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Mark A. Winton¹

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to use Lonnie Athens' violentization theory to explain the Bosnian and Rwandan genocides. These two case studies are used to compare and contrast how the brutalization, defiance, violent dominance engagements, and virulency stages emerged prior to and during the genocides. Using published texts such as interviews with perpetrators, human rights reports, and court transcripts, qualitative content analysis is employed to test the fit between violentization theory and the two case studies. The results demonstrate that violentization theory is consistent with the data and provides an explanation of how the genocides developed and were enacted. Similarities and differences between Rwanda and Bosnia are described to explain how the perpetrators went through the violentization process, and an additional stage is added to illustrate extreme violence. Suggestions for further research using this model are provided.

Keywords

genocide, violentization theory, Rwanda, Bosnia, Serbia

Introduction

Hagan and Rymond-Richmond (2009) pointed out that the criminology of genocide is still in its infancy and despite having a rich history of research on conflict and state crimes; criminologists and sociologists have tended to avoid applying such research to genocide. Focusing on Sudan, they demonstrated that criminologists can empirically show how race and other factors mobilized the Sudanese government and their associates to dehumanize the victims and to engage in mass rape, torture, and killing. They asserted that criminologists can take part in the important role of gathering data

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for use in criminal prosecution of the perpetrators by providing information on the extent of destruction, the racial nature of the genocide, the dehumanization process, and the government role in promoting the genocide. Hagan, Rymond-Richmond, and Parker (2005) explained that “modern criminology possesses the theory and methods to document, describe, analyze, and explain ‘the crime of crimes’ and other important violations of international criminal law. The denial and neglect of these crimes in modern criminology itself needs explanation” (p. 556).

This neglect is partly related to methodological and theoretical limitations due to current criminal justice theories and research failing to explain genocide (Day & Vandiver, 2000; Winton, 2008; Yacoubian, 2000). For example, problems explaining the scale of the atrocities and intent of the perpetrators may discourage criminologists to take on the task of studying genocide (Hagan & Rymond-Richmond, 2009). In addition, Maier-Katkin, Mears, and Bernard (2009) also concluded that criminologists are concerned that their theories may fail to explain genocide, worried about the political ramifications of conducting genocide research, and unclear if studying such uncharted domains could reduce their chance for tenure. With little interdisciplinary integration and lack of interest in addressing genocide, some may find it difficult to obtain funding. Others may have difficulty attaching the study of genocide to their specific specialization area within their discipline.

Following the lead of Hagan and Rymond-Richmond (2009), a criminological and sociological model of genocide is presented that will add to the literature on understanding and preventing genocide. Specifically, the goal of this research is to apply Lonnie Athens’ violentization theory to explain the evolution of the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides. Perpetrator and victim accounts will be examined to see how they fit with violentization theory.

Winton (2008) and Winton and Unlu (2008) addressed each of these genocides independently using violentization theory and a model from family therapy. For this study, qualitative comparative case study analysis is conducted using some of the same data sets from Winton (2008) and Winton and Unlu (2008) in a new way by comparing and contrasting the genocides using violentization theory alone.

Lonnie Athens’ Theory of Violentization

Although violentization theory has been successfully applied to genocide in separate cases (Rhodes, 2002; Spohn, 2008a, 2000b; Winton, 2008; Winton & Unlu, 2008), cross genocide comparisons have not previously been addressed using violentization theory (see Ulmer, 2003).

Using symbolic interactionist theory, Athens focused attention on the self-image, symbols, social interaction, role taking, and actors’ interpretations of interactions with others (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 1989; Longmore, 1998; Mead, 1977). The main focus of symbolic interactionism is on the self, act, social interaction, objects, and joint action (Blumer, 1969). The self is a product of one’s social interaction with one’s family, peers, and community. Thus, Athens (2010) suggested that we focus on the interpretations

of situations in which the crime occurred, the perpetrator's self-image during their offense, and their self-image throughout their criminal careers.

Athens (1992, 1997, 2003) developed violentization theory to explain how people become violent criminals. According to Athens (2003), violent criminals go through four stages of the violentization process. Winton and Unlu (2008) outlined these stages as follows:

