How Disaster Becomes Collective Trauma: Violence and Social Order from a Durkheimian Perspective

Dmitrii A. Bochkov

Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russian Federation

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3228-0708

Рекомендация для цитирования:
Бочков Д.А. (2025) Как катастрофа становится коллективной травмой: насилие и социальный порядок в дюркгеймианской перспективе. *Социология власти*, 37 (3): 97-125
EDN:

For citation:
Bochkov D.A. (2025) How Disaster Becomes Collective Trauma: Violence and Social Order from a Durkheimian Perspective. *Sociology of Power*, 37 (3): 97-125

Поступила в редакцию: 26.04.2025; прошла рецензирование: 04.06.2025; принята в печать: 29.06.2025
Received: 26.04.2025; Revised: 04.06.2025; Accepted: 29.06.2025

Abstract: This article examines the genesis of a foundational concept in the sociology of trauma, Kai Erikson's theory of *collective trauma*, forged within the context of post-war American sociology of disaster. This field presented a curious paradox: rather than observing social collapse, scholars frequently documented a surge of community solidarity and altruism in the wake of disaster, phenomena they interpreted through a Durkheimian lens. Erikson's seminal study of the 1972 Buffalo Creek flood revealed a profound unraveling of the social fabric — a condition he theorized as *collective trauma*. This distinction between *disaster* and *trauma* was achieved through two maneuvers. The first was the importation of a subject of violence from the psychological conceptualization of trauma — a framework that, as the article demonstrates, was itself deeply influenced by socio-economic factors concerning victim compensation. In the case of the Buffalo Creek dam collapse, this agent of violence was the coal mining company responsible for the dam's maintenance. The second maneuver was the resuscitation of Durkheim's original notion of violence as anomie — a pathological dissolution of norms and morality that unfolds during a collapse of the social order. While other disaster sociologists had moved away from this understanding of violence, which evokes a Hobbesian state of nature, Erikson used this Durkheimian lens to conceptually articulate the aftermath of a disaster marked by an unusually high number of casualties for its time, which resulted not in solidarity but in the total disintegration of the community.

Keywords: collective trauma, PTSD, disaster, violence, Durkheim

Как катастрофа становится коллективной травмой: насилие и социальный порядок в дюркгеймианской перспективе

Дмитрий А. Бочков

Институт этнологии и антропологии РАН, Москва, Российская Федерация
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3228-0708

Резюме: В статье прослеживается генезис одной из первых социологических концепций травмы — модели «коллективной травмы» Кая Эриксона, разработанной в рамках послевоенной американской социологии катастрофы (sociology of disaster). Социологическое понимание травмы, которое наследует психологической концептуализации, сформировавшейся в исследованиях боевой психической травмы и ПТСР, анализируется через различение социального и (квази)естественного порядка. Парадокс социологии катастрофы заключается в том, что ее представители часто наблюдали в катастрофах не распад, а всплеск социальной солидарности и альтруизма, который описывался в дюркгеймианских терминах. Эриксон, напротив, зафиксировал в случае с катастрофой в Буффало-Крик (1972) масштабные разрушения социальных связей, для объяснения которых и разработал концепт «коллективной травмы». Теоретическое различение Эриксоном «катастрофы» и «травмы» стало возможным благодаря двум взаимосвязанным ходам. Во-первых, это импорт субъекта насилия из психологической концептуализации травмы, которая, как показано в статье, всегда находилась под влиянием социально-экономических факторов, связанных с выплатами пострадавшим. В случае с прорывом дамбы в Буффало-Крик роль субъекта насилия играла угледобывающая компания, ответственная за обслуживание дамбы. Во-вторых, это реанимация изначального дюркгеймовского понимания насилия как аномии, патологического распада норм и морали, который разворачивается во время нарушения социального порядка. В то время как другие представители социологии катастрофы ушли от такого понимания насилия, которое отсылает к гоббсианскому естественному порядку, Эриксон использовал его для концептуального описания катастрофы с нехарактерно высоким для своего времени числом жертв, которая привела к тотальному распаду сообщества.

Ключевые слова: коллективная травма, ПТСР, катастрофа, насилие, Дюркгейм

Introduction

There is an intrinsic relationship between the concepts of «violence» and «trauma»: trauma is often presented as a direct consequence of violence. In addition, as demonstrated by numerous studies on combat mental trauma and PTSD, violence may also be the result of trauma. These concepts are intricately linked as they reside at the crossroads of various fields, yet they remain firmly grounded in the realm of everyday language, characterized by its many contexts that often appear endlessly ambiguous1. Confronting epistemological deadlocks that may be acknowledged (or ignored) when dealing with the concepts of 'violence' and 'trauma' often promises progress in the realms of knowledge, ethics, and politics. This is not surprising, as 'violence' is traditionally classified as an ethical category, and discussions regarding violence have always included considerations of the ethical implications that accompany the precise definition of these concepts. It is relevant to recall the famous idealistic thesis of Simone Veil from her essay 'Power of Words,' which she wrote after returning from the Spanish Civil War: the clarity of thought and the definition of words through precise analysis not only captures reality more effectively but also saves human lives. (Weil 2005, p. 242). Many violence and trauma theorists have saving human lives seems to come to the fore. This humanistic impulse is hard to judge, but if this precise definition words are not given so much attention, then used concepts begin to blur.

Classical understanding of violence implies intentionaity, an intentional act, which is treated as evil. For example, the conventional example of violence in sociology is crime: robbery, murder, assault in public places. Sociological studies of domestic violence, in fact, are based on the classic understanding of violence: behind the acts of violence are specific criminals or violent subjects with malicious intent. Intentionality, as a rule, connects the concept of «violence» with the concept of «trauma» in mundane understanding: if there is a subject of violence (criminal), that is, the subject of trauma (victim). This logic

1 Hannah Arendt complained about this: because violence is perceived as an obvious fact that does not require a special definition, «in the latest edition of the encyclopedia of social sciences «violence» did not even deserve a separate article» (Arendt 2014, p. 13). The terminological uncertainty makes it difficult for the concept to interact with other concepts, and for the researcher to draw boundaries between them. As examples of concepts that can merge with each other, Arendt gives the following terms, which, remarkably, are an integral part of everyday language: «power», «power», «force», «authority» and «violence» (Ibid, p. 50-51)

works in the opposite way: if there is a victim, then somewhere there must be a criminal. Sociologists who introduced the idea of 'cultural trauma' in the late 1990s maintain the link between violence, which enables the identification of the subject, and the associated identity issue: (J. Alexander, R. Ayerman, H. Bolzer, P. Stumcka): is an image that exists in the narrative of a given community and is labelled as «trauma». As Jeffrey Alexander writes: In creating a compelling trauma narrative, it is critical to establish the identity of the perpetrator — the "antagonist." Who actually injured the victim? Who caused the trauma? This issue is always a matter of symbolic and social construction» (Alexander 2012, p. 23).

While cultural sociologists aim to define the limits of 'cultural trauma', the concept is shaped by numerous discourses. Simultaneously, the boundary separating traumatic from non-traumatic experiences is becoming less distinct. The concept of 'cultural trauma' has faced valid criticism since its inception (Kansteiner 2004) and continues to do so today (Britt, Hammett 2024). Alexander himself emphasizes that «cultural trauma» is an empirical scientific concept which along with this, it «clarifies the emerging area of social responsibility for political action» (Alexander 2012, c. 7). It is therefore not surprising that socially responsible or irresponsible political actors, in turn, to exploit the concept for its own purposes, and the constructivist nature of «cultural trauma» certainly contributes to this. However, some critics (Haslam, McGrath 2020) argue that the blurring of the concept of «traumas» is not a problem specifically of psychology, sociology or, for example, cultural studies, because «trauma» does not belong to these scientific languages. In fact, this is a repetition of the thesis that was voiced by historian Dominik LaCarpa: «no genre or discipline does not «possess» trauma as a problem and cannot set its final limits» (LaCapra 2001, p. 69). It is more about the problem (or features) of the very concept, which during the 20th century passed through a series of structural transformations: from somatic trauma — to mental, from extraordinary trauma status — to ordinary or routine, from the direct impact of trauma — to the indirect, from the individual trauma — to the collective.

