
INEQUALITY IN OUR SOCIETY A PARADOX OR CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

The sociological theories of inequality have viewed inequality as a consequence necessary and inevitable or not of social organizational features, and not as a consequence of some person being lazy or unlucky or both while others are talented, lucky, or industrious. All sociological analysis of inequality – functional or conflict, conservative or radical – view the inequality distribution of social rewards and resources as giving rise to, and sustained by, unequal and ranked population groupings. Social classes in Marx’s terminology; castes in traditional Hindu India; estate in medieval Europe; or in more general sociological terms strata. However, Dahrendorf finds that all societies must be characterized by some greater or lesser measure of inequality. But whatever the integrative importance of inequality for societies, inequality even more inevitably generates conflicts and contests for power, with each disadvantaged group striving to impose a system of norms that promises it a better rank, even at the expense of others – therefore, inequality is not desirable. It will be consistent to mention that inequality is universal considering the social inequality as institutionalized differential rewards and flow of resources. From the foregoing argument, we conclude a priori that inequality is inevitable in our society and that we are not really equal. It also has to do with survival of the fittest.

Keywords: Inequality, Paradox, Consequences, Social Stratification

Introduction

“Ditch diggers exchange uncomplicated toil for low wages and little prestige. Physicians, bankers, and professors monopolize access to their positions, create and maintain scarcities of incumbents and could obtain both material benefits and difference politicians trade favours for power for major power and prestige. Wealthy men most often are able to trade wealth for power and powerful men have been known for wealth. This clearly explains the varied position in every society and how they exchange power for wealth, while the poor receive rewards for the job they do from the rich and powerful” (E.G Ugwu Daily Star, Tuesday, February 18, 1986).

In furtherance of the above premise, I have learned from experience and research that nothing bores students or scholars as being asked to define their terms systematically before discussing

some exiting issue. They want to get on with it, without wasting time on pretty verbal distinctions.

Much of our politics is conducted in the same spirit. We are for “equality” or “the environment” or “against partied in South Africa and there is no time wasted on definitions and other Mickey, Mouse Stuff”. This attitude may be all right for those for whom political crusade is a matter of personal excitement, like rooting for your favorite team and jeering the opposition. But for those who are serious about the consequences of public policy, nothing can be built without a solid foundation.

“Equality is one of the great undefined terms underlying, much current controversy and antagonism. This one confused word might even become the rock on which our civil nation is wrecked. It is worth defining (Acker, 2009).

Analysis of Concepts

Equality is such an easily understood concept. In mathematics that we may not realize it is a bottomless pit of complexities anywhere else. That is because in Mathematics we have eliminated the concreteness and complexities of real things. When we say that two plus two equals four, we either don't say two what or we say the same for each member. But if we said that two apples plus two apples equal four oranges, we would be in trouble.

SENSE: Yet that is what we are saying in our political reasoning. And we better may get twice as many hits as another.

In recent years we have increasingly heard it argued that if outcomes are unequal, then the rules must have been applied equally. It would destroy my last illusion to discover that Austin Okocha or Kanu Nwankwo didn't really play soccer any better than anybody else, but that the referee and sports writers just conspired to make it look that way. Pending the uncovering of intricate plots of this magnitude, we must accept the fact that performances are unequal in difference aspect of life. And there is no way to add up these apples, oranges, and grapes to get one sum total of fruit (Lamont and Michèle, 2000).

Anyone with the slightest familiarity with history knows that rules have often been applied very unequally to difference groups (A few are ignorant or misguided enough to think that this is a peculiarity of Nigeria Society). The problem is not in seeing that unequal rules can lead to unequal outcomes. The problem is in trying to reason backward from unequal rules as the sole or main cause (Barbusse and Dominique, 2004).

There are innumerable places around the world where those who have been in trouble for such reasoning. Nothing is more concrete or complex than a human being. Chris Okotie could not play centre field like Austin Okocha never tried to write a symphony. In what sense are they equal – or unequal. The common mathematical symbol for of discrimination or application for it. Inequality points to the smaller quality and in whose eyes – when such completely different things are involved?

When women have children and men don't how can be either equal or unequal? Our passionate desire to reduce things to the simplicity of abstract concepts does not mean that it can be done. Those who want to cheer their team and boo the visitors may like to think that the issue is equality versus inequality. But the real issue is whether or not we are going to talk sense. Those who believe in inequality have the same confusion as those who believe in inequality. The French make better Champagne to cameras to thousand other things and come up with a grand total showing who is “superior”.

