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<b>THEME ARTICLES. Applied Anthropologists and Human Rights: Roles and Responsibilities, Introduction, Larry Van Horn and Peter Van Arsdale, Guest Editors.....</b>	<b>1</b>
The Future of Human Rights: Theoretical and Methodological Problems, Theodore Downing.....	1
Defining Rights and Responsibilities: Theoretical and Applied Implications, Lenora Bohren, Edward Knop and Sheila Knop.....	7
The Religious Basis for the Violation of Human Rights in Colonial America: The Salem Witch Trials, Joan C. Ludeke.....	13
Human Rights Examined: The Homosexual Minority in the AAA, Paul Kutsche..	20
Sexism in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Male-to Female Transsexuals: Human Rights Considerations, Anne Bolin.....	23
Human Rights Examined: American Samsara and the Ideology of the Family, Jimmie John.....	26
The Drugging of the Third World: A Human Rights Issue, Peter Morley and Linda Strand.....	30
Human Rights Protected: Counseling Children in Crisis Through Safehouse, C. J. Johnson.....	35
Action Against Assault: A Sexual Assault Prevention Program for Adolescents, Debra Sandau.....	38
<b>FIELDWORK. Case Studies in the Gore and Glory of Field Research, Chester Ballard and James Jordan.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>COMMENTS. Tales From Chaos, Part III, Susan Scott-Stevens.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>PUBLICATIONS: Reviews and Notes, Larry Van Horn, Editor</b>	
Applied Anthropology by Erve Chambers, Reviewed by Hugh S. Plunkett.....	46
Changing Economic Roles for Miamac Men and Women by Ellice B. Gonzalez, Reviewed by Larry Van Horn.....	47
Ranching, Mining and the Human Impact of Natural Resource Development by Ray Gold, Reviewed by Dale Blahna.....	48
<b>HPSfAA AFFAIRS. Meeting Notices, Business Minutes and Miscellaneous Association Notes.....</b>	<b>50ff</b>
<b>NEWS NOTES. Miscellaneous.....</b>	<b>54ff</b>

## THIS ISSUE

The articles in this HPAA issue, and a subsequent one, take the place of a separate Proceedings volume for the 1984 annual meetings of the Society. Proceedings editors Larry Van Horn and Peter Van Arsdale serve as guest editors for the issue. The theme of the meeting, and this issue, is human rights. Later we will publish a second set of papers from the meeting which deal with topics less directly related to this theme. We thank Larry and Peter for the effort they have invested in obtaining and editing these papers. Other contents of this issue include a field research commentary by Ballard and Jordan that continues the human rights theme in that context, and another installment of Susan Scott-Stevens' "Tales from Chaos". Book editor Larry Van Horn's section contains reviews of recent books by Erve Chambers, Ellice Gonzales and Ray Gold plus notice of several other publications of presumed interest. Importantly, the remainder of the issue contains preliminary information on the upcoming HPSfAA meetings, a summary of our recent Society activities, and assorted notes of professional interest.

# Articles

## APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Introduction

Presentations made at the Society's meetings in February, 1984 illustrate the range of insights and concerns applied social scientists and clinicians have in the area of human rights and responsibilities. The presentations also indicate that additional attention is due matters that span institutional justice in and between nations, to challenges in family functioning and personal sexual relations. While a case can be made that anthropologists, in a sense, have been involved in the study of human rights and responsibilities for decades, in another sense the Denver meetings demonstrated that sustained professional involvement in such issues is a relatively recent phenomenon.

This is particularly apparent in the roles anthropologists have been assuming in support of the rights of youth, women and persons with non-traditional sexual preferences. In the following papers. Catherine Johnson discusses social scientists' roles and responsibilities in a "Safehouse" counseling program for children in crisis; Debra Sandau examines professional involvement in a sexual assault prevention program for adolescents; Jimmy John explores dimensions of differential earnings of women and others for their applied implications; Ann Bolin considers practical implications of dilemmas faced by transsexuals from a professional stance; and Paul Kutsche gives

complementary consideration to some of the professional challenges that confront homosexual anthropologists.

Active professional involvement in issues of human rights is also apparent in papers addressing a more "macro" context. Using an historical approach, Theodore Downing illustrates various dimensions of anthropologists' present and potential role responsibilities in his keynote address on sociopolitical considerations of applied work, both international and domestic. In like vein, Peter Morley and Linda Strand address implications of abuses and professional responsibilities in the context of the pharmaceutical industry's "exploitation of sickness for profit." Lenora Bohren, Ed Knop and Sheila Knop focus on reciprocal rights and responsibilities of various parties at the community level in their examination of data from an energy development case. Joan Ludeke also considers the community context in her assessment of lay and leadership role relations gone awry in the historic case of the Salem witch trials.

