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Rhetorical Weapons: The Social and Psychological Influences of Language and Labeling in Instances of Genocide

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RHETORICAL WEAPONS: THE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

INFLUENCES OF LANGUAGE AND LABELING IN INSTNACES OF

GENOCIDE

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Table of Contents

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Abstract

It is difficult to understand why genocide continues to occur, even when the international

community pledges never to let it happen in the future. Techniques such as moral

disengagement and dehumanization have consistently resulted in genocide. These

techniques can be greatly amplified through the careful use of language and labeling. The

purpose of this paper is to examine the roles that language and labeling play in genocide.

Social and psychological influences that use language will be investigated through the

examination of the Holocaust, the Cambodian genocide and the Rwandan genocide.

These influences are many times unintentionally or unknowingly exercised and can have

negative results for everyone involved. The use of language in the media is also

examined, along with ways in which ordinary people can avoid susceptibility to language

that could influence them to commit evil acts such as genocide.

Introduction

Language is a tool that appears in many forms, from nonverbal gestures to complicated vocabulary. Humans have developed language in a way that has improved communication across the world and given us a way to understand the things around us. The linguist Bolinger (1980) writes, "Language is our most complex system of signs – an intricate structure of words and relationships that interpenetrates our world so thoroughly that nothing 'out there' can be disentangled from it". Through this medium, humans have explored how far language can be taken to achieve certain goals and just how powerful it is if used effectively. Unfortunately, the power behind language has not always been channeled towards positive outcomes, but rather, towards the destruction and elimination of others -- genocide.

The term "genocide" was first coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1948 as "any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethical, racial or religious group" (Power, 2002). According to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (www.hrweb.org), the actions that constitute genocide include:

a. Killing members of the group;

b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

For a crime to constitute genocide, the perpetrator would only need to commit one of these actions as long as they did so with the intent to destroy either a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group (Power, 2002). While the definition of genocide may appear simple, a closer look shows that the definition is perhaps too broad, rendering it difficult to determine whether a crime falls under the label of genocide.

One issue with the definition rests on the idea of intent. One could claim that they were not *intending,* instead explaining the killings as a form of pre-emptive self-defense or the result of a war. Sometimes the people committing the atrocities are led to believe that they are doing so to defend their people. Many instances of genocide occur when people are taking orders from others to kill a certain group, and are perhaps unaware that they are carrying out genocide. The ease with which a leader or dictator can direct genocide is shocking, but not impossible to understand once the role of language is examined. Terms such as "self-defense" and "enemy" are seemingly minor contributors to genocide, but in reality have a major impact on how people respond.

A common myth about those who commit mass atrocities is that the perpetrators are "evil": either they were born with sinful qualities or something happened to make them capable of committing such horrendous acts against humanity. The reality, however, is that these criminals are normal people. Those who commit evil crimes are only evil because of their actions, not due to inherent qualities, therefore we should not regard them as completely irrational and

different from ourselves (Waller, 2007). What is it, then, that makes it so easy for some ordinary people to commit such heinous crimes while others would never dream of such things? Many people have tried to pinpoint what creates this transformation from ordinary to evil human being, what Philip Zimbardo has named the "Lucifer Effect". Zimbardo argues that the process of genocide can be made possible By creating stereotypes and ideas about the "other" through dehumanization and the abuse of language. It is a combination of these situational and social influences that can bring about genocide, not the genetic makeup of the perpetrators themselves. To attribute the acts of those involved in genocide to their inherent qualities, or to view them as "monsters" or other non-human creatures, is to relieve them of the responsibility for their detrimental actions (Coloroso, 2007).

After each genocide, thousands of voices declare in unison: "never again". This promise emerges every time, and again and again, we see it broken. After the Holocaust, the world was outraged at the atrocities committed, raised awareness about genocide itself and seemingly established moral expectations that crimes of such magnitude would never again take place. Should these crimes start to emerge, the international community is not only expected to, but obligated to intervene. Unfortunately, the "never again" mentality continues to be knocked down as nations who are in a position to intervene sit idly by, claiming that it is simply war between two groups or denying that such acts constitute genocide. As Coloroso states, "Never Again" has become a sort of "hollow slogan" due to the

reoccurrence of genocide after each time the phrase is spoken, rendering it almost

meaningless (Coloroso, 2007).

One reason history continues to repeat itself, is due to the bystanders. Not

every contribution to genocide involves direct involvement. Bystanders contribute

to genocide through acts of omission, looking away as things get uncomfortable

and sometimes even encouraging the perpetrators (Coloroso, 2007). Both the

bystanders and those actively participating in the genocidal acts, use techniques

such as moral disengagement and dehumanization to attempt to justify their

involvement. These methods are applied through the use of language. The words

the perpetrators choose to use make it easier for them to carry out the acts, and

easier for others to stand idly by. Others, like reporters, subconsciously apply

these techniques. Humans have a harder time relating to numbers than personal

stories and accounts. It is not uncommon to have a well-intentioned individual fall

victim to the trickery of language. Someone trying to raise money to aid those

being slaughtered in Darfur may be foiled in their attempt if they urge people to

donate to help thousands of people being killed, instead of helping a small child

named Fatimah who was orphaned when both her parents were burned alive. It is

much more likely that people will donate to the cause if they can relate to it, and

numbers make it more difficult for people to feel a personal connection.

