

Theory of gender
inequality spanning
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From the vantage of a modern, Western, Liberal Democracy like the United States, the existence of gender inequality is hard to dispute. In March 2010, while engaging in an escalating war in Afghanistan, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in her closing remarks to the UN echoed her speech of fifteen years ago at the World Conference on Women in Beijing stating, “ Women’s Progress is human progress” (Altaffer, 2010).

In 2005 a Gallup Poll of U. S. households found that “ gender inequality” was a top concern for American women when asked an open ended question on the, broadly named, “ Muslim World” (Mogahed, 2008). But contrary to the perception of American citizens, women’s rights in the Muslim World vary greatly.

From a gender education gap of nearly 0 in Iran (incidentally the same as the U. S.’s gender gap in higher education) to women in Pakistan needing a 73% increase in women’s education to equal that of men, there is a vast range of both gender equality and the perceptions of gender equality in the Muslim World (Mogahed, 2008, p. 1).[1]

Overall Muslim women do not consider gender inequality as a main problem facing their societies. Less than 2% of women polled in 2005 in Morocco and Egypt mentioned gender inequality as a concern, and only 5% of Saudi women cited it. In Lebanon and Turkey, arguably the most Western of the Middle Eastern countries, only 9% and 11% of women surveyed, respectively, expressed women’s inequality as a top 5 problem (Mogahed, 2008, p. 3).

Clearly there is a disconnect with how Muslim women are viewed from the West, in particular America, and how they view their own gender equality issues. Muslim women have not, as the American viewer would have it, been conditioned to accept a second class status. Majorities of women in almost all of the over 35 countries surveyed in a 2008 Gallup poll say that women deserve the same legal rights as men, the ability to vote free of familial influence, to work at any job they are qualified for and to serve in all levels of government (Esposito, 2008, Moghaed 2008).

However the percent of women pursuing higher educations, a key indicator (Apodaca, 1998; UN, 2010; King and Samar, 2002) in women's inequality and the overall social and economic status of a country[2], in the Muslim Countries varies greatly. In Iran 52% of women pursue higher education while only 13% do in Pakistan (Mogahed, 2008, p. 1). While in neighboring Afghanistan female literacy rate is at only 29% and only 33% of females, as a percentage of males, enrolled, and attended secondary school from 2003-2008 (UNICEF, Afghanistan, para. 8).

Discussions of women's rights in the United States when referring to the Middle East or the Muslim World[3]clearly do not distinguish between various countries and situations (Mogahed, 2008, p. 1) although polls show that Americans are perfectly able to distinguish between Middle Eastern countries, when prompted, on issues of national security[4](Rasmusse, 2009). Clearly this blanket view, by Americans, of women's rights in the Muslim World leads to issues with strategies to improve gender equality.

But beyond America's un-nuanced perceptions of gender inequality in the Muslim World and the damage this could cause to both national security priorities and efforts to improve gender equality, there is the fundamental question: why are there different levels of gender equality, between Muslim nations, when majorities in Muslim countries believe women should enjoy the same fundamental rights as men (Mogahed, 2008, p. 1)?

In order to answer this question and larger social questions this paper will look mainly at Afghanistan, a country that is particularly pertinent not only because the United States is currently involved in an escalating conflict, but because Afghanistan has one of the lowest grades in the world on the Gender Development Index[5] at . 310 (Morgan, 2008, para. 8). It will assess Afghanistan, in comparison to another case study, on gender inequality in relation to the theory of tribalization[6]. This paper will also consider the interaction between modern States and Tribes as a primary causal mechanism in the process of tribalization and make the connection, seemingly for the first time, that tribalization causes gender inequality.

These theories, and the above question, have larger social relevance as well. They seek to answer the question: what has happened along the evolution of human society to encourage the repression of women in tribal societies? This leads to larger implications for the understanding of this progression and applying it to Western civil societies' attempts to modernize the rest of the "tribal" world. Ideally understanding why tribal societies repress women will result in more effective strategies to cure gender inequality.

