabilitate and reform. The late modern world celebrates *diversity* and *difference* which it readily absorbs and sanitizes; what it cannot abide is *difficult* people and *dangerous* classes which it seeks to build the most elaborate defences against, not just in terms of insiders and outsiders, but throughout the population.

The world of modernity

The contrast between the inclusive world of the immediate postwar period ('modernity') and the exclusive world of the last third of the 20th century ('late modernity') makes this clear. The accent in modernity is anthropophagic; deviants are there to be absorbed. Criminals are rehabilitated, madmen and drug addicts cured, immigrants assimilated, teenagers 'adjusted', dysfunctional families counselled into normality. The difficult, obdurate parts of the population are almost a welcome challenge to the Welfare State and its functionaries (Gouldner, 1971: 76–7).¹

Lévi-Strauss talks of the magical ability of such anthropophagic societies to take individuals 'possessing dangerous powers . . . neutralizing' them 'and even turning them to advantage' (p. 388). This modernity was achieved with virtuosity; it scrutinized groups with alternative values and suggested that they were simply lacking in the values of the establishment, it abhorred diversity and insisted upon an absolutism of ethics over and against any relativity of value, it was not afraid of the difficult individual. It was not difficulty which threatened modernity, but diversity. A whole barrage of experts—psychiatrists, social workers, criminologists—were in the business of explaining away diversity; a positivist social science was evolved which sought to explain the 'remarkable', why differences in values, attitudes and behaviour could possibly occur in a world which was both economically and socially so successful—the endpoint of historical development. Their task was to convert diversity into deviance.

The transformation in late modernity

In late modernity the social world becomes simultaneously more diverse and much more difficult. A pluralism of value—the result of immigration and subcultural diversity—makes it impossible to maintain absolutist standards. And difficulty abounds; for example, the total recorded crime rate for England and Wales in 1995 was 11.5 times that in 1955, and the rate of violence was almost 20 times that in 1955. A diverse and more difficult population confronts the moralist of late-modern times; patterns of virtue have gone forever, rigidity of standards became part of a bygone age,

whilst crime itself has become normal—part of the everyday experience of the citizen (Lea and Young, 1993; Garland, 1996).

It was because of such dramatic changes that the balance of tolerance and intolerance in late modernity began to reverse the strictures of the modern world. Diversity became tolerated, indeed differences in lifestyle became celebrated whilst difficulty became less and less tolerable. This involved a transition in Lévi-Strauss's terms from the anthropophagic to the anthropoemic; from a world of inclusion to one of exclusion. The exclusive world necessitates the development of new modes of social control. The swallowing, incorporating world of the postwar period becomes transformed into one which is more ejecting, separating and excluding. The changes in the various institutions of social control are a response to the transformation in the problems which the system faces. They are a response to tackling a more diverse world and one where crime and disorder are much more widespread. That is, an increase in *difference* and in *difficulty*.

The rise of actuarialism

A major motif of social control in late modern society is actuarialism (see Simon, 1987; Feeley and Simon, 1992, 1994). This involves a transition to mores where there is no longer so much a concern with justice as with community defence and protection and where causes of crime and deviance are not seen as the vital clue to the solution to the problem of crime. The actuarial stance is calculative of risk; it is wary and probabilistic; it is not concerned with causes but with probabilities, not with justice but with harm minimization. It does not seek a world free of crime but rather one where the best practices of damage limitation have been put in place; not a utopia but a series of gated havens in a hostile world. The actuarial stance reflects the fact that risk both to individuals and collectivities has increased, crime has become a normalized part of everyday life, the offender is seemingly everywhere in the street and in high office, within the poor parts of town but also in those institutions which were set up to rehabilitate and protect, within the public world of encounters with strangers but also within the family itself in relationships between husband and wife and parent and child. We are wary of scoutmasters, police officers, hitchhikers, babysitters, people who care for the elderly, husbands, dates, stepfathers and stepmothers; the 'other' is everywhere and not restricted to criminals and outsiders. Its causes are increasingly unsure and this uncertainty is compounded by its seeming ubiquitousness. Both individuals *and* institutions face the problems of sorting out the safe from the risky and doing so in ways which are no longer cast iron and certain, but merely probabilistic.

Rules themselves have become problematic in a pluralistic society where rules overlap to be sure but are never identical between one group and the

other and which change over time and have changed, *without doubt*, within the lifetime of everyone. So it is no longer a question of right and wrong, more what is the likelihood of your rules being broken, and when the unit of risk becomes your chances of victimization, assessment of individual responsibility becomes less and less relevant. If you are the manager of a shopping mall or a mother seeking to protect her family, whether the likely transgressor is mad or bad, or whether following rules or being unable to engage in rule-following behaviour is of little consequence. Thus the line between free will and determinism becomes not only blurred, but in a sense, irrelevant. *You want above all to avoid trouble rather than to understand it.* You want to minimize risk rather than morally condemn behaviour.

