

From Rationalization to Attribution: A Meta- Analysis of Existing Explanations of Reaction to Marginalization and Inequality in Nigeria

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Abstract

The theoretical and empirical weaknesses in the inequality-conflict arguments have stimulated scholars to seek better reasoning and approaches. Often, scholars had reported a spurious correlation between inequality and conflict because interaction is governed by an "invisible hand", which produces 'unintended consequences'. It has therefore been concluded that inequality does not directly affect conflict. Thus despite hopelessness and disenfranchisement, inequality or deprivation has not caused violence because of mediating factors, notably justification. The viability of various mediators has been of major interest to scholars of rebellion. This article takes a look at various explanations within the collective action literature, using Nigeria as an example. The review showed that explanations have transited from rationalizations to justification and from efficacy to attributions. It showed that the emergence of an urban citizenship with informed political agenda has the potential to challenge the state or influence politics to demand basic services.

1. Introduction

Under neo-liberal globalization, world economies have grown. However, in many countries, income growth was accompanied by increased inequality (World Bank, 2007). In Nigeria, under the Structural Adjustment Programme (1980-1996), GDP increased 40%; however, households in the top 30% income bracket appropriated 75% of all gains, while incomes attributed to the bottom 10% decreased by 30%. Gini coefficient increased 20% (UN-HABITAT, 2003). The immediate cause of poverty therefore, is not in lack of resources, but in inequality of income distribution. With a gross Domestic Product of \$459.6 billion (World Bank, 2012), it is Sub-Saharan Africa's biggest economy (current GDP estimated at \$509.9 billion).

2. Nigeria and the Oil Curse

The discovery of oil in the 1960s transformed its economy from an agro-base to oil dependency. With an estimated oil reserve of 40 billion barrels, and currently the world's 12th leading oil producer, it earns an estimated \$20 billion from oil daily. 80% of government revenues and 50% of GDP is earned from oil (Watts, 2005). Nigeria's oil fortunes have however been a nightmare; 85% of oil earnings accrue to 1% of the population (Watts, 2005). The nation's erstwhile anti-corruption chief, Nuhu Ribadu revealed that over \$380 billion had been stole since 1960 (BBC, 2006). It is common knowledge that in the past decades, Transparency International rated Nigeria the most corrupt country in the world. Despite huge oil earnings, over 70% of Nigerians subsist on less than \$1 a day (UNDP, 2004); 2/3 are described as critically poor. Ironically, this proportion increased when the country received higher oil revenues (Tomlinson, 2002). Years of economic mismanagement and large scale corruption have undermined the country's development; poverty had grown from 27.2% in 1980 to 66% in 1996; an estimated 30 million people are 'extremely poor'- unable to meet 'basic food needs' (Narayan & Petesch, 2002). With the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), most industries that hitherto served as sources of employment to the teeming populations had collapsed, leaving millions eking a living from informal sources of employment and slipping into poverty. Rather than cure poverty, oil revenue had deepened inequality with extremities of opulence and poverty flourishing side- by- side. While the rich are holed up in mansions, the poor are increasingly concentrated in slums; places characterized by insecurity of tenure, poor housing conditions, deficient access to safe drinking water, poor sanitation and severe overcrowding (UNFPA, 1996). 2/3 of Lagos, Nigeria's financial capital is made up of slums and shanties (Davis, 2006).

The level of poverty in the slums contrasts sharply with the lifestyle of the wealthy that live nearby and possibilities

of upward mobility for the poor and their children fade as educational and occupational openings diminish. Under this situation, frustrations from dashed expectations of a better life might be expected to lead to social tension, protests, and a 'class consciousness' among the poor. While there have been violent protests in Nigeria, like the *Agbekoya* peasant uprising in the 1960s, the *Bakolori* riots, the Niger Delta (*Egbesu Boys*) and *Boko Haram* violent episodes, student demonstrations, mob actions and strikes over wages, taxes, and structural adjustment policies leading to violence, there has been an absence of demands for radical restructuring of society in a more egalitarian way; in Nigerian history there is no record of an uprising of the poor against the rich. While Nigeria has experienced a civil war and recently there has been growth of ethnic militias, the motivations of these groups are more often ethnic or religious (Ukiwo, 2005). Where violence had occurred they had been spontaneous and uncoordinated, directed against specific irksome conditions and quickly fade away upon achieving demands. While it may be argued that long years of military rule had repressed political freedom of Nigerians, return to civil rule has hardly changed the mismanagement of the economy and the nature of demands (Epelle and Uranta, 2014).

Recent 'happiness surveys' reported that Nigerians are the happiest people in the world. It is curious that people who live with such levels of poverty and inequality in a country with so many resources could be described as happy. Hirschman (1973) argued that income and stratification inequality can be tolerated where there is a perception that mobility is possible for the talented and diligent, while the inept fall. Schureke (2003) also posited that in a 'tunnel effect', people will justify a system if they perceive that they have chances of upward mobility within it. While there have been studies of income inequality, living conditions, (Olanrewaju, 2001) conflicts, (Epelle and Uranta, 2014; Akubor, 2011; Alabi, 2007; Ukiwo, 2005) and structures of legitimacy (Osaghae, et al, 1998) in Nigeria, there has been no scientific study of how Nigerians perceive inequality and how rationalizations and attribution are related to legitimization of inequality. It has been argued that while attributions may not be the sole determinant of action, they are important determinants of judgments, decisions and behaviour (Heine & Montiel, 1999). Jost and Banaji (1994) argued that social systems are maintained in part through the attitudes and beliefs that support them, and that social arrangements are stable to the extent that they are perceived as legitimate. Our knowledge of beliefs about poverty and inequality is therefore central to our understanding of justification or challenge to the status quo, and policies to redress inequality (Bullock, 2006).

