
SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Author(s): David O. Friedrichs and Jessica Friedrichs

Source: *Social Justice*, 2002, Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (87-88), Globalization and Environmental Harm (2002), pp. 13-36

Published by: Social Justice/Global Options

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29768116>

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David O. Friedrichs and Jessica Friedrichs

Introduction

THE BASIC ISSUE ADDRESSED IN THIS ARTICLE CAN BE CONCISELY STATED: ARE THE policies and practices of an international financial institution (the World Bank), arising in the context of an accelerated globalization, usefully characterized as a form of crime and a criminological phenomenon? What kinds of strategies and actions are available in response to the harm caused by these policies and practices?¹ International financial institutions such as the World Bank are key players in an increasingly globalized capitalist system. The claim that capitalism itself is a criminal enterprise is, of course, an enduring thesis of Marxist thought (e.g., Buchanan, 1983).² Moreover, some contemporary critics of globalization — as a transnational expansion of capitalist free markets — seem to suggest that globalization per se is a criminal enterprise that ought to be challenged on every level. We do not propose to pursue such sweeping claims here. Rather, we address the narrower claim that at least some of the policies and practices of the World Bank can be validly characterized as criminal. To support our case, we provide a case history of a World Bank-financed dam in Thailand.

A Perspective on Globalization

The policies and practices of international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund can only be understood in the context of the notion of “globalization.” The invocation of that term has become ubiquitous and the literature on globalization has expanded exponentially in the recent era, although its meaning is far from settled (Chase-Dunn et al., 2000; Dunne, 1999: 20; Hay and Marsh, 2000).³ The term “globalization” has been in wide use since the 1960s (Busch, 2000: 22). In

DAVID O. FRIEDRICHS is Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice at the University of Scranton (Scranton, PA 18510–4605; email: friedrichsdl@uofs.edu). The author of *Trusted Criminals: White Collar Crime in Contemporary Society* (1996) and *Law in Our Lives* (2001), he has published on topics such as the legitimization of the legal order, radical/critical criminology, violence, postmodern theory, white-collar crime, and governmental crime. **JESSICA FRIEDRICHS** graduated from the Schreyer Honors College of Pennsylvania State University, majoring in sociology. She has co-authored a book chapter on postmodern theory and has co-edited *Voice of the River: One Thai Villager's Story of the Pak Moon Dam* (2000). She has spent time in China, Thailand, and India and currently is working with inner-city children as an Americorp volunteer. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, November 2000. The authors wish to thank two anonymous *Social Justice* reviewers for exceptionally helpful suggestions.

one sense, globalization is hardly a new phenomenon, if one means by it the emergence of international trade and a transnational economic order.⁴ Yet globalization has become a buzzword of the transition into the era of the new century due to the widely perceived intensification of certain developments (Mazlish, 1999: 5).⁵ It is not simply an economic phenomenon, although it is most readily thought of in such terms.⁶ Globalization also has important political and cultural dimensions (Chase-Dunn et al., 2000; Mazlish, 1999: 7).⁷ The phenomenal growth in the importance and influence of transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, and special interest groups is a conspicuous dimension of contemporary globalization (Mazlish, 1999; Shapiro and Brilmayer, 1999; Valaskakis, 1999).⁸ Ordinary people lose control over their economic destiny (Greider, 1997). World markets increasingly overshadow national markets, barriers to trade are reduced, and instant tele- and cyber-transactions are becoming the norm (Blackett, 1998; Chase-Dunn et al., 2000; Jackson, 2000; Scheurman, 1999). In the broadest possible terms, globalization today refers to the dramatic compression of time and space across the globe.

We accept here the view that globalization as a phenomenon is endlessly complex, is characterized by various contradictory tendencies and ambiguities, and is best seen as a dynamic process as opposed to a static state of affairs (McCorquodale with Fairbrother, 1999: 733).⁹ The contemporary discourse on globalization is quite contentious, characterized by claims about the effects of globalization that are often directly at odds with each other (Busch, 2000). On the one hand, certain aspects of globalization — such as increasing global communication and interaction — are surely inevitable. On the other hand, the mission and policy choices of international financial institutions, in relation to the globalized economy, are hardly preordained and are very much open to challenge. Some commentators argue that globalization has basically increased living standards in much of the world, and that countries experiencing a rise in standards of living have done so by linking up with a globalized economy (Amsden, 2000; Easterlin, 2000; Zakaria, 1999). No one should dispute the claim that there are many “winners” in the move toward an increasingly globalized economy. However, we strongly agree with those who allege that the winners are disproportionately wealthy multinational corporations and the losers are disproportionately poor and disadvantaged peoples, especially indigenous peoples in developing countries (Frank, 2000).¹⁰ Globalization contributes to an overall increase in economic inequality, fostering impoverishment and unemployment for many (Carrasco, 1996; George, 2000; Kahn, 2000b; McCorquodale with Fairbrother, 1999: 747; Shapiro and Brilmayer, 1999: 2).¹¹ It has been characterized as a new form of the ancient practice of colonization (Dunne, 1999: 22).¹² Richard Falk (1993) argues that the logic of globalization is dictated by the well-being of capital rather than of people. Altogether, globalization is affecting human society in many different ways.¹³

Globalization has many dimensions, but the following are most pertinent to the thesis of this article:

1. The growing global dominance and reach of neoliberalism and a free-market capitalist system that disproportionately benefits wealthy and powerful organizations and individuals;
2. The increasing vulnerability of indigenous people with a traditional way of life to the forces of globalized capitalism;
3. The growing influence and impact of international financial institutions (such as the World Bank), and the related relative decline of power of local or state-based institutions; and
4. The nondemocratic operation of international financial institutions, taking the form of globalization from above instead of globalization from below.