In an important sense actuarialism is morally neutral, it is part of a late-modern sensibility which Zygmunt Bauman terms *adiaphorization*—‘the stripping of human relationships of their moral significance, exempting them from moral evaluation, rendering them “morally irrelevant”’ (1995, 133; see also Simon, 1987, 1988). Such adiaphorization occurs not only in terms of risk but in tackling diversity. If the actuarial attitude is the way of confronting difficulty (risk is a matter of calculation and avoidance not of moralism), multiculturalism is the response to difference. That is the existence of a diverse world of value which, on the face of it, poses an increasing threat to ontological security, is magically defused by granting and celebrating diversity yet suggesting that such a pluralism is not a product of choice but of pre-ordained culture. People *are* Irish, Jewish, Scottish, African, gay, female; the process of self-discovery to uncover one’s roots becomes the understanding of one’s own essence.

From mixophilia to mixophobia

Unlike in the modern era with its ambitions of homogeneity, [under post-modern conditions] . . . differences are no more seen as a temporary nuisance bound to be got rid of tomorrow; variety and plurality of the forms of life are here to stay, and the human essence seems to consist in the universally shared ability to establish and protect . . . the identity distinctive from other identities. The post-modern taste for *mixophilia* is constantly buffeted by the opposite tendency *mixophobia*; it would be vain to predict which of the two opposite currents will eventually prevail . . .

(Bauman, 1995: 221)

Zygmunt Bauman writing in *Life in Fragments* captures the uneasy coexistence of a late-modern world which celebrates plurality and precisely the reverse current, the desire to embrace absolute standards concomitant with the debasement of the other. The blasé attitudes of the city easily crumble into aversion, the rational and the calculative spills over into the irrational and the aggressive, the tranquil management of deviance transforms into the demonization of drug takers, single mothers and the underclass, whilst

the celebration of a multicultural society totters over into racial hatred, nationalism and fundamentalism. Attitudes in late modernity blow hot and cold: they are never still and never certain.

The forces which seek to topple mixophilia and engender mixophobia are endemic in late modernity. First of all the search for a firm identity in a world of growing ontological insecurity is enhanced by the contrast of an 'other' which is debased and inferior. Second, the need on the part of politicians and social commentators to blame scapegoats rather than pinpoint problems deep in the structure of society leads to a projection of problems onto others. Third, as a whole series of commentators from Bauman through to Robert Hughes (1993) and Nancy Fraser (1997) have argued, because of the manner in which it portrays difference as a series of essences, multiculturalism sets up and encourages the demonization of others. Finally, the material insecurity endemic within the social structure is a potent source of anxiety which constantly seeks out someone or some group as blameworthy (see Luttwak, 1995).²

Inclusion and exclusion as the causes of deviance

Theories of exclusion and inclusion are not only concerned with social reactions to crime and deviance, they are obviously also linked to their causes. Broadly speaking there are two conventional types of explanation of the causes of crime: a cultural and a structural, loosely associated with conservative and liberal political discourses respectively. Cultural theories suggest that crime occurs because of a lack of culture, of socialization, of symbolic embeddedness into society, community and the family. Hans Eysenck's classic formulation (1970), involving three discrete levels, is a useful illustration. Criminality occurs because:

- the individual is genetically less capable of being socialized;
- his or her family was inadequate at the business of social training;
- the values socialized were incoherent, inconsistent and contradictory.

These three interacting levels of inadequacy come together to produce a lack of cultural incorporation of the individual. More recent theories on the right of the political spectrum replicate such a formula; Gottfredson and Hirschi's *A General Theory of Crime* (1990) fits this well, as does Wilson and Herrnstein's (1985) *Crime and Human Nature*. This approach suggests that crime and deviance occur because of lack of inclusion in the culture of a given society. Crime occurs because of a *deficit of culture*. Such a model has been associated with individual positivism and its ideological attractions are clear: deviance occurs not because of material inequalities or differences in culture but because of a lack of an unquestioned and monolithic *absolutist* culture (see Taylor et al., 1973).