A few main theories have dominated the thinking on gender inequality and success and failures in improving gender equality, including that of feminist-socialism (Calasanti and Bailey, 1991), functionalist theory (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2009), conflict theory (New World Encyclopedia; Machiavelli; Hobbes) and symbolic interactionist theory (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2008; Blumer, 1986)

Feminist-socialist theory posits that gender inequality stems from the interaction of patriarchy and capitalism and is especially relevant to the division of labor (Calasanti and Bailey, 1991). The feminist-socialist theory loses a degree of nuance in that the interaction of patriarchy and capitalism can be said to occur in the United States even today; but whereby the levels of gender inequality are less than in most of the rest of the world it is unable to register the changes that occur to improve gender equality after the meeting of these two conditional factors, and is unable to explain why they succeed where they do and fail where they do.

Functionalist theory states that men are inherently more suited to functional or goal oriented tasks, while women are more suited to emotionally oriented tasks and when women 'leave the house' they are reducing their functional capacity to the detriment of society (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2009). It has been proven that women are perfectly capable of performing most, if not all of the jobs that men can in the modern workforce (or else modern western societies with equality of the workforce would have empirically collapsed under the weight of functionalist theory). Gender equality in the workforce has not caused a loss of overall functionality of society, merely a more even distribution of traditional tasks.

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Conflict theory argues for humanity existing in an inherent state of conflict which feeds into a pyramid structure of society where the elites survive on the backs of the masses, in a necessary structure to prevent a descent into anarchy (the ultimate state of constant conflict to which we as humanity, were born into). Essentially conflict theory seeks to explain how those in power stay in power. It has four main assumptions: competition is the inherent state of humanity; inequalities in power are essential to the survival of all social structures; change occurs through conflict not through evolution; and war unifies societies. In the framework of conflict theory gender inequality exists because women are inherently weaker and thus less able to defend them in the state of conflict. Therefore they have to make compromises putting them in a position with less power in order to survive. Once they are in a position of being subordinate to someone with more power then they are simply incorporated into the conflict theory pyramid and forever inherently unequal as a matter of self preservation (New World Encyclopedia; Machiavelli; Hobbes). Beyond the issues this author takes with the assumptions this theory is built, namely the state of conflict that is inherent to humanity, if the assumptions are taken at face value then conflict theory holds. But since the argument this paper will make is based on the evolution of social interaction to form covenants from the smallest units of society to the State, then the fact that these early covenants were egalitarian rules out conflict theory as a legitimate explanation for gender inequality.

Lastly symbolic interactions theory proposes that humans must cooperate to survive and that the human mind uses symbols to designate objects and

people and then selects courses of action appropriate to this symbolic definition. Humans have a self reflexive evaluation of self while a biased symbolically based view of others. So once a gender becomes known for a certain role in society, the role become codified, magnified and eventually reflexively repeated into perpetuity in a self defining circle that is incorporated into the culture. It takes the functional aspect of femininity, giving birth, and transforms it into a socially restrictive definition through repetition (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2008; Blumer, 1986). This theory is the closest to that of tribalization that this paper proposes; but symbolic interaction is only a tool by which tribalization occurs and not the overall picture as this paper will show.

The first section of this paper will look at the evolution of human society as a sociological justification for the theory of tribalization as the primary cause of gender inequality. It will compare the two case studies of tribal Afghanistan and that of tribal Mormons in America to assess the global implications of this theory clear of the restrictions of individual cultures. The second section will look at the data available on these two case studies in modern time to asses the validity of the State and Tribe interaction as the causal component of the tribalization theory.

If the theory of tribalization holds true this paper will show that the conflict between the purest form of social grouping, the Tribe, and the evolving forms of society, the State created a psychological group effect (with similar processes to those shown in the theory of symbolic interaction) called tribalization, which resulted in a shift from what was essentially an egalitarian society to a gender repressive society.

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Theory

Tribalization, as used by this paper, is a combination of sociological developmental theories and the psychological effects of group consciousness that is brought out by the contact between the State and the Tribe. By looking at the evolution from early human groupings to the modern State this paper defines the Tribe and the State for the purpose of later examining why they are incompatible and in conflict in modern life. The psychological process of group consciousness radicalization that occurs during the conflict of the Tribe and the State is Tribalization. This paper argues that Tribalization is the causal factor in gender inequality in the societies the theory applies to.