In addition, there are sociological interpretations of violence that do not require the identification of a violent subject with intention, making the definition of such a subject quite complex. The concept of 'structural violence,' as proposed by sociologist Johan Galtung, is often the first that comes to mind. Galtung asserts that violence is intrinsic to the very nature of social structures or institutions that create inequality. This form of violence, which raises questions regarding its subjectivity and intentionality is impersonal in its conceptualization.

A less overt form of impersonal violence can be identified in natural or man-made disasters, which result in widespread destruction of personal and urban property, leading to human casualties (Rezaeian 2013). Moreover, these disasters are frequently linked to an increase in interpersonal and domestic violence, looting, rape, robbery, and similar acts. The inquiry into why a catastrophe that significantly disrupts public life—whether by divine will, natural forces, actions of corporations, municipal decisions, or mere chance—remains one of the most significant questions explored by American post-war sociology of disaster (Blocker, Sherkat 1992). Since the foundational conceptual framework of sociology of disaster is rooted in the theoretical contributions of Emil Durkheim, the phenomenon of violence has also been examined by sociologists in this field through a distinctly Durkheimian lens.

In the 1970s, sociologist Kai T. Erikson explored the long-term effects of disasters on communities, leading to the development of the term «collective trauma» and the introduction of the notion of «traumas» within sociological discourse. Erikson defines «collective trauma» (Erikson 1976) as the complete breakdown of social connections in communities impacted by disasters. This concept poses an epistemological challenge for Erikson, as the term «trauma» carries various meanings across different scientific fields, making it difficult to effectively translate «trauma» into a sociological framework (Erikson 1991). He differentiates between the initial medical interpretation of trauma (external impact on the body), the psychological perspective (external impact on the psyche, which adds a new dimension — a condition resulting from this impact), and the sociological viewpoint (the external influence on the social entity, along with the resultant state). In line with Durkheim's ideas, Erikson discusses the dual nature of trauma, which encompasses both the source of trauma (the event) and its aftermath (the experience). He traces the conceptual lineage of sociological «collective trauma» back to mental trauma, often linked to combat-related PTSD. Consequently, the notion of «collective trauma» reflects the inherent challenges of psychological conceptualization tied to the traditional understanding of «violence». This issue is further complicated by the legacy of the concept of «cultural trauma», despite cultural sociologists critiquing their predecessors for an overly naturalistic approach (Alexander 2012, p. 11). Therefore, the central issue lies not merely in the terminological confusion surrounding the concepts of «violence» and «traumas», but in the fundamental nature of their conceptual interrelation.

The article is divided into two thematic sections: the first, a «militaristic» segment, discusses the psychological conceptualization of

combat-related mental trauma; the second, a «pacifist» segment, addresses the sociological conceptualization of collective trauma within the context of sociology of disaster. This structure will facilitate an examination of how the identification of violence in psychological frameworks is interpreted within the sociological domain of disaster. My primary argument posits that catastrophe is framed as a collective trauma, primarily understood through the perspective of violence. This perspective largely stems from the fact that the sociological interpretation of «trauma» inherits its foundations from psychological conceptualizations.

Psychological conceptualization of trauma

The psychic phenomenon, which in different historical periods referred to as «combat mental trauma», «post-traumatic stress disorder», «post-traumatic syndrome», «shell shocks» or «soldier's heart», is a classic medical-anthropological case (Young 1995). This is corroborated not only by numerous academic publications addressing the history and conceptualization of this phenomenon (see: Trauma Concepts in Research and Practice 2023), but also by the associated nosological diagnostic, and terminological complexities. Certain complexities, such as the ongoing discussion regarding whether a combat mental trauma is exogenous or endogenous in its origin, are still relevant today, as asserted by various psychiatrists (Suakisyan, Soldatkin, Skinkov etc. 2020, p. 176).

In medical anthropology, one can frequently observe an interpretation of the «flow» of this definition through the following rationale: The terms suggested by specialists in various historical contexts have indeed encapsulated different phenomena that transpired in distinct cultural frameworks. This hypothesis forms the basis of a thesis proposed by anthropologist Allan Young, which carries a notable critical significance: the «universality» of this nosological unit was, in truth, a construction rather than a discovery (Young 1995; see. also: Moghimi 2012).

Conventionally, the central focus has been directed towards the idea of post-traumatic stress disorder, which replaced the term 'traumatic neurosis' in the third edition of the DSM in 1980. For instance, various critics, including psychologists, tend to view PTSD not just as a clinical diagnosis but also as a means for broad political transformation, depicting the US military's return from Vietnam as a narrative of victims rather than criminals (see above: Summerfield 2001). It is easy to see that in this relativistic trauma paradigm, the question of identity comes to the fore: who is the subject: the injured, the injured,

or both? Certainly, untangling the ideological contexts of the combat psychic trauma phenomenon is a thrilling task for an intellectual historian (see: Alford 2016; Good, Hinton 2016). As a representative case that highlights the ideological intricacies of trauma discussions, even within medical narratives, one might consider the Soviet psychiatric anthology «War Psychosis and Psychoneurology» (1934). This anthology reinterprets the World War I experience through the psychological framework of trauma. It gathers both theoretical and practical contributions in the realm of military psychiatry from that period, which in some ways anticipates discussions on the social dimensions of trauma, yet conveys a markedly different ideological perspective. Thus, the remark by the collection's editor, psychiatrist V. P. Osipov, that mental experiences are heavily influenced by the socio-cultural context, assumes a specific ideological tint:

> The greater the political and moral awareness of a Red Army member, the stronger their political and class consciousness becomes. This allows them to better manage their natural emotional responses, stopping these from taking control of their personality and making them less likely to experience psychotic reactions (Osipov 1934, p. 10).

It is evident that the socio-cultural environment of Soviet Russia at the time this volume was created was vastly different from that of the nations engaged in the First World War, a point the authors stress repeatedly. One author warns:

> «You cannot just mechanically transfer experiences globally. A war under the Red Army›s conditions cannot occur, as the Red Army is fundamentally distinct from the bourgeois armies… in its class-political essence» (Goldman 1934, p. 34).

If we set aside the evident ideological framework, the practical suggestion to consider the cultural context when adopting another's experience is undoubtedly significant. Nevertheless, the proclaimed innovative methodology in examining the psychological traumas endured by soldiers engaged in combat is also facilitated by ideological factors.

At the III congress of domestic psychiatrists in 1910, members of the military section (P.P. Autokratov1, H. Sh. L. M. Borishpolsky,

1 In particular, the anthropologist and psychoanalyst Abraham Cardiner appeals to the clinical experience of Autokratov's work during the Russo-Japanese War in his book «Traumatic Neuroses of War» (1941), which represents an important stage in the conceptual evolution of post-traumatic stress disorder.

L.M. Stanilovsky, G.E Shumkov1) showcased the psychiatric facilities utilized during the Russian-Japanese war and proposed enhancements to the measures for delivering psychological support to military personnel. Unfortunately, during World War I, this knowledge was not implemented due to political constraints, reminding us that a critical analysis of the clinical data gathered during the First World War was aided, in part, by the historical distance from those events.

