bridging the gap between science and practice, I–O psychologists are prepared with generalized principles of human performance, and ever-expanding research on the dynamics of the attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors of individuals in organizations.

See also: Ethics in Organizations, Psychology of; Group Processes in Organizations; Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Cross-cultural; Industrial Sociology; Job Analysis and Work Roles, Psychology of; Job Design and Evaluation: Organizational Aspects; Job Design, Psychology of; Leadership in Organizations, Psychology of; Organizational Behavior, Psychology of; Organizational Climate; Personnel Selection, Psychology of; Psychological Climate in the Work Setting; Stress in Organizations, Psychology of; Work, Sociology of

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K. Kraiger

Inequality

The most straightforward definition of inequality is 'differences among people in their command over social and economic resources.' To be useful, however, one must go further and specify inequality: (a) of what, (b) among whom, and (c) how summarized. Furthermore, interest in 'inequality' is often prompted by a concern with 'inequity,' which can be defined as 'morally or ethically unjustifiable differences among people in their command over resources.' Although measurement of inequality often cannot avoid the problem of choosing which differences among people are of greatest concern, and that choice inevitably involves some values, in principle the discussion of inequality concerns issues of fact. In general, it is useful to distinguish as clearly as possible between analytic or descriptive statements about social in-

equality—i.e., how society *is*—and statements about inequity which involve moral evaluations of how society *should be*.

1. Inequality of What?

Although analysts of inequality would often like to discuss inequality of well-being, utility, or happiness, such differences among people in their internal psychological satisfactions must typically be inferred from observable inequalities in social and economic resources. Academic disciplines also tend to specialize somewhat in their focus. While political scientists emphasize the inequality of political power, social inequality in prestige and status is the domain of sociologists. Economists typically limit their analysis to the inequality of income or wealth or consumption. However, there has been a notable broadening of economic perspectives to the inequality of capabilities or economic functionings (see Sen 1985, 1992).

Inequalities in power, status, income, or wealth clearly interact, but these are also analytically distinguishable dimensions of inequality, which are not necessarily perfectly correlated. Furthermore, whatever the dimensions of inequality considered, many analysts would think it important to distinguish between inequality of opportunity (i.e., inequality in the sets of potential choices open to individuals) and inequality of result (i.e., inequality in the specific outcomes actually observed).

The appropriateness of a distinction between inequality of opportunity and inequality of outcome often depends on the time frame of analysis. In access to housing, for example, at any given point of time there will be some persons who are homeless and some who are adequately, or perhaps munificently, housed. These outcomes will depend partially on the choices that were available in earlier periods of time to each individual and on the events they have experienced. In the housing example, an analyst who stressed inequality of opportunity would want to know how many people ever had the opportunity to buy a home, and the income to keep up payments, while an emphasis on inequality of outcome would simply focus on the percentage of current homeowners.

The distinction between inequality of opportunity and of outcome is particularly important for intergenerational issues. In a multigenerational context the inequality of outcomes experienced by a given generation of parents will largely determine the opportunities which their children's generation face. By unconscious socialization and imitation, or by conscious choice of child-rearing practices, time allocation, schooling, and material bequest, parents pass social, cultural, human, and financial capital on to their children—but they can only do so to the extent that they have acquired such assets themselves. Inequality of outcome among parents, and the choices made by them, therefore condition the inequality of opportunity experienced by their children.

In the analysis of inequality, there is a great deal of complexity (and potential for ambiguity) in the empirical operationalization of broad concepts like power, status, income, or wealth. In general, it is important to distinguish between stocks (the total resources available at a point in time) and flows (the change in resources over time). Although the case can also be comparably made for social and political resources like power or status, inequalities in economic resources offer a particularly clear example.

Wealth differs from income precisely in the stock/flow distinction. Wealth is the total stock of economic resources—total potential consumption—that an individual has at a point in time. The classic Hicksian definition of income, on the other hand, is the maximum amount that a person could consume during a period of time and still be as well off at the end of the period as at the beginning. Measurement of wealth therefore requires specification of the date of measurement while income measurement is always for a specific period of time.

