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Earl Conteh-Morgan: Collective Political Violence: Study Guide

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EARL CONTEH-MORGAN: COLLECTIVE POLITICAL VIOLENCE: STUDY GUIDE, 2005

Steven Alan Samson

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PSYCHOCULTURAL APPROACH TO EXPLAINING COLLECTIVE POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Outline

- A. INTRODUCTION (69)
 - 1. **Relative Deprivation**: The feeling or perception of a gap or discrepancy between what people consider their rights, dues, or expectations, and what they have actually attained.
- B. THE CONCEPT OF AGGRESSION (70-71)
 - 1. The **Frustration-Aggression** Studies (John Dollard and other Yale Scholars, 1939) did not explicitly involve relative deprivation due to lack of comparison.
 - 2. Definition of **Frustration**: "An interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response at its proper time in the behavior sequence."
 - a. Example: Strong relationship between lynching in the American South and specific indicators of economic performance, such as the per acre value of cotton. Assumption: Frustration is displaced onto others.
 - 3. Problem of Defining **Aggression**: Action or behavior intended to inflict physical
 - a. For the Yale scholars, aggression is "behavior whose goal-response is the inflicting of injury on some object or person."
 - b. Author's working definition: "Action or behavior intended to inflict physical or psychological harm, or destroy property." [This suggests a connection with **envy** as a motivator and **scapegoating** as an expression, which calls to mind the **seven deadly sins**, which are pride, envy, anger, avarice, sadness, gluttony, and lust]
 - 4. The **goal of aggression** is self-preservation or self-enhancement by the individuals or groups who perceive themselves to be threatened, challenged, or devalued.
 - 5. Types of Aggression
 - a. **Instrumental** (incentive-motivated; defensive or self-enhancement violence): Aims at acquiring other non-injury-related goals, such as material goods, prestige, or social approval
 - b. **Hostile** (annoyance-motivated; affective or emotional aggression): Aims at injury of the target.
- C. RELATIVE DEPRIVATION (71-75)
 - 1. **James Chowning Davies**: "Toward a Theory of Revolution" (1962)

A revolutionary state of mind requires the continued, even habitual but dynamic expectation of greater opportunity to satisfy basic needs, which may range from merely physical (Food, clothing, shelter, health, and safety from bodily harm) to social (the affectional ties of family and friends) to the need for equal dignity and justice. But the necessary additional ingredient is a persistent, unrelenting threat to the satisfaction of these needs: not a threat which actually returns people to a state of sheer survival but which puts them in the mental state where they believe they will not be able to satisfy one or more basic needs. . . . The crucial factor is the vague or specific fear that ground gained over a long period of time will be quickly lost. This fear does not generate if there is continued opportunity to satisfy continually emerging needs; it generates when the existing government suppresses or is blamed for suppressing such opportunity.

Some Conclusions:

The notion that revolutions need both a period of rising expectations and a succeeding period in which they are frustrated qualifies substantially the main Marxian notion that revolutions occur after progressive degradation and the de Tocqueville notion that they occur when conditions are improving. By putting de Tocqueville before Marx but without abandoning either theory, we are better able to plot the antecedents of at least the disturbances here described [Dorr's Rebellion of 1842, Russian Revolution of 1917, Egyptian Revolution of 1952, Leisler's Rebellion of 1689, the American Revolution of 1776, and the French Revolution of 1789].

- a. **J-curve Hypothesis** ["rising expectations followed by their effective frustration"]: Collective violence is a consequence of shattered hopes and aspirations, as well as the individual's fear of losing what had already been gained.
2. **Ivo and Rosalind Feierabend**
 - a. Want-Formation vs. Want-Satisfaction
 - b. "Systematic Frustration" and the **Modernization Process**
3. **Ted Gurr**
 - a. Value Expectations vs. Value Capabilities
4. Patterns of Relative Deprivation Determine Magnitude of Frustration
 - a. **Decremental** Deprivation [step-wise reduction]: Individuals are angered because of the loss of what they previously had or thought they could have; value capabilities stagnate while value expectations are perceived to decline.
 - 1) Associated with disruption of **traditional society**
 - b. **Aspirational** Deprivation: Value capabilities remain relatively constant while expectations increase
 - 1) Associated with the demands of African Americans in the 1960s and "the revolution of rising expectations"
 - c. **Progressive** Deprivation: A "substantial and simultaneous increase in expectations and decrease in capabilities."
 - a. **J-curve Hypothesis**
5. **Three Mediating Factors**
 - a. **Normative Justifications** typically involve traditions (or lack of traditions) of violent conflict or ideological commitment or beliefs concerning regime legitimacy/illegitimacy
 - b. **Utilitarian Justifications** involve tactical cost-benefit calculations
 - c. **Balance of Coercive Forces** helps to determine the duration of violent conflict between regime and dissidents. If the balance is even, strife will be greatest. If it is highly unequal, one side is either totally defeated or goes underground. [NOTE: With regard to an insurrection such as that faced in Iraq, the rule of thumb is that there should be a 10:1 ratio of forces protecting and stabilizing the regime vs. the insurrectionary forces]
6. Direct Appeal of Psychological Theories of Collective Political Violence
 - a. **Aristotle**: When citizens of a political system fail to realize the level of justice (or constitutional rights) they expect and aspire to, they resort to sedition. This is an argument based on relative deprivation.
 - b. **Alexis de Tocqueville**: A grievance that is patiently endured so long as it seems beyond redress comes to appear intolerable once the possibility of removing it crosses men's minds.
7. Longings for Justice and Equity Is Related to the Rising Demands of Deprived/ Marginalized Social Groups
 - a. Violence does not necessarily follow
 - b. Gurr: Frustration must first be politicized
8. Alternatives to Public Action or Aggression
 - a. **Displacement** of Frustration-Aggression onto a **Scapegoat** [Here René