It is evident that from the inception of the early New Age states, which sociologist Charles Tilly argues were formed through the mobilization of capital and the allocation of tax revenues to the military and the support of the military pension system (Tilly 1990), the rehabilitation and reintegration of combatants possess significant political implications. The introduction of universal conscription during the French Revolution, along with the growing public perception that any citizen could serve as a soldier, contributed to this development. Consequently, in the 20th century, theoretical and clinical discussions surrounding the phenomenon of combat-related mental traumas, such as PTSD—whether stemming from World War I or the Vietnam War—rightfully contained political dimensions. Nevertheless, the psychological, psychoanalytic, and medical interpretations of mental trauma that emerged prior to the First World War were influenced by socio-economic factors that were closely tied to funding considerations.

The phenomenon of catastrophe led to the emergence of a psychological concept known as «trauma», which subsequently transformed the sociological understanding of the disaster. It is posited that the origins of the concept of «trauma» can be traced back to the observations made by English surgeon John Eriksen in the 1860s regarding the characteristic symptoms (which were then referred to as «hysteria») exhibited by victims of railway accidents (Leys 2000): these included memory loss, confusion, irritability, sleep dis-

1 The statistics from Harbin Hospital indicate that doctors identified various forms of psychosis among combatants, without consolidating them into a single diagnostic category. In the article «Mental State of Warriors After Battles» (1914), Shumkov suggests the notion of «soul wounds,» which are different from physical traumas because the latter are visible to the public and are honored as a result of duty performed; spiritual wounds, although also incurred during the same duty, are not visible and are thus often overlooked. The physical traumas sustained in battle <...> are a matter of pride; conversely, the mental traumas, which arise from the same experiences and cause significant distress, are typically a source of shame. (Shumkov 1914, pp. 118-119).

turbances, sensory disorders, behavioral changes, numbness, and more. Eriksen theorized that these symptoms had a somatic basis (specifically spinal cord trauma), although he was unable to provide demonstrable evidence for this and proposed the diagnosis of «railway spine». At that time, railway companies were apprehensive that such diagnoses would result in insurance liabilities (Lerner 2003, p. 25). In the following years, neuropathologists and psychiatrists, including K. Westfell, M. Bernhardt, J. Sharko, P. Zane, G. Babinsky, G. Oppenheim, and others, elucidated both the neurological and psychological dimensions of these traumatic effects (Holdorff 2011), particularly due to the absence of anatomical proof of spinal cord trauma. In 1888, the prominent German neurologist Herman Oppenheim, drawing on Eriksen's findings and similar cases in Germany, established a diagnostic category termed «traumatic neurosis»—a neurosis stemming from non-visible organic damage to the brain associated with psychological-neurological disorders, around which various psychological processes were occurring. Fundamentally, Oppenheim advocated for both somatic and psychological interpretations of «traumatic neurosis». At the onset of World War I, while working in a military hospital, Oppenheim introduced a second trauma concept—«military neurosis», which was essentially analogous to «traumatic neurosis» (Kloocke et al. 2005), albeit framed within the context of warfare rather than peacetime disasters. The symptoms identified by Oppenheim included convulsions, tremors, paralysis, memory loss, and others. He continuously sought to define both «traumatic neurosis» and «military neurosis» as legitimate diagnostic categories, generally acknowledged nosological units, yet it became apparent that his ideas encountered significant dissent.

The Oppenheim concept has faced criticism since the International Medical Congress held in Berlin in 1890. I wish to highlight the arguments that possess specific economic implications. For instance, neurologist Friedrich von Jolli argued that the issues addressed by Oppenheim were not of a neurological or psychological nature, but rather of socio-economic: he contended that accident insurance legislation incentivized victims to feign or exacerbate symptoms for financial benefit (Holdorff 2011). It is worth emphasizing that it was the status of «traumatic neurosis» as a nosological unit that gave the victim the right to claim compensation. This understanding of the origin of symptoms is related to the concept of «pecuniary compensation neurosis» (N. Rentenneurose), which was widespread at that time. Simultaneously, in medical discourse, there existed a «military» counterpart to Rentenneurose, which during World War I was typically interpreted as a reluctance to fulfill military obligations,

yet it had economic foundations beyond the ethical considerations. Consequently, one of the critics of «military neurosis,» psychiatrist Karl Bonhoeffer, promoted a system of lump-sum payments for combatants, which was enacted following the end of the war. Ultimately, at a gathering of psychiatrists in Munich in 1916, the concept of «war neurosis» was dismissed as a distinct illness, as acknowledging it would impose a significant burden on the German military budget due to lifetime pensions for those affected. It is also important to consider the ethical dimension of this matter — in the British Empire, the diagnosis of «shell shock» was intentionally halted in 1917 at the behest of the War Office, as it was linked to perceptions of «cowardice» among soldiers and a reluctance to serve. In Germany, «military neurosis» persisted as a diagnostic category until the war's end, despite the objections of numerous psychiatrists, largely due to the personal influence of Oppenheim. However, by 1926, «traumatic neurosis» was definitively eliminated as a nosological entity in the new insurance legislation. These historical instances, broadly sketched, aim to illustrate a clear thesis: the roots of the psychological understanding of «trauma,» which later sociological interpretations will examine, are intricately connected to socio-economic and ethico-political factors. These discussions engage with topics such as state responsibility, an individual's autonomy in simulating symptoms for personal gain, and considerations regarding the personal characteristics of the combatant.

After 1945, the understanding of war began to be viewed as a form of violence, not in the context of Clausewitz, but rather through the lens of Leo Tolstoy. This perspective highlights the intricate relationship between the concepts of «trauma» and «violence.» It is essential to recognize that this connection demands a pacifist interpretation of violence and, as a result, war, which is framed in this context as an absolute evil. Historically, this understanding started to gain traction and dominate academic discussions following World War II. Consequently, postwar American sociologists, for example, became more focused on issues such as social stratification or industrialization rather than on collective violence or war (Malesevic 2010). Additionally, the sociological notion of «trauma» began to reference a psychological interpretation that is akin to what would eventually be termed PTSD

In his article «The Idea of Violence» (1986), Australian philosopher Tony Coady opens with a factual statement that appears to mirror the current circumstances: there is no agreement on how to interpret violence, which remains a central theme in political theory. Coady correctly identifies the source of the issue as the fact that the term

«violence» not only exists within the fluctuating contexts of everyday language but also serves as a socio-political instrument for translating specific viewpoints and perceptions into reality (Coady 1986). For instance, the concept of «structural violence» may be at odds with the idea of «legitimate violence,» as both traditionally cater to different political agendas—namely, left and right. Since the concepts of «structural» and «legitimate violence» embody fundamentally different understandings of violence, reaching an epistemological consensus is impossible.

In 2019, more than three decades later, Tony Coady participated in an interview that focused on the issue of violence. The interviewer asked Coady whether he perceives any progress in the understanding of violence since the publication of his 1986 article, where he noted the absence of epistemological consensus on this subject. Interestingly, as a primary example of the positive changes that have occurred in the understanding of violence over the years, Coady points out that there "has been the increased awareness of the subtle, often hidden effects of involvement in violent acts, notably warfare,» which is reflected in the emergence of PTSD diagnosis in the third edition of the DSM (Sardoč, Coady 2019, p. 1). Coady argues that the post-Vietnam understanding of PTSD—mental trauma—has had a significant impact on shifting public and political attitudes towards violence in the 1990s. Moreover, he suggests that this diagnosis carries ethical implications, as the PTSD-afflicted combatant, upon returning from war, often begins to view himself as a «pawn in an unjust war» (Ibid., p. 2), which certainly alleviates some of his responsibility.