In practice, the accounting period over which one measures income flows is far from innocuous. Analysts have to choose whether it is lifetime, annual, or shorter period (e.g., monthly) income that should be measured. The underlying reason for studying inequality should determine the appropriate period over which to measure income flows, but the choice will influence measures of inequality. Over any individual's lifetime, some changes in income will follow a predictable pattern (for example, when workers get raises based on seniority), while others (such as the income losses caused by illness or unemployment) may be less predictable. If income is measured over a longer interval of time, periods of low and high income will be averaged, implying less measured inequality among income recipients.

The most common measure of economic resources used in analysis of economic inequality is annual money income, which includes cash earnings, rental interest and dividend income, and cash transfers from government. Money income can be calculated before or after tax, and in countries with progressive income tax systems the choice makes a significant difference to measured inequality. However, in a complex modern economy, it is also common to find complex cases in which the calculation of annual money income is not straightforward. For example, the cash flow of self-employed individuals or entrepreneurs typically has to be adjusted to reflect the depreciation of the capital they use in production. Since stock options and capital gains are very important for upper income groups, calculation of the level of income inequality is sensitive to whether income is calculated to include only the value of stock options actually exercised in the current period, or to include the value of unrealized capital gains.

Furthermore, a full definition of 'income' would include the value of nonmarketed goods and services received, as well as money income. In countries in which much of the population is agricultural, the value of food produced and consumed within the household may be a large fraction of total income. Individuals also receive a benefit from leisure time enjoyed, the goods and services which (like child care) are produced in the household, and the services of owner-occupied houses. They may also benefit from services (like medical care or education) provided by government agencies. Arguably, the value of these benefits should be added to cash income.

In addition, individuals who live in larger households benefit from a greater ability to share resources (e.g., due to household 'economies of scale,' a couple with a household income of $40,000 is better off than two individuals who each have $20,000 and must live separately). If the objective is to measure inequality in economic well-being, some account should be taken of living arrangements. Economists have therefore argued that 'equivalent income,' which adjusts income for household size, is the best measure to use in the analysis of inequality in economic well-being.

The complexities in measuring 'income' are a reminder that in measuring inequality, 'the devil is in the details.' Although 'income' is a complex concept, income inequality is only part of economic inequality more broadly conceived. Moreover, since institutions change over time and differ across countries, comparisons of inequality can often be sensitive to these measurement issues—and in the analysis of inequality, comparative statements on time trends or differences among societies are the major issue of interest.

2. *Inequality Among Whom?*

Because assessing the extent of inequality involves a comparison of resources, it is crucial to be clear about whose resources are being compared—and which resources. An analyst who looks only at inequality in family or household income is ignoring the fact that families and households differ significantly in size. On the other hand, if an analyst were to look only at the distribution of money income directly received by individual persons, the fact that many people (e.g., young children, unpaid spouses) have zero cash income of their own would tend to exaggerate measured inequality.

Because individuals without income of their own typically reside in households in which other family members do have cash income, the effective degree of sharing of income within households is crucial to inequality measurement. However, this is difficult to observe in practice, and it is often convenient for researchers to assume that all persons within a household have the same level of effective income (Phipps and Burton 1995 demonstrate that alternative assumptions can make a big difference to perceived poverty). Similarly, it is common to assume that all members of a given household have the same socioeconomic status. Effectively, such procedures amount to assuming away inequality within groups of people (in this example, coresident household members) and concentrating attention on inequality between groups.

Table 1
A comparison of inequality in two hypothetical societies

	Men			Women		
Arcadia	4	6	8	2	4	6
Bucolia	0	6	12	6	6	6

Assuming equality within groups can be problematic (e.g., much feminist scholarship has challenged the presumption of within-family equality in consumption, status, and power). Furthermore, the larger the group is, the harder it generally becomes to maintain the presumption of within-group equality. There is much social interest in the extent of inequality between broad groups of people (e.g., occupational groups, regions, racial or ethnic groups, age cohorts, etc.). In some instances, between-group comparisons are driven by an underlying theoretical framework which defines categories of interest (e.g., bourgeoisie/proletariat). However, when within-group inequality is large relative to that between groups (as in income comparisons between age groups, where inequality among individuals of the same age is far greater than the differences in average income between people of different ages), comparisons of average group characteristics may suggest unwarranted stereotyping.