The stages of social development, although varying from author to author are generally separated into four stages (although the stages are inherently flawed because of imperfections in demarcation as well as the lack of homogeneity among the groupings) (Diamond, 1999).

The first of these stage is the earliest of human grouping comprised of anywhere from five to eight people who, as a rule, are extended relatives. Typically they are dubbed Bands (Diamond, 1999; Sebastian, 1 as cited in Haviland, 2002, p. 326-328). Today examples of such autonomous bands can be found living mostly in New Guinea and Amazonia. Within the State apparatus Bands include African Pygmies, South African Hunter-Gatherers, better known as Bushmen, Aboriginal Australians, Eskimos and Native Americans. As Jared Diamond (1999) argues in his book *Guns, Germs and Steel*, it is probable, " that all humans lived in bands until at least 40, 000 years ago, and most still did as recently as 11, 000 years ago" (p. 268).
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Bands are a social grouping inherited from gorillas and chimps that exist where there are not enough dense local resources to permit many people to live together. Typically there is no single base of residence resulting from the fact they do not have the technology or numbers to artificially create a resource rich area. They are constantly on the move in order to survive. One of the more distinctive attributes of a Band, when contrasted with the State, is the lack of an institutional structure. The extended family architecture as well as the small numbers make the type of higher organization seen in the State unnecessary and even detrimental to inner group peace. This paucity of a formal framework also manifests itself in the lack of Band specialization of craft, trade or occupation beyond those decided by ability (Diamond, 1999, Sebastian, 1 as cited in Haviland, 2002, p. 328-331).

Labeled the original egalitarian society by many social theorists, Bands do not contain the formal social stratification of leadership or a monopoly of decision making power. Prestige is gained through ability and not inherited. In short Bands are egalitarian because all members start on an equal footing and have the opportunity to gain in prestige and power through deeds and not the accident of their birth. At the most basic unit of social organization there is almost a sum zero in gender inequality (Diamond, 1999; Frederiksen, 2010; Engels, 1876). In terms of gender equality models the Band is the theoretical ideal that can never be recreated.

The next tier up the social evolutionary ladder is the Tribe. In historical terms tribes began to emerge around 13, 000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent.

[7]As a rule a Tribe consists of one hundred to two hundred members that have moved beyond the extended family structure of the Band to a slightly
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more formalized kin, or clan based relationship. Generally they have a settled location and more than one formally recognized kin group. This means land belongs to particular clans and not to the whole tribe (Diamond, 1999; Sebastian, 1 as cited in Haviland, 2002, p. 328-331; Engels, 1876).

. Famous tribal examples in myth and history include the Tribes of Israel, as well as the Tribe Muhammad was raised, and that of his grandfather Abd al-Muttalib of the Banu Hashim clan of the Qurysh tribe (one of the larger tribes surrounding Mecca) (Armstrong, 2001; Rogerson, 2003).

In order to exist tribes need the ability to produce enough food for their members. Muhammad's tribe, the Bedouin Qurysh, did this through trading with the nearby cities of Mecca and Medina as well as through the raising of sheep (Armstrong, 2001). Other tribes learned to use agricultural technology or settled in resource rich areas. The development from Band style wandering is only possible because of specialization, which in the Tribe specialization is still slight. Within the classification of Tribe there is also a trend towards more variation (Diamond, 1999, p. 260-270; Sebastian, 1 as cited in Haviland, 2002, p. 328-331; Bodley, 2008, p. 13-20; Engels, 1876). The Qurysh tribe migrated in order to sustain themselves but they also learned trade (Armstrong, 2001), while other tribes became more agriculturally proficient (Diamond, 1999).