- **Brutalization**—This stage occurs when one is taught how to engage in violent behavior through observation and demonstration (Athens, 1992, 1997, 2003). Athens (2003) breaks this stage into three types of experiences: violent subjugation, personal horrification, and violent coaching. In cases of genocide, actors may be physically assaulted, threatened, observe others being threatened or assaulted, and coached on how to carry out violent behavior. In both cases of genocide, civil wars were occurring leading a large segment of the population to be exposed to different dimensions of brutalization. Both perpetrator groups also brought up previous victimization. Genocide was committed by the Croats against the Serbs during World War II, while the Tutsi committed genocide against the Hutu in 1972 in neighboring Burundi. Bringing these previous victimizations into the current situation provided the brutalization that was used to encourage the current genocides. Bringing up these historical cases of victimization allowed the perpetrator group to encourage others to become alarmed that they could be brutalized again if they did not take action.
- **Defiance**—In this stage, a belief system is presented to the individual or group that is supportive of the use of violent behavior (Athens, 1992, 1997, 2003). In cases of genocide, perpetrators reinforce through a variety of methods that violence is justified. Perpetrators may convince brutalized actors that they must behave violently to protect themselves from violent others. Violence is viewed as a means to control and dominate a threatening group.
- **Violent dominance engagements**—This stage involves engaging in violent acts (Athens, 1992, 1997, 2003). The perpetrators present a violent supportive belief system that encourages the use of violence toward others. In some cases, the actor may be punished for failing to behave violently. Actors who have gone through the brutalization and defiance stages test out their violent behaviors on subordinates. In the two case studies, small and large group violence was carried out in various settings prior to the genocides. As Athens (2003) points out, “as important as the operating circumstances surrounding a violent dominance engagement is its immediate outcome” (p. 13). In both cases, perpetrators were encouraged and sometimes forced to engage in violent behaviors. They were rewarded for behaving violently with positive comments from peers, celebrations from the community, material possessions, sex, and the reduced risk of being a victim of violence.

- Virulency—This stage is completed when the individual or group define themselves as violent and dangerous (Athens, 1992, 1997, 2003). In both case studies, individuals and groups defined themselves as violent and dangerous and instilled high levels of fear in others. The perpetrators are viewed as violent and have a violent self-image. They use violence to gain control of others, obtain respect, instill fear, and make others feel powerless, shamed, and humiliated. In contrast, the perpetrators are able to avoid these feelings.
- Extreme virulency—This stage was added to the four stages of the violentization model to include extreme violent behavior such as torture, mutilation of bodies, and sexual slavery (Winton, 2008).

Lonnie Athens' did not intend for his theory to explain genocide although Rhodes (2002) believed that Athens' theories do address war and genocide and has provided a detailed analysis of the application of violentization theory to the Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* (police battalions). In both Rwandan and Bosnian genocides, civil wars were occurring and military, paramilitary, and ordinary citizens were involved in the killings.

Athens (1997) pointed out that "it is the members of our community with violent generalized others who are at the heart of our violent crime problem" (pp. 99-100). Athens' later replaced Mead's generalized other concept with the phantom other and phantom community to focus on the specific agents of socialization and reference that people carry with them wherever they are located. The genocidal perpetrators go through the violentization process, although they do not have to go through all of the stages to engage in violent behavior. However, the ultraviolent perpetrators will complete the virulency stage.

Within this model, Athens identified the phantom community that "provides people with a multi but unified voice and sounding board for making sense of their varied social experiences" (Athens, 1994, p. 526). This concept focuses on the internal dialogue that individuals use to construct their interpretations of situations and their behavioral responses. The phantom community allows perpetrators to define their violence as legitimate. In violent communities, phantom others permeate the social setting while allowing violent individuals to refer to them as guides for violent behavior.

Athens explained how the self-image can change as the phantom others and communities change. According to Athens (1994), "the self's fluidity must be seen as arising from our ever-changing soliloquies; while its constancy must be seen as coming from the stability of the 'other' with whom we soliloquize" (p. 524). Furthermore, Athens (2010) differentiated between perpetrators with violent self-images that have an unmitigated violent phantom community that fully supports violence, perpetrators with incipiently violent self-images that have a mitigated violent phantom community that partially supports violence, and perpetrators with nonviolent self-images that have a nonviolent phantom community. The last category would include those who engage in violence as a self-defense tactic.

Athens (2010) explained that there are four types of interpretations and associated primary emotions related to violence. First, physically defensive interpretations are

fear based and focus on how a physical attack is or will be made. Second, frustrative interpretations are anger based in which the actor sees resistance and action he or she does not want carried out. Third, malefic interpretations are based on hatred in which the actor sees the negative character of others and uses violent responses. Finally, the frustrative-malefic interpretation is based on hatred and anger. According to Athens,

The perpetrator forms this violent plan of action because he sees violence as the most appropriate way to deal with an evil or malicious person's potential or attempted blockage of the larger act that he seeks to carry out or as the most appropriate way to block the larger act that an evil or malicious person wants to carry out. (p. 108)

According to Rhodes (1999), professional organizations (e.g., military and law enforcement) have to limit the amount and type of violence that is permissible. This allows us to differentiate legal wartime violence and criminal behavior. Rhodes stated, "limiting soldiers to physically defensive violence limits the degree of advancing virulency the men must undergo. This limit allows them to sustain a nonviolent phantom community they can take back home" (1999, p. 296).