Furthermore, the term 'inequality' can be used in two subtly different conceptual senses. In some discussions—discrimination is an example—'inequality' is used to refer to differences between particular individuals or groups (e.g., person A is not equal to person B). In other instances, 'inequality' refers to differences among people in general (e.g., in country A there is more inequality than in country B). These usages need to be distinguished, since pairwise and group inequalities do not necessarily imply aggregate inequality differences. Table 1 presents a numerical example of men and women in 'Arcadia' and 'Bucolia' to make the point.

Is there more inequality in Arcadia than in Bucolia, or less? Would eliminating between group inequality imply an end to inequality? Inequality among groups of people is illustrated by comparison of men and women in Arcadia and Bucolia. In Arcadia, women have a lower average income (4) than men (6), while in Bucolia the average is the same (6). However, the equality of male and female average income in Bucolia does not imply equality of individual incomes. Inequalities in average income between groups also do not imply individual inequalities (in Arcadia, for

example, two-thirds of men can be matched with women with exactly the same income while in Bucolia only one match can be found).

To answer the seemingly simple question of whether, overall, there is more inequality in Arcadia than in Bucolia, or less, one must compare the entire distribution of outcomes. Although there is a large middle class in Bucolia (two-thirds of the inhabitants have the same outcome (6)), there are also greater extremes (from 0 to 12). In Arcadia, middle-class incomes are more differentiated, but the extremes are not as widely separated. Hence, answering the seemingly simple question whether there is more or less inequality requires finding a way to summarize the number and size of differences in outcomes among all individuals.

3. *Inequality—How Summarized?*

The example of Arcadia and Bucolia has been simplified by the presentation of only one outcome, among a small number of individuals. In actuality, modern societies have millions of inhabitants who differ on a wide number of dimensions. There are, therefore, a very large number of potential comparisons. Even if one restricts attention to a single variable, like income, it is not a simple matter to summarize the extent of inequality.

One approach to inequality measurement is to order the population from worst off to best off, divide them into groups of equal size and calculate the share of total resources flowing to each group. (If five groups are used, the result is the calculation of five 'quintile' shares of total resources.) If, for all low income groups, this calculation always produces the answer that the less well off get a larger share of total income in country A, then it is easy to say that country A has less inequality. However, in the Arcadia/Bucolia comparison, the poorest sixth of Bucolia get a smaller share (zero compared to 6.6 percent), at the same time as the second poorest sixth of Bucolia get a larger share (16.6 percent compared to 13.2 percent). Which country has more inequality? If one wishes to know whether there is more inequality in country A than in country B, or whether there is more inequality at time A than at time B, inequality must be summarized in a single number.

The most popular index summarizing the extent of inequality within society is probably the Gini index. Mathematically, the index is calculated as the average differential (in absolute value) between any two people in society, as in Eqn. (1).

$$G = \frac{1}{2\,\bar{y}\cdot n\cdot(n-1)}\cdot\sum_{i}^{n}\cdot\sum_{j}^{n}|y_i - y_j| \qquad (1)$$

The Gini index also has a convenient graphical interpretation. When individuals are ordered from poorest to richest, Fig. 1 graphs the relationship between the cumulative percentage of income received on the horizontal axis, and the cumulative percentage of population on the vertical axis—the result is known as a 'Lorenz curve.' If everyone in society had the same income—perfect equality—then the Lorenz curve would be the straight line OY. If one person in society had all the income and the rest had nothing—perfect inequality—the Lorenz curve would lie along the horizontal axis for almost all its length.

Actual societies are somewhere between perfect equality and perfect inequality and as an example Fig. 1 graphs the Lorenz curve for Sweden and the USA. A convenient feature of the Gini index is that it is equal to the ratio of the area between the Lorenz curve and the line of perfect equality (area A in Fig. 1) and the triangle OPY. (In the early 1990s, the Gini index of equivalent after-tax money income of Sweden was 0.222, substantially less than the Gini for the USA of 0.371; see Osberg and Xu 2000.)

As Fig. 1 indicates, the Lorenz curve for Sweden lies entirely inside the Lorenz curve for the USA. The verbal interpretation of such a case is that the poorest x percent of individuals in Sweden always have a larger share of total income than the poorest x percent in the USA—whatever the value of x. If this is true, it is straightforward to say that there is less inequality in Sweden than in the USA. However, when Lorenz curves cross, comparisons between societies become sensitive to which part of the income distribution is of greater interest.