In this framework, trauma (and the current consensus) is regarded as a byproduct of violence, which is traditionally classified as an ethical category. In various discussions concerning nature, violence consistently arises, indicating that any act deemed violent is viewed as malevolent—even if it is intended for a positive outcome. Pragmatically, trauma can also be conceptualized as a malevolence that ideally would not have transpired; however, it does not itself constitute an ethical category. The inherent relationship between violence and trauma permits us to identify the ultimate ethical dimension. It assigns the identity of the subject as 'victim'—the entity that suffers harm, which cannot exist without a 'perpetrator', the source of violence. In the conventional understanding of 'violence', there is a core element of direct intentionality violence is a conscious act, executed by an agent (the subject of violence—identified in cultural trauma theory as a 'perpetrator'). This intensity sets classical 'violence' apart from 'force', no matter how destructive the latter may be. In English, one might refer

to a storm as violent; however, the adjective itself is not relevant to the concept of violence, which is a separate phenomenon (Degenaar 1980). For example, in Russian, one cannot say 'violent storm', but must say 'strong storm', as natural occurrences (unless interpreted as manifestations of 'God's will') do not exhibit intensification. In this context, it is intriguing that Coady, in a 2019 interview, points out that the term 'force' (whose embodiment is a violent storm) is increasingly replacing the term 'violence' in discussions of armed conflict, suggesting that the distinction between these concepts aligns with group identity boundaries, even though they are fundamentally phenomena of the same order: 'we' utilize force, while 'they' engage in violence (Sardoč, Coady 2019, p. 2). It is commonly recognized that 'terrorists' are always categorized as 'they'.

As a result, the severity of violence allows the trauma subject to discern both «victim» and «perpetrator» roles — even if the offender is not a particular individual, but an abstract idea like «system» or «regime». Therefore, it is unsurprising that in a well-known text with the subtitle «Vietnam veterans: neither victims nor executioners» (1973), psychiatrist Robert J Lifton points out two primary challenges for the psychological framing of «trauma»: guilt and violence. The psychological framing of «trauma» was initially inclusive of both socio-economic and ethico-political factors, which fostered a relationship with the concept of «violence» and the subjective experience of violence. Hence, it is observed that those suffering from PTSD may regard themselves as subjects of violence, a notion that Coady addresses in his 2019 interview. Finally, when considering the sociological interpretation of «disaster», the traditional understanding of «violence» seeps into the psychological interpretation of «trauma», causing the concept of «catastrophe» to evolve into «collective trauma». This is significant because, by the time Kai Erikson conducted his work with victims of the Buffalo Creek flood, the psychological interpretation of trauma had already been linked to issues of violence, guilt, identity, and ethical dimensions.

Sociological conceptualization of traumas

In 1972, a dam collapsed in West Virginia along the Buffalo Creek River, leading to the near-total devastation of several adjacent communities and the loss of 125 lives. In the renowned book «Everything in Its Path», published four years after this tragic incident, sociologist Kai Erikson presents an unconventional sociological perspective on disaster that emphasizes not merely the immediate disruption

of social order but also the enduring impacts on communities affected by such calamities. Through an examination of the narratives of those impacted, Erikson formulates the explanatory model of «collective trauma»—considered to be the initial introduction of the term «traumas» within sociological discourse (Abrutyn 2024). However, this concept is now more closely linked to the cultural sociology emerging in the late 1990s and early 2000s. At the time of its release, Erikson's work was recognized with an award from The American Sociological Association, garnering widespread acclaim and numerous critiques.

It is important to note that for cultural sociologists, Kai Erikson's interpretation of «collective trauma» serves as a significant reference point for the conceptualization of «cultural trauma». Jeffrey Alexander remarks: « This heartwrenching account of the effects on a small Appalachian community of a devastating flood was constrained by a naturalistic perspective, yet it laid the groundwork for a distinctively sociological approach by thematizing the difference between collective and individual trauma» (Alexander 2012, p. 11).

The naturalistic point of view, according to Alexander's thinking, is that it is the terrible events themselves that have been traumatic for the community. This is the main divide between «collective trauma» and «cultural trauma». In the paradigm of cultural sociology, trauma is not an event itself, but a cultural status, the modality with which this event is endowed, and this status allows the community to build its identity upon it: «trauma is a property attributed to the event through society» (Ibid., p. 16). Such trauma manifests itself, all members of the community know it, and moreover, such trauma does not need to exist in reality by virtue of its constructed nature. In turn, in the theoretical model of Erikson «collective trauma» is an empirical fact recorded in reality, and this point of view Erikson will defend in other works.

On sociological conceptualization of «collective trauma» directly affects psychological conceptualization, which Erikson calls it «individual trauma», a blow to the psyche, that do not withstand human defense mechanisms (Erikson 1976, p. 132). Thus, «individual trauma» can be traced in practices (for example, sleeping with clothes in case of a disaster will happen again) and the narratives of survivors. Individual trauma is Erikson's main analogy and reference for collective trauma, which is expressed in the loss of communality, i.e. «feelings of community». The focus is on the idea that the community was destroyed during the crash, but it was not restored. This idea is a continuation of Durkheim's concept of homo duplex, which highlights the dual nature of humans as both biological and social beings.

Although Durkheim interpreted this duality as a source of antagonism (Durkheim 2013, p. 136), Erikson suggests that individual and collective trauma can exist in a state of «harmonious» coexistence within one person.

According to Erikson, individual trauma affects the psychological «I» and collective — the social «I». It is also worth noting that the father of sociologist Kai Erikson, a well-known psychologist and psychoanalyst Eric Erikson, has been engaged in «psycho-historical research» since the 1950s. This approach was one of the experimental spaces for interaction between psychoanalytic and sociological theories in a historical perspective and thus preceded psychosocial research (Jacobsen 2021). One of Eric Erikson's followers and closest students at the time was psychiatrist Robert J Lifton, developing psychological theory of trauma and conducting group therapy sessions with veterans of the Vietnam War. His work was mentioned at the end of the section about the psychological conceptualization of «trauma». It should be noted that Lifton is believed to have been one of those psychiatrists who lobbied for the inclusion of PTSD in the DSM in 1980 (Grant 2020). In the context of our case, it is worth noting that Robert J Lifton worked as a psychiatrist with flood victims at Buffalo Creek; moreover, he worked for the same rights-defending law firm Arnold & Porter (Lifton, Olsen 1976; Erikson 1976), who also hired the sociologist Kai Erikson. Subsequently, Erikson and Lifton co-authored texts about other traumas; for example, the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Lifton, Erikson 1982). It appears that sociological collective trauma inherits the psychological conceptualization of PTSD, not merely in theoretical aspects but also within the realm of personal relationships, as exemplified by Durkheim and Moss.

From a rhetorical perspective, Erikson's notion of «trauma» functions more as a metaphor that defies the constraints of space and time. In terms of spatial characteristics, this metaphor, which is notably compelling, pertains to nature: a vast stream that has washed away the soil, leaving a trace on the ground that Erikson refers to as a scar. After several years, this scar has been overtaken by grass, debris from collapsed houses, and unfamiliar individuals, causing a person to fail to recognize the area as the site of a catastrophe. Additionally, the metaphor addresses the actions and emotions of those who survived: within their minds, a «scar» remains, one that does not vanish despite the passage of years. The temporal dimension of this metaphor is also linked to both «individual» and «collective» trauma. The latter signifies a lost sense of community and connection, reminiscent of Tönniesian Gemeinschaft or Durkhemian mechanical solidarity, which

is typical for traditional communities. Erikson provides a particularly eloquent expression of this:

> 'I' continue to exist, though damaged and may be even permanently changed. 'You' continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But 'we' no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body (Erikson 1976, p. 133). Erikson refers to society as an organism, the social body — and if the physical body can be traumatized, so can the society. The organicistic metaphor of society as a body in the biological sense, which is not the sum of individuals but a qualitatively different entity, certainly goes back to Emil Dürkheim and his well-known postulate: aspirations are not the state of consciousness of individuals, but conditions in which the social body as a whole is located» (Durkheim 1991, p. 495).