3. Marginality and Consciousness

This leads to the debate of the possible development of class consciousness among the urban poor in African societies. While the use of class to designate social categories in Africa has remained problematic (Lloyd, 1974), Miliband (cited in Lloyd, 1974) argued that the development of class consciousness must be preceded by a perception of membership, and of what the advancement of class interests require. While the poor in Nigeria can be said to be conscious of certain economic interests and differences in wealth and status, many concerns are expressed in terms of primordial, individual, religious or ethnic interests and similar vague ideological categories that diminish possibilities of the emergence of organizations that can provoke social change. Rather than an attitude of concern for the collective progress for the lower classes therefore, there is a preponderance of an individual desire to escape poverty through personal efforts (Portes and Walton, 1976). Blame for poverty is placed on circumstances or the individual rather than structure, thereby deflecting the revolutionary potential of frustration.

3.1 *The Paradox of Inequality and Seeming Stability*

Interests in the problems of inequality has been spawned by fears that large populations of unemployed persons, concentrated in urban centers next door to the rich and powerful would be the breeding ground for proponents of radical political ideologies (Perlman, 2004). From Aristotle and Plato to De Tocqueville, Marx, Dahl and in fact Huntington it has been thought that societies with more unequal income distributions are more prone to phenomena like revolutions, wars, coups, terrorism and rebellion (Lichbach, 1990). Marx had thought that by creating urban poverty, capitalism had provided the instrument for its own demise. Castells (1977) conceived of urban social movements as the foundation for class organizations of the urban poor. Former IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus warned that '*... poverty is the ultimate systemic threat facing humanity. The widening gaps between rich and poor nations ... are ... potentially socially explosive ... If the poor are left hopeless, poverty will undermine societies through confrontation, violence and civil disorder*' (Camdessus, 2000). In fact commonsense suggests that with increased poverty, the poor will reject the status quo in favour of self-interested motivations, and that greater injustice will breed greater discontent (Henry & Saul, 2006), as advocated for example, by economic and rational choice models of political action (Fiorina, 1981), social identity

theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), relative deprivation and frustration-aggression models (Gurr, 1970), and the realistic group conflict theory (Bobo, 1983). In summary therefore, it is assumed that the denial of basic freedoms or access to the basic essentials of life, will force people to choose between accepting gross injustice and securing a fairer share by violent means. It is almost a universal assumption that an inequitable distribution of resources and wealth will provoke violent rebellion (Cramer, 2005). However, history reveals far more acquiescence than identity-based competition or revolt on the part of disadvantaged group; rebellion is only an occasional reaction to suffering in human history (Zinn, 1968).

Contrary to speculations therefore, the urban poor have been found to be conservative, patriotic and system supportive (Perlman, 2004), preferring incremental changes to fundamental change. While urban movements have had some successes in influencing governments, successive governments have had successes in suppressing demands and excluding them from political participation despite worsened conditions, playing groups against each other, using what is now termed the 'patron-client' tactics (Davis, 2006). Where violence had erupted it had been the result of collective actions among competing groups (ethnic, regional or religious) mobilizing people around collective identities (Ukiwo, 2005). Demanding for immediate consumption issues like land invasion or riots over food and fuel prices or desires for other items that guarantee a more stable and predictable structure of daily life, (Walton, 1997). The poor have thus rallied promiscuously between leftist and rightist governments depending whichever can provide immediate needs (Davis, 2006), rather than taking practical actions to change the system. Economic inequality therefore incites relatively little protest; inequality does not directly affect conflict (Lichbach, 1990; Bullock, 2006). This for Cramer (2005), means '*...that inequality is legitimized in one way or another; that the inequality comes with a degree of power and repression that are simply too great to overcome; or that there are various obstacles preventing collective action.*'. The fairness or unfairness of inequality is therefore often determined by the effectiveness of national ideologies and institutions in justifying the system of inequality. Given that the inequality-conflict arguments are theoretically and empirically weak there is therefore a need for better reasoning and approaches (Lichbach, 1990).

These questions continue to beg for answers. Davis (2006) quipped rhetorically; what then is responsible for the seeming legitimization of inequality that have made Marx's 'historical agency' impotent? Or are the slums volcanoes waiting to erupt as Victorian bourgeoisies once imagined? Is there a point at which congestion, violence and poverty in the slums will overwhelm the 'clientistic' politics and ad hoc survival networks and lead to combustion? Lichbach (1990) argued that scholars had reported a spurious correlation between inequality and conflict because interaction is governed by an "invisible hand", which produces 'unintended consequences'. Inequality or deprivation has not caused violence because of mediating factors, notably 'justification' (Cramer, 2005); this justification may come from culture, political, economic and social processes, or some 'ideological moments'. What social values therefore, allow the poor in the Third World to come to terms with inequality? How do status beliefs emerge that legitimizes the status order? (Hegvedt, 2004) Scholars have been interested in the causes and consequences of poverty and beliefs about causes of poverty and inequality, especially with regards to the role of ideology and class consciousness in the maintenance and reproduction of social inequality (Hunt, 1996). Our knowledge of beliefs about inequality is therefore central to the understanding of public attitudes towards the status quo, and policies to redress inequality.