- Girard's concepts of mimetic desire and mimetic rivalry is helpful]
 - b. Domestic Conflict or Domestic Neglect
- D. RELATIVE DEPRIVATION AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR (76-79)
 - 1. Tariff of Abomination (Tariff Act of 1828)
 - 2. Panic of 1837
 - 3. Loss of Southern Political Influence
 - 4. Political-Economic Sectionalism
 - 5. Divisive Elections
 - a. Presidential Election of 1824 (Jackson, Adams, Crawford, and Clay)
 - 6. Presidential Election of 1860 (Lincoln, Douglas, Breckenridge)
 - a. Democratic Split: **Dred Scott v. Sandford** (1857)
 - b. Abraham Lincoln
 - 7. **Causes of the War**
 - a. Economic Differences: Different geographical conditions contributed to rivalries over protective tariffs, national banking, and slavery
 - b. Quarrel over the Nature of the Union: compact of the states (allowing for secession) vs. indivisible nation
 - c. Clash of Worldviews and Civilizations: small aristocracy of influential planter families vs. more democratic and dynamic (industrializing) society
- E. RELATIVE DEPRIVATION AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE IN THE UNITED STATES (80-81)
 - 1. 1960s
 - 2. Catalysts
 - a. **Brown v. Board of Education** (1954)
 - b. Rosa Parks
 - c. Sit-ins
 - 3. Organizations
 - a. SNCC
 - b. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC
 - c. CORE and NAACP
 - d. Black Panthers
 - 4. Voting Rights Act of 1965
 - 5. Major Rebellions
- F. PSYCHOCULTURAL FACTORS AND ONGOING CONFLICTS (81-83)
 - 1. Northern Ireland: **Parades**
 - a. Battle of Boyne, 1689
 - b. Aggravation of Differences: The parades reinforce cultural solidarity within groups, but at the same time aggravate out-group competition and prolonged conflict.
 - 2. Perception and Misperception
 - a. Older grievances become indexed to newer ones
 - b. Past massacres (1640s and 1650s)
 - 3. Non-Negotiable Issues
 - 4. Summary
 - a. Similar to explanations that focus on innate (genetic) or environmental factors
- G. INNATE VERSUS ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLANATIONS (83-86)
 - 1. Genetic or Instinctivist Theories
 - a. **Sigmund Freud: *The Ego and the Id***
 - 1) Thanatos vs. Eros
 - 2) Pleasure Principle [cf. Jeremy Bentham's felicific calculus]
 - 3) Displacement of Thanatos through aggression
 - b. **Konrad Lorenz: *On Aggression***
 - 1) Release of Pent-Up Energy
 - 2) Intra-Specific Aggression
 - c. Criticisms

- 1) Freud, Lorenz, and **Edward O. Wilson** [founder of sociobiology] have been criticized for generalizing their observations of insects and animals to human beings
- 2) They need to Distinguish Defensive vs. Offensive Aggression
- 3) Sports (seen in terms of displacement) can be a source of Aggression
2. Environmental Theories
 - a. **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**
 - b. Behaviorists [e.g., B. F. Skinner]
 - 1) Reinforcement of behavior
 - c. **Erich Fromm**
 - 1) Life-Affirming Societies
 - 2) Non-Destructive Aggressive Societies
 - 3) Destructive Societies
 - 4) Criticism of Genetic and Instinctivist Theories
- H. ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES (86-89)
 1. Cultural Imperialism
 - a. Tournaments
 - b. Head-Hunting
 2. Construction of Ethnicities
 - a. Hutus vs. Tutsis
 - b. Yonomami
 3. Revenge Behavior and Feuding
 - a. Melanesians
 - b. Institutionalization of Conflict
 - c. Edward Hall [author of *The Silent Language* and *The Hidden Dimension*]
 4. Cross-Cultural Negotiations
 - a. Raymond Cohen
 5. Reciprocity
 - a. Bonds of Indebtedness
 - b. Effects of Extreme Conditions
 - c. The Ik [Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People*]
 6. **Fraternal Interest Groups**
 - a. **Polygyny** [marriage to multiple wives]
 - b. Keith Otterbein
 7. Peaceful Societies

Review

James Chowning Davies	fraternal interest groups	polygyny
Erich Fromm	Sigmund Freud	Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Konrad Lorenz	Ted Gurr	the Feierabends
Aristotle	Tocqueville	causes of the Civil War
<i>Dred Scott v. Sandford</i>	J-curve hypothesis	the Yale scholars
relative deprivation	decremental, aspirational, and progressive relative deprivation	aggression
parades in Northern Ireland	frustration	