

Untitled

Pat Lauderdale

A sociological imagination permits diverse ways of studying inequality. We, for example, can focus upon the emergence and transformations of: a. hierarchies in small and large groups; b. socioeconomic classes in a neoclassical approach to stratification at the country or nation-state level; c. countries in the world stratified system; and d. class, gender, age, and race as traditional sociological variables.

Most sociologists study inequality either implicitly or explicitly. My interest in the topic springs from roots that are similar, in an analytical sense, to other sociologists. When I entered 'higher' education at Cameron State Agricultural and Technical Junior College in Lawton, Oklahoma, I immediately was informed of my low status. I had attended high schools in Indianola and Cache, Oklahoma. The total population for the two villages was approximately 800 people. In other words, in Lawton I was defined as unequal to the 'big city' students.

After two years, I found myself at the University of Oklahoma where I was told that Cameron Junior College Students usually couldn't graduate from the University because of inadequate preparation. After three more years and a B.S. [seriously] from OU and having been reprimanded by the Dean of Students for my political actions as President of the Independent Students aka Students for a Democratic Society, I moved to Washington, D.C. to hear that 'Okies' were interesting but inferior folks, at least, in an academic sense.

To make a long story short, after attending three different graduate schools, dropping out and working as a general laborer in construction, I found myself in New York City. When I received the letter of acceptance to graduate school at Stanford University many months later, most of my new acquaintances kept saying: 'Why do you want to go to Stamford, Connecticut?' I said Stanford again. Then, the questions became more pejorative.

Three years later, I found myself studying inequality both at the small group and global levels of analysis. Ironically, the study of deviance as diversity became essential because I realized that the sociological study of deviance via Gouldner and Coser was an interesting window into the study of inequality. Or, from Gouldner's perspective he was posing questions such as why don't we study people fighting back who have been labeled as deviant rather than as mere victims. Or, from Coser's view why not study how people are restricted access to status rather than how people manage to attain high status positions. Since you already may have been exposed to my work in these two areas, i.e., small group and societal stratification, I'll present a few ideas from the other two areas, e.g., global and variable in the sociological sense. Of course, now the use of the term South is global, as in Africa, and the East, e.g., is Asia. I'm simply employing the terms, with all the problematic ethnocentrism, from the political economy of the world systems research.

I should also thank Claudia von Werlhof and Marie Mies for inviting me to international conferences on the topics of peasants and housewives where I have presented my research on indigenous peoples. It was, and still is, my position that indigenous peoples forms of living are largely either ignored, suffocated, or seen as deviant rather than diverse. Or, the indigenous person is seen as noble until the world-wide globalization project encounters the resistance and diversity of that person who traditionally does not engage in analysis of the self, as if that were deviant.

Inequality from a Global Perspective: Colonialism, Internal and External Pressures, and the State of South Africa.

Part of the research challenge is to understand inequality and the encompassing issues, not only in their internal sense as local phenomena unique to a particular state or region, but also as products of the historical processes of colonialism and the contemporary pressures of the global economic community. One common pattern, for example, South Africa— while acknowledging the unique nature of the problem in each locality — strongly resembles the

experiences of numerous peoples in other regions of the world: People indigenous to a region who have created particular cultural and economic practices over time suddenly find themselves confronted with a 'superior' power from outside the region who claims entitlement to their land and resources (Abu-Lughod, 1989; Wallerstein, 1986; Lauderdale and Amster, 2000). These indigenous people, once self-sufficient and culturally diverse, are either forced from their lands and relocated or are enclosed within a narrowly defined space.

The oldest surviving inhabitants in South Africa are members of the Khoisan language groups. Many South Africans belong to the people that migrated south from central Africa, settling in the Transvaal region thousands of years ago. The Boers who engaged in some of the earliest forms of colonialization in the area did not call them Africans for that would have implied, correctly, a prior ownership. The Boers called themselves Afrikaners to indicate, incorrectly, that it was their land.

The people of South African then increasingly were prevented from working the land for food or moving over a wide enough area to graze animals or hunt-gather for sustenance; state lines are drawn by colonial administrators often without regard to cultural and ethnic boundaries. New problems and conflicts ensue, and eventually external, international 'relief' is mustered and delivered to the state apparatus as delineated on the colonial maps (see Frank, 1981, for an analysis of relief food as power). This relief is often appropriated by corrupt strongpersons, sold on the black market, or delivered to one (the dominant) group but not the others in the region. Competition over scant resources and food supplies exacerbates tensions among the many diverse groups in the region, some of whom were allies or trading partners before the colonial Era. The international community recognizes a particular group in the region as the legitimate rulers or leaders, and in return for aid, relief, 'bailout' money, or military supplies, the international community plies the official leaders for access to natural resources for export, the opening of import markets in the region, and the development of urban centers, technology, and industry based on the Western model (Merchant, 1992).