3.2 The Concept of Marginality

The use of the concept of urban marginality is the product of ethnographic studies of peasants' adaptation to city life. These approaches have contended that migrant peasants found integration into 'modern' cities impossible because of their values, attitudes, traditions and behavioural patterns. The views of this school is summed up in Oscar Lewis' (1969) theory of the *culture of poverty*, which proposes that the poor reject the values of the larger society, creating a different subculture, in which economic and social handicaps are self-reinforced, resulting in intergenerational deprivation. The use of marginality to describe the conditions of the urban poor declined giving way to new concepts like capacity deprivation (Sen, 1999) or livelihood and assets (Rakodi, 2001), which argue that poverty is not attributable to attitudinal deficiencies in the poor, but the underlying social structure. These approaches have been responsible for the formulation of policies that embrace hither-to disadvantaged groups like women, ethnic minorities and the disabled, and advocating the use of social and human capitals as panacea for survival and the entrenchment of the social welfare states to cater for the 'disadvantaged. With the triumph of or neoliberalism, the use of the term 'advanced marginality' gained currency. Wacquant (1999) theorized that new forms of global capitalism encompassing deindustrialization, and the growth of the knowledge economy, causes desolation, as highly skilled workers are rewarded and unskilled workers rendered jobless (Sassen, 1991) thus extant marginality based on residual poverty in working class communities hither-to assumed to be remediable by an expansion in the market as postulated by Marx and Engels has become permanent. Wacquant argued

that Marginality is decoupled from cyclical fluctuations of the economy as upswings have no benefits for the poor, while downswings imply greater misery. Further economic growth thus produces more marginality. Advanced marginality is enhanced by what Wacquant termed the 'retrenchment of the welfare state' entailing the stemming of social budgets and anti-poverty programmes and privatization of social policy. The concept of advanced marginality is closely linked to the development of the underclasses in many cities of developed nations.

4. Explanations of Reaction to Marginalization and Deprivation in Nigeria

Since independence, Nigeria has had some experience of armed conflicts (Akpan, 2007). These include the 'Agbekoya' uprising in the erstwhile Western region in the 1960s, the 'Tiv' riots and the secessionist bid by Isaac Boro in the Niger-Delta region. While it may be argued that the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) is the most costly episode of violence in Nigerian history, Olukoshi (1998: 16) argued that economic crisis which commenced in the 1980s consequent upon the adoption of SAP served to undermine state capacity and legitimacy reinforcing the structures of authoritarianism, and creating an endless spiral of crisis after crisis. While most of these episodes have been described as stemming from ethnic, regional and religious mobilization especially with recent formation of ethnic militias masquerading as freedom fighters, the recent crisis in the oil rich Niger-Delta region has perhaps had the greatest impact on the ability of the country to retain its territorial and economic integrity. Akpan (2007: 162) aptly described the situation in Nigeria's Niger-Delta when he asserted that the region "...has since the early 1990s witnessed an almost unbroken orgy of violence and militarization". Employing the Marxian political economy approach, Epelle and Uranta (2014) concluded that the recent *Boko Haram* phenomenon in Nigeria is reflection of the dependent and weak character of the Nigerian State. They hypothesised that *Boko Haram* is symptomatic of not only a weak state, but also a desperate and marginalized class whose only source of drawing the state's attention is through organized violence. For Epelle and Uranta (2014) therefore, *Boko Haram* is merely a coincidence between serious private accumulation of the state's GDP and lack of what they termed 'Focused Civil Empowerment'. The *Boko Haram* scenario can be located within the capitalist mode of reproduction in which groups dissatisfied with their condition under sundry identities (class, ethnic, and religious) to improve their position. Epelle and Uranta (2014) concluded that while identity factors may contribute to the violence, the nature and character of the Nigerian state is a major factor in the emergence of the deepening politico-religious violence in the northern part of the country, described as *Boko Haram*. Although the group is being allegedly sponsored by some northern politicians, ideologically, *Boko Haram* opposes to western education, western culture and modern science. Official estimates indicate that since the general election in 1999, over 2,000 people have died in sectarian and ethnic violence (Singer, 2000). While most explanations of this situation have been within the ambits of ethnicity, class, *clienticism* as well as religious identities, there have been limited attempts to utilize a relative deprivation perspective.