My thesis will examine the contribution that language and labeling play in

genocide. I will be looking at the psychology behind those who commit acts of

genocide and how they use language and social influence to persuade others to

join them. The subsequent chapters will discuss methods used in genocide, such

as moral disengagement, dehumanization and conformity. These techniques can

be amplified through propaganda and euphemisms, which I will examine more in

depth through the history of the Holocaust and other genocides such as Cambodia

and Rwanda. I hope to highlight how easy it is for ordinary individuals to fall

under the influence of language and to submit to acts against humanity. By

exploring the ways in which we are allowing history to continue to repeat itself,

perhaps there can be hope that crimes against humanity might cease to persist.

Chapter I

Moral Disengagement

One of the easiest ways for ordinary people to commit seemingly inhuman acts such as genocide is for them to rid themselves of feelings of responsibility or guilt, making it easier for them to engage in violent acts. Through moral disengagement, perpetrators of genocide are able to separate their actions from the moral standards they might hold. There are several ways to employ tactics of moral disengagement in order to reduce feelings of dissonance. An individual can attempt to disengage their actions from their morals by diffusing the responsibility placed on them, by misconstruing potential consequences, and through dehumanizing their victims.

When a single individual is faced with a decision between committing an act that they consider morally unacceptable or that they know others will disapprove of, it is more unlikely that they will follow through with it. The fear of receiving negative judgment from others and feeling guilty about one's actions is usually enough to deter a single individual from violating general moral standards, protecting themselves from unpleasant states of arousal. When there is a group of individuals, however, the likelihood of participation in morally unacceptable acts soars. If harm is done from the group as a whole, the results can be attributed to the rest of the group without having to place responsibility on any single individual (Bandura, 1999). When an individual is part of a group that is participating in something morally distressing, they are able to focus solely on their individual contribution, viewing their actions as unimportant in the

advancement of something they might not support as a whole. They might be assigned a minor task that, when out of context, could be considered an ordinary action such as transporting weapons or making phone calls. By separating these specific tasks from the main objective, individuals diffuse the responsibility for their actions.

When individuals feel that they are anonymous, their sense of personal identity is diminished and they are more likely to engage in morally unacceptable behaviors. Through this process of deindividuation, people are not influenced by what those around them might think, because the element of anonymity creates a feeling of lessened responsibility on the part of the individual committing the act (Zimbardo, 2007). The individual can also create a feeling of deindividuation for oneself by engaging in activities that will alter ones own perceptions of ones actions. This can be accomplished through several processes from drugs and alcohol use, which assuage the severity of their actions in the moment of execution, or by adjusting their state of mind so that they do not perceive their own individuality as strongly.

People can morally disengage by manipulating the way in which they perceive the consequences. If they can find a way to redefine their behavior, they can then view it as socially acceptable, claiming that their actions were *necessary* for the well-being of the group they were harming or by blaming their behavior on deep-rooted historical issues between two groups. It is much easier for individuals to morally disengage when they are able to remove themselves from observing the effects of their actions (Bandura, 1999). This is one of the reasons that delegation

of tasks works so well, because individuals need not consider the consequences of the entire group's actions, just the consequences of their task. Their task might not have any immediate effects, allowing more time for a delay of consequences. The individuals might never find out the results of their actions, maybe even making an attempt not to. They can avoid associating a mental picture of the pain they inflict on others in order to ignore the effect of their actions altogether.

One way in which people can disengage their feelings from their actions is through the process of dehumanization. Language becomes an essential tool in dehumanizing victims, as perpetrators portray their victims as having animalistic qualities and labeling them in ways that make it easier to treat them like animals or aliens. By stripping individuals of their identity and their humanity, the responsibility to treat them with the level of respect that should be afforded human beings is significantly diminished in the mind of the perpetrator. People are much more likely to harm others if they can view them as objects rather than as having the same human qualities as themselves. Dehumanization creates a distance between the person causing the harm and the person receiving the harm, because the ease with which we relate to other humans is eliminated when the victims are instead redefined as objects. Someone who is not considered to possess feelings is much easier to inflict harm upon than someone whom we can relate to and empathize with (Bandura, 1999). The process of dehumanization can either rid a group of their human identity, causing people to disrespect the rights of the group, or it can cause a group to be viewed as lacking warmth and other

components of human nature, leading people to actively invoke harm against them (Waytz, Gray, Epley, &Wegner, 2010).