This is the key difference from mental trauma. One and a half years after the accident, during the legal investigation in which Erikson himself participated, psychiatrists surveyed 615 flood survivors. 570 of them (93%, notes Erikson) have been diagnosed with various emotional disorders. Their symptoms were depression, anxiety, phobia, emotional lability, hypochondria, apathy, insomnia that refer to «post-traumatic neurosis», as stressed by sociologist (Erikson 1976, p. 134). However, in principle, «collective trauma» does not refer to the sum of diagnoses made by the victims, but to a sense of communality whose origin leads not to mental, but to social. We can say that it is about the feeling that society... has in itself» and which is reproduced «through the assembly of its members» (Durkheim 2018, p. 578).

The sociology of disaster, which developed in the context of post-war American sociology, addresses theoretical challenges posed by Durkheim and reflects the dominant American structural functionalism of that time. Thus, this field is oriented towards practical solutions to applied inquiries such as «how can a catastrophe be prevented» or «what management strategies should be employed during a natural or man-made disaster?»[1] It also engages with Durkheim's ideas regarding «social order,» «communities,» «norms,» and «solidarity.» As noted by sociologist Gary Kreps, «studying disasters means studying the social structure» (Kreps 1985, p. 50). For those studying disasters, this area provides a conceptual model that reveals social processes often concealed in everyday life. Given Erikson's relevance

1 It is interesting that Kai Erikson believes that the real interest of the American authorities in disaster sociology lies in their desire to model the reaction of the population to a nuclear attack (Erikson 1976, p. 209).

to the sociology of disaster, it is unsurprising that his concept of «collective trauma» is fundamentally rooted in Durkheim's postulates. Additionally, since the term «disaster has frequently been interpreted sociologically as analogous to «war» (Gilbert 1995), the decision to integrate the psychological interpretation of «traumas» as a form of combat-related mental trauma within the sociology of disaster is not counterintuitive.

In general, conceptualizing the object of study from a sociological perspective — the 'catastrophe' itself — has been a particularly crucial theoretical challenge for disaster sociology. Many individuals interpret disaster as something designated by authorities or shaped by public opinion; however, take for instance a situation where a warning of an impending hurricane prompts the complete evacuation of a settlement, yet the hurricane ultimately passes without causing any material damage. Nevertheless, the disruption to the community's routine order prompts the inquiry: can we regard this as a catastrophe from a sociological viewpoint? The definition provided by sociologist Charles Fritz, a foundational figure in this field, is particularly relevant. For him, a disaster is:

> ... event, concentrated in time and space, in which a society, or a relatively self-sufficient subdivision of a society, undergoes severe danger and incurs such losses to its members and physical appurtenances that the social structure is disrupted and the fulfilment of all or some of the essential functions of the society is prevented (Fritz 1961, p. 655).

In a text authored in 1961, yet published only at the end of the 1990s due to significant historical circumstances, Fritz posits that this definition embodies the ideal type of social catastrophe: «societal» in the Parsonian sense, which refers to a disaster that disrupts the coherence of social relations. Fritz elucidates this characteristic by stating that a disaster interrupts the operation of survival systems, which encompasses meaning, order, and motivation (Fritz 1996, p. 21). For instance, social stratification can be impacted, as it is reasonable to assume that a large-scale catastrophe influences all social strata uniformly. Consequently, the catastrophe evolves into a « referential framework for human behavior « (Ibid.) and fundamentally signifies an order distinct from the conventional social order. Therefore, Fritz arrives at a pivotal conclusion: survivors of disasters exhibit a natural and unimpeded social adaptation to the aftermath, as well as engage freely with one another (Ibid.)—in a context where the social order has yet

to be reinstated, or more accurately, until the coherence of social relations is reestablished. Indeed, it is this paradoxical conclusion, prevalent in classical disaster sociology, that contradicts Erikson's observations regarding community disintegration following a catastrophic flood. Thus, Charles Fritz essentially revisits the foundational Hobbesian premise of a natural human condition, which has historically been linked to perpetual violence and insecurity. Within the framework of catastrophe sociology, I would characterize this condition as «quasi-natural,» since the catastrophe itself serves as the reference structure. According to Fritz, in this state, paradoxically, there is not a war of all against all; rather, there exists solidarity, reciprocity, and altruism.

This is an important thesis that sociologists have sought to back up with empirical data and observations: it seems that the catastrophe divides people, but the observed community reaction to the disaster is often one of mutual support and emotional solidarity. From the perspective of the Durkheim paradigm, this is a rather counterintuitive observation, because solidarity is a natural social manifestation, a kind of norm of a healthy society-organism, which is hard to imagine in case a society begins to function inadequately or ceases to function at all.

To clarify this, it is important to refer to the distinction made by Fritz between «disaster" and «normal life». This differentiation also addresses the division between social and quasi-natural orders. According to Fritz, this contrast does not indicate that «normal life» in the social context is free from violence. In some of Fritz's eschatological descriptions, «normal life» is characterized by numerous deaths, accidents, diseases, conflicts both interpersonal and inter-group, violence, and social pathologies, which he describes as «alienation», «senselessness», and «normlessness». Destruction, in contrast to a disaster scenario, is not limited by time and space, while

> … No peacetime or wartime disaster in American history has ever produced the aggregate amount of death, destruction, pain, and privation that is experienced in a single day of «normal» life in the United States, but this fact is rarely recognized except by insurance actuarial specialists and other keepers of vital statistics. (ibid., p. 23).

Fritz proposes a view of «normal life» wherein the «natural» social needs are not fulfilled, resulting in a constriction of solidarity and communication, a blurring of primary groups, and a social order that is less than orderly. Through a critique of modernism, Fritz concludes with a theoretical explanation of altruistic behavior in the wake

of disasters: «People perhaps come closer to fulfilling their basic human needs in the aftermath of disaster than at any other time » (Ibid., p. 27-28). Therefore, this leads to a paradoxical conclusion in the sociology of disaster, standing in direct opposition to the primary moral of «collective trauma» as described by Kai Erikson: to fully demonstrate altruism and solidarity—natural social needs that support the social order—it is necessary for the social order to temporarily cease to exist.

The distinction of social and quasi-natural order in the context of solidarity is a classic move for disaster sociology. For example, sociologist Allen Barton argues that, on the one hand, in modern society active altruistic behavior is rare, and on the other hand, «Most studies of sudden natural disasters show a high degree of emotional solidarity and mutual help among the affected population» (Barton 1969, p. 206). Charles Fritz proposes the concept of «therapeutic community» to grasp this phenomenon of self-organization of a community in an acute crisis situation. Such public reaction is certainly not universal. Likewise, Barton gives historical examples of catastrophes in which a therapeutic community did not emerge, such as the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Furthermore, Robert Merton, in the introduction to Barton's work (Ibid., p. xxv), points out that dire examples like the Great Depression and slavery in the US are currently recognized as «cultural trauma.» These instances, both conceptually and typologically, do not fit the definition of catastrophes (acute crisis situations), but are instead chronic manifestations of collective suffering. The key difference is that chronic suffering unfolds over time and often remains hidden (as does structural violence), while acute experiences akin to catastrophes happen in the immediate context, thus drawing public focus. Sociologist Russell Dynes stresses the paradox of catastrophe in that it has both a disintegrating and an integrating impact on the community. The latter is related to the emergence of an «extraordinary consensus» based on altruistic norms (Dynes 1970, p. 204). Dynes solves this paradox by forming a premise that the very structure of the community does not allow it to be prepared for disaster, even if the community has had similar experiences in the past. Therefore, in order to adequately respond to the unnatural catastrophe, the community must naturally disintegrate, then integrate into a qualitatively new structure that forms the same «extraordinary consensus»; this concept is in the same line with the understanding of «catastrophe» as a «reference structure of human behavior» by Fritz. Sociologist Patrick Gurney's reflection on the concept of a «therapeutic commu-

