

Analysis on Globalization and the Impact of Its Outcomes on Social Sciences

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Abstract

Continuing the critique of Western social scientific thought set in motion in the 1960s, postmodern thinkers of this decade have promoted descriptions of the uniqueness and complexity of human life by focusing on identities and group affiliations (See Bolough and Mell, 2004; Mato, 2006; Seidman, 2010; Sztompka, 2009; Zavarzadeh and Morton, 2004). The critique of logical positivism in the social sciences, which sought general truths about the social world, ultimately resulted in a discourse that rejected, to use the language of postmodern thinkers, totalizing and essentializing master narratives of the dominant canon (Martinez, 2010).

Keywords : globalization, social sciences, outcomes, impact

Introduction

I don't find much promise in a discourse that leaves us adrift in a world of endless particularities and competing identities. On the other hand, I also don't find much promise in a social science, like sociology, which has become increasingly insular and self-referential over the past three decades and seemingly irrelevant to our period of great social change.

Today, I want to focus on one of those master processes that I believe impacts each of us irrespective of our class, status, and/or power location in society. The process is globalization and it is beginning to receive increased attention by social scientists (See Barnett and Cavanagh, 2004; Burbach, Nunez and Kagarlitsky, 2012; DasGupta, 2013; Drucker, 2004; Lomnitz, 2004; Madrick, 2013; Pierson, 2013; Said, 2004; Smith, 2006). My purpose today is to raise issues about globalization as a way of highlighting its importance for the social sciences.

Students of globalization tend to agree that it involves the bridging of temporal, spatial, and cultural distances in new ways, and that these processes tend to be driven by the revolutions in transport technologies and communications and the internationalization of capital (Eichengreen, 2012; Giddens, 2004; Harvey, 2013; Willoughby, 2010). Notions of the world system, post-industrialism, the information society, and the new world order all are reflective of efforts by scholars and political leaders to characterize and to understand contemporary societal and global changes. My own interest in globalization has to do with its implications for the social sciences, and for us, as social scientists, as we go about our everyday business of studying the world(s) of human beings.

What are the implications of globalization for the social sciences? Should we continue conducting most of our research within the confines of the nation-state? Should comparative research be on the rise, and should we modify our concepts in efforts to capture the emergent global reality that is enveloping our worlds? What is the role of the state in the emerging global reality? Will expansion of the Western corporate world result in a global monoculture? How will global research be financed, and what role will the social sciences have in the conduct of global research?

Although we are not able to address these questions today, they should cause us to give serious consideration to the trajectory and relevance of the social sciences in contemporary times. With your permission, I would like to review briefly the rise of globalization and highlight two dimensions: its integration of technology, and increases in social inequality. Then I want to examine some implications of globalization for the social sciences in general. Following that I focus briefly on my own discipline of sociology, the discipline I believe I know best, and its relationship to globalization. I then review the discussion on globalization's inevitability and conclude with a challenge to engage our colleagues in other countries in discussions on topics of common social scientific interests.

Clearly, addressing the relationship between globalization and the social sciences is an immense and daunting challenge which requires the systematic attention of a community of social scientists. My comments are intended as a small contribution to the work of the larger community of scholars whose members are increasingly considering similar questions.

THE RISE OF GLOBALIZATION AND GLOBAL FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP

The management of international capitalism through the regulation of finance capital has been central to the development of contemporary global dynamics (Eichengreen, 2012). From the Bretton Woods agreements in

1944, which led to the establishment of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, to the Trilateral Commission of the 1960s and 1970s, to the World Trade Organization and the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of this decade, the development of global capitalism has been underway in a more or less deliberate manner.

In the 1940s, the principle of fixed exchange was established and the IMF was able to maintain stable currency exchange by extending short-term loans to states with payments imbalances (McMichael, 2006). This process, alongside that of Marshall aid to capital-poor countries, promoted capitalist structures and established the dollar as the international reserve currency. Modernization was promoted through combined forms of international and national regulation. The ideology of modernization held that each developing state would replicate the forms of more advanced capitalist states.