4.1 Legitimization of Inequality: Injustice Perception and the Rational Actor

The legitimacy of a system of stratification must come from rationalization by both those who benefit from it and those who do not otherwise members of both groups are likely to foment social change (Olson & Hafer, 2001). While it is clear why beneficiaries of a system come to support it, scholars have tried to grapple with how people legitimize a system in which they are disadvantaged. Recently, Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999) Self Evaluation (Della Fave, 1980) and Social Justice Theories (Hegtvedt, 2004) have been used to explain how disadvantaged persons respond to inequality. While the SDO argues that the degree to which a person endorses anti-egalitarian views and group-based inequality determines their level of legitimization of inequality, Self-evaluation theories posit that people's evaluations about their ability to obtain resources lead to a normative acceptance of inequality, when self-evaluations become congruent with resource received (Sutphin, 2007). Social Justice Theories however argue that justice exists when there is congruence between expectations and outcomes (of rewards and procedures for determining rewards) based on normative rules and that perception of injustice leads to emotional distress and attempts to restore justice. These theories paint a picture of advantaged persons as cashing in on their dominance and the disadvantaged as revolutionaries-in-waiting and conflicts of interest are assumed to be endemic (Jost & Banaji, 1994). The system justification perspective on the contrary, proposes a positive correlation between group disadvantage and support for the status quo (Henry & Saul, 2006); it argues that "...existing social arrangements are legitimized, even at the expense of personal and group interest" so long as it is perceived as fair and legitimate (Jost & Banaji, 1994), and that dominant and subordinate groups are averse to conflict and antagonism and generally develop collaborative relationships.

With extremes of wealth and poverty in capitalist society, justifications must be created to rationalize inequality. These justifications provide answers to the disadvantaged who may become aggrieved when wealth gaps become

excessive and unfair (Huber & Form, 1973). An illusion is created of a fair economic and social structure, making it seem normal, fair, necessary, inevitable, moral and therefore legitimate. Stereotypes, myths, and ideologies become tools to make the poor, as well as the rich, believe that they 'deserve' their places in the stratification spectrum thereby perpetuating inequality. Characteristic elements of this concept are the principle of equal opportunities and the responsibility of each person for his/her social position. (Castillo, 2007) Disadvantaged classes come to believe that existing rules governing the allocation of rewards, power and distribution of wealth and incomes also represent their interests and are therefore legitimate. In the social justice, and social conflict literature, increasing concern is being given to individual subjective perceptions of fairness or unfairness of the redistribution system (Hedgvelt, 2004). The central idea is that individual subjective perceptions rather than the 'objective perceptions of an external observer, has a greater effect on attitudes and actions and that more often, when there is an incongruence between expectations and rewards based on normative rules, emotional distress ensues that provokes attempts to restore justice(Hedgvidt, 2004). The system justification perspective on the contrary however, hypothesized that disadvantage people are more likely to justify existing social systems, and that "system justification levels will be higher in societies in which social and economic inequality is more extreme than less extreme"(Jost & Banaji, 1994). It contends that economic inequality does not present a threat to the legitimacy of the social order since the order is a collaborative psychological and ideological process where inequality is justified by virtually everyone in society, especially the more disadvantaged and not merely as something imposed by one group on another. Disadvantaged people thus come to believe that existing rules governing the allocation of rewards, power and distribution of wealth and incomes also represent their interests and are therefore legitimate Jost and (2003). This legitimization is achieved through stereotypes and other ideological devices (Jost & Banaji, 1994) that neutralize the effects of discontent, replacing it with out group favouritism and attitudinal ambivalence. While all perspectives have found empirical support for each position, they leave a confusion regarding the true nature of reactions of the disadvantaged to perceived inequality. This has been largely due to the fact that researchers had focused on feelings and attitudes largely neglecting actual resultant actions (Wright et al, 1990).

4.2 *Poverty Attributions*

Scholars have been interested in beliefs about causes of poverty and inequality, especially with regards to the role of ideology and class consciousness in the maintenance and reproduction of social inequality (Hunt, 1996). Studies linking poverty attribution to inequality legitimization correlate legitimization to the acceptance of an 'ideology of individualism' (Feagin, 1975) or a 'logic of opportunity syllogism' (Kluegel & Smith, 1986), linked to Americans' acceptance of a system of inequality based on a preponderant belief that poverty is the result of individual character deficiency (Robinson, 2009). In what is now regarded as a classic study of perceptions of causes of poverty, Feagin, (1972) advanced three categories of attributions of poverty: Individualistic explanations, structural explanations and fatalism. While Feagin's attribution index was tested on Americans, his study has been replicated using other samples, Feagin's work has formed the basis for current studies regarding attributions of poverty.

Studies of attributions of poverty have been very useful in determining perceptions of causality, predisposition and actions, and are therefore useful for policies of poverty removal (Ige and Nekhwevha, 2012). Hunt (1996) argued that contrary to explanations that ideologies exist in opposing individualist-rightist against structural-leftist perspectives, individual and structural explanations are often combined in cases where individuals perceive that while structural barriers cause poverty, if people work hard enough they can overcome it, in which case contradictory beliefs are combined in compromise explanations (Robinson, 2009). This seeming values inconsistency ('split consciousnesses') is the basis for social cohesion; a lack of consensus on system challenging values among the poor and excluded is the source of social stability (Mann, 1970). The split consciousness thesis proposes that the dominant ideology (individualism) and the challenging ideology (structuralism) coexist without conflict; both norms jointly occupy different "segments" of an individual's consciousness.