In discussing military basic training, Rhodes (1999) stated that

Military organizations encourage recruits to revise their phantom communities to incorporate military phantom companions partly to recreate the deep, basic trust that most people feel toward at least some members of their family-trust then put to use to mobilize action in battle. (p. 289)

Thus these phantom companions and communities become the perpetrator's primary group. In this case study, we will use this model while focusing on genocidal communities and companions. These phantom communities and companions present "unmitigated violent phantom communities that support taking pure malefic and frustrative violent actions" (Rhodes, 1999, p. 301). This can lead to extreme virulency.

Bridging this line of thought to genocide, it becomes apparent that there exists genocidal others that help to create the genocidal community. The genocidal others and genocidal communities are the people and groups that an individual has in his or her mind that they converse with and organize and negotiate their actions (Rhodes, 1999). In other words, the community becomes a point of departure for members to develop a genocidal self-image, although the perpetrators may define themselves in many different ways. It appears that perpetrators may have multiple phantom communities operating simultaneously in a genocidal context, although one phantom community becomes dominant at one particular moment. Although there may be conflicts between these phantom others and communities, there are methods to decrease or overcome the dissonance.

The violentization process allows socially defined targets to develop in which the perpetrators may engage in extreme violent behavior with the knowledge and support

of their genocidal community. The genocidal other promotes, encourages, and sometimes forces others to take on the genocidal self-image.

In addition, Athens (2003) also considered three different types of communities. The civil minor community members tend to use nonviolent strategies to resolve conflicts. The turbulent minor community is composed of members who use both violent and nonviolent strategies to resolve conflict. The malignant minor community is made up of members who live in a chaotic environment in which ultraviolent behavior is used to resolve conflict. Clearly, the genocidal community is a malignant minor community.

Violentization theory provides us with a dynamic and developmental approach that addresses genocidal behaviors. This approach may be applied to individuals, families, organizations, communities, and states and may be used to explain various types of violence between different groups, during different times, and residing in different locations (Winton, 2008; Winton & Unlu, 2008).

Method

Data Sources

These two genocides were selected due to the availability of extensive documentation of perpetrator and victim accounts and the availability of court transcripts. The main sources of data were from Winton (2008) and Winton and Unlu (2008) who used court documents from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. For this study, case summaries from the trials were reviewed and six court cases were selected and coded involving 15 perpetrators. These cases were chosen based on the detailed information on violent behaviors carried out by the perpetrators.

The Rwandan prisoner interviews conducted by Hatzfeld (2003) were especially helpful in the analysis of perpetrator explanations of the genocide. Hatzfeld provided extensive interviews of 10 men who were incarcerated in Rwanda due to their participation in the 1994 genocide. This also was the main data source used in Winton's (2008) study.

Data Analysis

Directed qualitative content analysis was used to code text and identify violentization themes and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Winton, 2008). The directed qualitative content analysis approach involved using a theoretically informed coding scheme that was constructed prior to the analysis of the data. Specifically, the violentization stages coding scheme from Winton (2008) and Winton and Unlu (2008) was used. First, the original data used by Winton (2008) and Winton and Unlu (2008) were reread and coded using the stages of violentization. Second, a comparative matrix was developed to organize the themes and patterns related to each stage in the violentization process (Winton, 2008). Perpetrator and witness statements were compared and contrasted regarding how the genocides were organized, how the perpetrators killed, tortured,

and raped, and how the perpetrators explained and reacted to their violent behavior. The violentization process was coded based on indicators of brutalization (e.g., reports of witnessing violence), defiance (e.g., statements indicating that it was permissible to use violence), dominance violent engagements (e.g., testing out violent behavior), virulence (e.g., defining oneself as a dangerous and violent person), and extreme virulence (e.g., engaging in mutilation of bodies). Third, the genocides were compared and contrasted by examining the coded text for each of the genocides based on the violentization stages. Finally, an evaluation was conducted to determine how the data fit with violentization theory.

Results

Brutalization—Witnessing, Learning, and Experiencing Violence

In the brutalization stage, the focus is on how groups are taught to engage in violent behavior through observation, threats, and explicit teaching. This stage prepares the perpetrators toward a path to genocide. The perpetrators are taught that they must defend themselves from an enemy. This begins to set up the “kill or be killed” script that becomes incorporated into the phantom community.

Both the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides were probably planned years in advance. Genocidal propaganda was present in both cases. The Rwandan Hutu perpetrator groups were quick to remind the Hutu citizens that the Tutsi had tried to eradicate them in Burundi in 1972. Likewise, the Serbian perpetrators brought attention to several historical cases of genocidal attempts. For example, the 1940s Croatian genocide was publicized to give legitimacy to potential threats (Weitz, 2003).

In Rwanda, the political party *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (MRND) planned for the genocide using brutalization through the creation of a youth wing called the “Interahamwe” with the primary purpose of teaching the members about Hutu politics and encouraging cohesion and instruction for attacking the Tutsi (*Prosecutor v. Juvenal Kajelijeli*, 2003). This was one example of the “kill or be killed” script carried out in massacres (Winton, 2008). The MRND and the youth wing became one phantom community for the perpetrators.