Dehumanization can also appear in the form of numbers. By describing victims through statistics, others have a harder time attempting to relate to them because they are no longer perceived as humans, but as objects (Waller, 2007). This can be an unintentional effect, for example, when a group of people use statistics when trying to raise money to help those suffering from a natural disaster. While the sheer size of a number may trick people into thinking that others will be moved to donate more if the number of sufferers is so substantial, the numbers themselves are what prevent people from feeling as if they can relate to those suffering. People are more likely to donate to the cause if they feel that they can relate to the victims, which is more easily accomplished through specific stories of individuals who are being harmed, rather than accidentally dehumanizing the victims through numbers.

Language also plays a role in moral disengagement through the use of euphemistic labeling. Perpetrators commonly reword their violent behaviors in ways that attempt to disguise their severity or wrongfulness. By giving a euphemistic label to a negative action, perpetrators are able to change the way people react to hearing about it and can reduce the amount of responsibility they feel (Bandura, 1999). Language can easily sanitize evil actions and turn them into actions that are merely frowned upon or even ones that are applauded. The severity of evil actions can be greatly reduced through euphemisms, causing people to ignore them due to their seemingly innocent nature. When employees

are fired from their jobs they are told they have been "let go," as if they are being

done a favor. When soldiers set out to harm a group, it is called a "mission," as if

they are about to perform a heroic action. Even when the perpetrators themselves

do not believe their own euphemistic jargon, the way they come to perceive their

detrimental behavior changes and allows them to dissociate from the cruelness of

their actions (Waller, 2007).

Compliance, Obedience, and Conformity

Human actions are governed by social influences, whether we are aware of

these influences or not. When acts of genocide are carried out, it is generally

assumed that those who committed the acts were operating under the social

influence of obedience, performing certain duties demanded of them by someone

higher up in the hierarchy. While this may indeed occur, the act of obeying a

dictator or leader is not the only way in which social influences can lead ordinary

people to partake in genocide. It would be unusual for a large group of people to

suddenly obey the commands of some person they did not respect or know

anything about, unless there was some sort of reward associated with obeying. For

obedience to occur, there must first exist a circumstance in which an authority

figure is present and in which there is some consequence involved if the person

chooses not to obey.

One of the most notable examples of obedience was demonstrated by

Stanley Milgram's experiment on Obedience to Authority. In this study, Milgram

assigned the participant to the role of "teacher". The participant was under the

impression that an additional participant had been assigned the role of "learner,"

when in reality the "learner" role was being played by a confederate. The

participant was then instructed that they would be asking the "learner" a series of

questions, administering shocks as punishment to the "learner" for every wrong

answer. With each wrong answer, the "teacher" is instructed to raise the voltage

level so that the shock becomes more severe with every mistake. As the

experiment progresses, the "learner" displays signs of pain and requests that the

"teacher" end the experiment. Meanwhile, the experimenter encourages the

"teacher" to continue with the experiment, even telling the "teacher" that the

experiment *requires* that they continue (Milgram, 1965). In this particular

scenario, there was an authority figure that pressured the participant to do

something that conflicted with his morals. After the experiment ended, the

majority of the participants claimed that they felt uncomfortable and did not

intend to inflict harm upon the "learner," yet they did so anyway because they felt

obligated to obey the instructions.

   Milgram's experiment demonstrates just how easy it is for ordinary

individuals to engage in behavior that they know is inconsistent with their beliefs.

Why would so many of these participants obey orders when they had such strong

feelings against doing so? The first reason is that there was an authority figure

present, using words such as "requires," "needs," and "must". Words like these

make individuals feel as if they have no choice in the matter. Language is an

essential component of obedience. Another reason participants continue to

administer shocks to the "learner" can be attributed to the gradual increase in the

level of shock. Had the "teacher" at first been instructed to administer the most

severe shock, it is unlikely that they would have done so. By delivering a mild shock at first, the "teacher" does not feel as if they are really harming the "learner". As the "learner" continues to provide wrong answers, the "teacher" is instructed to increase the shock by such small increments that they justify it by telling themselves that each shock cannot be significantly more painful than the one previously administered (Gilbert, 1981). This step-by-step technique makes it more difficult for an individual to determine at what point their behavior becomes harmful to the recipient and for them to justify why the harmful behavior should be terminated.

Clearly there are situations in which people engage in certain behaviors due to the desire to obey orders, but a more common social influence is compliance. Compliance occurs when a request is made, rather than a demand. A request can be either explicit, if they are asked directly by someone else to do something, or it can be implicit, if someone does not specifically ask them to do something but implies in other ways what they would like to happen (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Compliance strategies can be observed daily, especially when interacting with salesmen, recruiters or advertisers (Zimbardo, 2007). Compliance is more likely to occur if individuals feel they can trust the person making the request. This differs from obedience, because obedience does not require trust to make it effective. Another way compliance can come into play is when people are made to feel guilty about something and then someone makes a request that has the ability to alleviate the negative state they are experiencing. People are more likely to comply with a request if it will enhance their mood. Compliance can be

much less direct than obedience because the individuals, although being

encouraged to comply, do not feel as if they are required to obey.