4.2.1 *Attributions and Legitimization*

Studies have shown how disadvantaged and advantaged persons or groups come to accept 'legitimizing myths' 'Legitimizing Ideology' or what Robinson (2009) termed 'institutional logic', reminiscent of Marx's 'false consciousness', embedded in 'beliefs in a just world 'or forms of meritocracy, legitimizing status differences (Henry and Saul, 2006). Feagin (1972) had found that nationally, Americans believe in a 'meritocratic' philosophy and that this formed the basis for unbridled individualism. Feagin's finding which reflects the so-called American dream has been found by virtually all studies on American attitudes to poverty (Kluegel & Smith, 1986). Hunt (1996) however showed that individualistic

philosophies are not all encompassing; Americans differ in attitudes according to race and geographical locations. Robinson (2009) demonstrated how American beliefs could be understood on the basis of an individualist-structural continuum on which attributions and legitimization could be located. In studies of transitory economies of Western Europe, a similar pattern is emerging as people's acceptance of egalitarian distribution gives way for individualism as an overriding ideology.

4.3 Class and Ethnicity Paradigms

The colonial state bequeathed to Nigeria at independence towers above all other structures of society, retaining for itself absolute control of massive economic resources (Idowu, 1999). As the state is the custodian of political power needed for accumulation, (Ekekwe, 1985: 53) it then becomes the central actor in the formation and mediation of conflicts. While it has been argued that internal marginalization is the cause of conflict between economic and social groupings in Nigeria (Adedeji, 1999: 32), Nolutshungy (1996: 2) averred that the state is central to the process of marginalization. Alavi (1972) argued that at independence, post-colonial states in Africa inherited a bureaucratic-military apparatus that was overdeveloped in relation to the society because of the necessity to maintain the subordinate status of the latter to colonial interests. The state thus appropriates economic surplus in the name of development, fostering territorial unity and legitimacy (Idowu, 1999). Ake (1985: 43-65) argued that class struggles consequent upon attempts to hijack the state and the consumerist character of the dominant classes are the precursors for instability in Nigeria, thus proposing that class politics is central to Nigeria's problems. Ake (1996: 42) contends further that *'instead of being a public force, the state in Africa tends to be privatized, that is, appropriated to the service of private interests by the dominant faction of the elite'*. In the same vein, Onimode (1988: 97-125) averred that class struggle stimulates conflicts in Nigeria and is central to an understanding of socio-economic inequality. Nigeria, for Onimode is therefore polarized between the political power holders on one hand and working people on the other, resulting in an intra-class and inter-class struggle between bourgeoisie and working class ideologies. However, the view of the Nigerian situation as amenable to a class analysis has been contended. Idowu (1999: 43) argued that given the heterogeneous ethnic environment in which these 'classes' have had to engage in struggle, and the fact that ethnic identities tend to be stronger than class identities, an analysis of the Nigerian situation using a 'class' prism produces a jaundiced picture. In a failed state like Nigeria, which sustains ethnic parochialism, institutions ultimately collapse and anarchy eventually ensues as ethnic groups contend for power making ethnicity a superior paradigm for explaining contentions. Idowu (1999: 44) therefore argued that ethnicity transcends other loyalties to become the sole basis of identity. Studies have unveiled a number of mobilization on the basis of religious and ethnic rather than class identities as the precursor for needless violence and wars in Africa (Idowu, 1999; Ukiwo, 2005). Mobilization on the basis of ethnicity has been used to garner solidarity for in-groups and negative bias and hostility towards out-groups to stimulate conflicts in Africa. Therefore, Ukiwo (2005: 4) argued that competition for political power and resources in Nigeria is based rather on ethnic than class identities. This ethnicity manifests in a variety of forms, including voting and political party support, community service and violence.

Instrumentalist conceptions of ethnicity argue that ambitious classes and regional elites manipulate ethnic identities to suit class interests, thereby politicizing it in its quest for state power and wealth (Varshney, 2002). The implication of this argument is that ordinarily people do not engage in conflicts except at the behest of the elites. Ukiwo (2005) therefore averred that there is the tendency to exonerate the agency of the subordinate classes in privileging the role of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois classes. The common feature of such arguments is the centrality of the state and conspiratorial bourgeois elements in fostering violence to suit their goals, a trend that has been reported in studies of conflicts elsewhere in Africa (Mandami, 2001). This instrumentalist assumption which pervades the literature however fails to demonstrate how congruence emerges between the interests of the ethnic leaders and those of their followers (Ukiwo, 2005). This would require an investigation of the nature of horizontal inequalities among ethnic groups and the responses of groups to such inequalities. The successes of the elites in their instrumental manipulations have been adduced to an array of factors, one of which revolves around the reciprocal obligations consequent upon 'clientism'.

4.4 Reciprocal Obligations and 'Clientism'

The patron-client model of co-optation (Nelson, 1979: 383) avers that the urban poor in Third World cities are basically satisfied with urban life and are too preoccupied with trying to make ends meet to engage in protests and eventually become petitioners in the demand 'making process' (Walton, 1997: 2) political participation therefore often takes the form of deference and patronage. Thus while the elite grab the lion's share of privileges, the poor are co-opted with minor concessions like subsidized services. This perspective however presents the poor as rational actors who make the best