The Rwandan prisoner Pio stated,

Me, I don't know why I started detesting Tutsis. I was young and what I liked most was soccer: I played on the Kibungo team with Tutsis my own age . . . I never noticed any unease in their company. Hatred just showed up at killing time; I latched on to it through imitation, to fit in” (Hatzfeld, 2003, p. 218).

In the above case, the perpetrator did not even realize he was going through the brutalization stage.

In the Bosnian genocide, preparation for the genocide also occurred through careful planning by the leaders through the use of brutalization:

For Serbs their fourteenth century struggle against the Turkish foe, unaided by other Balkan peoples, serves as a rallying cry for a Greater Serbia. Slobodan Milosevic, already a powerful political figure in Serbia as a party chief, spoke at a mass rally at the site of the battlefield itself. He spoke as the protector and patron of Serbs throughout Yugoslavia and declared that he would not allow anyone to beat the Serb people. This greatly enhanced his role as the charismatic leader of the Serb people in each of the Republics, after which he rapidly rose in power. (*Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic a/k/a "Dule,"* 1997, paragraph 72)

Implications. The brutalization stage was apparent in both genocides. Each perpetrator group focused attention on teaching others how to engage in violent behavior through small scale massacres, threats of victimization, and observation of constructed threats of violence. Although some threat was based on civil war, civilians were never a real threat. The perpetrators provided permission to engage in violent behavior as a preventive measure and a genocidal script was disseminated to the perpetrator group by various phantom communities.

Defiance—Using Violence to Stop Violence

The defiance stage entails the perpetrator group constructing the belief system that will support the genocide. In other words, the violent behavior is justified.

For example, in the Rwandan genocide prisoner Elie reported,

The intimidators made the plans and whipped up enthusiasm; the shopkeepers paid and provided transportation; the farmers prowled and pillaged. For the killings, though, everybody had to show up blade in hand and pitch in for a decent stretch of work. (Hatzfeld, 2003, p. 13)

In another case, a Rwandan clergyman was charged with encouraging violent behavior at his church:

On or about 13 April 1994, the Interahamwe and militiamen surrounding the parish, launched an attack against the refugees in the church. The refugees defended themselves by pushing the attackers out of the church, to a place named "la statue de la Sainte Vierge." The attackers in turn, threw a grenade causing many deaths between the refugees. The survivors quickly tried to return to the Church, but Father Athanase SEROMBA ordered that all doors be closed, leaving many refugees (about 30) outside to be killed. (*Prosecutor v. Athanase Seromba,* 2001, paragraph 15)

In the Bosnian case,

Over time, the propaganda escalated in intensity and began repeatedly to accuse non-Serbs of being extremists plotting genocide against the Serbs. Periodicals

from Belgrade featured stories on the remote history of Serbs intended to inspire nationalistic feelings . . . In articles, announcements, television programmes and public proclamations, Serbs were told that they needed to protect themselves from a fundamentalist Muslim threat and must arm themselves and that the Croats and Muslims were preparing a plan of genocide against them. Broadcasts from Belgrade caused fear among non-Serbs because only the Serb nation was presented positively, and it was represented that the JNA supported the Serbs. The theme that, for the Serbs, the Second World War had not ended was expressed on television and radio by Vojislav Seselj, Zeljko Raznjatovic, otherwise known as “Arkan,” and other Serb politicians and leaders. (*Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic a/k/a “Dule,”* 1997, paragraph 91)

Implications. In both cases, the perpetrators were encouraged to become violent to avoid being victimized. Both of these situations led to the mobilization of citizens who became ready to engage in violent behavior. Although the Rwandan genocidal leaders appeared to recruit citizens without a history of violence, the Serbian and Croatian genocidal leaders recruited those who had already demonstrated a propensity toward acting violent, such as those from the paramilitary or prisons (Mulaj, 2005; Winton, 2008).

Much work was devoted to increasing the strength of the genocidal phantom communities. In addition to encouraging violent acts, the perpetrator groups were able to gather large support systems who provided aid.

Violent Dominance Engagements—Carrying Out Violent Acts

In the violent dominance engagements stage, the perpetrators engage in various forms of violent behavior. The brutalization and defiance stages allowed the perpetrators to justify their violent behaviors and demand that violence is carried out. The perpetrators willingly agree to engage in violence as they have internalized the violentization script from their phantom communities.

In the Rwandan genocide, prisoner interviews revealed multiple violent dominant engagement scripts (Hatzfeld, 2003; Straus, 2006; Winton, 2008):

Prisoner Fulgence stated, “First I cracked an old mama’s skull with a club . . . I went home that evening without even thinking about it” (Hatzfeld, 2003, p. 21) while prisoner Pio stated,

The first person, “I finished him off in a rush, not thinking anything of it, even though he was a neighbor, quite close on my hill” (Hatzfeld, 2003, p. 24).