Today, globalization holds sway over modernization, and is a vastly different historical project (McMichael, 2006). According to McMichael, globalization, as a historical project, ". . . seeks to stabilize capitalism through global economic management - this time along the lines of specialization, rather than replication" (2006, p. 31). In other words, instead of advanced nations offering developing nations a vision of their own futures, with the latter modeling themselves on the advanced nations, the countries are now ordered through a global system that promotes national and regional specialization. From a global viewpoint, finance capital manages the "emerging market" regions (Callaghy, 2012).

The rise of an offshore dollar market during the postwar years was attended by the emergence of transnational corporate activity and the rise of global banks. These processes ultimately resulted in a shift from fixed to floating currency rates and with the loan binge of the 1970s to Third World countries following the modernization path, led to a major international debt crisis. The debt management approach used to resolve the debt crisis (at least among advanced capitalist nations) has today become the vehicle through which international monetary relations are reconstructed on a global level (Eichengreen, 2012). Development was first defined as participation in the world market, and then modified to include a comprehensive policy of economic liberalization (McMichael, 2006).

Debtor nations, in order to renew credit, have had and continue to have to meet global economic criteria to guarantee repayment of debts. This had the effect of redefining and restructuring national projects away from social projects in order to meet the austere measures required by global financial managers. The net effect of this has been ". . . mechanisms of the debt regime institutionalized the power and authority of global management within states' very organizations and procedures . . ." (McMichael, 2006). In this context, the World Trade Organization has emerged as a major global governing power in that it has independent jurisdiction in overseeing trade, and ". . . insofar as its rules are binding on all members, . . . it has the potential to overrule state and local powers regulating environment, produce and food safety" (McMichael, 2006, p. 38).

TWO DIMENSIONS OF GLOBALIZATION

There are many important dimensions to globalization, not the least of which include those relating to the environment, the persistence of nation-states, and global democracy and its discontents. I want to highlight two others today: (1) The integration of technology in the operations of transnational corporations and its effects, and (2) increases in social inequality at both national and global levels.

Mega-technology

In the last decade we have heard much in the American mass media about the rise of the "information society". Indeed, today it is common to hear something about the "information age" at every professional conference. Little, however, is said by the media and at national conferences about the role of the "information society" in the global economy, and at least one thinker has referred to globalization as the "Great American Non-Debate" (Tonelson, 2012). Yet, from a global perspective, it doesn't take much to deduce the hypothesis that the relative position of the United States, an advanced capitalist nation, has shifted toward an even more centralized "management role" in a global capitalist economy. In the language of world systems theory, the scenario that I see is one where core nations use information technology to "manage" the extraction of raw resources from developing nations, the manufacture of commodities in semi-core nations and, as much as possible, the dynamics of currency markets on a global level. In this model, the information society is a significant part of the management of global capitalism, especially the management of finance capital.

Jerry Mander (2014), an advertising executive turned social scientist, for instance, argues that the new phase in the rise of the global economy is made possible by breakthroughs in information technologies (i.e., computers):

. . . [T]he new merger of computer, laser, and satellite technologies [have] combined to produce instantaneous worldwide corporate communication, capital transfer and resource control At the same time, developments in high-speed transportation [have] facilitated the rapid movement of resources and commodities worldwide and unified all the world' . . . (p. 15).

Similarly, Gibson-Graham (2006/97), views globalization as "that set of processes by which the world is rapidly being integrated into one economic space via increased international trade, the internationalization of production and financial markets, the internationalization of a commodity culture promoted by an increasingly networked global telecommunications system" (Gibson-Graham, 2006/97, p. 1).

In sum, we're talking about a system of global capitalist management that involves the use of technology to manage the affairs of a global economy (and that will most likely be followed by the globalization of political authority). The results have been not only that all peoples have been brought deeper within the orbit of a global capitalist economy, but Western culture has permanently changed other cultures, causing a concern among some who perceive the increasing ". . . homogenization of cultures within a Western economic paradigm" (Mander, 2014, p. 15), a feature of capitalism long-ago noted by other Marxian scholars. For instance, as English and other European languages become the common languages of capitalism, we see the disappearance of other languages, and with their extinction we see the disappearance of the diversity of human experience (Kane, 2012a).