of their circumstances rather than gullible subjects of manipulation (Walton, 1997: 3). In fact Leeds & Leeds (1976, quoted in Walton, 1997: 4) argued that the poor themselves manipulate the system as much as they are manipulated by it. Therefore, clientistic participation often entails material gains in addition to the concessions. Patronage has thus become the only means by which people can succeed in Nigeria (Smith, 2001). In the African tradition, morality rooted in kinship demands reciprocal obligations of patrons to clients (Smith, 2001: 593). Whilst kin-based societies are marked by inequality, this inequality is sustained when people at the top echelon of society consistently fulfil certain obligations to the downtrodden to buy loyalty, prestige and power (Bledsoe, 1995). In this way everyone is a client or a patron depending on his/her place in the social hierarchy. The advantaged therefore benefit more when they acquire large numbers of clients than fortunes, a resource that is easily cashed in (Guyer, 1995). Thus in Nigeria today, connections with patrons with state and economic power determines one's access to jobs, health care, education and other services. Within this framework, tension and conflicts arise only when clients perceive that their patrons are not doing enough. Where the patrons feel less obliged to fulfil their obligations, as occurred with military regimes in Nigeria, their clients are left without leverage. A system of stratification that puts the haves in obligation to the have-nots is therefore more desirable. Smith (2001: 596) hypothesized that Nigerians' hatred for their erstwhile military rulers was rooted in the failure of the latter to fulfil client-patron obligations rather than corruption or ineptitude. As Smith (2001: 603) noted, not distributing ill-gotten wealth to clients and supporters is regarded as a form of evil which must be opposed. Diminished client-patron benefits consequent upon long years of military rule heightened deprivation and inequalities leading to deepened resentments. *Clienticism* is however inextricably intertwined with beliefs in the supernatural selection of those who acquire elite status.

4.5 *The Political Economy of Religion and Pentecostalism in Nigeria*

Davis (2006) proposed that while urbanization and urban poverty in developed nations had secularized the masses as predicted by Marx, by contrast, in the developing world, the reverse had been the case (McLeod, 1996). In the cities of developing nations, Davis (2006: 28) asserts, '*Marx had yielded to Mohammed and the Holy Ghost*'. This reinforces the underlying importance of religious beliefs in shaping perceptions and reactions to social issues among people of developing nations. Perlman (1976) in her study of the Brazilian *favelados* noted that a majority of her sample reported that they believed that success in life is attributable to some 'unseen spirits'. Religion and fatalism may thus be a factor stimulating 'dual consciousness', a perception of structural forces as causes of marginalization and deprivation and an unwillingness to 'do something' about it.

Recently, Pentecostal Christianity has expanded along with increasing poverty and desolation in Nigeria (Smith, 2001). Scholars have linked the proliferation of the belief in unseen forces in Africa to the intrusion of colonial capitalism as well as neoliberal globalization and its attendant neoliberal policies (Smith, 2001). As capitalism produces extreme wealth and poverty existing side by side, a process which is beyond the comprehension of ordinary people, and often brings confusion, the belief in unseen forces and witchcraft distil these complex processes into comprehensible motives (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999: 284). Consequently, rather than project frustration towards the state and capitalist, discontent is projected back to the unseen symbols of traditional social structure that people conceive as inhibiting their personal acquisition of wealth, whilst working in favour of a privileged few. The popularity of Pentecostalism is therefore adduced to the need for a moral compass to navigate the strains and despair that accompany recent economic misfortunes. Smith (2001: 588) argued that forces responsible for inequality in Nigeria are conceptualized and interpreted as social, political, economic as well as supernatural. Failures and success of people are attributed to unseen forces. This assertion is consistent with many ethnographic and Anthropological findings that the distribution of wealth and power are explained through the prism of the supernatural (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999). Studies have shown that wealth and power is explained by African in terms of witchcraft and the occult thus response to deprivation poverty and inequality is often linked with consultations with positive occult powers to seek protection or reverse curses.

The growth of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria has been adduced to its perceived ability to counter the evil effects of witchcraft in consigning people to poverty (Smith, 2001). These churches have therefore been at the forefront of reinforcing local beliefs that the emergence of 'fast wealth is attributable to satanic force. The churches situate all battles including poverty and frustration within the general battle between good and evil or God and the Devil. Marshall (1993: 34) proposed that connections are made between the world of 'satanic agents' and martial power as people believe that 'big men' acquire wealth and power through evil forces. Where subordinate classes are unable to express discontent within the ambit of the state, they often make accusations of witchcraft. Smith (2001: 588) posited that while the churches ostensibly condemned occult practices, they were in fact implicated in pre-conversion practices akin to the occult (Meyer, 1995), and glaringly display knowledge that connote ambivalence (Marshall, 1993). The churches are also said to be complicit in that they promise adherents prosperity and wealth with God's blessings thus the 'religious entrepreneurs' tout

their wealth as evidence that being 'born again' results in prosperity. Many are reported to own private jets, but some are suspicious of this sudden wealth (Smith, 2001). Consequently 'born again' churches have been on the rise in Nigeria with motives of converts often linked to political and economic aspirations. In reaction to the growing popularity of prosperity churches, scholars have found that other denominations that preached the frugal lifestyle have begun to modify their doctrine by jettisoning renunciation of material acquisition in favour of prosperity (Marshall-Fratani, 1998). Therefore while the churches preach against political patronage, corruption and nepotism in the national polity, they create their own networks of social patronage in this way presenting an alternative milieu for people to re-negotiating perceptions of economic frustration and social exclusion (Smith, 2001). Perhaps, this is the reason Pentecostalism has been more acceptable to the younger and more deprived who are in dire need of avenues to make sense of an increasingly frustrated life in a country that makes no attempt to provide for its people. Pentecostalism therefore offers a network of social ties to survive (Marshall-Fratani, 1998) as well as reinforcing a belief that God will reward true believers. The only kind of radical restructuring imagined is thus one in which being 'born again' will be the only criteria for success in Nigeria. Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria therefore paradoxically preaches morality by condemning corruption and nepotism but in the same breath provides justification for individual ambition and accumulation of wealth.