The perpetrators became more violent over time as groups and community support and permission to behave in violent ways was encouraged and promoted. For example, a popular Rwandan newspaper and radio station provided “permission” to engage in violence. The Hutu 10 Commandments that emphasized that the Tutsi were the enemy, were published in the Kangura newspaper, stating that the Hutu should prevent the Tutsi from attacking them, and that Tutsi women were dangerous spies. The newspaper editors even held a competition:

In Kangura Nos. 58 and 59, published in March 1994, a competition was launched, consisting of eleven questions, the answers to which were all to be found in past issues of Kangura. Various points were allocated to correct answers, and prizes were announced for the winners. Readers were directed to enter the competition by sending their responses to the questions to RTLM (*Prosecutor v. Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, and Hassan Ngeze*, 2003, paragraph 18).

By having a contest, the newspaper readers were encouraged to carefully read the paper multiple times. A game was presented as an active way to sensitize the public to anti-Tutsi ideas (*Prosecutor v. Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, and Hassan Ngeze*, 2003). This is another example of the major newspaper writers becoming a phantom community for the general public. Greater interest in the anti-Tutsi propaganda was encouraged by creating a competition and instilling fear and hatred to fuel aggression.

Implications. Comparative analysis demonstrated that leaders gave permission to the perpetrators to kill. In Rwanda, children and adults were taught how to kill by soldiers and encouraged to loot from their victims (Jones, 2002; Winton, 2008). In the Bosnian case, citizens who had got along for many years with the victims prior to the genocide, joined with the military and engaged in rapes, beatings, and looting (Lieberman, 2006; Ramet, 2004). In both cases, there were no negative sanctions for killing, while punishments for protecting the “enemy” or failing to take part in massacres did occur (Winton, 2008; Winton & Unlu, 2008). It appears that the Bosnian media presented threats to encourage violence while the Rwandan media presented threats and methods of carrying out violent behavior against the victims.

Virulency—Violent and Dangerous Selves

In the virulency stage, the perpetrators have successfully defined themselves as violent and dangerous. The genocidal phantom community has been successfully incorporated into individuals and perpetrator groups. According to Rwandan prisoner Elie,

Only young guys, very sturdy and willing, used clubs. The club has no use in agriculture, but it was better suited to their way of trying to stand out, of strutting in the crowd. Same thing for spears and bows; those who still had them could find it entertaining to lend them or show them off (Hatzfeld, 2003, p. 37).

The Rwandan perpetrators were greeted by their fellow citizens with support through parties. In fact, there was community gatherings in which the perpetrators would put on a show by killing victims to the cheering of their fellow citizens (Winton, 2008).

The following case illustrates the virulency stage among perpetrators in the Bosnian genocide:

Women who were held at Omarska were routinely called out of their rooms at night and raped. One witness testified that she was taken out five times and raped and after each rape she was beaten (*Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic a/k/a "Dule,"* 1997, paragraph 165).

The white house was a place of particular horror. One room in it was reserved for brutal assaults on prisoners, who were often stripped, beaten, and kicked and otherwise abused. Many died as a result of these repeated assaults on them. Prisoners who were forced to clean up after these beatings reported finding blood, teeth, and skin of victims on the floor. Dead bodies of prisoners, lying in heaps on the grass near the white house, were a not infrequent sight. Those bodies would be thrown out of the white house and later loaded into trucks and removed from the camp (*Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic a/k/a "Dule,"* 1997, paragraph 166).

The red house was another small building where prisoners were taken to be beaten and killed. When prisoners were required to clean the red house, they often found hair, clothes, blood, footwear, and empty pistol cartridges. They also loaded onto trucks bodies of prisoners who had been beaten and killed in the red house (*Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic a/k/a "Dule,"* 1997, paragraph 167).

Implications. In this situation, we see that those that have already defined themselves as violent and dangerous are used to encourage others to follow suit. Authorities provided permission and encouragement to define oneself as a dangerous and violent person and to act in dangerous and violent ways. Part of this violent behavior also incorporated various methods of humiliation used to dehumanize the victims.