      While both obedience and compliance involve a desire on the part of the

person requesting or demanding something, conformity does not require any

verbalization. Conformity involves the change of an attitude or a behavior in

response to social pressure from others (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). It is a type

of social influence that incorporates labels simply by the fact that they exist.

Conformity can occur without an individual intending it or realizing it (Pronin,

Berger, & Molouki, 2007), and it occurs more frequently because it at times

emerges without others' desire for the individual to conform. Political opinions,

popular styles, and attitudes in general are all capable of socially influencing an

individual without needing the use of tools such as advertisements or verbal

demands. Conformity can be a useful tool, especially when it comes to

informational social influence, in which individuals use information from those

around them to learn the appropriate way to conduct themselves in an

environment. Normative social influence involves the desire to avoid rejection or

disapproval from others, so individuals conform in order to feel accepted by

others.

      Conformity can also have negative consequences, such as when a group of

people decides to commit violent acts against another group, others might be

affected by normative social influences that ultimately pressure them to conform.

Individuals are less likely to conform when group size is small, and conformity

becomes higher as the size of a group increases. After a group get big enough,

however, the likelihood of conformity does not continue to increase unless there is someone who deviates from the group. Conformity levels dramatically decrease when another individual in the group chooses not to conform. The one individual who does not conform can be perceived as an ally for others who do not wish to conform, even if the non-conformist opinions differ from one another. Other factors that influence conformity levels include expertise and status, because we assume that those who encompass such characteristics will either offer us valid and useful information or will reject us if we do not follow them. This is why it is extremely useful for those who wish to eliminate another group of people to have great expertise or power, because they will have greater influence over others.

The power of conformity can appear in the smallest of forms, such as mimicry, which has the capability to emerge unconsciously (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Some studies have shown that individuals will start to mimic the expressions and mannerisms of those they spend time with. The ease with which conformity comes to us can be dangerous, however, if the things we are conforming to are capable of harming others. Those who unconsciously conform to behaviors such bullying, could easily conform to more extreme forms of bullying or hate-related actions, quickly escalating into genocide. One would hope that somewhere along the way, individuals might realize their mistakes, yet other factors that leaders might employ, such as the step-by-step, can have detrimental effects on one's judgment in a social situation. If conformity can occur with such ease in the absence of language, it is unsettling to consider situations in which influential language is present.

Misinterpretation of social and situational factors can also be augmented by the fundamental attribution error. This error occurs when individuals disregard situational factors that might be playing some role in why a person behaves a specific way, and when they assume that a person's behavior is regulated solely by dispositional factors (Riggio & Garcia, 2009). The Jonestown tragedy commonly leads people to the fundamental attribution error when examining the cult. Many assume that it was a mass suicide committed by people who were somehow dispositionally inclined to kill themselves for a cult, attributing their behaviors to madness and insanity (Riggio & Garcia, 2009). This type of approach is commonly used in the process of genocide when a group is defined as having faults based on their dispositions rather than their situations, making it easier for others to condemn the group.

Chapter II

The "Other" group

Genocide requires not only that one group is singled out, but that the group's identity is personified as "the Disgusting Other" (Cooper, 2009). When we feel that we can relate to others and can associate ourselves as belonging in similar groups, we are more likely to respect them. Because we have evolutionarily competed with other groups, xenophobic tendencies have emerged over time, motivating groups to identify more closely with those they consider their own (Waller, 2007). It is beneficial for humans to identify with one another, to form bonds with those who are similar to them and there is nothing wrong with having preferences. There is a strong emotional need that humans have to feel as if they have a place in society and that others agree with and accept their values (Rustomjee, 2001). It is when these preferences become extreme, and prejudice towards other groups starts to appear, that exclusivity of groups can cause behaviors to lead to genocide.

Once a group exists, people tend to look for similarities within their own group and for differences between their group and those in other groups. Because individuals wish for their group to be regarded as being better than other groups, a sense of competitiveness naturally emerges. Individuals search for flaws within the other groups, recategorizing them as being subordinate, and increasing antagonism towards them (Waller, 2007). As the distinction between "us" and "them" manifests itself more clearly, people find it easier to morally disengage

because they recognize that harming the other group will have no effect on their

own group.