The Role of the World Bank in a Global Economy

The international financial institutions that play such a central role in contemporary globalization have become prime targets for criticism for their policies and practices in the global economy. These international financial institutions include the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Each entity has a different key mission, with the World Trade Organization primarily focused on fostering trade, the International Monetary Fund on maximizing financial stability, and the World Bank on promoting development (Stiglitz, 2001). Of course, these institutions have many ties with each other, and the lines of demarcation between their activities can become quite blurred. Collectively, much evidence suggests that they have acted principally in response to the interests of developed countries and their privileged institutions, rather than in the interests of the poor (Phillips, 2000; Sjoberg et al., 2001; Smith and Moran, 2000; Stiglitz, 2001). In this article, we focus principally on the activities of one of these institutions, the World Bank, because it played a key role in the particular case addressed here.

The World Bank (formally, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, or IBRD) was established at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 to help stabilize and rebuild economies ravaged by World War II. Eventually it shifted its focus to an emphasis on aiding developing nations (Johnson, 2000). The Bank makes loans to governments of its member nations and to private development projects backed by the government. Projects are supposed to benefit the citizens of the country receiving Bank loans, which are made at a favorable rate of interest. The World Bank (2000) generally claims to contribute to the reduction of poverty and improved living standards in developing countries. Today the Bank is a large, international operation, with over 10,000 employees, 180 member states, and annual loans of some 30 billion dollars (Finnegan, 2000: 44). Historically, the World Bank itself has been the principal source of information about its

operations and programs; inevitably, such internally generated information can be strongly suspected of being self-serving (Rich, 1994).

The World Bank was established (along with the International Monetary Fund) at the behest of the dominant Western nations, with little if any real input from the developing countries (Kapstein, 1998/1999: 28). It is disproportionately influenced or manipulated by elite economic institutions and has been characterized as an agent of global capital (Greider, 2000b: 15). In the developing countries, it deals primarily with the political and economic elites of those countries, with little direct attention to the perspectives and needs of indigenous peoples, a practice for which it has been criticized by U.S. senators (Caulfield, 1996: 227; Rich, 1994: 145). It has had a record of lending money to ruthless military dictatorships (engaged in murder and torture), after having denied loans to democratic governments overthrown by the military (Rich, 1994: 99). It favors strong dictatorships over struggling democracies because it believes that the former are more able to introduce and see through the unpopular reforms its loans require (Caulfield, 1996: 209). Borrowers of money from the World Bank typically are political elites of developing countries, and their cronies, although the repayment of the debt becomes the responsibility of people in these countries, most of whom do not benefit from the loans.¹⁴ In this reading, then, the privileged benefit disproportionately from dealings with the World Bank, relative to the poor.¹⁵

Criminology and Crimes of Globalization

Most criminologists have paid little if any attention to the phenomenon of globalization and international financial institutions such as the World Bank, although some prominent criminologists have called for more attention to globalization as a new context within which crime must be understood.¹⁶ Progressive or critical criminologists — writing in journals such as *Social Justice* and *Crime, Law, and Social Change* — have been especially attuned to the relevance of an evolving global economy to understanding crime and criminal justice issues.¹⁷ A criminology of the 21st century must address immensely consequential forms of crime being committed in an evolving new global order.

If we claim here that it is useful to view at least some of the activities of the World Bank as criminal, an operative definition of crime must be established. First, we adopt the view that a valid definition of crime need not be limited to those actions clearly defined as crime by state law.¹⁸ Some attempts to define crime have broken completely with a legalistic framework, on any level.¹⁹ A core argument of those who reject the purely legalistic definition of crime is that criminologists should not restrict their study of crime to that which is defined by state law as crime, insofar as state-defined crime is ideologically biased and fails to address a wide range of objectively identifiable forms of harm.²⁰

That powerful entities (including international financial institutions) are in a strong position to influence national (and international) law has long been

recognized (Passas, 1999: 401). In an increasingly globalized world, we need to adopt conceptions of crime that transcend limitations of traditional state-based law. Crime itself is increasingly a transnational or global phenomenon. Nikos Passas (2000: 17–18) offers the following definition of transnational crime: “...cross-border misconduct that entails avoidable and unnecessary harm to society, is serious enough to warrant state intervention, and is similar to other kinds of acts criminalized in the countries concerned or by international law.” Such a definition offers a specific starting point for a conception of crime that transcends the limitations of conventional, legalistic definitions within a state-based context. For our purposes here, if international financial institutions adopt policies and practices that violate the provisions of international human rights accords and covenants, they may be said to be complicit in a form of crime. The United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), for example, holds that:

All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of the right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.... In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence (United Nations, 1966: 225)

Because they are not states, international financial institutions such as the World Bank are not technically bound by this U.N. covenant, but the states to which they have made loans have generally ratified the covenant (Stark, 2000: 536–537). Even if these states have done little, if anything, to enforce the economic covenant, willful failures by the international financial institutions and the states to comply with these standards may be regarded as crimes in terms of the conception offered above. Accordingly, if the policies and practices of an international financial institution such as the World Bank result in avoidable, unnecessary harm to an identifiable population, and if these policies lead to violation of widely recognized human rights and international covenants, then crime in a meaningful sense has occurred, whether or not specific violations of international or state law are involved. The failure to characterize the forms of harm perpetrated by international financial institutions as crime tends to dilute the seriousness of such activity.