The second approach is also a deficit model, but, in this case, crime and deviance is seen to occur because of a lack of material goods through inequality, poverty, unemployment, etc. It is concerned with absolute

deprivation; people commit crime because they are not included in the economy. The policy correlate is that crime and disorder will disappear if work and income are provided. Such a view of social exclusion is commonplace. It informs, for example, the policies of both the Clinton and the Blair administrations. Such social positivism was severely shaken by the experience of the 1960s when full employment and rising living standards across the Western world was accompanied by rising crime rates. For it was not absolute deprivation but *relative* deprivation that was the source of social disquiet and such a subjective experience of inequality and unfairness is related to meritocracy, not merely opportunity to work.

Thus both the deficit model favoured by the political right (individual positivism) and that by the left (social positivism) are flawed, and both competing strands are about different types of exclusion: cultural or economic.

The critique of the two positivisms

The critique of the two positivisms is part of the legacy of sociological thought; it is, for example, embedded in the work of Durkheim. But the most influential single article is, of course, Robert Merton's 'Social Structure and Anomie' (1938) which explicitly targets both individual and social positivism. This rejection of individual positivism points to the way in which crime and deviance, rather than being a pathology of individuals, is the 'normal' response generated by the culture and structure of society. Further, Merton is aware of the paradoxical findings that many poorer countries have lower crime rates than richer countries and that crime does not necessarily decrease with a rise in living standards. Crime is, therefore, not a result of absolute deprivation but of cultural and social pressures stemming from the heart of society.

Let us rephrase Merton's formulation in terms of our present discussion. *Crime occurs where there is cultural inclusion and structural exclusion*. He reverses the dictum of individual positivism: crime is not a result of a lack of culture but of embracing a culture of success and individualism. He then recontextualizes social positivism: it is not material deprivation per se, nor lack of opportunity that gives rise to crime, but deprivation in the context of the 'American Dream' culture where meritocracy is exhorted as open to all.

Inclusion/exclusion: a late-modern bulimia

All of this takes us back to Lévi-Strauss and his metaphors of the anthropophagic and the anthropoemic, those societies which are social cannibals and those which vomit deviants out. What Merton suggests as the paradigm case for a discontented society is one which does both: it voraciously devours people and it, then, steadfastly ejects them. A bulimic

society: 'bulimia: a condition of continuous, uncontrolled hunger. When compensated for by forced vomiting or overdoses of laxatives the condition is called *bulimia nervosa*' (*Collins Encyclopaedia*, 1995: 145). The social order of the advanced industrial world is one which engulfs its members. It consumes and culturally assimilates masses of people through education, the media and participation in the market place. A ubiquitous mass media, proliferate in its channels, takes up a greater and greater proportion of leisure time and carries with it global images of success, of expectations and desires. Most crucial of all is that there is the image of what is a normal lifestyle, what goods and level of comfort can be expected if we play the game. There are images of the lifestyle of the stars to be true, but there are also images of the rewards of everyday life in the soap operas and in the incessant succession of fictional dramas and factual news stories.

Further, the mass media is not, of course, the only instrument of inclusion in our society. Mass education prepares children for work and carries inevitably notions of career, of meritocracy and success whilst the market itself, particularly as a place of consumption, encourages participation and involvement. Only the most steadfast minority can resist its encroachments and only by banning access to newspapers, radio, television and by running one's own schools and frowning on extra-group friendships, can cultural isolation be achieved.

The test case in the heart of Philadelphia

By the measure of this argument discontent in late-modern societies is not a product of simple exclusion, rather it is a bulimic process of inclusion and exclusion. What more ready test of this hypothesis could be made than with regard to the phenomenon of the 'underclass'? Surely, here is an excluded population, cut off from the outside society, where disorder and incivility has become part of the torn fabric of everyday life and where cultural alienation has generated remarkable differences in lifestyle and aspiration. William Julius Wilson in his pathbreaking book *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) outlines precisely such a process of *social dislocation*. Blacks became concentrated in the urban centres of the US by the attraction of work in the factories of Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Detroit. The deindustrialization of the 1970s brought about by the flight of capital to the cheaper labour markets of South East Asia left these people stranded. The growing black middle class, encouraged by equal opportunities legislation, obtained jobs, often in the government bureaucracies, and quit the ghetto for the suburbs. Left behind were a dislocated people, cut off from economic opportunity, spatially segregated both by class and race—an Appalachians of the Inner City. The number of 'marriageable' men declined with the lack of work and the inability to support families, which resulted in the growth of single-parent, female-centred families.

Children grew up without either role models of everyday work or the practices of the nuclear family. A culture emerged which was low-achieving, ill-suited for the disciplines of work, unstable in its family structure, with excessive emphasis on masculinity and where crime and violence abounded. The urban underclass, according to William Julius Wilson, was thus born.