       The "Other" group can be created based on almost any difference. Race,

ethnicity, nationality, religion, and political ideas have all been the basis for

genocide. People find differences between themselves and others, create groups,

and sometimes attempt to eliminate the existence of those groups. By not being a

member of the in-group, the "Other" group is automatically perceived as a danger

or threat (Cooper, 2009). From this fear of the "Other" group, individuals justify

oppression and elimination by claiming pre-emptive self-defense or that they are

simply working towards the betterment of society. By framing their violent acts in

this light, perpetrators of genocide not only convince others that their

eliminationist actions are necessary, but they sometimes even convince

themselves as well. Many times, one group's perception of unjust acts of brutality

is another group's brave attempt to improve the world they live in (Bandura,

1999).

       Genocide is almost always tied to war, and those who contribute to

genocidal acts can usually use war as a way of disguising genocide (Coloroso,

2007). If outside observers see two groups killing one another, they find that to be

more justifiable than when a single group is committing all the violence.

Perpetrators of genocide are dismissed from having to provide reasons for their

murderous actions if they can explain them in the context of war and conflict.

During times of war, the "Other" group becomes much more distinct and barriers

that did not previously exist are established, furthering the division of the groups

even more prominently. The difference one must look for between war and genocide is that genocide involves the intent to destroy or eliminate survival of one of the groups, while war entails the intent of winning rather than annihilating the "Other" group (Fein, 1992). Although conflict may already exist between two groups, acts of elimination will almost guarantee conflict if it is not already present. If conflict exists prior to the attempt to eliminate a group, the perpetrators can carry out their murders with minimal question from others, making it appear as if something occurred to exasperate the conflict into war or self-defense.

Feelings of animosity towards the "Other" group are many times rooted in history, reflecting wrongs done to one another in the past. One group will claim that fighting and conflict between the groups has been occurring for decades, even centuries and that the conflict cannot be resolved. In these cases, one option to resolve such conflicts is the mentality that both groups cannot co-exist and that one group must be eliminated. Simply using the label "other" to describe a group can lead to the idea that co-existence is not a possibility. Groups that have historically been in conflict with one another have a stronger "us versus them" ideology and are more capable of generating excuses for incurring harm. When these groups continue to wrong one another and no reconciliation is achieved, desire to eliminate the opposing group increases. When a group is accused of genocide, they may claim that the two groups have been in conflict for years and that nothing has changed, making it difficult to pinpoint the inception of genocide (Power, 2002).

Power of Propaganda

Hate speech that is used to dehumanize a group and to persuade others to think negatively towards a specific group, usually appears in propaganda form at some point during genocide. Propaganda takes into account multiple techniques in getting a message across, such as television, radio, newspapers, posters and word of mouth. Because of the wide range in which propaganda can influence others, perpetrators of genocide are very careful about how they frame the message they want to send to the public. Individuals can be powerfully influenced by media messages, so the more propaganda they are surrounded with, the more likely it is that they will start to follow the same ideologies. It can sometimes be difficult to know what information around you is factual and what information is propaganda.

An important element involved in effectively promoting genocide in the media is the language used. If a group were to blatantly announce their intent to destroy another group, people would not react positively. By using the step-by-step technique in their propaganda, gradually increasing eliminationist ideas and rhetoric, perpetrators gain acceptance and support from others (Bytwerk, 2006). By carefully selecting the pieces of information that they share with the public, leaders in genocide can effectively plant hints of their plans to destroy a certain group without explicitly saying so. Since the public has not been informed of definite slaughter, they can remain silent about the issue because they can later claim they were unaware genocide was really taking place.

Chapter III

The Holocaust

As with many Genocides, the Holocaust was linked to war. The extermination of 6 million Jews during World War II was initially sparked by Nazi racial policies that desired the emigration or removal of German Jews from Germany (Totten, Parsons, & Charny, 2004). As Hitler gained more power after starting his dictatorship over Germany, he had the Nazi officials help promote his strong anti-Semitic attitudes, which were generally accepted with little protest from the Germans. A variety of elements contributed to Hitler's success in carrying out the Holocaust, but the role that labeling and the language played in propaganda had a large impact on the social influencing of the public.

Although Hitler had originally intended to force German Jews to emigrate, the process turned into extermination in 1941 (Totten, Parsons, & Charny, 2004). Knowing that the public would not approve of the mass slaughter of the Jews, the Nazis were careful about how many details they disclosed, keeping quiet about their plan of elimination by blaming any Jewish deaths as being a result of the war. To ensure the loyalty of the Nazis, Hitler convinced them that ethnic cleansing would be beneficial to them, their families and even Germany as a whole.

The Nazis operated under the psychological rule that extermination of the Jews could only be accomplished through keeping silent about the things they did to the Jews, never describing their actions, but carrying them out quietly (Power, 2002). Due to this secretive technique, Hitler was able to make certain that the

public would never be certain of what was actually occurring or what his plans really entailed. The Nazis used anti-Jewish propaganda in very specific ways, endorsing it when the public was responding well, and toning it down when they became fearful of the public's reactions (Totten, Parsons, & Charny, 2004). Hitler elected Joseph Goebbels, a man of extreme anti-Semitic ideology, as coordinator of Nazi propaganda, allowing him to take charge of every form of media including press, radio, film and even theater (Perry & Schweitzer, 2008). Acting as Hitler's right hand man, Goebbels was a main contributor in creating a hate campaign against the Jews, publicly blaming them for the war and encouraging active discrimination against them.