4.6 Relative Deprivation and Social Identity Inspired Explanations

Greater injustice will breed greater discontent. This has been the arguments of most theories and theorists concerned with inequality and injustice (Lichbach, 1990). Most renown in this tradition are relative deprivation theory (Gurr, 1970), equity theory (Walster et al, 1978), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), frustration-aggression model (Hepworth & West, 1988), self-evaluation theory (Della Fave, 1980) and distributive social justice theory (Hegtvædt & Markosky, 1995). In summary, these theories argue, inequitable resource distribution produces emotional distress in the aggrieved and forces people to secure a fairer share by violent means (Cramer, 2005). Gurr (1970: 73) argued that; *...the more widespread and intense deprivation is among members of a population, the greater is the magnitude of strife*. Scholars agree that deprivation emanates when a discrepancy exists between what people get and what they believe they ought to get (Gurr, 1970; Walster et al., 1978) that justice exists when there is congruence between expectations and outcomes, and that perception of injustice leads to emotional distress and often, attempts to restore justice. Della Fave (1980) put the argument succinctly, proposing that justice exists when there is congruence between expectations and outcomes based on normative rules, and that perception of injustice leads to emotional distress and attempts to restore justice.

However, while it is reasonable to expect that absence of feelings of dissatisfaction may lead to inaction, the presence of these feelings does not necessarily lead to action (Martin, 1986: 238). In fact, the system justification theory hypothesizes that disadvantage people are more likely to justify existing social systems (Jost & Hunyadi, 2003). While Scholars are in agreement that perceptions of injustice leads to anger and emotional distress which actors may attempt to remove by attempting to restore justice (Hegtvædt, 2004), the relationship between discontent and strife (Gurr, 1970) or 'injustice feelings' and 'reactions to inequality' has remained a trouble spot in the literature (Wright et al., 1990: 995). Scholars have thus attempted to answer the question; 'what factors mediate emotional response to inequality and resultant actions?' (Hegtvædt, 2004) Scholarly resolution of this paradox has been guided by Olsen's (1968) dilemma of collective action which proposes that rational individuals will take a 'free ride' where benefits of collective action accrue to all irrespective of level of participation. While Olsen's proposal seemed to answer the question relating to why people do not participate in collective action, it does not explain why some people do (Klandermans, 2002). Gurr (1970) however posited that the discontent-strife relationship is mediated by the extent of the coercive potential of the state, institutionalization, social facilitation and legitimacy. Zelditch & Walker (1984) confirmed that collective support for an allocator (legitimacy) alters perception of unfairness and diminishes possibilities of action. Hegtvædt, Clay-Warner, & Johnson (2003) showed that reaction to injustice is contingent upon perception of fairness of distributive procedures and a comparison of one's justice judgment with others.

Results from Relative Deprivation (RD) and distributive justice theories however showed limitations in their applicability given difficulties in conceptualization of individual and collective feelings of deprivation (Kawakami & Dion, 1995). Resource Mobilization (RM) approaches (McCarty & Zald, 1997) attempted to fill this gap by showing that action would ensue only when structural conditions are rife and resources for mobilization (weapons, money etc.) are available, regardless of ideology or feelings of injustice. While RM arguments were stunningly supported by the much quoted work of Ellemers, Wilke & van Knippenberg (1993) which cast doubts on the validity of feelings as antecedents of action, later works of Mummendey, Kessler, Klink & Mielke (1999) showed that when RD and Social Identity Theory (SIT) are combined, clearer paths from feelings to action could be discerned. Recently therefore, the infusion of SIT into RD research has led to the development of pathways for explaining motivations and impediments to action in terms of a

combination of instrumental and affective routes to action. It has thus been found that the extent of 'group identification' (Klandermans, 2002; van Zomeren *et al.*, 2010) and perception of group 'efficacy' or 'empowerment' (Hornsey *et al.*, 2006; Giguere & Lalonde, 2010) mediate willingness to engage in collective action and actual action. Stürmer & Stürmer (2009) recently motivated for an addition pathway, 'emotion'. Other Scholars have argued for supplementary pathways including willingness to express one's view or ideology, the protection of sacred values (Ginges & Altran, 2009; van Stekelenburg *et al.*, 2009) and individual enhancement motive (Tropp & Brown, 2004).

Bluic *et al* (2007: 19) showed that while group identification and efficacy influence collective action, the statistical variance contributed to action by these variables have been weak, indicating that there are other mediating factors meriting attention beside these instrumental concerns. These studies have therefore not generated effective conclusions about the discontent-strife relationship thus the 'trouble-spot' persists in the literature rendering virtually all theoretical explanations incomplete. There is however, a notable exemption in the literature of an analysis of the effects of consensually shared beliefs and social structure in producing and sustaining inequality (Kluegel & Smith, 1986). The only notable exceptions to this have been Castillo (2007) and Martin (1986) who studied the effects of existential and utopian justice beliefs (egalitarianism and in-egalitarianism) on reaction to injustice excluding an analysis of the mediating effect of beliefs that govern the realities of daily life like beliefs about causes of poverty. The social movement literature has downplayed the role of attitudes and beliefs as motivators or impediments to mobilization to redress grievances. However, matters of attitudes and beliefs are creeping back in the forms of logics, frames and discourse that spur micro-mobilization (Rothenberg *et al.*, 2002).