Early Tribes were egalitarian to an extent. Tribes usually have a leadership position or council which is based on ability and not inherited, although the position of leader is codified (Diamond, 1999 p. 265-279). The modern Tribes of this paper's case studies most closely resemble ancient Tribes with a "big

man” at the head. Relevant to the examination of gender inequality in these societies it is important to note that women were not inherently at a disadvantage or repressed.[8]

In the example of Muhammad’s Tribe, the Quraysh are said to have worshipped a Goddess before the Revelation of the Qu’ran, and much of early Bedouin poetry is centered on Goddess figures using the allegory of a woman’s love to describe other aspects of desert life. Muhammad’s first wife, Kahdijah bint Khuwaylid, was herself a prosperous merchant many years older than Muhammad and independent in her own right (Armstrong, 2001; Rogerson, 2003).

Defining the Tribe coherently from a historical basis will later help in the comparison to the State in this paper’s case studies of Tribal Afghanistan and Tribal Mormonism in the United States.

Around 5, 000 BC in the Fertile Crescent Chiefdoms the next stage of social development between Tribes and States began to emerge. Chiefdoms consisted of several thousand to several tens of thousands of people who were most notably not related. As of 1492 AD Chiefdoms were still in existence in areas not yet under State control, such as the Eastern United States, South and Central America and Sub-Saharan Africa (Diamond, 1999).

The massive gap in size between the populations of a Tribe and a Chiefdom caused a problem where strangers fell under the same authority. The solution was a Chief who exercises a monopoly on authority, the right to use force and information. Additionally the office of the Chief becomes hereditary in most cases. To accommodate the larger population needs food had to be <https://assignbuster.com/theory-of-gender-inequality-spanning-cultures-sociology-essay/>

produced on a much larger scale and extreme specialization occurred.

Finally Chiefdoms are the stage of social development where Religion became codified (Diamond, 1999; Sebastian, 1 as cited in Haviland, 2002, p. 333-335).[9]

About 2,000 years after Chiefdoms arose in Mesopotamia States began to appear. From around 3,000 BC until just over 1,000 years ago in West Africa, States evolved from Chiefdoms to become the largest and most modern form of society (Diamond, 1999; Sebastian, 1 as cited in Haviland, 2002, p. 335-337; Bodley, 2000).

States evolved from Chiefdoms, but possessed far greater populations. Information was confined to an elite few and control was centralized and monopolized. Extreme economic specialization became the norm and multi-layered bureaucracy arose as a necessity in order to maintain control over a population. Fundamentally the State was different from all earlier forms of society in that it was organized on political and territorial lines instead of purely kinship lines (Diamond, 1999; Bodley, 2000; Engels, 1876; Hobbes, 1651).[10] In terms of gender inequality the early State saw some of the largest gaps between the social status' of men and women. In the history of the United States it took one hundred and forty four years for women to get the vote. In 1776 Abigail Adams famously pleaded in her letters to John Adams, " I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power in the hands of Husbands (Adams, 1776). Today women are still paid on average seventy seven cents to every dollar that men earn (National

Women's Law Center). Yet through the mechanisms of Democracy, only <https://assignbuster.com/theory-of-gender-inequality-spanning-cultures-sociology-essay/>

possible through the State, women have earned the same rights as men, while the originally egalitarian Tribes have manifested themselves in modern times as some of the most unequal societies in the world.

The Tribe and the State are polar opposites in terms of human organizational structures. It then follows logically that conflict would arise between these two frameworks (Griffen, Ferguson, & Whitehead, 1993; Tajfel, 1982; Hyman, 2002).

In general there are two theories on how and why Tribes are formed when they come in contact with a State. The first is that warfare is the primary force of tribal formation. The argument goes that modern Tribes are a reaction of State intervention, particularly Colonial State intervention, into societies that would have naturally evolved from Band to State of their own volition with far fewer tribal outliers (Griffen, Ferguson, & Whitehead, 1993).

In the book *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare*, Neil L. Whitehead (1993) writes, "that the tribal organization is itself only a particular response to European state contact, with the corollary that this "tribalization" involves the degradation of preexisting political formations, be they chieftaincies or ethnic groups (Gonzalez, 1983; Helms; 1976; Wolf; 1982)" (Anderson, 1974; Griffen et al, 1993, p. 128; Todd, 1975).