Economic and Social Inequality

Growing inequality within and across nations is a prominent feature of the world today. One of the most repeated views among many scholars is that over the past three decades, the rich have gotten richer and the poor have gotten poorer (Barnet and Cavanagh, 2004; Burbach, et al., 2012; Heredia, 2012; Kane, 2012b). Studies of the United States indicate that absolute downward mobility increased from the 1970s through the 1980s, and that a larger share of the downwardly mobile is coming from the middle and lower classes (Franklin, 2014/94; Smith, 2004). Data show that the share of the country's aggregate income received by the top 20% of households increased from 40.5% to 46.9% between 1968 and 2004 (Kane, 2012b). Between 1975 and 1990, the richest 1% of the population increased its share of assets from 20% to 36%. A similar pattern is found at the international level.

United Nations data indicate that thirty years ago the richest 20% of the world's population received 30 times more income than the poorest 20%. Today, that gap has increased to 61 times more income (Kane, 2012b). Moreover, per capita incomes decreased between the years 1980 and 2014 for more than a billion of the world's population. During this decade, people in over 100 countries, most in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet countries, have experienced declines in income. Between 1960 and 2014, the gap in per capita income between industrial and developing nations increased from \$5,700 to \$15,400. It is the case, as one writer has pointed out, that ". . . the meek show no signs of inheriting the Earth" (Quoted in Kane, 2012b, p. 116).

Why has inequality increased? Part of the answer, it would seem, lies with the fact that many countries have cut tax rates for the rich and the corporations they operate, and held back spending on social programs. This approach is part of the debt management framework promoted by global financial organizations. Liberal economic policies adopted by many countries over the past 15 years have engendered a highly competitive global environment which has increased inequality. Economic restructuring and corporate re-engineering have displaced millions of workers across the globe, as has the expansion of capitalism itself (Burbach, et al., 2012; Hill, 2013).

Some might say that inequality is merely a necessary byproduct of rapid economic growth, and that growth will eventually benefit everybody - this is the trickle-down theory at the global level, but very little actually trickles down to the working poor and the destitute, not even at the national level and much less at the global level. And, that which does trickle down does so through an array of social programs that today are being rapidly dismantled. In this country we have seen it in the policy-produced homelessness and the social abandonment of the mentally ill of the 1980s, and in the abdication of affirmative action practices and programs and the welfare reform movement of the 1990s. Inequality, however, also is related to social malaise, and at certain points in history, has provoked crises and revolutions. What do we know about the emerging international underclass, and what will be its role in the next century (Callaghy, 2012)? Of what utility are the social sciences in this context? Should they have any relevance?

GLOBALIZATION AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Students of globalization are modifying well-worn concepts and attempting theoretical shifts in order to better understand changes at the global level (Giddens, 2004). Most recognize the vast implications that globalization has for the social sciences in terms of meta-theory, conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and institutional forms.

David Harvey (2013), for instance, asks if today's societal changes are "great enough and synergistic enough when taken together to put us in a qualitatively new era of capitalist development, demanding a radical revision of our theoretical concepts . . . ?" (p. 11). In response to his own question, Harvey has coined several new concepts, including those of spatial-temporal contradictions and uneven spatial-temporal development, to try to capture the emerging realities of globalization. This critical process of conceptual modification can be seen

occurring across many social scientific disciplines.

In psychology, Edward Sampson (1989) notes that " globalization will compel a change in psychology's current theory of the person, thereby setting a challenging task and future agenda for psychology" (p. 914). Global changes today, for Sampson, are of the same magnitude as the historic changes that ushered in the modern epoch. And, just as psychology's theories during the era of modernism ". . . were apt descriptions of that era's framework of understanding", the new self that is emerging within the developing global world system is better understood, according to Sampson, by using a constitutive conception of the person.

During the industrial period, psychology held a conception of the person as a self-contained individual acting autonomously, free to form associations, and set apart from any community. Modernism's theory of the person emphasized voluntarism and prioritized the individual over community. The task today, according to Sampson, is to identify the ". . . essential characteristics of a globalized theory of the person" (p. 917). Rather than dissociating persons from their circumstances of life, Sampson urges us to see persons as ". . . creatures whose very identities are constituted by their social locations" (p. 918). Attachments and commitments to community help define them, and this is important as individuals adapt to life in an increasingly interdependent globalized world system.