Extreme Virulency—Torture, Rape, and Mass Murder

A fifth stage was added to Athens' model to account for aggression involving torture, mutilation, and other behaviors associated with extreme violence (Winton, 2008). These behaviors go beyond the virulent type in intensity, severity, and scope and may be used to account for extreme group violence. Some perpetrators forced females into sexual slavery (Des Forges, 1999), and the following case illustrates extreme violence with sexual abuse carried out by members of the Rwandan Interahamwe militia group:

Witness JJ testified that when they arrived at the bureau communal, the women were hoping the authorities would defend them but she was surprised to the contrary. In her testimony, she recalled lying in the cultural center, having been raped repeatedly by Interahamwe, and hearing the cries of young girls around her, girls as young as 12 or 13 years old. On the way to the cultural center, the first time she was raped there, Witness JJ said that she and the others were taken past the Accused and that he was looking at them. The second time she was taken to the cultural center to be raped, Witness JJ recalled seeing the Accused standing at the entrance of the cultural center and hearing him say loudly to the Interahamwe, "Never ask me again what a Tutsi woman tastes like," and "Tomorrow they will be killed." According to Witness JJ, most of the girls and women were subsequently killed, either brought to the river and

killed there, after having returned to their houses, or killed at the bureau communal. Witness JJ testified that she never saw the Accused rape anyone, but she, like Witness H, believed that he had the means to prevent the rapes from taking place and never even tried to do so. In describing the Accused and the statement he made regarding the taste of Tutsi women, she said he was “talking as if someone were encouraging a player” and suggested that he was the one “supervising” the acts of rape. Witness JJ said she did not witness any killings at the bureau communal, although she saw dead bodies there (*Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu*, 1998, paragraph 422).

Witness KK also recalled seeing women and girls selected and taken away to the cultural center at the bureau communal by Interahamwes who said they were going to “sleep with” these women and girls. Witness KK testified regarding an incident in which the Accused told the Interahamwe to undress a young girl named Chantal, whom he knew to be a gymnast, so that she could do gymnastics naked. The Accused told Chantal, who said she was Hutu that she must be a Tutsi because he knew her father to be a Tutsi. As Chantal was forced to march around naked in front of many people, Witness KK testified that the Accused was laughing and happy with this. Afterwards, she said he told the Interahamwes to take her away and said “you should first of all make sure that you sleep with this girl.” Witness KK also testified regarding the rape of Tutsi women married to Hutu men. She described, after leaving the bureau communal, encountering on the road a man and woman who had been killed. She said the woman, whom she knew to be a Tutsi married to a Hutu, was “not exactly dead” and still in agony. She described the Interahamwes forcing a piece of wood into the woman’s sexual organs while she was still breathing, before she died. In most cases, Witness KK said that Tutsi women married to Hutu men “were left alone because it was said that these women deliver Hutu children.” She said that there were Hutu men who married Tutsi women to save them, but that these women were sought, taken away forcibly, and killed. She said that she never saw the Accused rape a woman (*Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu*, 1998, paragraph 429).

Witness NN, a Tutsi woman and the younger sister of JJ, described being raped along with another sister by two men in the courtyard of their home, just after it was destroyed by their Hutu neighbors and her brother and father had been killed. Witness NN said one of the men told her that the girls had been spared so that they could be raped. She said her mother begged the men, who were armed with bludgeons and machetes, to kill her daughters rather than rape them in front of her, and the man replied that the “principle was to make them suffer” and the girls were then raped. Witness NN confirmed on examination that the man who raped her penetrated her vagina with his penis, saying he did it in an “atrocious” manner, mocking and taunting them. She said her sister was raped by the other man at the same time, near her, so that they could each see what was happening to the other. Afterwards, she said she begged for death (*Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu*, 1998, paragraph 430).

According to Witness PP, who then went to Kinyira herself, the three women were forced by the Interahamwe to undress and told to walk, run, and perform exercises “so that they could display the thighs of Tutsi women.” All this took place, she said, in

front of approximately 200 people. After this, she said the women were raped. She described in particular detail the rape of Alexia by Interahamwe who threw her to the ground and climbed on top of her saying “Now, let’s see what the vagina of a Tutsi woman feels like.” According to Witness PP, Alexia gave the Interahamwe named Pierre her Bible before he raped her and told him, “Take this Bible because it’s our memory, because you do not know what you’re doing.” Then one person held her neck, others took her by the shoulders and others held her thighs apart as numerous Interahamwe continued to rape her—Bongo after Pierre, and Habarurena after Bongo. According to the testimony, Alexia was pregnant. When she became weak, she was turned over and lying on her stomach, she went into premature delivery during the rapes. Witness PP testified that the Interahamwe then went on to rape Nishimwe, a young girl, and recalled lots of blood coming from her private parts after several men raped her. Louise was then raped by several Interahamwe while others held her down, and after the rapes, according to the testimony, all three women were placed on their stomachs and hit with sticks and killed (*Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu*, 1998, paragraph 437).

In the Bosnian genocide, we also have cases of sexual violence:

Another witness, FWS-87, a 15 year old, was interrogated by DRAGAN ZELENOVIC and three unidentified soldiers in a room at Buk Bijela. During the interrogation, they accused FWS-87 of not telling the truth. The interrogators removed her clothing and then, each one raped her. The nature of the rape was vaginal penetration. The first soldier also threatened her by putting a gun to her head. FWS-87 experienced severe pain during the assault, followed by heavy vaginal bleeding. (*Prosecutor of the Tribunal v. Dragan Gagovic, Gojko Jankovic, Janko Janjic, Radomir Kovac, Zoran Vukovic, Dragan Zelenovic, Dragoljub Kunarac, Radovan Stankovic*, 1996, paragraph 5.5).