The dashed line in Fig. 1 is drawn to represent 'Bucolia,' in which the bottom sixth of individuals get nothing, the middle two-thirds share equally two thirds of total income, and the top sixth get the remaining third of total income. The Lorenz curve for this hypothetical society crosses the Lorenz curve for both Sweden and the USA. The poorest sixth of individuals in this hypothetical society get a smaller share of national income than they would in actual Sweden or USA, while the second and third poorest sixths get substantially more. In hypothetical 'Bucolia' the bottom half of the income distribution gets 33 percent of total income. In the real world of 1994, in the USA the bottom half of the income distribution received, after taxes and transfers, is about 24.8 percent of total equivalent income (for full details of methodology and data see Osberg 2000). Which is the more unequal?

When Lorenz curves cross, it matters which part of the income distribution one thinks to be most important. If one thought that the most important aspect of inequality was the share of income received by the very poorest, then Bucolia should be counted more unequal than Sweden or the USA. However, the Gini index for Bucolia is 0.139—well below that in either Sweden or the USA. If inequalities among 'most people'—i.e., those in the middle part of the income distribution—are thought to be the most important

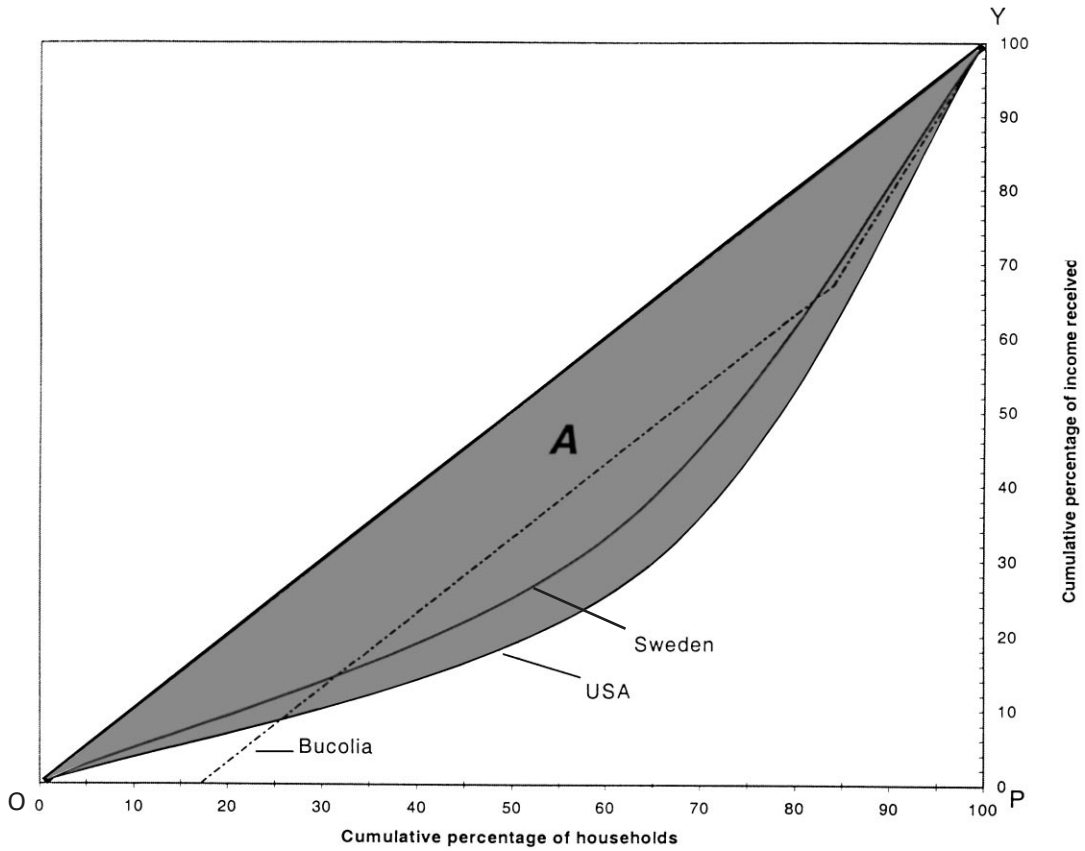

Figure 1
Relationship between cumulative percentages of income and population

issue, then the low Gini index in Bucolia is the appropriate measure. In Bucolia, two-thirds of people have exactly the same income, and by this criterion one would count Bucolia as considerably more equal than either the USA or Sweden. However, if inequality between the poorest and everyone else is thought to be the important issue, one would disagree with the Gini ranking. When Lorenz curves cross, a different ranking of inequality may be obtained, depending on which part of the distribution is of greater concern. In this case, a single index number for inequality may be insufficient.