Here we have a classic social democratic account of the formation of an underclass: economic and social exclusion (exacerbated by spatial segregation) leads to social disorganization and a lack of culture—a social group excluded from the cultural mainstream of American society. Recall and compare the account of underclass formation given by Charles Murray (1990, 1994): the Welfare State creates a culture of dependency whose menfolk are unwilling or unable to take up the possibilities of work and where womenfolk are encouraged by benefits to become single mothers. A culture antithetical to the work ethic of the wider society is created which is racked by crime and disorder because of the inability of single mothers to adequately socialize their sons and because work has little attraction compared with theft and the illegal economy. Here, the culture created by the Welfare State excludes its members from the social and economic institutions of the mainstream. Thus, Murray's account is the very reverse of Wilson's, although the resulting culture itself is seen to be rather similar in its difference, disorganization and alienation from the core values of American society.

These two authors clearly represent the two types of exclusion that I have talked of: that where the group is excluded because of exclusion from the economy, and that where 'self-chosen' exclusion is seen to result in a lack of ability to socialize children into the wider culture. In both these instances, the 'underclass' is seen to lack culture. But, finally, let us note there are authors both on the left and the right who start from the position that black culture is different from the mainstream to begin with: those on the left—whom Wilson is particularly critical of—who see black culture as an alternative culture of struggle, fight-back and survival, and those on the right who see it as alien in the sense of naturally intransigent, ill-disciplined and unassimilable. Thus we have four positions in all: two that portray the underclass as a lack of culture and two that see it as an alternative culture. None of them would deem to characterize it as the very embodiment of dominant culture.

Against these positions, Carl Nightingale in his remarkable study of the black ghetto of Philadelphia, *On the Edge* (1993), counterposes an analysis which is incisive and convincing. He argues that what is vital to understand is not only the alienation but, paradoxically, the degree of inclusion of black youth into American culture. Such a process of cultural inclusion has increased over time. Furthermore, it is augmented rather than diminished by economic and social exclusion. It is this assimilation which is the key to understanding the violence of their lives. Thus he begins his book:

This is a . . . book about some American children. But *American* is not the word most Americans commonly use to describe them. Overall, the nation's preferences run instead to phrases like 'alienated youth', 'ghetto kids', . . . and in more hateful moments, 'punks', 'wolf packs', 'welfare queens', or 'niggers'. . . . But the favorite term nowadays is 'underclass', a term one liberal scholar defined, in part, as 'a vile and debased subhuman population'. Americans do have access to more respectful names for the kids in this book: '*African-American*' is one of them. But '*all-American*' (as in apple pie or the kid next door) is almost never a first choice.

(1993: 1)

And he notes how it became clear to him, just like Merton before him, that crime and incivility relate to the 'American dream':

Poor, on welfare, left behind by emigrating employers and community leaders, racially excluded, feared and despised by many Americans, then thrown into prisons: how could the children described in this book be more alienated from the American mainstream than that? In fact, it was only by getting to know some poor urban African-American children much closer up that I could grasp just how thoroughly American their lives have been.

(1993: 5)

First of all he charts their exposure to American mainstream culture. The market readily embraces them in an enthusiasm for sneakers, cars, clothes, jewellery:

Already at five and six, many kids in the neighborhood can recite the whole canon of adult luxury—from Gucci, Evan Piccone, and Pierre Cardin, to Mercedes and BMW . . . from the age of ten, kids became thoroughly engrossed in Nike's and Reebok's cult of the sneaker . . .

(1993: 153–4)

Television is watched avidly. African-Americans watch half again as much television as whites and in the average black household the television is on for 11 hours per day. The culture is, in fact, permeated by the mainstream. Nightingale, for example, points to what he calls 'the didactic use of violence', the notion that problems can be readily solved by violence, which constitutes such a major motif in American cartoons, feature films, law and order strategies and, indeed, foreign policy. He notes the extent to which 'forceful parenting', rather than *laissez-faire*, is a key component of African-American childrearing, reflecting traditional rather than liberal values. He points to the extent to which the neighbourhood backed Bush during the Gulf War—which occurred at the same time as the interviews. But his explanation of their enthusiastic embracing of conventional values involves not simple transmission through television and the market place, but has a dynamic rooted in compensation.