The second theory argues that intensifying contact between various autonomous kin groups is the primary force for tribal formation. This sense of tribal formation is more grounded evolutionarily and is a realistic look at most of the progress of society. But the tribes that experience Tribalization are those that form from within the State in resistance to it; or those that are <https://assignbuster.com/theory-of-gender-inequality-spanning-cultures-sociology-essay/>

already in existence and are reinforced by outside State meddling. So for the purposed of this paper the theory of conflict in Tribal formation is more accurate. It is important to keep in mind that not all tribes are formed through the assumption of conflict that this paper assumes, nor that all tribes are unable to reconcile their tribal identity to the with the State (Griffen et al, 1993)

Whitehead (1993) argues that:

ethnic formations that lie outside state control at a given point in time are either “tribalized” or destroyed in periods of state formation and expansion. No other outcome is possible if the state itself is to survive, since the state is a political formation under which authority must proceed from a uniform source. In this sense tribal and state organizations can be treated as historically symbiotic social forms, culturally antagonistic yet each relying on the presence of the other to become a fully viable mode of human social organization. Anecdotally one might note that the threat of the “savages” on the borders of states has often had an important function in controlling population internal to the state, as in the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbe’s Leviathan, while in the case of the Roman empire the German tribes actually became integral to it’s military efficiency. (Whitehead, 1993, p. 129-30, italics added by me).

Tribalization, as Whitehead argues it, occurs as the State expands or forms, but this paper argues that it can also come from within an already formed State as the process of psychological tribalization occurs.

Psychologically a society defines itself by two broad criterion: internal and external. (The relative importance individual groups place on both definitions are particular to each.) Internal criteria consists of a cognitive, evaluative and emotional aspect. Cognitively members must have a sense of self awareness in group ownership. Essentially the individual must be aware that (s)he belongs to a group. Once the member is aware that (s)he belongs then (s)he evaluates this membership and places some sort of value connotations on participating. Finally the individual member associates an emotional utility to belonging. The crucial process of identifying with a group, evaluating critically that membership and finally placing an emotional value on belonging is bolstered by the external processes labeling them as part of this group. An outside consensus that the group exists is critical to truly psychologically belong to a coterie (Tajfel, 1982; Griffen et al 1993).

The formation of group identity has often been compared to the cognitive process of stereotyping (Bullock, & Stallybrass, 1999; Hogg, & Abrams, 2001; Rothbart, Fulero, Jensen, Howard, & Birrell, 1978; Tajefel, 1957; Tajefel, 1981; Tajefel, 1982; Taylor, & Aboud, 1973; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978). Oliver Stallybrass, co-editor of *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* (1977) defined the social significance of stereotyping as: an over-simplified mental image of (usually) some category of person, institution or event which is shared, in essential features, by large numbers of people. The categories may be broad (Jews, gentiles, white men, black men) or narrow (women's libbers, Daughters of the American Revolution)... Stereotypes are commonly, but not necessarily, accompanied by prejudice, i.

e., by a favourable or unfavourable predisposition towards any member of the category in question. (p. 601, italics mine)

Members of a group stereotype not only their adversaries or the outside world, but also themselves in the opposition. Members of both Tribes and States, and indeed of any type of social group, form an identity for themselves that they are then able to tie to their membership. That membership psychologically oversimplifies themselves and the opposition in a process similar to that of stereotyping, which reinforces their group membership (Bullock, & Stallybrass, 1999; Hogg, & Abrams, 2001; Rothbart et al, 1978; Tajfel, 1957; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel, 1982; Taylor, & Aboud, 1973; Taylor et al, 1978).[11]

As out-group and in-group stereotyping occur a natural extension of this process is for the in-group to not only stereotype themselves as a group but also to stereotype internal divisions. This paper has already shown that group membership has an inherent process cognitively similar to that of stereotyping. Out of this mindset women began to be defined by traditional and thus subservient roles. Additionally the Tribe has an incentive to portray the women of the out-group in a negative light (as they are portraying everything of the out-group in a negative light in order to codify their own in-group.) In a modern culture of gender equality in the contemporary State apparatus the Tribe takes the opposite view point and the process of justifying the repression of women begins.