Extending Crime Typologies to Encompass Crimes of Globalization

The most readily recognized categories of criminal activity include violent personal crime, conventional crime, organized crime, professional crime, and public order — or victimless — crime. Although Sutherland’s call for more attention to white-collar crime was not widely embraced for several decades, for some time now the categories of corporate crime and occupational crime have been accepted in some form by professional criminologists, the media, and the

public. The senior author has argued elsewhere that certain hybrid or marginal types of white-collar crime — such as state-corporate crime, finance crime, technocrime, enterprise crime, entrepreneurial crime, and avocational crime — merit wider recognition (Friedrichs, 1996). Although in one sense state crime (e.g., genocide) and political white-collar crime (e.g., accepting bribes) have been long recognized, these forms of crime have been largely slighted by criminologists and viewed by the public and the media as fundamentally disconnected from “the crime problem.” A number of criminologists have recently called for more attention to state crime in particular as a significant criminological phenomenon (e.g., Friedrichs, 1998; Ross, 1995; Kauzlarich and Kramer, 1998; Green and Ward, 2000). The form of crime addressed here does not fit neatly into any of the existing categories, however. It incorporates elements of state crime, political white-collar crime, state-corporate crime, and finance crime, in particular.²¹ In addition, it suggests the need to adapt existing, widely adopted typologies of crime to encompass such activities, prospectively labeled global or transnational state-finance crime. Such crime involves cooperative endeavors between international financial institutions, transnational corporations, and state or political entities that engage in demonstrably harmful activities in violation of international law or international human rights conventions.

If some of the policies and activities of the international financial institutions are specifically characterized as a form of crime, this provides a conceptual framework for systematically exploring parallels and differences, as well as interconnections, with other forms of crime. It facilitates the application of criminological knowledge to this form of crime and contributes to the development of a truly globalized criminology.

A Case Study: The Dam at Pak Mun (Thailand)

The villagers are not against development. We are against violating rights. We're against organizations using their power over the governments of the people so that the people don't have a place to live or food to eat. — Mae Sompong, villager affected by Pak Mun Dam (in Vienchang, 2000: 49)

From December 2000 to April 2001, the junior author lived intermittently at the Assembly of the Poor Pak Mun (Moon) dam protest village just outside Ubon Ratchatani, Northeastern Thailand.²² During this time, she acted as a participant-observer in daily village meetings, various protests, and marches throughout the country. She interviewed five villagers in great depth about their experiences with the dam. Interviews were also conducted with local Energy Generating Authority of Thailand officials, World Bank representatives, international and Thai non-governmental organization workers involved in dam or development issues, and Thai academics researching the subject. As an observer, she noted the daily futility

of fishing in the Mun River, as well as the severe economic hardship faced by the villagers. Statistics and other data related to the issue were obtained from the “World Commission on Dams Report for 2000,” the *Bangkok Post* newspaper, International Rivers Network publications, and World Bank sources. At the time of the protest, Thai academics as well as World Bank and government officials were becoming increasingly aware of the need to weigh affected villagers’ concerns as heavily as environmental and socioeconomic data. In the following case study, dam-affected villagers present their concerns about the Pak Mun project. Factual data supports their claims. The project history covers the environmental and socioeconomic damage caused by the dam, and the protest history outlines the villagers’ response to the dam. The entire study centers on the role and responsibility of the World Bank in this controversy.

History of the Project:

The World Bank became involved in hydropower dam projects in the late 1970s and 1980s as part of structural adjustment policies that fostered production industries. The World Bank approved the Pak Mun dam loan in 1991 to support a shift in Thailand’s economy toward export-oriented industrialization (Tyler, 2000: 14, 23). Classified as a large dam, it was originally slated to produce 150 megawatts of energy; since its completion in 1994, however, it has not generated more than 40 megawatts over a given peak period. Construction costs soared from an original estimate of U.S. \$135 million to an actual cost of U.S. \$233 million (World Commission on Dams, 2000). The World Bank contributed a \$23 million loan and was involved in many facets of the project from the beginning (Tyler, 2000: 14). The Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) oversaw the project and consulted with the Thai government throughout construction. Among the original goals of the dam were energy generation, irrigation for nearby farmland, and an increase in fisheries, but the latter have been adversely affected. More important, the entire process, from loan to construction to operation, took place without input from the many fishing communities along the river. Today, these villagers have lost their livelihood and community due to the dam’s destruction of the river ecosystem.

The Mun River is a large tributary of the mighty Mekong River, which snakes through much of Southeast Asia. For generations, villagers living in the rural plateau area of Northeast Thailand along the Mun River sustained their communities through fishing, using fish to barter for rice from farmers nearby. Villagers depended on the complex system of rapids, watershed, and forest for everything in their lives. Yet when TEAM, a World Bank-approved group, conducted the first Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for dam construction in 1982, villagers were not even made aware of the impending plans. One villager did not learn of the dam until 1985, when the construction plans that would affect her entire community and future were announced on the radio (Vienchang, 2000: 18). Early

on, the villagers were concerned about the effect the dam would have on their livelihoods, but government officials and EGAT and World Bank representatives never addressed their concerns (*Ibid.*). The EIA itself has been highly criticized. Dams by nature create detrimental effects on the watershed environment surrounding a river, including flooding farmland with reservoirs, submerging natural forests, and preventing the natural migration of fish upstream. In the case of Pak Mun, these issues were magnified by the lack of proper EIAs and pre-construction studies, and the push to complete the project quickly regardless of villagers concerns.

Environmental Damage: The EIA at Pak Mun was carried out in 1982 when the World Bank accepted EGAT's proposal to allow TEAM to conduct the studies. Since the consultants were chosen and hired through the Office of Environmental Planning and Policy, a Thai Government body, the developer institution can apply pressure to ensure the EIA is to their liking (Vallabhaneni, 2000: 8). This issue, compounded with simple logistics, made for problematic EIAs in the case of Pak Mun. Logistically, the EIA discovered that the original dam site would flood a large portion of national forest, so they proposed to move the dam a few kilometers upstream and lower the dam's overall height. They saw no reason to conduct a new EIA after making these changes because any changes based on environmental concerns alone were considered a major accomplishment within the bank. After completion, the dam's new position was discovered to have serious effects on river life.

First, the dam still flooded a portion of forestland (community forest), violating the bank's own policies on the destruction of cultural property. The World Commission on Dams (2000) report — an independent global evaluation of dams — estimates that at least 40 edible plants, 45 mushroom species, and 10 bamboo species harvested by locals for subsistence and household meals were lost. These plants, overlooked by almost all EIA reports, provided income at local markets and had medicinal usages (*Ibid.*: 4).