When we speak of “equal justice under law” we simply mean applying the same rules to everybody. That has nothing whatsoever to do with whether everyone performs equally. A good umpire calls balls and strikes by the same rules for everyone, but one is the victims of unequal rules have nevertheless vastly out-performed those who were favoured. Almost nowhere in South East Asia have the Chinese minority had equal rights with the native peoples, but the average Chinese income in these counties has almost invariably been much higher than that of the general population. A very similar story could be told from the history of the Jews in many countries of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. To a greater or less extent, this has also been the history of the Italians in Argentina, the Armenians in Turkey, and the Japanese in America and so on and so on (Lareau, 2003).

It is clear that in this frame work and formulation social inequality consists of a patterning or institutionalization of differential rewards, the flow of rewards and resources or exchange of resources. Ditch diggers exchange uncomplicated toil for low wages and little prestige. Physicians, bankers, and professors monopolize access to their positions, and are able to obtain both material benefits and difference, politicians trade favours for power. Important, politicians trade minor power and powerful men have to be known for wealth. This clearly explains the varied position in every society and how they exchange for wealth. While the poor receive rewards for the job they do for the rich and the powerful (Lareau, 2003).

What I am trying to say is that social interaction consists the flow of social reward and exchange of social resources among the roles and positions, and among the groupings and sub-systems of rules and positions, in the social structure. In other words:- “the process by which resources and rewards are continually converted into general media of exchange, and vice versa, constitute the very fabric of social life”.

The dynamics and structure of distributive systems in societies include the following: men obliged to choose, men choose their own interest over those of other, the objective of man's striving is in short supply', many are unable to produce or obtain enough in an absolute sense, and in any case man has appetite for goods and services. Societal interests and goals are the interests and goal of whatever groups or classes are dominant in the society, and they include, typically, maintaining the political status quo – that is, the dominate group – and maximizing production and the resources on which production depends (Esping-Andersen, 1999).

In the simplest term, the least differentiated and technologically most primitive societies goods and services are distributed on the basis of need.

Above and beyond individual satisfactions or the deprivations associated with them patterns of inequality have bearing on virtually all facts of social relations in every society. For I unequal social groups, unequal social categories, and unequal population aggregates within a society. These, in turn, are characterized by a distinct pattern of behavior, values, and ideologies, and intergroup relations throughout the world (Grusky and Sørensen, 1998).

Although inequality is regarded as a necessity or inequality inevitability for these historically and empirically it has been the case that unequal persons have formed unequal social groups. Not only have such groups been unequal in that their members enjoy greater or lesser power respectively or greater or lesser prestige respectively, but the groups themselves have ranked in their societies; they have been characterized by differential wealth, power or prestige and indeed, membership itself in such groups has accorded individuals greater or lesser wealth, power or prestige.

The above-mentioned points explain that inequality is universal and also that it is a necessity, inevitable and a sin qua none of the socialites. Inequality is never desirable because inequality is a major source of conflicts, and it is sustained by coercion and subterfuge. If inequality is assumed to be deprived of the power and authority the next thing we should expect in any society is confusion and conflict. In a bid for the unequal to improve their condition through hard work – they will also look on the elite with an invidious eye – the next thing in trouble.

Conclusion/Analysis of Social Inequality: Villians

It would be very convenient if we could infer discriminatory rules whenever we found unequal outcomes. But life does not always accommodate itself to our conveniences.

Those who determined to find villains but cannot find evidence of its resort to “Society” as the cause of all our troubles. What do they mean by “Society” or “environment”? They act as if these terms were self-evident. But environment and society are just new confused terms introduced to save the old confused term, equality (Lenski, 2001).

The Nigerian environment or society cannot explain historical behaviour or patterns found among Cameroonians in Ghana, Australians, Ireland and elsewhere around the world. These patterns may be explained in the history of Cameroonian Society. But if the words “environment” or society refer to things that may go back a thousand years, we are no longer talking about either the causal or the moral responsibility of Nigerian society. If historic causes include such things as the peculiar geography of Africa or of Southern Italy, then we are no longer, talking about human responsibility (Lenski, 2001).

This does mean that there are very serious social problems (there is no Pareto-optimality in the distribution of incomes and resources) in our society. However, serious attention will be required to solve them-beginning with defining our terms. We cannot infer discriminatory rules whenever we find unequal outcomes.

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This attitude may be all right for those whom political crusade is a matter of personal excitement, like rooting for your favourite team and jeering the opposition. But for those who are serious about the consequences of public policy, nothing can be built without a solid foundation (Lenski, 2001).

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