There are two schools of thought in the thought process regarding how out-group members are stereotyped, and stereotype; based on individuals non-

typical or typical to the group. The first supported by the works of Rothbart et al (1978) in their article titled From Individual to Group Impressions: Availability Heuristics in Stereotype Formation holds that,

Under high memory loads the assumed typicality of certain distinctive instances tend to be retrospectively overestimated. This is the case in the association of “ extreme” individuals, such as would be one or a few members of a social minority in groups of mixed composition, with some forms of “ unusual” behavior which would tend to be unfavorable. (as cited in Tajfel, 1982, p. 3)

In other words out-group members can identify groups negatively by the actions of a few individuals thus reinforcing in-group stereotyping and membership.

The second school of thought holds that groups can only be stereotyped (by the out-group) by the actions of their individual members (thus reinforcing the process of group psychology) if those individual members are typical of the group. In the book, Intergroup Relations: Essential Readings authors Michale A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams make this case based on works by Johnston and Hewstone (1992) that, “ Experimental evidence has shown that disconfirming attributes will become associated with a group stereotype only if they belong to an individual who is perceived as typical” (as cited in Hogg & Abrams, 2001, p. 393). Essentially in cases of realistic contact[12]between in and out-group members, typical members of both groups are associated with negative attributes to the detriment of their interaction.

In both of these arguments it is clear that psychological group formation occurs because of how individuals are perceived in relation to their group interacting with other societal formations. Where there is contact with an outside, opposing or different group there tends to be the development of a more positive self view and a more negative view of other groups. The stereotyping goes both ways and is reinforced by contact with individuals of the group, whether typical or atypical[13](Hogg & Abrams, 2001; Rothbart et al, 1978; Tajfel, 1982, p. 7).

Jaspars and Warnaen (1982) found through a study in Indonesia that discrimination was more marked in the capital of Jakarta than it was in the provinces because of a salience of group membership in addition to a more mixed environment (as cited in Tajfel, 1982, p. 8-9)

But what accounts for the normalization or what would seem to be Tribes interacting with the State, such as immigrant groups integrating? When there is an inequality of status perception and the reality of status among group interaction there is sometimes a phenomenon of “defection” especially in groups that are integrating into the State environment (which later this paper will show is an alternative to Tribalization.) In separate studies on Asian and West Indian children in Britain in the 1980s Mullin (1980) as well as Davey and Norburn (1980) both showed that Asian and Indian children expressed an out-group preference in response to perceived status gains (as cited in Tajfel, 1982, p. 11).. Although this would seem to contradict the theory of group psychology the differences between the rate of “defection” between the two different ethnic groups tell a different story.

Although both showed a preference for the out-group in response to a low actual status in contrast to a high in-group perceived status, the West Indian children were showing a much higher rate of defection than the Asian children. This can be attributed to the fact that the Asians in Britain has a stronger social community, preserving more of their language, history, traditions and religion (Tajfel, 1982, p. 11). Essentially the strength of the Asian in-group in attempting to preserve their group identity mimics more accurately the group behavior of those societies at risk of Tribalization. Their higher group salience and lower rate of defection shows the group psychology tendency to prefer in-group rather than out-group membership no matter what the status gains are.

Conflicts over status, or other scarce resources often precipitates a greater psychological group effect. Scarce resources can refer to land, or food in ancient or less economically developed situations or non material resources of rank, status and prestige. When the norms of the social situation encourage and legitimize this competition there is more of a tendency to express in-group preference (Tajfel, 1982). When there is already a basis for competition over the scarce resources of status and physical gains between the in-group and the out-group, there is more incentive for in-group members, already stereotyping “ their women” as the opposite to modern State women, to decrease the status of women in order to eliminate some of the competition for limited resources such as status and jobs.

The process of group psychology in the setting of conflict between the State and the Tribe is the basis on which Tribalization theory is built.