From previous dam experiences, the EIA TEAM group knew the stagnant water created by the dam's reservoir would affect the health of local people. Therefore, the EIA made provisions for parasitic river fluke mitigation, but fewer than 30% of the plans for monitoring the disease have been implemented (Vallabhaneni, 2000: 10). Water plants such as hyacinth, which choke up the river, have collected around the dam site and villagers living in the area are experiencing adverse health effects when they use the river. Traditionally, villagers used river water for most of their daily needs —drinking, bathing, and washing laundry — but today the villagers complain of skin rashes whenever they try to use it.

The blasting of the river's natural rapids, particularly a large one named Geng Supurr that now trickles by uneventfully, is another major concern of the villagers. The World Commission on Dams (2000) reports that more than 50 of Pak Mun's natural rapids have been permanently submerged. Villagers know that the rapids

are responsible for oxygenating the water and serve as pools of energy for the fish system. The blasting of rapids around the dam site was extremely questionable since the rapids are technically part of protected forest. The rapids were known to be the habitats of some 20 species of fish, but since no baseline data on fish populations were collected, we cannot be sure of the economic loss due to decline in fish (*Ibid.*: 4).

The severe decline in fish population that has plagued the surrounding community and ecosystem since the dam's completion was the most devastating effect on the Mun River environment. Peak fish migration, when fish swim upstream to spawn, takes place at the start of the rainy season (May to July), a period in which the dam's flood gates are rarely opened (*Ibid.*). Due to the blockage of the dam, fish species have declined in the last few years from the 265 species recorded in the Mun watershed before 1994 to only 96 species found upstream of the dam. Therefore, the dam has affected 169 species of fish, with 56 vanishing through extinction. The annihilation of the way of life of these indigenous fishermen, who depended on the abundant fish for food and income, followed. According to the Project for Ecological Recovery, the number of families obtaining income from Mun River fisheries has declined by 75% and the average daily fish catches for family subsistence have decreased by 30% (Vallabhaneni, 2000: 9). One villager remembers being able to catch 40 to 50 fish, weighing many kilograms, just by laying her nets in the river only a few years ago. The junior author's observation of villagers in 1999 found them spending an entire day fishing, only to come home with two tiny fish. The World Commission on Dams Report (2000: 7) notes that the 1981 EIA produced inadequate baseline information because studies should have covered different seasons over a two-year timeframe and natural fluctuations in abundance of fish should have been monitored. Socioeconomically, the study should have identified the dependency of the local population on fisheries.

Social Harm: For fishermen who had relied on the river their entire lives, the environmental damage created by the dam was dramatic. The problems were compounded by the Thai government, EGAT, and the World Bank's unjust handling of resettlement issues. The World Bank's operational directive on involuntary resettlement stresses that potential resettlement issues should be dispatched with early in the evaluation process. Yet qualitative issues of right to livelihood, sustainable economy, and community structure can often be manipulated to suit the project design, since they are inherently much more difficult to define. At Pak Mun, the physical resettlement of villagers who lost their land to flooding was appraised and compensation was supplied to those affected, but the figures regarding the meaning of "affected" are hotly disputed. World Bank reports claimed 989 families would lose some land and housing, but only 200 would have to resettle because of the dam (Vallabhaneni, 2000: 12). The World Commission on Dams (2000: 3) reported on predictions that the dam and reservoir

would affect 31 villages, with a direct impact on 241 households. Yet it found that 1,700 households actually lost a house, land, or both. Their figures are much higher because they account for houses affected by the loss of fishing income upstream and downstream of the dam. Beyond flooding and loss of income, the overflow of water from the dam has surrounded some villages, creating difficulties for transportation, farming, and general access through their communities. Further, those building and funding the dam have made culturally insensitive arrangements for those truly dislodged by it. For example, in Ban Hoi Hay, a strip of 11 houses built as “compensation” along a patch of highway far from the river, the one-room houses, which are stacked up on stilts, fail to provide for the traditional Thai family (including extended relatives) living under one roof. Water, previously obtained from the nearby river, now comes through unreliable pipes, leaving the villagers without options if the supply is disrupted.

History of the Protest

Villagers along the river witnessed the disintegration of their communities as fish populations declined and difficulties in finding basic sustenance mounted. Able-bodied family members, including young children, left school and the community to find work in big cities like Bangkok. With little formal education, the employment choices of the former fishermen were limited to the most undesirable jobs, such as searching through landfills for recyclable materials. Dissatisfied villagers demanded more for the loss of their land and houses, and after participating in the Assembly of the Poor protest for 99 days in Bangkok, they received some monetary compensation. Yet, as villagers told the junior author, the money was destructive to their community because they were not familiar with managing it. Without land for planting rice or rivers to fish, it was useless. The ideology guiding World Bank development projects such as dams that export energy is that they create a better, more secure future for villagers. Yet, without consultation, villagers are rapidly thrust into a money economy in areas not structured to absorb new employees, such as the rural northeastern area of Thailand around the Mun River.

As the money ran out, villagers became more aware of the struggles they faced due to the lack of fish, inundated farmland, and disintegrating communities. A group of over 5,000 people came together in March 1999 to set up a protest community beside the dam. Between then and March 2000, various villagers from nearby dams came to protest alongside them, and four protest villages were created in response to other dam issues. Instead of compensation, villagers demanded that the dam gates be opened to allow fish to spawn in the river.

Throughout the process, the government marginalized and often misled villagers on the future. The original announcement of the dam, one villager recalls, claimed they would be able to plant two or three rice crops a year (instead of the typical one), although this dam never had irrigation capabilities (World Commis-

sion on Dams, 2000: 1). No villagers the junior author spoke with remember being warned of the negative consequences. Villagers who spoke out against the dam early on (in the form of protest) were physically attacked and restricted by government-hired neighbors.