For, like Merton, he stresses that tension is created by the combination of economic and social exclusion with cultural inclusion, but to *compensate*

for this discrepancy, cultural identification is given an even greater emphasis. Thus:

New pairs of sneakers every month, Mickey Mouse T-shirts, glorified caricatures, 'racial obsessions', 'patriotism' and 'law-and-order' ideas, and long lines of young African-American people outside showings of *Terminator* or *Nightmare on Elm Street* are all important to the inner-city story. In the past thirty-five years, poor African-American children have increasingly and enthusiastically sought out these essentially American values, self-images, and grand delusions as principal means of expressing and compensating for the awful hurt they have felt growing up poor, jobless, and racially outcast.

(1993: 11)

Inner-city kids' *inclusion* in mainstream America's mass market has been important in determining those kids' responses to the economic and racial *exclusion* they face in other parts of their lives. And, indeed, kids' experience of exclusion and of the associated painful memories has made their participating in mass culture particularly urgent and enthusiastic, for the culture of consumption has given them a seductive means to compensate for their feelings of failure.

(1993: 135)

Carl Nightingale's theory is, thus, a critique of those who believe that the problems of the underclass are a result of simple exclusion; such theories of alienation explain much but they do not go far enough.

These forces of economic and racial alienation explain increases in fatal violence and the erosion of community only when viewed along with forces which have helped the inner city become more included in the mainstream.

(1993: 74–5)

But it is also a critique of those theories which portray the ghetto as a repository of alternative values. Rather they have a *surfeit* of American values; let's recast this in terms of identity and difference. Nightingale sees the Philadelphia underclass as lacking a separate identity; they do not inhabit a different world as part of a multicultural universe. If anything he tends towards the argument of a loss of difference, from the African-American culture of the past, to an absorption in the American mainstream.

Here we have then a bulimic world of cultural inclusion and social exclusion, followed by overidentification in order to compensate, an inclusive moment, and then, presumably, an even greater awareness of the exclusive nature of social structure. But we can go further than this by adding parts of this process which Nightingale only touches upon. How does the underclass react to this over-identification coupled with rejection? The most obvious answer to this is through crime and, in the case of youth,

through the creation of gangs and criminal subcultures. These could be construed as somehow alien to the wider culture, a position long debated in criminological theory, but modern ethnography graphically demonstrates that this is not true. For example, if we look at Phillipe Bourgois's (1995) ethnographic study of El Barrio, East Harlem, New York City, we find a distinct parallel with Carl Nightingale's work. Just as he sees African-American culture being assimilated into the mainstream, Bourgois even more dramatically notes how the culture of Puerto Rican immigrants becomes part and parcel of American culture. Thus he writes:

I . . . want to place drug dealers and street level criminals into their rightful position within the mainstream of U.S. society. They are not 'exotic others' operating in an irrational netherworld. On the contrary, they are 'made in America'. Highly motivated, ambitious inner-city youths have been attracted to the rapidly expanding, multibillion-dollar drug economy during the 1980s and 1990s precisely because they believe in Horatio Alger's version of the American Dream.

Like most other people in the United States, drug dealers and street criminals are scrambling to obtain their piece of the pie as fast as possible. In fact, in their pursuit of success they are even following the minute details of the classical yankee model for upward mobility. They are aggressively pursuing careers as private entrepreneurs; they take risks, work hard, and pray for good luck. They are the ultimate rugged individualists braving an unpredictable frontier where fortune, fame, and destruction are all just around the corner, and where the enemy is ruthlessly hunted down and shot.

(1995: 326)

But such a measure of success—the crack dealer with money to burn one day yet on his heels the next—is only for a few. The vast majority of people in the ghetto have to deal with failure, and this failure is, because of the internalization of the values of the wider society, articulated in terms of self-blame rather than a fault of the system. Because of their cultural inclusion, the excluded blame themselves for their exclusion. Bourgois concludes his book:

At the same time, there is nothing exotically Puerto Rican about the triumphs and failures of the protagonists of this book. On the contrary, 'mainstream America' should be able to see itself in the characters presented on these pages and recognize the linkages. The inner city represents the United States' greatest domestic failing, hanging like a Damocles sword over the larger society. Ironically, the only force preventing this suspended sword from falling is that drug dealers, addicts, and street criminals internalize their rage and desperation. They direct their brutality against themselves and their immediate community rather than against their structural oppressors. . . . There is no technocratic solution. Any long-term paths out of the

quagmire will have to address the structural and political economic roots, as well as the ideological and cultural roots of social marginalization.

(1995: 326–7)

But, of course, no such long-ranging policy of social and political inclusion is forthcoming to this bulimia of exclusion. In fact the very reverse is true; the US criminal justice system has expanded at an unprecedented level and its focus is the underclass of the ghettos.