The Gini index is not the only possible single index in widespread use, and the choice of index to use depends upon which aspect of inequality is of greatest importance. Theil's index of inequality can be calculated as in Eqn. (2) and has the attractive property that it can be decomposed, so that an analyst can say how much of total inequality is due to inequality within social groups and how much is due to inequality between groups. Also, because it is based on the average proportion of mean income received by individuals, it responds strongly to changes in the dollar incomes received by low income individuals.

$$R = \frac{1}{n}\sum_i \frac{Y_i}{\bar{Y}} \log \frac{Y_i}{\bar{Y}} \tag{2}$$

The Coefficient of Variation is another decomposable index of aggregate inequality, which is derived from the standard deviation of income, as in Eqns. (3) and (4). It also has the property of decomposability (unlike the Gini index, in general) but since it is based on the average squared deviation, it is most responsive to changes in income among the more affluent.

$$Var(Y) = \frac{\sum_{i-1}^{n} (Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}{n} \tag{3}$$

$$CV = \frac{\sqrt{Var(Y)}}{\bar{Y}} \tag{4}$$

The literature on inequality (ably summarized in Silber 1999) has broadly agreed on a set of criteria that an acceptable index of inequality should satisfy. The principle of transfers argues that if a transfer of income is made from a richer person to a poorer person, an acceptable inequality index should always decline. The anonymity principle states that an index of inequality should depend only on the relative sizes of incomes and be invariant with respect to the identities of those occupying each position in the income hierarchy. The properties of scale invariance and population invariance require an index to be the same if all incomes are measured in different units or if identical populations are added together. These properties are not possessed by some possible measures (summarizing inequality by the 90:10 ratio of the top 10 percent's average income to that of the bottom 10 percent would, for example, not satisfy the principle of transfers, since transfers from richer to poorer in the middle part of the distribution would not affect the index).

In some cases, measurement of inequality is unambiguous—if the Lorenz curve for one country lies entirely inside that of another, all acceptable inequality indices will give the same ranking. However, as Atkinson (1970) observed many years ago, it is common in the real world to observe crossing of the Lorenz curve of two populations. In this case, when choosing an index of inequality the analyst is implicitly also choosing to emphasize inequality in a particular part of the distribution.

In some instances, it is possible to reduce inequality in several dimensions of life to a common denominator—for example, a good deal of work has been done in establishing the monetary value of access to different public services (such as education or health care). However, it is also reasonable to suppose that individuals differ in dimensions (e.g., income and life expectancy) that cannot easily be made equivalent. In this case, unless the dimensions of inequality are perfectly correlated, the assessment of aggregate inequality will depend on the relative weight to be assigned to each aspect of inequality and the correlation and shape of each variable's distribution.

4. Summary

If there were only two types of people, who differed only on one easily measured dimension, then inequality would be a fairly simple concept—the difference between 'the rich' and 'the poor.' In practice, however, there are multiple dimensions to inequality, and multiple differences between people. As soon, for example, as one adds a 'middle class,' inequality could be seen as either the differences between the rich and the poor, or the differences between the poor and the middle class or those between the middle class and the affluent. Key concepts like income, status, or power are also ambiguous and difficult to measure, in practice.

Furthermore, as Atkinson (1998), Brandolini (1998), and Osberg (2000) have demonstrated, although there have been clear trends in inequality in some countries in recent decades, there is no universal trend in all countries. Household income depends on household composition (i.e., on the processes determining formation, dissolution, and size of households); on the total market income of all household members from capital (which is influenced by inheritance patterns and taxation); as well as on individual incomes from labor (which depends on trends in both hourly wages and the distribution of work hours across employees, and on the correlation of male and female earnings within households); on the transfer incomes for which household members are eligible; and on the household's treatment by the tax system. Trends in the inequality of household income depend on changes in all these variables, some of which are heavily influenced by the public policies of governments, but some of which depend more on shifts in culture and society (both of which vary by country). National differences in culture and politics, and the vagaries of the evolution of such differences, thus have many channels of influence—and no segment of the income distribution is insulated from the impact of political decisions and public policy. It is not, therefore, really surprising to find a diversity of national experiences—as Brandolini (1998, p. 38) puts it: 'Neatly defined and unambiguous trends are unlikely to result from this multiplicity of factors.'