The World Bank, you have a lot of money, but wherever you invest there is destruction. I want you, if you are building, or developing, or investing in some underdeveloped country, I want you to see the humanity, to not violate the rights of people, to not violate the environment of those who live with nature. You adversely affect their lives, their communities, and cause their culture to crumble. What you have done already, you must fix. Whatever you have destroyed of ours, you must cure it. (Mae Sompong, villager affected by Pak Mun dam, in Vienchang, 2000: 48.)

A Postscript: On July 17, 2000, Thai police under Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai forcibly removed Assembly of the Poor protesters from the area around Government House in Bangkok and arrested 200 of them (South-East Asia Rivers Network, 2000). The villagers responded with a mass hunger strike and both parties met on numerous occasions to discuss the opening of the dam gates, with no resolution. By spring of 2001, a new prime minister had been elected and talks seemed more promising. On May 26, 2001, Prime Minister Thaksin Sninawarta promised to open the Pak Mun gates for a four-month trial period, to determine the impact on fishing. Although representatives from the World Bank visited the dam site and protest village in the spring of 2000, the World Bank has played no role in addressing villagers concerns to date.

The World Bank and Crimes of Globalization

The World Bank has been criticized for being paternalistic, secretive, and counterproductive in terms of any claimed goal of improving people's lives. Specifically, it has been charged with being complicit in policies with genocidal consequences, with exacerbating ethnic conflict, with increasing the gap between rich and poor, with fostering immense ecological and environmental damage, and with the callous displacement of vast numbers of indigenous people in developing countries from their original homes and communities (Rich, 1994: *xiii*, 16, 30, 93, 151). Critics claim that many of the less-developed countries that received World Bank loans are worse off today in terms of poverty, and that the severe austerity measures imposed on borrowing countries, deemed necessary to maximize the chances of Bank loans being repaid, most heavily affect the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population (Johnson, 2000).

The most favored World Bank project has been the building of dams, but even its own experts concede that millions of people have been displaced because of these projects (Caufield, 1996: 12, 73). In many of these projects, resettlement

plans have been nonexistent — violating the Bank’s own guidelines — or have been inadequately implemented. In a notorious case from the 1970s, in which anti-dam protesters in Guatemala were massacred by the military, the World Bank report on the project failed to directly mention the atrocity (*Ibid.*: 207–208; 263). Given such circumstances, claims of criminality have been leveled against the World Bank. At a 1988 World Bank meeting in Berlin, protesters called for the establishment of a Permanent People’s Tribunal to try the World Bank (and the International Monetary Fund) for “crimes against humanity” (Rich, 1994: 9). An American anthropologist characterized the forced resettlement of people in dam-related projects as the worst crime against them, short of killing them (Caufield, 1996: 262). An American biologist characterized the World Bank’s report on the environmental impact of one of its dam projects in a developing country as “fraudulent” and “criminal” (Rich, 1994: 11–12). These allegations are certainly applicable to the Pak Mun dam discussed here.

The World Bank’s complicity in the crimes outlined above is best understood in terms of its criminogenic structure and organization. The historical charge of its charter called upon it to focus on economic developments and considerations, not the other consequences of its policies and practices (*Ibid.*: 199). Throughout its history, it has thus avoided addressing or taking a strong stand on human rights issues (Caufield, 1996: 206). Its focus on a less than well-defined mission of promoting “long-term sustainable growth” has served as a rationale for imposing much short-term suffering and economic losses (Rich, 1994: 189). This orientation has led the World Bank to adopt and apply somewhat one-dimensional economic models to its project-related analyses, with insufficient attention to many other considerations and potentially useful insights from other disciplines (*Ibid.*: 195). Once the projects are initiated, they tend to develop a momentum of their own that often marginalizes or negates any real adjustments in response to reports indicating negative environmental or social effects (Vallabhaneni, 2000: 11). The underlying incentive structure at the Bank encourages “success” with large, costly projects. Bank employees are pressured to make the environmental (as well as social) conditions fit. Like other international financial institutions, the World Bank is structured so that it rewards its personnel for technical proficiency rather than for concerning themselves with the perspectives and needs of the ordinary people of developing countries (Bradlow, 1996: 75).²³

In terms of their career interests, World Bank officials are rewarded for making loans and moving large amounts of money, rather than relative to any human consequences of these loans. Furthermore, World Bank personnel have not been held accountable for the tragic human consequences of their projects (Rich, 1994: 91, 307). All of these institutional factors contribute to a criminogenic environment.

Insofar as the World Bank is not a signatory to international human rights treaties, it has manifested relatively little concern with human rights abuses

(Bradlow, 1996: 63). International financial institutions are, however, subject to the imperatives of international law, and at a minimum are obliged to insure that they do not exacerbate conditions impinging on human rights. Most of the countries with which they have dealings have ratified the U.N.'s Economic Covenants, and accordingly should be bound by its provisions.

Our claim is not that the World Bank adopts policies or makes loan-related decisions with the intent or objective of causing harm. The case can be made that at least some World Bank policymakers sincerely hope to achieve positive results, to foster development and reduce the scope of poverty (Caufield, 1996; Rich, 1994). Furthermore, voices within the World Bank during the recent era have questioned or challenged some World Bank policies and practices that appear to have had harmful consequences. Policies are being examined now through the Bank's internal departments that will more clearly define the Bank's influence (or lack of it) after a project has been completed. This influence may be monetary, such as providing compensation for mistakes made. It may also be based on leverage to pressure governments to take responsibility for a project, leverage that propelled these projects from the start. However, many critics — and even the former chief economist of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz (2000; 2001) — contend that the policies and practices of the World Bank and other international financial institutions have adopted the interests of the advanced industrialized nations and the Wall Street financial community as their highest priority. Without checks in the Bank's procedures, it can continue to encourage, fund, and assess development projects that do not support the goals of a country's people (yet continuously prop up powerful government and big business). Ideologically, the World Bank creates and contributes to the general concept of "development" by funding only a certain kind of development. For the past 50 years, the World Bank has invested in large, export-oriented projects such as pipelines and dams that cause severe environmental upheaval and penalize the very people they claim they wish to help: the poor.