Public opinion of the increasing hate directed at Jews involved little controversy. Germans were mostly uninterested in what was happening to the Jews throughout the war, focusing instead on their own private matters (Kershaw, 2008). Perhaps this lack of concern was due to anxieties concerning the war and worries for loved ones, rather than worries for a group other than their own. However, this separation into groups aided Hitler in exterminating many Jews over the course of the war, giving him confidence that he would not be questioned by the public. Because questions were rarely asked by the Germans, it is difficult to say how aware they were of the slaughter occurring around them. As the Jews were systematically deported and placed outside the everyday lives of the Germans, their disappearance was many times forgotten about (Kershaw, 2008). Much of the propaganda that emerged was lobbying for German nationalism, rather than being specifically directed at the Jews.

Because of their mild indifference towards the fate of the Jews, the German people were somewhat malleable in their opinions, allowing them to fall prey to many of the social influences presented by the Nazis. As a dictator, Hitler held an authority position that demanded power and respect from the Germans. His ability to control the fate of every German made it easy for him to receive high levels of obedience from the Nazi officials. As for the rest of the German population, they were expected to support Hitler, which meant supporting his views on anti-Semitism and Judeophobia (Totten, Parsons, & Charny, 2004). The fear that Hitler would punish those who did not support him was enough to make individuals abandon their morals and verbalize their support for Hitler's anti-Jew regime. Because many felt that they had no choice but to support such violent practices for the safety of their own families, this also enabled people to relinquish responsibility for their actions. If Germans ever felt guilty about having condoned such evil behavior, they could disengage their obedient behavior from their beliefs. They could attempt to justify their actions by claiming that an authority figure forced them to and that they had no choice but to comply if they wanted to keep their families safe.

Once the German people had morally disengaged their actions from their beliefs, they were more willing to commit themselves to Hitler's cause. Those who committed themselves to Hitler in order avoid punishment, many times still believed the tales of slaughter to be far-fetched. They imagined circumstances that could explain the oddities as actions other than genocide. They explained the deportation of the Jews by reasoning that Hitler was in need of slave labor in

order to keep them on track to win the war (Power, 2002). Regardless of whether

or not the Germans actually believed the excuses they came up with, they felt

there was nothing that could be done to change their situation, therefore they saw

no point in trying to change it.

Throughout the course of the Holocaust, language played a key role in

shaping people's thoughts and reactions. The Nazis labeled the Jews as being a

danger to the Germans because they threatened the Aryan supremacy for which

Hitler strived for (Cooper, 2009). The use of the word "threat" created a sense that

the Jews were actively seeking to take something from the Germans. People do

not enjoy being threatened and will usually go to great means to defend whatever

it is of theirs that is being threatened. Definitions such as the "Jewish Problem"

framed the Jews as being troublesome and something that would require "fixing".

These dysphemisms helped to cast the Jews in a negative light by influencing the

listeners to picture the Jews in an unfavorable manner (Bolinger, 1980).

Anti-Jewish propaganda also used language to emphasize messages of

hate. Among other things, Jews were depicted as insects, devils, rapists and as

being subhuman (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2008). Hitler believed that the Jews and

the Aryans were inherently different types of human beings and that racial mixing

was a sin (Smith, 2011). By characterizing the Jews as subhuman, dehumanized

creatures, the Nazis were attempting to pressure Germans into abandoning any

relations with Jews. The fear that, if relations did continue between Jews and

Aryans, their children would also be born as subhuman was an idea introduced

through the language and labels promoted in anti-Jewish propaganda.

Chapter IV

Cambodia

In 1975, shortly after a five-year war, the Khmer Rouge and their leader Pol Pot took control of Cambodia with the goal of cleansing Cambodia of all its western influences (Totten, Parsons, & Charny, 2004). The Khmer Rouge planned to implement a communist nation in which the peasants would have the state power (Mam, 2006). Anyone suspected of having different ideas from those of Pol Pot were in danger of extermination.

Pol Pot was successful in establishing strong social influences over his army. He was careful in selecting only those who were uneducated and poor, because he believed that their minds were blank and impressionable, diminishing the chance that they would later cause trouble or become a burden (Power, 2002). Due to their lack of education, they posed little threat of rebelling against Pol Pot and they had few better choices concerning the occupation of their time. Members of the Khmer Rouge were given immense power over the Cambodian citizens and many of them had never before been given a chance to exercise such power. With the feeling that Pol Pot had provided his members with the gift of control, they looked more fondly upon him for trusting them in carrying out his goals.