In various contexts, then, it is apparent that we are becoming more sensitive to the human rights challenges of a broader base of constituents from both their practical perspectives and our analytic ones. Further, we seem increasingly inclined to become involved in their causes with combined professional insight and personal concern. In so doing, we honor and extend our role responsibilities in pursuit of greater human justice and rights.

Larry Van Horn and  
Peter Van Arsdale,  
Proceedings Editors

## THE FUTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS FOR ANTHROPOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

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Can we discover an anthropological approach to the study of and struggle for human rights? This question repeatedly needs asking when anthropologists become entangled in practical issues such as identifying and testing assumptions underlying discrimination, using their science to call attention to the relative deprivation of defenseless peoples, and anticipating the pleasure and sting of change.<sup>3</sup> The following offers an answer to this question.<sup>4</sup>

### Human Rights from an Anthropological Perspective

Human rights are bundles of interrelated propositions which define a peoples expectations and values concerning proper human interaction. Such proper interactions refer not only to their conduct with respect to one another, but also between themselves and others.

debt, the debt shall not grow whilst the heir is under age; and if such debt become due to us, we will take no more than the goods expressed in deed (ibid:307).

And if any die, and owe a debt to the Jews, his wife shall have her dower, and shall be charged with no part of the debt; and if the children of the deceased person be within age, their reasonable estovers shall be provided them, according to the value of the estate for which their ancestor had; and the debt shall be paid out of the residue, saving the services due to the lord (ibid:307).

In ancient Greece, homicide was punished by banishment, which is the complete denial of an offender's rights to the comfort, privileges, and protection of his own group. Likewise, Roman's offered its citizens exile (*exsilium*) as an alternative to the death penalty. Institutions may simultaneously deny and protect human rights. This is most notable in institutions charged with protecting and interpreting violations of normative propositions, as occurs in the establishment of a Council of 25 Barons, in the Magna Carta or the judiciary systems of complex societies.

We turn now to an important, fifth dimension of human rights propositions: human rights propositions set standards by which a society may judge its own performance. Evaluations of changes in the moral status of one's own social group are based, in part, on the adherence of its members to standards which they accept. Considerable social energy is expended on setting and maintaining these moral standards in society. In complex societies, the institutional product of this task involves complex bureaucracies and training. Some view the social sciences themselves as playing an important role in this evaluative dimension.

Sixth, unpredictable behavior is an anathema to orderly social reproduction. Consequently, human rights propositions not only set standards of conduct but also increase the predictability of human interaction. The Great Charter meticulously delineates the proper conduct for sovereign and barons at the time of succession, thereby allowing claimants to anticipate and judge one another's actions during the stressful process and intergenerational transfer of wealth.

A seventh characteristic of human rights propositions concerns their degree of accretion within the social institutions and customs of a society. In June of 1215, the rights granted in the Magna Carta were considered by the grantor to be politically expedient and temporary concessions. However, after the repeated application of these rights and the formation of social institutions specifically concerned with their protection and application, certain of these rights became deeply embedded in English society.

The concept of accretion is important. If the practices which deny the human rights of people are weakly grafted onto a society, representing the product of particular individuals, groups, administrations, or weakly articulated institutions, they

may be more easily changed. A "Mission Impossible," a paramilitary "A-Team," the CIA, or a modification of certain laws may be capable of altering human history by disrupting this situation. But when rights are embedded in an institutional or cultural ethos, changes in human rights require fundamental cultural change, with all the attendant problems which anthropologists have described over the past forty years.

Recognizing that many human rights issues are ideological expressions of deeper social struggles, class conflicts, organizational and value differences, and economic confrontations within specific social organizations, and that they often become most volatile under conditions of socio-economic stress, it follows that the logic of human rights is subject to considerable, if not constant, flux. Thus, the eighth dimension of human rights propositions is that they change. This dynamics has been repeatedly recognized by those that actively work on human rights problems.

The field of human rights is constantly evolving not only because ideas of what constitutes human dignity change but also because, as society changes, needs arise for new forms of protection (Teltsch 1981:3).

As capitalism and industrialization waxed over the past three centuries, human rights issues shifted from the agrarian rights problems appearing in the Magna Carta to problems of equal pay for equal work, protection of workers from arbitrary acts by employers, and the rights of workers to organize. And most recently, the various UN declarations, covenants, and conventions have focused primarily upon the rights of citizens vis-a-vis the nation-state.