A characteristic of significant forms of white-collar crime (including much corporate crime) is that the harm involved is a consequence, not a specific objective, of certain policy choices and practices. As with other forms of white-collar crime, the harmful (or illegal) activity associated with the crimes of international financial institutions occurs within the context of productive, legal activity; it is a byproduct of efforts to achieve gain, avoid loss, or advance some other legitimate organizational objective, with such objectives taking precedence over other considerations. Legitimate organizations do respond at times to claims that they are engaging in harmful (or illegal) activities, as in the case of the World Bank. Yet such responses may simply be cynical (purely for public relations purposes), strategic (to maximize chances of achieving major objectives), political (in deference to internal coalitions, or as necessary compromises), or sincere (authentically concerned with pursuing the most morally and ethically defensible policies). With organizations such as the World Bank, a complex combination of responses is surely involved.

In sum, we do not contend that the specific intent and purpose of the policies of the World Bank is to do harm. However, we hold that the World Bank's mode of operation is intrinsically criminogenic and that it functions undemocratically; its key deliberations are carried out behind a veil of secrecy and it is insufficiently accountable to any truly independent entity. At a minimum, the World Bank is criminally negligent when it: (1) fails to adequately explore or take into account the impact of its loans for major projects on indigenous peoples; (2) adopts and implements policies specifically at odds with the protocols of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and subsequent covenants; or (3) operates in a manner at least hypothetically at odds with international and state law.

The Social Movement Against International Financial Institutions

The anti-globalization movement has targeted the World Bank, the WTO, and the IMF. The movement includes a broad range of constituencies — “an effervescent and troublesome cauldron of peasants, women, environmentalists, human rights activists, indigenous people, religious activists, and other individuals” (Rajagopal, 2000: 539). Each has a somewhat different agenda. Some protesters have invoked the notion of “crime” in an attempt to characterize the activities of the international financial institutions.²⁴ In general, though, the anti-globalization protests in Seattle, Washington, D.C., Prague, and Quebec have been animated by a concern with the alleged harmful consequences of globalization and the activities of the international financial institutions, rather than with claims of criminality. Our premise is that successfully imposing a label of “criminal” on some activities of international financial institutions could broaden the appeal of the anti-globalization movement and lend support to the case for formally adjudicating these claims in an appropriate international body.

The anti-globalization protest movement may have influenced international financial institutions to undertake internal reforms and to incorporate matters such as poverty and environmental protection into their agendas (Gitlin, 2000; Rajagopal, 2000). Evidence from recent news stories suggests that protests in Seattle, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere have had an impact.²⁵ Globalization and its effects were the top agenda item in the Millennium Meeting of world leaders at the United Nations in September 2000 (Crossette, 2000b).²⁶ It remained to be seen, however, whether the powerful nations of the world would seriously attempt to address the criminality inherent in the activities of the international financial institutions, or would principally direct their efforts toward deflecting and confronting protests against such activity.

Conclusion

Globalization, as defined here, is an increasingly important dimension of the context within which crime of all types occurs. We have argued that the World Bank can be viewed as engaging in a noteworthy form of criminal activity and that

it is necessary and useful to view some of its policies and practices this way. Raising consciousness about the criminal dimensions of the activities of international financial institutions ideally fosters the application of comparative criminological frameworks to these phenomena and directs activist responses to it on behalf of those most harmed by present trends.

The term “globalization” is elusive and multifaceted; although globalization is a real and dramatic intensification of existing international patterns, we need not accept its current direction as inevitable. Critics of present global developments call for the development of popular accountability on the part of national and global institutions, for more public control over these institutions, for a true internationalism, and for just alternatives to the criminal activities of international financial institutions (Crossette, 2000a; Frank, 2000: 16, 19; Hutton and Giddens, 2000; Lemisch, 2000: 10). Ideally, external pressures on international financial institutions such as the World Bank will lead to substantive internal reforms, or to the demise of such institutions.

What is the role of law in responding to the crimes of globalization? Although law and legal forms play a central role in facilitating the global exchange of persons, capital, and culture, the place of justice in this world order is not clear (Silbey, 1997). Advancing human rights demands its own law, one that is independent of national law and sometimes deliberately at odds with states (Teubner, 1997; Williams, 1990: 660). A movement on behalf of indigenous peoples seeks to establish a universal declaration of such rights, quite independent of the law established by conquering colonial powers. The United States (along with other leading Western powers) has claimed a commitment to human rights and has challenged other countries on human rights issues, but this posture is hypocritical given its own dismal historical record on the implementation of such rights (Hahnel, 2000: 41). In a parallel vein, global business and finance engage in hypocrisy by campaigning against many forms of regulatory law in Western developed nations, while calling for adherence to “the rule of law” in developing nations (Greider, 1997: 34). The World Bank’s perspective on law has been market-focused and has failed to recognize the protection of human rights and of settled indigenous communities as legitimate purposes of law (McCorquodale and Fairbrother, 1999: 755).

In one interpretation, the rule of law can play a role in allowing the disadvantaged to protect themselves from abuse (*Ibid.*: 753). Law can thus serve a positive function by insisting that human rights be incorporated into government policies and those of international financial institutions, demanding the inclusion of human rights in international treaties, and requiring transnational corporations to conduct themselves in line with international human rights law (*Ibid.*: 766). Legal prohibitions could be imposed on World Bank loans for projects with demonstrably harmful consequences (Greider, 2000a). Americans have the sovereign power to reform legislation at state and national levels, to impose codes of conduct on

corporations, and to impose rules on U.S.-based transnationals (Greider, 2000b). Law, then, can be seen as part of the problem or part of the solution in connection with the oppressive and exploitative dimensions of globalization.