Before Pol Pot took over, the lives of the Cambodians revolved around the family. To obtain their loyalty in the new regime, the Khmer Rouge made every attempt to weaken the strong family structures by splitting family members up and sending them to collective farms (Mam, 2006). These collective farm communes were used as part of Pol Pot's effort to create a society void of all

western thought and influence, forcing people to live as farmers and peasants. Although different from dehumanization, this technique of forcing people to regress from a modern style of living to a much more crude lifestyle played an important role in getting the Cambodians to despair of their situation and feel as if their potential was wasted. By turning the year back to Zero, Pol Pot relabeled the citizens as "farmers".

The Cambodian genocide was not focused mainly on race or religion, but on western ideologies. The Khmer Rouge targeted intellectuals, doctors, monks, police, fascists, Vietnamese, and many others (Totten, Parsons, & Charny, 2004). Pol Pot labeled all of these groups as "enemies". People were made unsure of who they could trust, because so many people fell under the category of "enemy". Pol Pot saw two types of enemies; external enemies, such as all western influence, and internal enemies, such as those who were unfaithful to the new regime (Power, 2002). A true revolutionary would have a desire to defend the purity of the new regime and not hesitate to commit acts of genocide (Hinton, 2005). Language played an instrumental role in Cambodia, as Pol Pot used words such as "purification" to describe his process of cleansing. He created the sense that a problem existed, and a dirty one at that. Enemies were relabeled with characteristically animalistic names, such as monsters, parasites and vermin (Smith, 2011). Dehumanization of enemy groups was displayed everywhere, encouraging citizens to strive for "cleanliness" by abusing the rights of the "enemies". This type of language most likely contributed to Pol Pot's hopes of conformity. The Khmer Rouge had the goal of achieving absolute conformity,

which they did through brutally terrorizing the citizens (Tyner, 2008). It is likely that conformity was occurring subconsciously for many, as society became more accustomed to using derogatory language.

Chapter V

Rwanda

As the years passed and people claimed that genocide would never again occur, the year 1994 brought with it indication that history repeats itself. The Rwandan genocide stemmed from deeply rooted hatred between the Hutus and the Tutsis. Hutu children were educated regarding the sins of the Tutsi that had been committed against their families years before, with stories of injustice passed down from generation to generation (Power, 2002). When the president of Rwanda was killed in a plane crash, The Hutu took control of the country.

One of the most powerful contributors to the genocide was the use of the Radio Mille Collins. This hate-propagating radio was in charge of broadcasting discriminatory labels towards the Tutsi and instilling fear. Along with Radio Mille Collines, Radio Rwanda acted as a threat because it would report about massacres that had not yet taken place, creating animosity and encouraging the Hutu to attack before the Tutsi were able to (Spencer, 2005). Hutu became worried that the Tutsi would kill their families if they did not kill them first. Broadcasts would include specific directions and tasks to be carried out against the Tutsi. The social influence of these broadcasts was substantial. Because the majority of households in Rwanda not only had access to these radio stations, but actively tuned in to listen, it seemed evident that the entire country must be in accordance with the extremist view, causing conformity levels to rise. Because most African countries operate under a powerful hierarchy, obedience without question is common (Kellow & Steeves, 1998). This is especially true when a country has a high

percentage of illiteracy, because people will frequently take what they hear to be absolute truth.

Radio Milles Collines was able to promote hate speech not only by the language and labels they used but by the ways in which they used them. They took advantage of the culture by broadcasting popular music and stories, and used biblical references to attract listeners and gain support (Kellow & Steeves, 1998). People were drawn into listening to the station not only because it was so accessible but because it was enjoyable. The opinions of elites and high-ranking officials were portrayed in the media as having great authority over the Rwandan people and a strong link was made between violence and those who held power (Straus, 2007).

In addition to the rules and directions put forth by the radio stations, a Hutu newspaper published the Ten Hutu Commandments, which called for the mistreatment of the Tutsi (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2008). The commandments gave Hutu instructions that all education sectors were to be a majority Hutu, to have no mercy on the Tutsi, and not to marry or befriend a Tutsi (Power, 2002). There was great emphasis on the word "enemy" to refer to the Tutsi, elevating the sense of threat that the Hutu already felt. By identifying as Hutu, their sense of belonging to a group would have been questioned if they went against any of the Commandments, and they would be pegged as traitors. Traitors were in jeopardy of serious consequences if they were caught.

Other labels such as "cockroaches" or "devils" were used to dehumanize the Tutsi (Power, 2002). While the Radio Mille Collines used hate speech to

generate devaluation of the Tutsis, they had other methods to dehumanize them as well. Identification cards were issued for both Hutus and Tutsis and created a more concrete way in which to discriminate (Staub, 2011). Once people got used to referring to Tutsi with negative labels, they could more easily regard them as inhuman, further making it easier to commit acts of violence towards them. Using these labels gave the false sense that Tutsis were inherently bad, and the distance it created between the two groups made it easier for harm to occur.

