

Emile Durkheim Ideas on Terrorism Essay

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On September 11, 2001 two hijacked airplanes crashed into the World Trade Towers in New York City. Another jetliner crashed into the Pentagon in Washington D.C. This is a day that no American will ever forget. People could not understand why these people planned and followed through these horrible acts. In the following paper I will use the ideas of Emile Durkheim to explain not only the acts of the terrorists but also the reactions from the American people. People wept for the victims they had never met, pride in America was stronger than ever. What Durkheim processes must have been in place for all these situations to occur? I will start with what the terrorists did. The negative feeling they had against the American people did not develop overnight. These feelings had been simmering for a long period of time to form what Durkheim would call their "collective consciousness". A collective consciousness is the collective representations and sentiments that guide and bind together any social group. (Allan p. 109) They committed suicide. Durkheim would call this Altruistic Suicide. The people who committed these horrible acts had a high group attachment. They took their own life for what they thought was to the benefit of their own group. Durkheim says that when there is high group attachment the life of the individual is not as meaningful. The group becomes his or her only reality. The terrorists obtained their effervescence or emotional energy from a common misinterpretation of their religious text, the Koran. They believed they were doing

what they needed to do to please their GOD, Allah. Allah and the misinterpreted Islamic faith became their symbol that gave them the necessary effervescence to not only kill millions..... middle of paperocial solidarity can be used to explain the actions and reactions. People are drawn together by a common idea that is made “bigger than life” by the presence of symbols, which promote and create effervescence. Works Cited Allan, Kenneth, 1951. Classical Sociological Theory. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press Emerson, Steven (2004) “Third public hearing of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.” National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. Retrieved September 17, 2011 http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing3/witness_emerson.htm Keith, Toby (2002) “Courtesy of the Red White and Blue (The Angry American).” Sing 365.com Retrieved September 17, 2011. <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/angry-american-courtesy-of-the-red-white-and-blue-live-version-lyrics-toby-keith/9ac9db3b7e5c91bd48256c8d00296a2c>

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