nity» is a case in point: the Teton River dam was breached in 1976, nearby settlements were destroyed, more than $1 billion worth of damage was done, but only 11 people died. For a disaster of this magnitude, this is an extremely low number of human casualties due to the rapid self-organization of evacuation and rescue operations. Gurney posits that this was feasible due to the distinctive social framework found in the ravaged settlements, where a significant portion of the community consisted of Mormons (Gurney 1977). The formation of a «therapeutic community» was based on the already established socio-religious structure, which was capable of consolidating social efforts for evacuation and delivering medical and psychological aid. Simultaneously, while federal agencies and the Red Cross provided assistance, local communities did not foster relationships — a significant observation that resonates with Durkheim's thesis that a more robust social structure makes it increasingly challenging to assimilate foreign elements (Durkheim 1991, p. 145). As a case study of a catastrophic incident lacking community self-organization and coordinated evacuation and rescue operations, Gurney references the dam break at Buffalo Creek, which claimed 125 lives, despite the presence of emergency warnings in both instances.

It is crucial to recognize that the sociological analyses provided by Kai Erikson, who introduced the notion of collective traumas, contradict the empirical findings obtained by other sociologists engaged in disaster research. Reviewers frequently challenge Gurney's proposition: the absence of a «therapeutic community» in the aftermath of the Buffalo Creek dam collapse can be attributed to the excessive number of fatalities, which also highlights the unique characteristics of the disaster itself (Dynes 1978, Heading 1978). Consequently, in the case outlined by Erikson, collective trauma acts as an anti-therapeutic community. Erikson asserts that during a «normal» disaster, the pre-existing community is not entirely dismantled, thus facilitating the formation of a «therapeutic community» rooted in the prior structure. This did not occur following the flood in Buffalo Creek, as the casualty figures were too high, and the recovery operations were executed by individuals «from outside» the community, rather than by those who endured the severe repercussions of the dam breach.

In sociology of disaster, a premise articulated in Charles Fritz's definition asserts that a catastrophe can be distinctly identified in both time and space, which allows for the establishment of its temporal boundaries, and in some cases, even the documentation of the moment when the community returns to 'normal life'. As a

result, many sociologists have proposed the development of chronological maps that outline the different phases experienced by the disaster-affected community (Quarantelli, Dynes 1985; Smith, Belgrave 1995). Therefore, Erikson was certainly not the first to acknowledge the enduring effects of disasters on the communities that experience them. However, Fritz highlighted the unique temporality that arises as a social fact generated by catastrophe: ' A restudy of a Midwestern river town conducted more than 15 years after a severe flood in 1937 showed that the disaster was still a salient fact in the life of the community. (Fritz 1996, p. 69). Nonetheless, it is crucial to understand that the concepts of 'disaster' and 'collective trauma' are not interchangeable. Erikson's theoretical framework is incomplete without the inclusion of intensified violence. Although Erikson does not delve deeply into the topic of violence, this concept—also vital to Robert Jay Lifton's psychological understanding of trauma—serves to differentiate 'disaster' from 'collective trauma'. A significant condition in Erikson's argument is that the Buffalo Creek disaster occurred for a specific reason. The coal mining company bears responsibility for the tragedy, as its operations, according to Erikson, were closely intertwined with the community's life: Pittston neglected its moral duties, firstly by constructing an unreliable dam, and secondly, by responding to the disaster as a bureaucratic entity focused on asset protection rather than as a responsible guardian obligated to protect its community members (Erikson 1976, p. 153).

The institutional context plays a key role in understanding «collective trauma»: of course, it should not be overlooked that Erikson worked for a law firm that prepared a collective lawsuit on behalf of the affected companies, responsible for the breakout of the dam. Russell Dynes in his review directly indicates that Erikson's main sources were transcripts of victims' conversations with lawyers: «The questions formulated for an effective judicial process (the case was settled for 13.5 million dollars) may differ from those asked by sociologists» (Dynes 1978, p. 722). Another reviewer indicates that Erikson's failure to adopt a value-neutral stance causes any traumatic occurrences to be labeled as a «disaster». This encompasses the forced relocation of US Indigenous populations as well as urban redevelopment projects that obliterate entire regions. (Heading 1978).

Therefore, the concept of «disaster» emerging from the observed phenomenon transforms into a metaphor, akin to the subsequent evolution of the term «trauma». As a result, the institutional circumstances that facilitated the development of the idea of «collec-

tive trauma» inherently involve a violent entity—namely, a coal mining company that neglected to maintain the dam properly. This initial identification of the violent entity corresponds with the classical interpretation of violence. Ned Erikson cites the stories of victims, in which the actions of the company are labeled as «murder», and elucidates them using a mythological metaphor: the «father» (Pittston company) devastates mother-earth and inflicts «depravation» upon local communities (Erikson 1976, p. 155). At the same time, from a theoretical point of view, the idea of violence is present in the very conceptualization of «collective trauma», but from a position specific to the Durkheim paradigm. Durkheim is believed not to have dealt with violence in traditional meaning (see: Gane 2010). For example, crime, which is traditionally defined in sociology as a manifestation of violence, was not considered by Durkheim to be violence from the point of view of social norms: based on the fact that crime is abhorrent and repugnant, common sense erroneously implies that it should disappear altogether. Prone to simplification, he does not understand that a phenomenon that is repugnant may have some useful basis. <... > Are there not certain unattractive functions within the body that, despite their unpleasant nature, are essential for an individual's health? (Durkheim 1995, p. 24). For Durkheim, violence is fundamentally the destruction of the social norm itself, and this perspective aligns closely with the concept of a «collective catastrophe». In this context, Erikson characterizes «collective trauma» as a state of «demoralization» (Erikson 1976, p. 171), which entails a loss of personal ethics and a diminished sense of public morality. Essentially, Erikson identifies a condition that Durkheim would refer to as anomie—a social pathology manifested in a lack of solidarity, leading to the absence of new norms. If suicide can result from an anomaly — «if the bonds between a person and life are broken, it is because its connection with society has been weakened» (Durkheim 1994, p. 193) — then why should we not consider that diagnosed emotional disorders in the affected individual might also stem from an anomaly? Therefore, while the classical sociology of catastrophe, beginning with Charles Fritz, has significantly altered Durkheim's initial argument, Erikson's notion of «collective trauma» appears to restore Durkheim's perspective on violence. Anomia, as noted by Erikson, was similarly accompanied by a sentiment that those around had lost their moral compass following the disaster. This is illustrated in the account of a survivor who resided in a trailer camp post-crash:

> There was all kinds of mean stuff going on up there. I guess it still does, to hear the talk. I haven't been back up there since we left. Men is going with other men's wives. And drinking parties. They'd play horseshoes right out by my trailer, and they'd play by streetlight until four or five in the morning. I'd get up in the morning and I'd pick up beer cans until I got sick. The flood done something to people, that's what it is. It's changed people. Good people has got bad. They don't care anymore. (Erikson 1976, p. 174).

The habitual life of a community, especially the traditionalist one described by Erikson, accommodates practices that may be criticized within the larger social context. Thus, anomy, in the classical interpretation by Durkheim, does not indicate a mere increase in behaviors deemed immoral, but rather signifies a breakdown of social order that includes such behaviors. In fact, the portrayal of life post-disaster by Erikson directly references the Hobbesian natural order: «Everyone seems to look at a sea of strangers and feels that there was a fair amount of evil» (Ibid., p. 176).