In the completely individuated life of industrial society, where persons are seen as devoid of constitutive attachments, ". . . no one bears responsibility for anyone's behavior and so we all pay for each individual's irresponsibilities" (p. 919). Interventions by the community are seen by the individual as improper intrusions. In an interdependent global world, however, "because individuals are constituted by their communities . . . community involvement is not experienced as an improper intrusion into their personal affairs" (p. 919). Although the new theory of the person is not yet fully developed, Sampson is right in recognizing the need to adapt our theories to the global context.

In anthropology, Michael Kearney (2013a) has noted that socio-cultural anthropology is becoming more interdisciplinary and more focused on processes of global change. For Kearney, globalization has consequences for cultural anthropology's theories and methods. For him, globalization entails a reorganization of the bipolar imagery of space and time of [the] modern world view" (p. 549), and a ". . . a shift from two-dimensional Euclidean space . . . to a multidimensional global space with unbounded, often discontinuous and interpenetrating sub-spaces"(p. 549). According to Kearney, "transnational spaces, identities, and communities pose difficult problems for ethnographic representation" (2013a, p. 559). In other words, the emergent social reality is not adequately captured by our standard research tools, which are in need of refinement for research purposes.

In law, Susan Silbey (2012), in her address to the membership of the Law and Society Association, argued that sociological scholarship needs to become more sociological in order to capture how matters of time, space, complexity, volume and content help frame legality and globalization (p. 233). For Silbey, globalization is a form of colonial domination impacting local economies and cultures, and one in which legal actors and legal forms are active participants in promoting transnational corporate interests. In this scenario, globalization has resulted in concentrated power and increased inequality, and diminished the possibilities for justice. Although the liberal ideology of globalization promises a better world for all, once again the invisible hand conceals the domination of peoples and nature across the globe. Sociological scholarship, argues Silbey, needs to study the social organization of law within the process of globalization.

Anthony Giddens (2004), the well-known British sociologist, views globalization as a complex mixture of processes which is giving rise to a "post-traditional social order." It includes not only political economic changes but cultural changes as well. For instance, although economic restructuring and reengineering have produced unpredictability, uncertainty and fragmentation, there also are the unifying effects of shared (emergent universal) values (e.g., justice, the sanctity of human life, sustainable development, etc.) and the common interests and risks that accompany the intensification of global interdependence. Within the post-traditional social order those taken-for-granted practices we call traditions suddenly become objects of public discourses. The result is that social reflexivity is intensified as globalization sweeps individuals into a wider world that disrupts and transforms local lifestyles, and then reintegrates them at a broader level.

According to Giddens, religious fundamentalism expresses the dynamics of increased social reflexivity as it defends traditional practices in the face of emergent social forces. Because fundamentalism rejects the dialogic engagement of ideas in a public space, it has tremendous potential for violence. According to Giddens, fundamentalisms of religion, ethnicity, family and gender are expressions of the "de-traditionalization" of local cultures, including the commitment of citizens to the nation-state. Globalization, then, may be giving rise to increased violence in society through the resurgence of the many forms of fundamentalisms.

The monopolization of violence in society has received much attention in the work of Norbert Elias. In his view, material survival and the control of violence have been the functions of "survival units," those groupings in which people live and have lived since time immemorial (see Mennell, 1990). The size of human survival groups has increased tremendously since pre-historic times, and substantially since the emergence of

nation-states. The economic function and that of monopolizing and controlling violence have remained constant (universal) throughout the growth levels of survival groups. In the view of Elias, "the overall trend in world history [has been] towards bigger survival units incorporating more people and more territory" (Mennell, 1990: 362). During the Cold War, however, the two superpowers were caught in a "double-bind figuration," where the two parties were ". . . bound together in interdependence through the danger they posed[d] each other" (Mennell, 1990, p. 366), and violence was controlled through mutually assured destruction. That balance was disrupted with the demise of the Soviet Union, and almost immediately the United States moved aggressively to stem threats to the rise of the deregulated global economy (e.g., Iraq, Bosnia, North Africa, etc.).