Neither the Hutus nor the Tutsis were inherently bad, yet the Hutus were able to convince many that the Tutsis were evil. For those who were not as easily convinced of there being an inherent component involved, the Hutu had another incentive for discrimination: If the Tutsi were not controlled, they would take everything away from the Hutu (Mamdani, 2001). Because of this widespread fear, the Hutu were capable of morally disengaging due to the perceived consequences of doing nothing. The Tutsi did not have to follow through on any of the threatened actions because the Hutu could remember what it was like when the Tutsi had once ruled their nation, and they were unwilling to relinquish their newfound power.

Conclusion

The power of social influence should not be underestimated. Everyday, our social interactions guide the ways in which we interact with others and the responses that are subsequently generated. Even the most seemingly insignificant gestures can have an impact on another person's life. While it is certainly critical to have these social influences present in life to guide many types of behavior, it is also important to recognize their consequences when used carelessly or with bad intent. This type of misuse is most extreme when viewed through the lens of Genocide.

Because power dynamics will always be an issue amongst humans, it is unlikely that a soundproof solution can be constructed. Educating people on the effects their actions can have is an important first step in the process of reducing genocide and other destructive acts. It is essential to recognize that every genocide is different and that most of the time there are difficulties involved in knowing whether certain behaviors really constitute genocide. Even in preventing genocide, language poses problems because attempting to define genocide is such a difficult process. By keeping the definition broad, it is hard to differentiate between acts of war and acts of genocide. By defining it more specifically, it becomes difficult for all acts of genocide to meet all of the requirements. The struggle in finding a way to define genocide so that it can be recognized and put to an end is a direct embodiment of the complications involved with language and labeling.

Once behavior is recognized as genocide, it is frequently too late and thousands have already perished. After the realization, the promise of "never again" echoes not only throughout the area where genocide took place but across the world as the international community dedicates themselves to playing a police role in thwarting future attempts at extermination. As people and nations alike promise to intervene in the future, they consistently fail to honor such promises. As with those who partake in acts of genocide, those who do nothing are simply conforming to the standard that surrounds them. Bystanders are easily influenced by others and are more likely to imitate persuasive bullies if they perceive them as important (Coloroso, 2007). They can either take active roles, joining the bullies and engaging in the brutalization of another group, or they can remain passive, assuming that if everyone else is remaining passive then they should do so as well.

Remaining passive tends to be the most common option, because the bystanders can claim they were unaware of the reality of the events unfolding or that by not actively engaging in the behavior themselves, they are doing nothing wrong. If many others are attempting to ignore genocide, bystanders can diffuse the responsibility of intervening across a large network of bystanders, making them feel less accountable for their negligence. They can reassure themselves by using euphemistic language, making justifications that those with authority are only trying to improve society or ensure the safety of their people. It is also possible that obedience plays a role in creating passive groups. There could be consequences for those who attempt to intervene or even question the actions of

authority. It becomes much easier to conform to society and let genocide occur than to make an effort to stop harmful behaviors.

When hearing the word "Genocide" people immediately jump to the word "Holocaust" as well. While the Holocaust is surely the most frequently discussed genocide due to the uniqueness in how the systematic slaughter was carried out, it is dangerous to use the Holocaust as a standard for other genocides. It has already been established that determining whether actions fit the definition of genocide is difficult, but by setting a high standard for what should qualify, we will only continue to enable the processes of extermination. Rather than rely solely on the label of genocide, the world must pay attention to the intentions and the acts themselves.

Considering all of the negative roles that the media tends to play in genocide, it is worth examining the positive roles as well. Being such an influential tool, the media should be harnessed to promote positive behaviors and to discourage acts that could lead to genocide. The first step would be for journalists to discard of their euphemistic and dysphemistic language, reporting the truth in ways that don't twist reality into something it is not. Another key to preventing genocide is to rid the media of journalistic neutrality, in which journalists and reporters attempt to remain neutral on a subject to the extent that they loose touch with the accuracy of their reports. While this is sometimes done under good intentions in order to create a sense of equal representation on both sides of a conflict, it removes the accuracy in reporting. Journalists and reporters need to abandon their attempts to remain neutral, and report on the reality behind

behaviors. By not allowing fear of criticism to affect them, reporters can actually aide in preventing and stopping genocides, rather than enabling them.

It is difficult to establish concrete guidelines for putting an end to genocide because it so rarely occurs, but when it does, the consequences are disastrous. By actively taking measures to encourage both the media and the general public to discard of dehumanizing labels and insensitive language, we can perhaps make an attempt to prevent ethnic cleansing in the future. We must make an effort to remember that ordinary people are susceptible to a range of influences and that it is not inherent evil, but social influences in the environment, that generate acts of genocide, therefore, it is essential that we not allow environments to evolve to the point of fostering evil.

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