For Erikson, as well as for Fritz, the ideas of «collective trauma» or «disaster» are primarily focused on the notions of social and natural order. Yet, while Fritz views the catastrophe as a quasi-natural order that provides a referential framework for altruistic actions, Erikson reflects this idea in the same traditional manner as the Durkheim model: If social life vanishes, then, without any support, moral life will also vanish. The natural state... if not immoral, then at least not moral» (Durkheim 1991, p. 370).

The result of this was that, in Erikson's perspective, during the floods, individuals inhabit a realm of violence; particularly if, following Durkheim and Hobbs, they perceive violence as the antithesis of the social, which is defined by norms and solidarity. Indeed, the individual who carries collective trauma stands in stark contrast to Robinson Crusoe, as she exists within a social framework, yet lacks a conception of society. Consequently, «violence» is interpreted by Erikson in both the classical sense, where there exists a perpetrator of violence (represented by the coal mining company), and in the Durkheimian context of anomalies and societal demoralization. In fact, this adherence to the Durkheimian tradition is somewhat utopist — not in the sense of being fictional — regarding the nature of the depiction that Erikson presents in his work. Due to its idealism, the incident of the Buffalo Creek disaster is now indelibly linked to the notion of «collective trauma.»

Conclusion

The railway accidents in the 1860s. gave rise to psychologists concept of trauma, which was based on the premise that if you can traumatize the body with an external shock, you can traumatize the psyche. With the onset of World War I, the focus shifted and trauma-related clinical materials were understood in the context of military experience: researchers such as Herman Oppenheim sought to grasp what later became known as «combat mental trauma» or «post-traumatic stress disorder». The psychological conceptualization of trauma from its inception was shaped by socio-economic factors and the debate on insurance payments to victims and pensions for combatants. Through these discussions, psychological conceptualization of trauma has acquired an ethical dimension related to the problems of guilt, personal responsibility, simulation and military service. After the Vietnam War, the ethical dimension of trauma was linked to the issue of the subject of violence and guilt, a point made by psychiatrist Robert J Lifton, who worked with American combatants. This subject's problem of violence and the subject of trauma and was inherited by sociological the conceptualization of «collective trauma», which sociologist Kai Erikson developed, based on the experience of Lifton. He was familiar with him and even worked together.

The concept of «collective trauma» was introduced by Erikson within the framework of Durkheim's sociology of disaster, exemplified by the catastrophic flood in Buffalo Creek, which resulted in numerous casualties and the total devastation of communities. In this instance, Erikson identified what he termed as «collective trauma»: the complete breakdown of the community and total social upheaval. Consequently, the sociological interpretation followed the rationale of the psychological perspective: if the psyche can be traumatized (individual trauma), then the social identity can also experience trauma (collective trauma). Nevertheless, these observations appeared to contradict the seemingly paradoxical thesis posited by other scholars in disaster sociology, which suggested that a widespread community response to a disaster, characterized by the disruption of the established social order, often leads to increased solidarity, mutual assistance, and altruism.

This thesis, in turn, conflicted with Durkheim's classical notion that altruism and solidarity are fundamental traits of society, social order, and collectives, which he described as creating a unified connected aggregate from individuals (Durkheim 1996, p. 406). Although disintegration is temporary, it is typically described as a coherent ag-

gregate in disaster scenarios; according to Durkheim's logic, this cannot foster morality and solidarity, but rather results in a condition where social norms cease to operate. As Durkheim himself articulated:

> Morality in all its degrees is found only in the public state and changes only as a function of social conditions. To ask oneself what it would have been if society had not existed, would be to leave the field of facts and enter the field of unfounded hypotheses and fantasies that cannot be tested (Ibid., pp. 407-408).

Nonetheless, empirical data obtained by disaster sociologists such as Charles Fritz, Allen Barton, Enrico Carantelli, and Russell Dynes revealed an increase in solidarity, which was theoretically defined as a «therapeutic community» or an «extraordinary consensus.» Charles Fritz theoretically rationalized this occurrence by positing that at the moment of the breakdown of social order and familiar community, the catastrophe itself acted as a referential framework against which altruistic actions were manifested. It was not the success of natural order or a «war of all against all»; instead, it was the establishment of a quasi-natural order in which a new form of community emerged, marked by endeavors to uphold social sustainability.

In order to clarify the total disintegration of social bonds following the Buffalo Creek flood, Kai Erikson presents the disaster not as a temporary referential framework for human behavior but as «collective trauma.» He adeptly makes this shift by associating «trauma» with «violence,» using insights from the psychological interpretation of trauma experienced by victims of violence (represented by a coal mining company), while also reviving Durkheim's foundational argument regarding violence as a social anomaly. In essence, Erikson's model amalgamates two interpretations of violence, classical and Durkheimian, and the flood in Buffalo Creek has been transformed from a disaster into a collective trauma.

Funding

The article was prepared within the framework of the RSF project No. 25-18-00901.

References

Александер Дж. (2012) Культурная травма и коллективная идентичность. Социологический журнал, (3), с. 5–40. EDN: PELCHZ

— Alexander J. (2012) Cultural trauma and collective identity. *Sociological Journal*, (3), pp. 5–40. (in Russ.)

Арендт Х. (2014) О насилии. М.: Новое литературное издательство.

— Arendt H. (2014) *On violence*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe izdatelstvo. (in Russ.)

Дюркгейм Э. (1991) О разделении общественного труда. Метод социологии. М.: Наука.

— Durkheim E. (1991) *On the division of social labor. The method of sociology*. Moscow: Science. (in Russ.)

Дюркгейм Э. (1994) Самоубийство. Социологический этюд. М.: Мысль.

— Durkheim E. (1994) *Suicide: A study in sociology*. Moscow: Mysl'. (in Russ.)

Дюркгейм Э. (1995) Метод социологии. В: Социология. Ее предмет, метод и предназначение. М.: Канон.

— Durkheim E. (1995) *The method of sociology*. In: Sociology. Its subject, method, and purpose. Moscow: Kanon. (in Russ.)

Дюркгейм Э. (2013) Дуализм человеческой природы и его социальные условия. Социологическое обозрение, 12(2), pp. 133–144. EDN: QZVESP

— Durkheim E. (2013) The dualism of human nature and its social conditions. *Russian Sociological Review*, 12(2), pp. 133–144. (in Russ.)

Дюркгейм Э. (2018) Элементарные формы религиозной жизни: тотемическая система в Австралии. М.: Элементарные формы.

— Durkheim E. (2018) *The elementary forms of religious life: The totemic system in Australia*. Moscow: Elementarnye formy. (in Russ.)

Гольман В. (1934) Неврозы военного времени. В: Психозы и психоневрозы войны. М., Л.: Ленбиомедгиз.

— Golman V. (1934) War neuroses. In: Psychoses and psychoneuroses of war. Moscow, Leningrad: Lenbiomedgiz. (in Russ.)

Осипов В. (1934) Введение. В: Психозы и психоневрозы войны. М., Л.: Ленбиомедгиз.

— Osipov V. (1934) *Introduction*. In: Psychoses and psychoneuroses of war. Moscow, Leningrad: Lenbiomedgiz. (in Russ.)