For Elias, violence in the pre-nuclear age resulted in a pattern of re-integration at a higher level (i.e., larger survival units), but now that humanity exists in a world-wide system of tensions, higher levels of integration are impossible (unless we become organized in an interplanetary system), and a nuclear war, in his view, is quite likely to result in a regression to a much lower level of integration (Mennell, 1990). Are we reaching the highest level of societal centralization only to return to decentralized survival units? This would not be surprising given the salience of this pattern in human history.

Globalization and Sociology

Being a sociologist, I want to touch briefly on my own discipline's relationship to globalization. Interestingly, American sociology is today characterized by two features, chaos and insularity, and has given little attention to the massive changes that are taking place at the global level today. Instead, the discipline has been caught up in a decades-long internal discourse centering on epistemological, ontological, and methodological issues (Sztompka, 2009).

As early as 1983, Arthur Stinchcombe, a noted American sociologist, held forth that American sociology had become divorced from the real world (Ritzer, 1990). In addition to the theoretical chaos resulting from philosophy of science debates, the discipline also has been differentiating rapidly, so much that Irving Horowitz, a well-known American sociologist, laments the "decomposition of sociology." For Horowitz, sociology ". . . has become so enmeshed in the politics of advocacy and the ideology of self-righteousness that it is simply unaware of, much less able to respond to, new conditions in the scientific as well as social environment in which it finds itself" (2014, p. 5). The discipline has broken up into a multiplicity of specializations, each going its own way and without much regard for the others (e.g., urban studies, criminal justice, environmental sociology, cultural studies, etc.).

Within the insulated discourse of well-known, mainstream sociological theorists the focus has tended to be on macro-micro linkages (Coleman, 2004; Ritzer, 1990; Scheff, 2012), the resurrection of general theory (Turner, 1990), and the integration of social systems thinking with contemporary quantitative methods and models (Coleman, 2004). In this context, globalization has emerged as a political economic reality without any systematic attention by American sociology, giving merit to Stinchcombe's view that sociology indeed has become divorced from reality. I agree with James Coleman (2004), whose vision for sociology holds that sociological theory should have utility for the ongoing functioning of society. After all, if our work does nothing to ameliorate the human condition, then we might as well remain stuck in internal discourses that focus on formal aspects of theory and keep us disconnected from real world processes, for there are no consequences to our work beyond academic careers.

Is Globalization Inevitable?

The potential for a single global human society has existed ever since humans migrated to every part of the globe. This potential was given great impetus by the discoveries of the 15th century and intensified through the 19th century, only to be interrupted by the world wars of the first half of the 20th century.

Some thinkers hold the view that globalization has been a central feature of capitalism since its beginnings (A. Giddens, 2004; D. Harvey, 2013; M. Kearney, 2013a; P. Sweezy, 2012; and W. Tabb, 2012 for instance). From this view, what is occurring today is the intensification of capitalist dynamics at a global level that is giving rise to "qualitatively new and structurally institutionalized forms of cooperation" among capitalist national [and regional] economies (Willoughby, 2010). This emergent global economy is different from that based on national economies in that the former differentiates states and regions along the lines of specialization, while the latter, based on the principle of replication inherent in the modernization thesis, called upon nation-states to follow a common idealized Western path.

A point of contention that has arisen among students of globalization concerns its inevitability (Gibson-Graham, 2006/97; McMichael, 2006; Tabb, 2012;). Is globalization inevitable? Is it an inexorable process? For advocates like Jerry Mander and Ralph Nader, who openly oppose globalization, the answer to this question is obvious. For economists, like Eichengreen (2012), there is "no turning back the clock" on today's economic trends. Were it not for related questions concerning human agency in times of great social change, this question of global inevitability might not be important altogether. For those who still believe in human agency and in the

possibility of shaping one's human environment, the question of global inevitability poses a daunting challenge.

William Tabb (2012) and John Willoughby (2010) see a duality between global and national levels, and hold the view that globalization has not yet become the primary dynamic in the process. Tabb (2012) recently created a stir among some thinkers by arguing that globalization is not the sweeping set of technological and market forces that leave national level actors and policies without major roles in shaping their destinies. Instead, Tabb argues, nations, not transnational corporations, regulate capital flows, and the deregulation of the past few years resulted from political choices at the level of the nation-state, and not from necessity.