This account of the suffering of the Pak Mun dam protesters documents the criminality claim directed at the World Bank; it also serves as a cautionary tale for a globalized future. Demonstrably harmful policies and practices of the World Bank can be appropriately labeled as crime, more fully understood by applying a criminological perspective, and responded to by activist protest and engagement.

NOTES

1. This article was inspired by a juxtaposition of the authors' intellectual and activist concerns. The senior author was influenced by the progressive political initiatives that emerged in the 1960s and by activist experiences during that era (i.e., the Civil Rights campaign in Mississippi in 1964 and antiwar protests from 1965 on). His most recent intellectual, or scholarly, interests have focused on white-collar crime, state crime, state/corporate crime, genocide, and elite deviance. The junior author has been strongly influenced by a summer in China and eight months living in Thailand (with trips to Cambodia and Laos). During her time in Thailand, she lived among and became actively involved with anti-dam protesters, landfill scavengers, and traditional fishermen. She has participated in anti-globalization demonstrations in Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia, and has produced an honors thesis on the ACORN antipoverty movement, with which she worked.

2. Recently, in the context of his magisterial exploration of the role of law in a globalized world, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1995: 359) has called for bringing historical capitalism to trial before a world tribunal, to be held accountable for its complicity in the massive violation of human rights.

3. For an especially broad, current survey of the issues surrounding globalization, see Held and McGrew (2000).

4. In the most inclusive sense, globalization is many centuries old, going back at least to the 15th-century voyages of discovery and the gradual emergence of a world economic system (Hay and Marsh, 2000; Valaskakis, 1999). If one adopts a more restrictive conception of globalization, to refer to the establishment of formal, international institutions to coordinate international trade, finance, and economic activity, such institutions were established in the first half of the 20th century (Thurow, 2000). In another interpretation, globalization truly begins from the 1970s on, with the ending of the cooperative economic system established by the Bretton Woods Conference after World War II, and with the liberalization of world financial markets (Hay and Marsh, 2000: 14, *fn.* 2).

5. Theorists of globalization are somewhat divided on the extent to which recent developments do or do not establish a fundamentally new institutional order in the world (Dunne, 1999: 18). For a thorough discussion of globalization very much in line with our own views, see Greider (1997). In the final section of the book, Greider (1997: 335) observes, "...the global system tears at the social fabric — upending the peasantry in Thailand, attacking the social state of Germany, suppressing human freedoms on behalf of commerce in Indonesia or China, threatening the foundations of social cohesion of Japan, deepening the social deterioration in the United States and elsewhere."

6. Chase-Dunn et al. (2000: 78) observe that "*economic globalization* means greater integration in the organization of production, distribution, and consumption of commodities in the world economy.... *Political globalization* is conceptualized as the institutional form of global and interregional political/military organizations (including 'economic' ones such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and their strengths relative to the strengths of national states and other smaller political actors in the world-system."

7. Globalization leads to homogenization, polarization, and hybridization, with the cultural consequences of globalization being diverse and complex (Holton, 2000; Mazlich, 1999).

8. One commentator suggests that the most striking feature of contemporary globalization is the runaway quality of global finance, which appears remarkably independent of traditional constraints of information transfer, national regulation, industrial productivity, or “real” wealth in any particular society, country, or region (Appadurai, 1999).

9. Among the most pertinent general questions and themes pertaining to globalization are: (1) Can poorer countries be helped without compelling them to raise standards on wages, working conditions, and the environment? (2) Can high wages and full employment be maintained in more affluent countries without hindering the economic development of poorer countries? (3) Is protectionism — in either the richer or the poorer countries — ever justified? (4) Can the inherent conflict between economic growth and environmental protection be satisfactorily resolved? (5) Is the notion of effective international regulation of corporations and investors realistic? (6) Should the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund be reformed or abolished? (Landy, 2000: 13).

10. Critics of globalization must be sensitive to paternalistic attacks on policies and practices that appear to be repugnant in Western terms, but that may be experienced as a “lesser evil” by poor people in developing countries. For example, conditions in developing country sweatshops producing products such as upscale clothing for affluent Americans are often miserable, with wages of 60 cents an hour, but the alternative for sweatshop laborers may be no work, or even more oppressive working conditions, such as prostitution (Kristof and WuDunn, 2000; Kaufman and Gonzalez, 2001). It does not necessarily follow from consciousness of such realities, however, that one should refrain from exposing and criticizing policies and practices that are inherently unjust and harmful.

11. The World Bank itself reports that the number of people living on less than a dollar a day had increased to 200 million in the 1990s, and that over 80 countries suffered a decline in per capita income in the recent era (Levinson, 1999: 21).

12. Silbey (1997: 219) regards “globalization as a form of postmodern colonialism, where the worldwide distribution and consumption of cultural products removed from the contexts of their production and interpretation is organized through legal devices to constitute a form of domination.” McDonald’s is an especially conspicuous symbol of this new form of domination. Similarly, Santos (1998) suggests that globalization is best thought of as the imposition of the agendas of particular entities and countries upon the rest of the globe, rather than authentic globalization. Neumann (2000: 89–90) observes, “our current global system is a process of colonization. It not only creates organizations like the WTO that replace national sovereignty with corporate interests, it also displaces human ways of relating to each other and substitutes monetary relationships in which human worth is measured in dollars.”