In another case of group sexual violence,

Members of the Jokers took a Bosnian Muslim woman (Witness A) to the bungalow, where she was interrogated. While she was held in the bungalow, she was repeatedly raped and sexually assaulted by Bralo. At one point while she was being interrogated, Bralo beat a Bosnian Croat man in her presence and threatened to kill her. He raped her in front of other soldiers and ejaculated repeatedly over her body. He also bit her about the body, including her nipples (*Prosecutor v. Miroslav Bralo*, 2005, paragraph 15).

Concentration camps were used to ethnically cleanse non-Serbs. Visitors were allowed to visit the camp and killed some of the prisoners (Winton & Unlu, 2008). Both male and female prisoners were assaulted, raped, tortured, and executed. Other techniques of psychological abuse were also used. The following case is another example of extreme virulency at the group level:

Halid Mujkanovic, after describing the calling-out of the three victims and of G and Witness H, speaks of seeing the accused, whom he knew well, on the floor of the hangar while prisoners were being beaten, first sitting on a tyre and later near one of the inspection pits with other soldiers, a group of some seven to ten soldiers. He himself was crouching beside a glass door at the foot of the stairs leading into the hangar floor with his hands over his face so that the guards would not think that he was watching what was happening. He nevertheless did see the beating of Jasmin Hrnica with an iron bar, already referred to, G emerging from the inspection pit covered in oil and a man being held down by the hands while G was ordered to bite the man's genitals, later he saw G with his mouth full and "all bloody with oil" and someone being made to eat a live pigeon. He also saw Jasmin Hrnica being beaten and falling, "as he fell he was showing no signs of life," and soldiers on the hangar floor were behaving as if they were supporting a team at a football match. He did not see the accused taking any active part in what happened on the hangar floor. However, one of the two occasions on which, while crouching beside the glass door, he saw the accused on the hangar floor was at the time of the incident involving G emerging from the inspection pit and having sexually to assault a man. Halid Mujkanovic did not associate that assault with Fikret Harambasic but rather with one or other of the three earlier victims. However, it is clear that it was with Fikret Harambasic and he alone that G was concerned at the time of the inspection pit incident. Accordingly, this witness's sighting of the accused on the hangar floor on this occasion is evidence that the accused was there when Fikret Harambasic was attacked and sexually assaulted (*Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic a/k/a "Dule,"* 1997, paragraph 222).

Implications. Extreme violence was carried out by both perpetrator groups. Some of the violent behaviors were similar to those found among serial killers presented in case studies including mass killings, torture, rape, and mutilation of bodies. Group sexual violence and torture was organized in both genocides.

Hypermasculinity was present in both genocides. The above descriptions of the Hutu rapes of Tutsi children and women showed various hypermasculinity actions. Jones (2002) also described cases of Hutu hypermasculine behavior during the genocide. In discussing Serbian perpetrators, Kressel (2002) stated, that the perpetrators viewed "themselves as a heroic and virile race" (p. 32). Sexual violence became an encouraged act that bonded the perpetrators together as they attempted to destroy the lineage of the victims (Markusen, 2004; Wood, 2001). In the cases presented, sexual violence, torture, and mass killings occurred in an extreme group virulency supportive environment.

Discussion and Conclusions

The goal of this study was to apply violentization theory to explain the evolution of the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides. At the micro level, violentization theory successfully

provided explanations for both genocides. The stages of violentization were present in both case studies. Victim and perpetrator accounts were matched with the brutalization, defiance, violent dominance engagements, virulency, and extreme virulency stages.

The brutalization stage was present in both genocides. The perpetrator groups taught others how to engage in violent behavior through small scale massacres, threats of victimization, and observation of constructed threats of violence. In addition, the perpetrators provided permission to engage in violent behavior as a preventive measure, and a genocidal script was disseminated to the perpetrator group by various phantom communities. In the defiance stage, the perpetrators were encouraged to become violent to avoid being victimized and this led to the mobilization of citizens who agreed to become violent. The perpetrator groups were able to gather large support systems who provided aid. In the violent dominance engagements stage, the leaders gave permission to the perpetrators to kill. Killing was encouraged and there were no negative sanctions for killing. In fact, there were negative consequences for refusing to kill. In the virulency stage, the perpetrators defined themselves as violent and dangerous and directed others to become violent. Finally, in the extreme virulency stage, extreme violence was carried out by both perpetrator groups, and included mass killings, torture, rape, mutilation of bodies, and group sexual violence.