There is, therefore, a good deal of complexity in the concept of 'inequality.' This complexity does not imply either that measurement of inequality is impossible or that a measure can be found that will justify any hypothesis. However, recognition of the complexity of inequality measurement does imply that analysts should test explicitly whether, in a particular instance, all plausible measures of inequality agree. If there is ambiguity in inequality rankings, analysts should be prepared to be clear about which aspect of inequality is of greatest importance.

See also: Class: Social; Equality and Inequality: Legal Aspects; Inequality: Comparative Aspects; Mobility: Social; Social Demography: Role of Inequality and Social Differentiation; Social Inequality and Schooling; Social Inequality in History (Stratification and Classes); Social Stratification

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L. Osberg

Inequality: Comparative Aspects

Inequality is defined here as sanctioned differential access to valued things, experiences, and conditions in human societies. Comparative aspects are similarities and differences found among systems of inequality as a result of comparing societies in all of their variety: through time (developmentally) and space (cross-culturally), in societies small and large, homogeneous and complex, prehistoric, historic and contemporary, throughout the world.

1. Social Inequality

Social inequality has been debated from the time of Aristotle and Plato to Rousseau, Karl Marx, Max Weber and innumerable contemporary authors (Beteille 1987). The classic triumvirate, 'class' (economic order), 'status' (honor) and 'party' (power) are widely cited as its essential dimensions, with power—the ability to prevail over others—as the virtual independent variable. Powerful people are privileged; powerless people are rarely so, and then only under sponsorship of the powerful. Their perspectives on inequality reflect their places in the system: those who look from below see and experience a different world than those whose gaze and experience is from above, and the latter are the ones in a position to define and explain the system, as well as enforce it.

This entry draws on understandings of social inequality obtained, primarily by anthropologists, through cross-cultural and cross-temporal research focused on peoples who have been otherwise largely ignored: those commonly labeled, if noticed at all, as primitive, aboriginal, tribal, native, indigenous, heathen, nomadic, peasants, untouchables, colonials, minorities, ethnics, immigrants, refugees—in short, those rendered vulnerable for whatever reason, or unreason.

2. Egalitarian (Unranked) Societies

Dominance and differential evaluation exist in every society, but in some—those often loosely described as 'egalitarian'—are limited to elemental roles found in all societies: those of family, sex/gender, age/seniority, specific activities or skills, and cherished or stigmatized personal characteristics. If additional inequalities occur they are more symbolic than material or political. Inequalities in such societies have received increasing attention from ethnographers and archaeologists in recent years (Flanagan 1989).

These are small, mobile bands of kinsmen with households as the basic social and economic units. Theirs are subsistence economies derived by foraging wild species, without privileged or curtailed access to resources or the means to obtain them. They share their economic pursuits and rewards, without expectation of specific returns, in what has been termed 'generalized reciprocity' (Sahlins 1968). Requisite knowledge and skills are present in every household, extra-familial authority or occupational roles are rare or absent, and sexual division of labor is complementary with little or no differential evaluation.

2.1 Assertively Egalitarian Societies

Even in 'egalitarian' societies, equality of power, possessions and prestige is in jeopardy. The *Hadza* of Tanzania, are foragers who consume the products of a successful foray before embarking on another. This, Woodburn (1982) describes as an 'immediate return system.' He characterizes societies with such economies as 'assertively egalitarian' in that their members characteristically resist and sanction attempts to exert authority or consume resources without sharing.

2.2 Relatively Egalitarian Societies

By contrast, foraging economies in which long-term collective investments of resources are employed (e.g. construction and maintenance of corrals for game drives), Woodburn terms 'delayed-return systems': the return on investment of labor is delayed rather than immediate. Although they are egalitarian to an extent found among few non-foragers, and are therefore 'relatively egalitarian,' they entail authority and accumulation untenable in immediate-return societies as a result of the need for coordination of delayed-return

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