13. A number of presidents of sociological associations have recently used their presidential addresses to call for more sociological attention to globalization and to some of the harms attendant to it. Susan Silbey (1997: 209), in a Presidential Address to the Law & Society Association, called for a sociology of globalization. She observed, “while it is clear that law occupies a prominent place in the global society — because most of the global exchange of persons, capital, and culture is managed through legal forms — it is not clear where the place of justice is in this new world order.” Francesca M. Cancian (1996), in a Presidential Address to the Pacific Sociological Association, called for a sociological commitment to reducing inequality, a renewal of the commitment of earlier sociologists to social reform, and a more activist research agenda addressing nonacademic audiences and their concerns. Too much present sociology, she stated, follows a pure science model. Evelyn Glenn (2000: 16), in a 1999 Presidential Address to the Society for the Study of Social Problems, noted the great impact of globalization on social existence and the need for sociologists to address new forms of inequality that result, with justice now having to be challenged on a transnational level. Glenn highlighted the role of supranational entities such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund in contributing to conditions of deprivation and inequality on a global scale: “[T]he new global economy is contributing to new forms of race, class, and gender

inequality by widening economic disparities, displacing people from land which provided self-sufficiency and eroding accustomed ways of life that can't be addressed in a strictly domestic context. Struggles for economic justice and human rights thus need to be moved to the transnational level." Pamela Roby (1998), in her 1997 Society for the Study of Social Problems Presidential Address, also argued that sociologists must become actively engaged in promoting movement toward a just world.

14. As Noam Chomsky (2000: 29) has observed, "debt is not valid if it's essentially imposed by force. The Third World debt is odious debt."

15. For Caufield (1996: 338), "there is much truth in the saying that development — at least in the monopolistic, formulaic, foreign-dominated, arrogant, and failed form that we have known — is largely a matter of poor people in rich countries giving money to rich people in poor countries."

16. Freda Adler (1995), in her 1995 Presidential Address to the American Society of Criminology, observed that new paradigms are called for within the global village and in the information age. Margaret Zahn (1999), in her 1998 Presidential Address to the American Society of Criminology, calls for criminology to expand its scope, testing its propositions in new contexts. She noted that the international community requires increasing attention, and that it has established standards based on principles of human rights that may transcend national laws. William McDonald (1997: 7) has called for a global criminology, separate from a comparative and international criminology. He suggests that "the phrase, global criminology, should be reserved for...the study of crime and justice problems related to the compression of the globe." Mark Findlay (1999), in *The Globalization of Crime*, argues that the globalized economy of today has produced a new context within which the issue of crime must be understood.

17. Recent issues of *Social Justice*, for example, have explored the intersections between globalization, neoliberalism, militarism, crime, and criminal justice (Weiss, 2000; Kirk and Okazawa-Rey, 2000). Ian Taylor (1999), writing in a recent issue of *Crime, Law, and Social Change*, argues that the rise of the (free) market society provides a new context for a critical criminology.

18. The familiar term "crime" has been defined in quite different ways, and an ongoing debate within criminology has focused on the most appropriate way to define this key term. E.H. Sutherland's (1940) conception of white-collar crime — incorporating violations of civil and administrative, as well as criminal law — was one influential challenge to more traditional legalistic definitions of crime.

19. Herman Schwendinger and Julia Schwendinger (1970, 1977) and Larry Tifft and Dennis Sullivan (1980, 1998) have promoted a humanistic conception of crime — as social harm, as a violation of human rights — while Stanley Cohen (1993) has characterized crime somewhat more narrowly as directly harmful violations of widely recognized human rights. Still others — e.g., Raymond Michalowski and Ronald Kramer (1987) and David Kauzlarich, Ronald Kramer, and Brian Smith (1992) — have advanced conceptions of crime based upon United Nations codes or international law.

20. Conservative and mainstream criminologists have largely dismissed or ignored this call for an alternative approach to defining crime, but even some of those with a progressive orientation contend that stretching the definition of crime as broadly as the Schwendingers propose to do is either counterproductive and unhelpful, or transforms criminology into a moral crusade (Cohen, 1993; Green and Ward, 2000). Braithwaite (1985) has criticized humanistic definitions of crime as irrelevant to people who do not share the applicable morality.

21. State-corporate crime is crime committed as a cooperative endeavor between the state and private-sector corporations, such as exploitation by multinational corporations in developing countries. Finance crime is crime committed on behalf of, or in the context of, major financial institutions, such as frauds by thrifts and manipulations of securities markets.

22. The pronunciation of the river is Pak Moon, although in most of the literature it is spelled Pak Mun.

23. In the case of Thailand, the government elite adopted a policy to deliberately undermine rural peasants. "The World Bank supported this strategy with development loans to finance infrastructure — roads, dams, electrical generation — and the industrialization of agricultural production" (Greider, 1997: 352).

24. Conversely, a small number of protesters in Seattle engaged in vandalism and were accordingly accused of engaging in criminal activity. In response, an activist collective communique states: "We contend that property destruction is not a violent activity unless it destroys lives or causes pain in the process. Private property, especially corporate private property, is in itself infinitely more violent than any action taken against it" (Neumann, 2000: 91).

25. For example, some headlines include the following: "World Trade Officials Pledging to Step Up Efforts Against AIDS: Growing Sensitivity to Criticism as Protests Ebb" (Kahn and Kifner, 2000); "World Bank Criticizes Itself over Chinese Project Near Tibet" (Sanger and Kahn, 2000); "World Bank Cites Itself in Study of Africa's Bleak Performance" (Kahn, 2000c); and "I.M.F. Is Expected to Ease Demands on Debtor Nations" (Kahn, 2000d).

26. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan (Crossette, 2000b: 4) observes, "it has been said that arguing against globalization is like arguing against the laws of gravity. But that does not mean we should accept a law that allows only heavyweights to survive. On the contrary: We must make globalization an engine that lifts people out of hardship and misery, not a force that holds them down." It is not unreasonable to suppose that the concerns expressed by Mr. Annan, and surely shared by many world leaders, have been influenced or activated by the protests. Yet some anti-WTO activists have expressed concern with the U.N.'s own vulnerability to manipulation by corporations and other elite powers (*Ibid.*). The U.N. is certain to be buffeted by countervailing pressures on the globalization issue in the years ahead.

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