#### Hierarchies of Rights

The study and struggle for human rights has become an analytical mine field covered with varied ideologies which coexist and compete at different levels of social organization. They provide a society's members not only with a code of acceptable conduct for interaction within their society but also with outsiders. The latter means that additional logics are present which guide inter-organizational and inter-societal interactions (e.g., diplomatic immunity, taxation codes, etc.). Sorting out the hierarchies of logics concerning human rights proves a formidable and endless task, as all levels in the hierarchy of human organizations, ranging from relatively isolated tribal groups in the upper Amazon to nation-states, to non-governmental associations, to transnational corporations which continuously codify and modify, clarify and obscure, adopt and reject, interpret and reinterpret propositions concerning what ought to be proper human interaction. An exploration of the hierarchies of logics concerning human rights stands as a potentially significant, yet unaccomplished task for applied anthropology, with pay-offs for those actively engaged in attempting to change the logic

Falk continues with his macro-political theory by distinguishing between supranational logic from transnational logic. Transnational logic refers to an ordering of nongovernmental activities which crosses national boundaries. Transnational corporations are the most visible actors operating at this level, but other organizations use it, such as Amnesty International, International League for Human Rights and the International Commission of Jurists, the World Council of Churches, National Council of Churches, and the Third World Forum.

Finally, Falk identifies the weakest and potentially most subversive of the ordering logic, which he calls populist. Populist logic rejects the five previous logics by insisting that governmental and intergovernmental organizations do not hold a monopoly of legitimated authority. It advocates the radical proposition that human rights derive "from the people," rather than through any legitimating national, transnational, or supranational organization. Its expression may be found in activities such as Bertrand Russell's War Crimes Tribunal and the holding of "counter-conferences" concurrent with meetings organized along statist and hegemonial lines. Although Falk does not so state, populist logic also underlies the widespread reemergence of supranational, fundamentalist religious sects.

#### Projections of Future Human Rights Issues

Falk develops this six-part typology to assist him in projecting several alternative global futures of human rights, each based on a different perception of the changing world order. The details of his projections need not concern us, but they range from a mild reordering of the global stage, as American hegemony wains, to more radical futures, wherein the nation-state system erodes and a new planetary polity emerges with its associated beliefs, values and myths. The latter future has two variants, one a centralized tyranny, the other, a decentralized polity, with the central guidance dedicated to the growth of functional activities. In either case, supranational logic greatly expands at the expense of state and populist logic.

But Falk's futures provide little help to an applied anthropologist analyzing human rights problems in a specific socio-cultural context. Unless we assume that micro-level ideologies and actions are merely microcosmic representations of macro-level ideologies and actions, and I have tried to point out that we cannot so assume, we face a serious theoretical and methodological problem. Falk seems aware of the weakness of his own theory, as a tool for futures projection when he approaches the question of micro-logics, below that of the nation-state.

The protection of human rights in a given world order system is not rigidly the exclusive preserve of any one of the ordering logics. It all depends on the value base that animates a given political actor at any level of social organization. As racist and religious militants' movements have demonstrated, repressive

intolerance can rise from below (via populist logic) as well as imposed from above (via statist logic) (ibid:107-8).

If it is true, as I have argued, that all social organizations have human rights propositions and that these propositions become increasingly context-specific as one slides across the macro to micro spectrum, then micro-level political action cannot be expected to be a microcosm of macro-level normative propositions. Specific propositions derived from macrocosmic logic such as those identified by Falk, will appear at subordinate levels, but many human rights propositions will be specific to the socio-economic context and needs of the organization or groups under investigation. Moreover, all the macro-logics described by Falk originated as micro-logics. They appear in philosophical and political debates, such as are to be found in the Federalist papers, in the writings of nineteenth century marginal men, such as Karl Marx and Fredric Engels, and in a massive non-written tradition which anthropologists are fortunate enough to hear.

Anthropologists have struggled with this problem since Redfield's pioneering work on the Great and Little traditions. They have discovered that the local level responses to such global changes exhibit considerable variability as local level organizations modify, interpret, adapt, and incorporate external ideologies to fit their own objectives and constraints. Falk's projective methodology and global theory fails to consider this aspect of the problem and, as a result, is wanting. It is in this arena that the applied anthropologist may hope to make contributions, not only to the peoples whom we study, but also to the basic anthropological goal of understanding social change.

#### The Horizon: Unresolved Issues

Multiple tasks await applied anthropologists working in the area of human rights, tasks which range beyond the issues of specific individual transgressions or a particular group's problems maintaining or defending their human rights.

The first task might be called that of "sorting things out." Most of the human rights propositions of the societies that we study have not been formally stated in such a way that those seeking to change or defend them may clearly see what they are. Making them explicit requires ethnographic fieldwork and ethnological analysis. The sorting task becomes urgent as the powerless groups we study become more tightly enmeshed in the world political economy. The scope of this task is staggering. Once one steps below the macro-level considered by Falk, the world becomes, and is still, exceedingly diverse and complex. It will be impossible to sort out all the human rights logics in the multitude of societies, organizations, and minority groups of the world since, by the time they are catalogued, they will have changed. Rather than attempt such a gargantuan task, it is best for individual applied anthropologists to focus on the

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