The Rwandan and Bosnian genocides presented many similarities but also differences. Previous genocides had occurred in both locations. Civil wars were also present during the genocides. In the Bosnian case, three major groups were involved, although one of the groups was identified as the primary perpetrator group. In the Rwandan case, two groups were involved, with one group identified as the primary perpetrator.

The victims were segregated by different personal characteristics. For example, in the Bosnian genocide, the three groups had different religious affiliations while in the Rwandan case the two groups shared one religion. There appeared to be a stronger involvement of female perpetrators in the Rwanda genocide.

The locations of the genocides and the levels of development differed as apparent in the choice of weapons used by the perpetrators. The time frames of the genocides differed as well. The Rwandan genocide took place over several months in 1994 whereas the Bosnian genocide occurred over a number of years (1992-1998). More deaths occurred in the Rwandan genocide despite the lower level of weapon technology and shorter time frame.

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, only two genocides were compared in this study. Future researchers might use multiple cases to determine how violentization theory fits with other genocides. Second, secondary data was used that was originally collected for other purposes. This limitation could be addressed by conducting interviews with perpetrators and victims while integrating the violentization stages into specific questions. Third, postgenocide comparisons were not addressed. Analyzing the postgenocidal behavior of the perpetrators would be beneficial to examine how and if they deviolentize. Fourth, the temporal relationship between the stages in

each of the genocides was not analyzed. Finally, the societal-wide macro explanations of genocide were not completely addressed, but will be briefly discussed next.

Can violentization theory explain societal-wide violence? Although the results of this study are congruent with explanations of violence at individual and group levels, future work needs to be conducted to integrate violentization theory into a theory of societal-level violence. Suggestions for using this approach at the societal level have been provided by Athens (2007), Spohn (2008a, 2008b), and Rhodes (2002).

Athens (2007) addresses this issue in his discussion of radical interactionism and points out how Mead did focus on the operation of institutions, and how institutions develop and change. Furthermore, Athens focuses his attention on language, family, economy, religion, polity, and science and how these institutions are rooted in social action. The integration of the theme of “domination” into the analysis of genocide would further specify how violent thoughts, feelings, and actions emerge within phantom communities over specific periods of time (Athens, 2002). According to Athens (2007), “domination not only provides the master principle from which all major institutions in society are created, but also the master principle for their ongoing operation after their creation” (p. 141).

This would involve an examination of the dominance hierarchy of each institution and how this institutional hierarchy operates to allow leaders and the phantom communities to encourage or discourage violent behavior. In other words, institutions may be organized in a particular manner that may encourage individuals and small groups to engage in violent or genocidal behavior (Spohn, 2008b). As Spohn (2008a) states,

The phantom community is also important in the context of the considering violence on the societal scale because it treats whether an entire community or society can undergo violentization together, and that the internal dialog that takes place within an individual is replaced with an external, if often still intimate one.” (p. 116)

Applying violentization theory to each of the major institutions would further develop this theory at a macro level. For example, attention might be focused on how the political leaders encourage genocidal behavior and how the religious system legitimizes violence toward others. This analysis would also need to address the relationships between the institutions.

Many questions remain on the application of violentization theory to genocide. Violentization theory may be very useful in differentiating those in similar situations who become violent perpetrators, take no action, or assist the victims and put their own lives at risk. For example, comparing “willing” and “unwilling” killers using violentization theory might assist in discovering specific factors within the violentization process that lead to differential violent behavior. Some perpetrators entered the virulency or extreme virulency stage whereas others remained at the violent dominance engagements stage. Some perpetrators decided to torture and rape the victims whereas others avoided this behavior. Further research might focus on the deviolentization

process (Ulmer, 2003; Sanborn, 2003) that may occur postgenocide. The postgenocidal situation can be analyzed to determine if there are specific stages of deviolentization that can be mapped out. In addition, early warning signs and procedures to disrupt the violentization process might be useful for preventing genocide. Certainly there were small massacres and other indicators (e.g., political speeches, press releases, community meetings) that might warn of a formation of a genocidal phantom community. Finally, the time frames for the stages of the violentization process should be examined possibly using historical-comparative methods (Huttenbach, 2004) as there may have been repeating cycles of the violentization process in each of the genocides. In both of these cases, the perpetrators brought up prior victimizations of their group to instill fear and hatred among the population.

Lonnie Athens has developed a theory that can be successfully applied to many different types of violence at micro and possibly macro levels. For example, his theory could be applied to child abuse, intimate partner violence, sports-related violence, bullying behavior, riots, the military and wars, terrorism, prison life, video and internet games, and genocide. In addition to providing a comprehensive approach to understanding violence, his theories may be used to develop programs with an emphasis on reducing and preventing violent behavior in numerous situations. Hopefully, this type of research helps to move genocide studies in criminology and sociology out of the infancy stage to a more mature science.

Author's Note

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Bio

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