Dissenting views are crushed, often under the facade of the rule of law (Adams, 1993; Thompson, 1987). Criminal law expands in some areas to be used as a device to depoliticize civil protests and social movements. Authoritarian statism often is the order of the day (notwithstanding cosmetic overtures toward 'democracy' and 'rights'), poverty and disease continue to proliferate, and 'clans' or 'tribes' are blamed for the unrest. The only viable solution appears to be more 'development', more international 'aid', more exploitation of resources, and in general more of the state largely controlled by outside interests as a paragon of order in a region rife with conflict (see generally Maxted and Zegeye, 1997; Lauderdale and Amster, 2000). The essence of this historical nexus between territory/land/resources and conflict is the role of the state and globalization (i.e., as key variables in the process of conflict in genera).

This familiar scenario has been played out in varying degrees and with some important differences in most countries throughout the world. One critical task is to analyze internal conflicts in terms of the balance of power between civil society and the varied interest inside and outside the country (Gramsci, 1971; Thomas et al., 1987). We hope others will help us extend this perspective that elucidates the complex nature of the relationship between local conflict and internal dissent on the one hand, and the global processes and pressures of externally encouraged, ostensible 'law and order' on the other (Gills, and Frank, 1992; Krasner, 1994).

Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been seeking to give itself formal power to remove capital flows and investment regulations that would help implement the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). The MAI would extend to multinational corporations the ability to write the rules of the global economy, including doing business where they want, how they want, and with no safeguards on their local impact. The MAI would allow corporations to sue states in their own trade courts and overturn local laws. Neither the IMF nor the MAI have independent evaluation units and there is little international concern about the sweeping impact that such changes could have on national and local governments' ability to pursue policies to support decent living standards, environmental protection and human rights

(Mies and Werlhof, 1999). Typically, despite their intentions, the results of IMF restructuring programs have destabilized poor countries. Countries such as South Africa often spend between one-quarter and one-third of their foreign exchange earnings to pay the interest on their debts. The large debt-service payments divert money from vital social services and infrastructure stability (Scholte, 1998).

*Inequality from a Variable Perspective such as class, gender, age and race:
A Focus on Indigenous Views of Law and Equality [Remanded to the Shadows of Sociology]*

The closest approximation to the law-ways or common law of most indigenous North Americans is civil law. Civil law is more amenable to incorporating essential principles of equality, unity and collectivity. It has the potential to provide a more equitable, less oppressive arena in which to negotiate and regulate major social problems, including those of a violent nature. The civil process has the potential to consider the positions and perceptions of the victim and the offender. This process focuses upon the paying of damages and the receipt of compensation reflecting both the problematic behavior of the offender and the suffering endured by the victim. Civil proceedings can carry far less degradation to the parties involved and de-emphasize the moral condemnation or stigma of criminal sanctions. This civil approach is especially relevant to victims of domestic violence, for example, who often become stigmatized because of their relationship with the offender. Civil sanctions are alternatives to repressive punishments both for the specific parties involved and also the broader system of law and justice. The civil emphasis on restoring relationships even if only at the community level is critical. However, these civil alternatives are often suffocated before they reach any public policy agenda.

Despite numerous attempts to portray pre-modern or indigenous people as “primitive” or “savage,” Thomas Henry Maine documented that in the infancy of “modern” jurisprudence, people depended for protection against violence or fraud not on the Law of Crime, but on the Law

of Tort. Maine's analysis is similar to Emile Durkheim's revised position on this matter when he noted that consolidation of power by the government leads to more repressive rather than restitutive sanctions. More recently, Garland examines evidence leading to the conclusion that cultures with non-absolutist political organization tend to have a preponderance of lenient punishments while absolutist cultures have a preponderance of severe punishments. In essence, political organization is central to our understanding of when particular types of punishments and what forms of law are more likely to be imposed.

North American indigenous justice reflects civil rather than a criminal application of law. Phillip Deere's statement is accurate today:

...All over our Country, historians, anthropology people, dug up the earth to find the history of the Western hemisphere. But they have not found any jailhouse. They have not found any prisons ... How did different Nations of people speaking so many different languages live without these institutions.

Respect for diversity seems central to equality and civil law. Values of cooperation, respect, kinship and the fundamental role of spiritual values and ceremonies were embodied within the educating and caring for the youth. Le Jeune had his work cut out for him: working with people who did not punish children, encouraged women in independence and decision making, and had a horror of authority imposed from without — who, in Le Jeune's words could not “endure in the least those who seem desirous of assuming superiority over the others, and place all virtue in a certain gentleness or apathy ... They have reproached me a hundred times because we fear our Captains, while they laugh at and make sport of theirs.”

Garland also suggests the importance of understanding the complex variables that lead to historical periods of severe punishment, e.g., the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England and the U.S. where servants, apprentices, children and wives were treated with a "casual cruelty" and the penal systems were cruel and brutal both in terms of severity and duration of punishments (1990) pp. 230-31. Such analyses also point out the importance of realizing that the most

systematic research indicates that there is no simple linear or evolutionary civilization of punishment in modern societies. Terms such as civilization, progress, and modern continue to be exceedingly polemical and evolution and devolution are becoming problematic.