Сукиасян С. Г., Солдаткин В. А., Снедков Е. В., Тадевосян М. Я., Косенко В. Г. (2019) Боевое посттравматическое стрессовое расстройство: от «синдрома раздраженного сердца» до «психогенно-органического расстройства». Эволюция понятия. Журнал неврологии и психиатрии имени С.С. Корсакова, 119(6), с. 144–151. EDN: NREHXB. https://doi.org/10.17116/jnev-

ro2019119061144

— Sukiasyan S. G., Soldatkin V. A., Snedkov E. V., Tadevosyan M. Ya., Kosenko V. G. (2019) Combat post-traumatic stress disorder: From "irritable heart syndrome" to "psychogenic-organic disorder". Evolution of the concept. *Zhurnal Nevrologii i Psikhiatrii Imeni S.S. Korsakova*, 119(6), pp. 144–151. (in Russ.) https://doi.org/10.17116/jnevro2019119061144

Шумков Г. (1914) Душевное состояние воинов после боя. Военный сборник, (11), с. 103–127.

— Shumkov G. (1914) The mental state of warriors after the battle. *Voenniy Sbornik*, (11), pp. 103–127. (in Russ.)

Abrutyn S. (2024) The roots of social trauma: Collective, cultural pain and its consequences. *Society and Mental Health*, 14(3), pp. 240–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/21568693231213088

Alford C. F. (2016) *Trauma, culture, and PTSD*. Springer.

Barton A. H. (1969) *Communities in Disaster: A Sociological Analysis of Collective Stress Situations*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Blocker T. J., Sherkat D. E. (1992) In the Eyes of the Beholder: Technological and Naturalistic Interpretations of a Disaster. *Industrial Crisis Quarterly*, 6(2), pp. 153–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/108602669200600206

Britt L., Hammett W. H. (2024) Trauma as Cultural Capital: A Critical Feminist Theory of Trauma Discourse. *Hypatia*, 39(4), pp. 916–933. https://doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2024.22

Coady C. A. J. (1985) The idea of violence. *Philosophical Papers*, 14(1), pp. 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/05568648509506233

Degenaar J. J. (1980) The concept of violence. *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 7(1), pp. 14–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589348008704765

Dynes R. R. (1970) *Organized behavior in disaster*. Heath Lexington Books.

Dynes R. R. (1978) [Review of the book Everything in its Path. Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood by Kai Erikson]. *Social Forces*, 57(2), pp. 721–722.

Erikson K. (1976) *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Erikson K. (1991) Notes on Trauma and Community. *American Imago*, 48(4), pp. 455–472.

Fritz C. (1961) *Disaster*. In: Merton R. K., Nisbet R. A. (Eds.) Contemporary Social Problems. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Fritz C. (1996) *Disasters and Mental Health: Therapeutic Principles Drawn from Disaster Studies*. Disaster Research Center, Historical and Comparative Disaster Series #10. URL: https://udspace.udel.edu/items/0e4bf49b-f7a0-4feb-916d-8ada6367431b/

Gane M. (2010) Durkheim's theory of violence. In: Mukherjee S. R. (Ed.) *Durkheim and Violence*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Gilbert C. (1995) Studying Disaster: A Review of the Main Conceptual Tools. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies & Disasters*, 13(3), pp. 231–240. https://doi.org/10.1177/028072709501300302

Good B. J., Hinton D. E. (Eds.) (2016) *Culture and PTSD: Trauma in global and historical perspective*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Grant L. (2020) Post-Vietnam syndrome: Psychiatry, anti-war politics, and the reconstitution of the Vietnam veteran. *Rhetoric of Health & Medicine*, 3(2), pp. 189–219. https://doi.org/10.5744/rhm.2020.1007

Gurney P. (1977) *The therapeutic community revisited: Some suggested modifications and their implications*. University Of Delaware Disaster Research Center, Preliminary paper № 39. http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/409

Haslam N., McGrath M. J. (2020) The Creeping Concept of Trauma. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 87(3), pp. 509–531. https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2020.0052

Heading B. (1978) [Review of the book Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood by Kai T. Erikson]. *Journal of American Studies*, 12(1), pp. 141–144.

Holdorff B. (2011) The Fight for "Traumatic Neurosis", 1889–1916: Hermann Oppenheim and his Opponents in Berlin. *History of psychiatry*, 22(4), pp. 465–476. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957154X10390495

Jacobsen K. (2021) The devil his due: Psychohistory and psychosocial studies. *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture & Society*, 26(3), pp. 304–322. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41282-021-00223-7

Kansteiner W. (2004) Genealogy of a Category Mistake: A Critical Intellectual History of the Cultural Trauma Metaphor. *Rethinking history*, 8(2), pp. 193–221. https://doi.org/10.1080/1364252041000168390 5

Kloocke R., Schmiedebach H., Priebe S. (2005) Psychological Injury in the Two World Wars: Changing Concepts and Terms in German Psychiatry. *History of Psychiatry*, 16(1), pp. 43–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957154X05044600

Kreps G. A. (1985) Disaster and the social order. *Sociological Theory*, 3(1), pp. 49–64. https://doi.org/10.2307/202173

LaCapra D. (2001) *Writing history, writing trauma*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Langer P. et al. (2023) *Trauma concepts in research and practice: An Overview*. Springer.

Lerner P. (2003) *Hysterical men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890–1930*. Cornell University Press.

Leys R. (2000) *Trauma: A genealogy*. University of Chicago Press.

Lifton R. J., Olson E. (1976) The human meaning of total disaster: The Buffalo Creek experience. *Psychiatry*, 39(1), pp. 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1976.11023872

Lifton R. J., Erikson K. (1982) Survivors of nuclear war: psychological and communal breakdown. In: Chivian E., Chivian S., Lifton R. J., Mack J. E. (Eds.) *Last Aid: The Medical Dimensions of Nuclear War*. San Francisco: WH Freeman.

Malešević S. (2010) How pacifist were the founding fathers?: War and violence in classical sociology. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13(2), pp. 193–212. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431010362298

Moghimi Y. (2012) Anthropological discourses on the globalization of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in post-conflict societies. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, 18(1), pp. 29–37. https://doi.org/10.1097/01.pra.0000410985.53970.3b

Quarantelli E. L., Dynes R. R. (1985) *Community response to disasters.* In: Sowder B. (Ed.) Disasters and mental health: Selected contemporary perspectives. National Institute of Mental Health.

Rezaeian M. (2013) The Association Between Natural Disasters and Violence: A Systematic Review of the Literature and a Call for More Epidemiological Studies. *Journal of research in medical sciences: the official journal of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences*, 18(12), pp. 1103–1107.

Sardoč M., Coady C. A. J. (2019) Re-thinking violence: an interview with C.A.J. Coady. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 12(4), pp. 735–747. https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2019.1651926

Smith K. J., Belgrave L. L. (1995) The reconstruction of everyday life: Experiencing Hurricane Andrew. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 24(3), pp. 244–269. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124195024003001

Summerfield D. (2001) The invention of post-traumatic stress disorder and the social usefulness of a psychiatric category. *BMJ*, 322(7278), pp. 95–98. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.322.7278.95

Tilly C. (1992) *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990–1992*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Weil S. (2005) The Power of Words. In: *An Anthology*. London: Penguin Books.

Young A. (1997) *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*. Princeton University Press.

About the author

Dmitry A. Bochkov — MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology, is a researcher at the Center for Medical Anthropology at the N.N. Miklouho-Maclay Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russian Federation; and a doctoral candidate in the Department of Social Sciences at the Université catholique de l'Ouest, Angers, France. His research interests include the sociology of knowledge, medical anthropology, the history of philosophy, and the history of psychoanalysis.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3228-0708. E-mail: dimitr.bochkov@gmail.com

Бочков Дмитрий Андреевич — MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology, исследователь в центре медицинской антропологии Института этнологии

и антропологии им. Н. Н. Миклухо-Маклая РАН, Москва, Российская Федерация; докторант департамента социальных наук Universite catholique de l'Ouest, Анже, Франция. Научные интересы: социология знания, медицинская антропология, история философии, история психоанализа

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3228-0708. E-mail: dimitr.bochkov@gmail.com