5. The Relative Deprivation Explanation of Nigerian Conflicts

Agbu (2007: 13) argued that with increasing deprivation and desolation consequent upon neoliberal economic globalization, vast proportions of Nigerian urban dwellers were rendered unemployed and 'anomic'. These segments of the population therefore become a ready base for recruitment as criminals, '*area boys and girls*' and members of ethnic militias. Anifowoshe (2000: 5) used relative deprivation theory and the frustration-aggression nexus to explain the emergence of ethnic militias in Nigeria. He argued that the origin of these militias is attributable to frustrated expectations consequent upon the nation's economic demise. In his word; '*mass misgivings over perceived political marginalization, poverty and unemployment, collapse of social infrastructure and state welfare programmes as well as the perceived inefficient and corrupt state security system*'. As the declining economic climate created acute discontent and frustration among the people, military rule repressed people's reactions. However, the advent of democracy was accompanied by euphoria of expectations of increased political and economic freedom. Consequently, frustration consequent upon the failure of the new democratic government to provide the much taunted 'dividends of democracy' gave rise to violence (Anifowoshe, 2000: 6). The relative deprivation explanation has however not received as much acceptance as explanations based on class and ethnicity.

6. Conclusion: Summative Conceptual Alignment

The phenomenon of different reaction by people to inequality and deprivation in society has also interested recent scholars (Szirmai, 1991: 232). Olsen's (1968) 'dilemma of protest' and its consequence of 'free ride' for rational actors probably partly answer the questions relating to rational inhibitions to protests. However, scholars in the Resource Mobilization tradition have shown that rational and instrumental concerns encompassing permissiveness of structural and political processes as well as cost benefit analysis preceded reaction (McCathy & Zald, 1977; Beaton & Deveau, 2005; Klandermans, 2002). The instrumental analysis extends to current debates within the Social Identity paradigm regarding the effects of perception of efficacy or empowerment as motivators of collective responses to injustice (Hornsey *et al.*, 2006; Giguère & Lalonde, 2010; Drury & Reitcher, 2005; van Zomeren *et al.*, 2010). Perhaps the most prominent contributions to the debate have been within the ambit of the role of group identification as precursor to action with the argument that group members will respond to defend group interests where threatened (Klandermans, 2002), as well as individual enhancement motive in motivating group identity and action (Tropp & Brown, 2004). Recently however, van Zomeren *et al.*, (2010) showed that efficacy and group identification are mutually enhancing and recursive. There have also been analyses of effects of emotion (Stürmer, & Simon, 2009), and violated sacred values and ideology (Giguère & Altran, 2009; van Stekelenburg *et al.*, 2009). However the absence of the analysis of the effects of consensually shared beliefs about the causes of phenomena in shaping action (Kluegel & Smith, 1986) renders the account of motivators and constrains incomplete. The social movement literature has virtually downplayed the role of attitudes and beliefs as motivators or impediments to micro-mobilization for redressing grievances. However, matters of attitude are creeping

back in the forms of logics, frames and discourse that spur micro-mobilization (Rothenberg *et al.*, 2008).

The Relative Deprivation originally proposed by Stouffer *et al.*, (1949) argued that social outcomes are predicated upon subjective rather than objective experiences. This proposition was further developed by Gurr (1970). There have however been debates about whether resultant action will be individual or collective depending upon whether subjective feelings are egoistic or fraternal or combined. Given ambiguities in findings of empirical RD studies (Ellemers *et al.* 1993) and the proposition that feelings were not relevant in determining reactions as advocated by RM studies (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Brush, 1996), it took the infusion of SIT and later Taylor and McKirnan's (1986) Five Stage Model of intergroup relations (FSM) to provide evidence that feelings would translate to action when legitimacy of intergroup structures were perceived illegitimate and group boundaries closed (Mummendey *et al.*, 1999; Wright *et al.*, 1990). However, the failure of SIT to predict which group members would embark on collective action led to the development of an integrative perspective culminating in FSM's proposal that changes in perception of social philosophy guiding stratification and income distribution determines type and nature of resultant action (Taylor & McKirnan, 1984). While FSM-inspired studies have theorized action to be the result of perception of group openness and legitimacy, there is little attention to FSM's proposition that the true determinant of action is the change in the social philosophy guiding stratification even if perception of openness of group boundaries can be therein deduced. However, while scholars agree with the basic argument of RD that deprivation often stimulates feelings of injustice, Martin (1986) argued that often feelings have not led to action. Scholars have therefore been interested in studying what factors motivate or hinder reaction to injustice. While many, using the paradigm proposed by SIT, have identified instrumental and affective pathways to action, there have been arguments for the inclusion of separate pathways of emotions (Stürmer & Simon, 2009), individual self enhancement (Tropp & Brown, 2004) as well the protection of sacred values (Ginges & Altran, 2009). Bluic *et al.*'s (2007) argument that the statistical variance contributed to action by these variables justifies the search for non-instrumental antecedents accounting for missing variance in action (Ginges & Altran, 2009; van Stekelenburg *et al.*, 2009).

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