Thus, lastly, we must chart the final moment of exclusion. The inclusive moment of creating a criminal subculture based on all-American notions of work as an area of rugged individualism and competition and sanctioned by a film industry which carries the message of didactic violence, which blurs the notion of criminal and non-criminal, of good guy and bad guy, of hero and crook, is followed by exclusion in the most draconian fashion imaginable. For the US criminal justice system focuses upon ghetto youth on an unparalleled level. One in nine black men aged between 20 and 29 years is in prison in any 12-month period, one in three is on probation, parole or in prison (Mauer, 1997). The criminal justice system constitutes their lives, constructs their identity, impinges upon them daily. Thus the last expulsion of a long, bulimic process is in place. What a strange world this is of inclusion and exclusion; a bulimia nervosa of the social system. At one point the outside world touches and shapes them, at another point they are rejected and expelled.

Subculture and diversity

The concept of subculture allows us to gain insight into the nature of diversity in late modernity. Subcultures occur throughout society, they are the differently accentuated interpretations of the wider values which vary by age, class, gender and ethnicity. They are constructed in relation to each other by bricolaging, reinterpreting and invention. Difference then is related to subculture and subcultures connect together the global and the local. That is, they are part of a global culture which is, in late modernity, very much a product of a market society (see Currie, 1997), which stresses individualism, consumerism, attempts to legitimate itself through meritocracy and has a strong emphasis on self-expression and actualization. That such values permeate society allows critical theorists such as Russell Jacoby (1994) to argue that there is no such thing as diversity. He is correct, of course, to emphasize that the ethnic ticket has been grotesquely exaggerated ('does the fact that salsa sales surpassed ketchup sales signify that the US has become culturally diverse or just that more people eat Mexican-American food?' (1994: 125)), but the local variation between people by age, class, gender and ethnicity relates to a diversification of problems from the changed complexity of the labour market to the diverse pursuit of identity in a world where normative contours are blurred and shaded. Of course, in a society where market forces permeate every corner,

particularly in terms of consumerism, one would expect the broad brush of market values to tar every corner and crevice of the social structure. Indeed, we have seen precisely this in our examination of Nightingale's study of the Philadelphia ghetto. Yet the social fabric is scarcely so interwoven as it was in the inclusionist period up to the early 1970s where employment was full and monolithic, where careers tended to span a lifetime and where domestic and leisure roles were tightly cast and designated. For the rise of an exclusive society involves the unravelling of the labour markets and the rise of a widespread individualism concerned with identity and self-actualization. Role-making rather than role-taking becomes top of the agenda. Subcultures, therefore, do not disappear but rather they lose their rigidity, they are more diverse in a late-modern world and involve crossover and transposition of values one from another (see Taylor, 1999, where subcultures are seen to vanish) and they involve much change in character and membership over time (Ruggiero and South, 1995).

Part of the problem of the existence of diversity, then, is the lens used. Russell Jacoby's is of such low definition that the world easily seems one-dimensional to him; only the cultural dinosaurs—he mentions the Hasidic Jews and the Amish—seem to represent real cultural differences. As a result, the way that difference manifests itself in late modernity is significantly occluded.

Returning to Philadelphia

The culture of the ghetto is closely linked with that of the outside world, is dynamic, is propelled by the contradictions of opportunities and ideals, of economic citizenship denied and of social acceptance blocked. It is neither a lack of culture nor an essentially different culture. But it *is* different: it is a subculture bricollaged out of wider culture which stresses certain values and transforms others. In the very act of compensation, it over-identifies and it under-identifies. Here both Nightingale and Jacoby are wrong, for at some point selection and exaggeration become difference. It is irretrievably linked but it is different and this is, in fact, the meaning of diversity in late modern societies. It is overlap and choice, accentuation and transformation. It is also a subculture which in this process creates possibilities as well as blocking others. Its members see themselves through the situation but then, at the same time, as they are existentially creative they tend to essentialize themselves. The subculture creates essential notions of masculinity; it accepts rigid distinctions and even plays upon racial stereotypes.