Willoughby (2010) notes that accumulation is always global, which I take to mean that the management of capital already takes place within an evolving interdependent nation-state system. The evolution is in the direction of increasing economic and political integration within an advanced capitalist world international economy. As the world economy becomes more integrated we are challenged to shift our analytic focus toward a global level and ". . . study the construction and reproduction of capitalist nation-state cooperation and the related creation of globalist state institutions . . . and contemporary international political economic conflict" (p. 141).

Teepie (2013), on the other hand, sees the emergence of a global economy much further along than the dualistic models of Tabb and Willoughby. Teepie views an "internationalized capital" with interests that exceed national jurisdictions and span the globe. In this scenario, national markets are merely one element within the global economy, and they are too small to direct the course of its productive capacities. Ultimately, Teepie argues, internationalized capital does not hold national allegiance and actually requires 'freedom' from national controls. Not only does global economic growth spell the end of the industrial nation-state, according to Teepie, it also entails the commodification of everyday life by corporations that "determine broadly the main cultural parameters and . . . define and structure human needs so that they correspond with society as market" (2013, p. 130).

While we may argue about the nature and development of globalization, it is clear that we have entered a new epoch in human society and that there are wide-ranging changes that are taking hold in the realm of everyday life across the entire globe. To be sure, globalization is local in its effects. The reverse, however, may not be true - that is, the local is not necessarily global, although some scholars are hopeful that local cultures can impact the dynamics of globalization (See Hill, 2013; Giri, 2013).

Conceptually, the question of inevitability is bound up with that of capitalism, and may have to be separated from it. For instance, it is inconceivable that humanity's global future is limited to capitalism. While globalization may be here to stay, capitalism may not, although the next societal form will surely be a descendant of capitalism.

CONCLUSION

What does globalization mean for the social sciences? We know that under industrialism the social sciences were greatly impacted by cultural and political influences (Horowitz, 2014). Indeed, in my own discipline, there continue to exist national sociologies that embody the values and ideologies of the nation-state in which they exist. In addition, apart from the issues of meta-theory, theoretical conceptualizations and methodology, there are issues regarding the funding of global research. The cultural lag that exists between the development of a global economy and the development of mechanisms by which to systematically study that economy and its effects remains a significant, if not huge, challenge. Unless professional research organizations and universities begin to support research of global issues, the overwhelming majority of social scientists will find it difficult to conduct systematic research at that level.

Some hope lies with the fact that the Social Science Research Council, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Council of Learned Societies are planning new phases in the organization of international research. The Social Science Research Council, for example, is launching a Collaborative Research Network to advance understanding of development in the context of globalization (Hershberg, 1998). The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, through the leadership of Daniel Bell, has revitalized its Intellectual Correspondence Committee, established during World War II, to promote the exchange of scientific views on the cultural and intellectual issues of other countries.

These organizations, with the support of numerous foundations, have promoted social scientific and humanistic research in the international arena for decades. However, most of that research constitutes "area studies" research and has not emphasized the transnational and global dimensions so prominent in the world today. Moreover, as we seriously consider the globalization of social scientific research, we have to critically reflect upon the broad cultural assumptions that undergird our research ethics and how they might fit with or against those of our colleagues abroad.

Appadurai (2012), in writing about the need for internationalizing social scientific research, raises the following important question: "Are we prepared to move beyond a model for internationalizing social science whose main concern is with improving how others practice our precepts?" (p. 59). Our colleagues in other

nations often see themselves involved in the powerful social changes sweeping their countries. In other words, moral and political concerns are central to their work, whereas here in the United States there is the powerful precept that such concerns remain detached from research (despite the fact that in reality they are not (Herring, 1947)). Such extra-scientific valuations, at least among Western social scientific communities, are seen as illegitimate in the conduct of social scientific research. This is only one difference among scholars in an international context, others remain to be addressed as we become part of a global community of social scientists. Through dialogues and collaboration on research with colleagues from other countries we might hasten the achievement of consilience, by which E. O. Wilson (1998) means the "'jumping together' of knowledge as a result of the linking of facts and fact-based theory across disciplines to create a common framework of explanation" (p. 41). Global consilience, then, is our challenge in the next millennium.

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