**Intersectionality in Intractable Dirty Work: How Mumbai Ragpickers Make Meaning of Their Work and Lives (edited)**

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Ragpickers in Mumbai handle and dispose of garbage. This article explores the intersectionality of multiple sources of “taint” among the ragpickers. Taint is defined as a stereotype and source of discrimination. For ragpickers sources of taint are:

 > employment in a ‘dirty’ job

 > belonging to the lowest caste in India

 > living in slums

 > gender

For example, gender becomes an intersectional taint in the following way: refuse collectors and street cleaners use masculinity to enhance their self-esteem and resist class subordination.

The authors use the term “make meaning”. This can be thought of as how ragpickers cope with their existence. They describe 3 methods:

1. Time Frames. Ragpickers focus on specific time frames. They define:

 - Past. As a result of their caste, dirty work was their destiny.

 - Present. Since ragpickers often get paid daily, their viewed dirty work in terms of survival

 - Future. When they focused on their work and where they lived, they viewed dirty work in terms of hope.

2. Separate or Bracket. Ragpickers were able to “disambiguate facets of their environment”. This means:

 - They could separate or “bracket” features or processes of their lives. For example, they could separate their:

 - occupation, living place, caste, etc.

 - As a result, they were able to avoid a “global sense of helplessness”.

3. Functional Ambivalence. This means ragpickers were able to:

 - work (function) in their life situation

 - while simultaneously holding “opposing orientations” (ambivalence)

These 3 methods “allowed a level of acceptance of structurally determined conditions which were beyond their ability to overturn or significantly transform”.

 1. For Mumbai ragpickers what are the four sources of “taint”?

 2. How did the ragpickers avoid a “global sense of helplessness”?

 3. Can you think of an example of “functional ambivalence” in your personal life?

Note: This journal article is 24 pages long. If you would like the full text, please email me at <forjohnino@gmail.com>