Let us consider for a moment the mechanisms involved in the process of bulimia. The actors, themselves, in the process of cultural inclusion experience relative deprivation which is rendered even more chronic by their compensatory over-identification with the American values of consumerism and competition. Their criminality is shaped by this individualism as it is informed by the notion of justified violence. The legitimacy of orderly

behaviour is thus easily undermined; 'techniques of neutralization' abound. But lastly, the paradox of inclusion/exclusion is not only expressed in terms of access to material goods, cars, clothes, apartments, etc., it is also evidenced in a loss of identity. Denied access to the full status of citizenship—a sense of indignity for many rubbed into them daily by their treatment on the streets by the police—being unable to take up the role of husband or breadwinner portrayed daily in the backdrop of comfortable homes that make up the set of so much television drama and feared because of stereotype and prejudice, all contribute to lower class youth having the most extraordinary crisis of identity and self-worth. It is not just relative deprivation, then, that they confront, but ontological crisis. One solution to a crisis of identity is to emphasize features, to draw clear delineating lines, to suggest that your being is fixed and resolute. In short, to exaggerate and to essentialize oneself and the difference from others. The 'hard' man of macho-culture whose toughness of physical features is contrasted to the derogatory 'softness' of women or of men acting like women. Both heterosexual masculinity and the 'otherness' of women, 'soft' men and homosexuals are essentialized. Hollywood, following on from the like of Marvel comics, contributes well here. Thus Richard Sparks notes:

One of the most striking features . . . is the evident, indeed exaggerated muscularity. Many stars of earlier periods (John Wayne perhaps most obviously) have presented emphatically and heftily masculine figures but with few exceptions (Kirk Douglas in *Spartacus*) the detail and definition of their physique has not been dwelt upon so lingeringly. Stallone and Schwarzenegger are not just male heroes: their pumped up bodies signify (nay, yell) 'Masculinity' as if these days one showed masculinity by presenting it in excess—a prototypical, warrior essence . . . We see masculinity 'hyperbolized' in the ultra-physiques of Schwarzenegger or Stallone; or else we have the hyper-masculine close-to-the-edge dangerousness of the Mel Gibson character in the *Lethal Weapon* films.

(1996: 355–6)

Paul Willis, in his celebrated *Learning to Labour* (1977) describes how the lads create an identity which is macho, anti-female, racist and anti-intellectual, in order to survive. Similarly, such a toughening of identity, the process of essentialization, occurs across the world, wherever lower class male adolescents are marginalized (see Messerschmidt, 1993). Of course such a process of creating an essence, a stout and solid identity, is only one half of the equation. The other is the images projected upon the underclass by the wider public. Here, the pervasive ontological insecurity spurred on by the exigencies of late modernity also has a tendency to essentialize—perhaps not spurred on as acutely as by the predicament of the youth themselves, but certainly the vehicle of massive forces tending towards exclusion within society as a whole. This process of essentialism can turn to demonization—to apportioning the blame for society's ills on certain, usually vulnerable, victims of the social structure.

Essentialism and social exclusion

It should be obvious from the above discussion that essentialism greatly facilitates the process of social exclusion. It furnishes the targets, it provides the stereotypes, it allows the marshalling of aggression and it reaffirms the identity of the in-group; but we can go further than this, because social exclusion confirms and realizes essentialism. David Matza, at the end of *Becoming Deviant* (1969), discusses this relationship and there are several lines which he draws:

- Social exclusion threatens the sense of identity of an individual or group making them ontologically insecure and thus open to the embracing of essences.
- The actors may embrace these essences in order to compensate for the lack of identity. We have seen, in our discussion, how such a process of embracing the essence bestowed upon the deviant can be taken up ironically, mockingly and transformatively. But, even so, it still shapes the individual's notion of themselves.
- Finally, and crucially, by blocking off opportunities, social exclusion both materially and in terms of the possibility of embracing alternative identities, can be self-fulfilling. For example, a man forced into a situation where he has little means of earning a living other than thieving, can come to believe that he *truly* is a thief, whilst the onlookers can find their prognosis confirmed for, lo and behold, the man they designated 'thief' continues thieving.

Matza calls this the 'intricate bogus' of essentialism. The answer to how we know that a person is essentially a thief is his recurrence as a thief. Take away the material and ontological reasons for recurrence and it seems to be a product of an essence which is centred in the individual and by definition repeats itself.

In Philadelphia, Carl Nightingale notes the level at which the ghetto culture makes heroes of the rap and hip-hop singers who turn 'the language of racial hatred on its head, transforming the label "nigga" and the violence and sexual conquest of their songs into a badge of authentic blackness' (1993, p.132).³ He adds:

The career of the 'nigga' hero suggests just how complicated an impact American racism has had on inner-city children. On the one hand, racism has operated as a force of exclusion and alienation—through white hatred, segregation, discrimination, and rampant suspicion—and has helped to fill kids' emotional memories with humiliation and resentment. On the other hand, in a perverse way, the history of the effects of American racism on inner-city kids has also been one of inclusion—resulting, ironically, in a fragile form of personal satisfaction. Racial caricatures, after all, have been a central part of American national culture, and the identities that kids, especially boys, forge for themselves using those caricatures reflect their immersion in the mainstream as much as their exclusion from it.

However, if boys' inversion of the language of white racial hatred represents a creative way of resisting the forces of painful emotion in their lives and gives them some sense of emotional equilibrium, it also reflects the extent to which racism has tragically limited their lives. Moreover, it illustrates just how high a price kids can pay for a compensatory identity based on American mainstream images. By choosing to use the word *nigga*—with its deliberately unshed and definitive evocation of racial exclusion and stereotype—in a wry and ironic attempt to save face, kids end up accepting the word's evocation of self-contempt. The identity also helps impose a rigid uniformity on the ideal image of black masculinity, which enforces inner-city boys' all-too-prevalent tendency to repress or aggressively express their overwhelming memories of pain. Nor, unfortunately, does it do much to allay suspicious white Americans' proclivities toward linking race and violence. Indeed, if the history of inner-city social life is partly based on some sort of 'cyclical' dynamic, the most important one is not a 'self-perpetuating' cycle of poverty passed from generation to generation. Instead the crucial dynamic involves white racism feeding off the self-portraits of those young black men it has trapped in the seduction of its caricatures.

(1993: 133)

I quote this excellent passage at length because it captures the recurrent bogus of essentialism in a nutshell, but here it is not just a single individual who is cast in a mould, but a whole race and a whole generation.

Herein is the deceptive nature of essentialism. For, on the one hand, conservatives insist that these essences are reality (a thief is a thief, the feckless are without drive, young blacks are violent) whilst on the other hand more liberal commentators will insist that these presumptions are mere illusions. They are prejudice invoked against poorer parts of the community and more vulnerable individuals whilst in reality people are more or less similar. In reality, the social system produces people who are as if constructed as an essence. *It is neither essence nor illusion* but a world of appearances which appears as if it is constructed of essences, whose very reality has a stolid, stereotypical quality.

Notes

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1. I am well aware that counter currents to the general process of exclusion occur. Indeed, my overall argument is that both exclusionary and inclusionary processes are constantly at ebb and flow although the overall tendency is an exclusionary direction. This is true of the social actors depicted here—in this case the underclass who are subject to the inclusion and exclusion of bulimia—and of the political attempts to tackle the problem of crime and indeed social exclusion itself. The policies of New Labour, for example, are crucially an attempt at a new inclusionism. Thus the family is to be refurbished, those on welfare are shepherded into work, a Social Exclusion Unit orchestrates the re-inclusion of truants and those expelled from school, single mothers into work and the reduction of the dole queues. A Crime and Disorder Act (1998) mobilizes multi-agencies to eliminate hotspots and no-go areas. Above all what Garland (1996) calls a ‘responsibilisation strategy’ is underway which seeks to bring back notions of moral responsibility—the very opposite of actuarialism. All of this is, to my mind, part of a politics of nostalgia: it attempts to magically bring back a world of full employment, community and family which existed in the Golden era of modernity. More importantly this and parallel activities in the US are fundamentally flawed in their conception. To include a person within a community in a just and integrative fashion demands that jobs are available which are fairly paid, secure and which provide some measure of a career structure. The forceable coercion of people into the most transient and humiliating work below the poverty levels, for the families involved, is simply inclusion of people into the labour market not into a society of full citizens (Currie, 1985: 265). It confuses the market place with society, the commodification of labour with community. And make no mistake about it: the process is experienced not as social inclusion but the creation of an underclass of servants and second-class citizens (see Galbraith, 1992). It is seen not as inclusion but as exclusion.
2. Actuarialism and such demonization are, of course, both forms of exclusion; the cool and the hot aspects of our culture. The late modern desire for diversity is constantly subverted by the difficulty of a world where economic exclusion causes genuine problems of discontent, disturbance, deviance and crime. In my rendering of the transition from inclusive to exclusive society the main motor is these all too real conflicts in our society; alternative interpretations put a stress on the autonomous developments within the control structure (see Cohen, 1985). Indeed Feeley and Simon (1992, 1994) in their pathbreaking articles explicitly argue that the actuarial mode of control develops quite separately from any changes in the crime rate (for a critique of this, see Young, 1999).
3. As a last twist in this history of inclusion/exclusion. Rap music, hip-hop, has become one of the most influential musical forms appealing to white youth as much as black youth, and parodies of rap occur from nursery TV to satire show. Late modernity consumes diversity yet gags at difficulty, witness the demonization (and self-promotion) of Niggers with Attitudes (NGA), Ice Cube and Ice-T (see Back, 1996).

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