

Synthesis Examples

Excerpt: Valentine's Day

Both of these articles spring a singular idea: negative effects of these gifts if the receiver were to find out they were given out of obligation and what else to do instead of giving gifts. Although, the Rugimbana et al. and Ogletree's research on the emotions and motivations of gift giving on Valentine's Day are well structured and persuasive, I think the effect of that said gift giving can be detrimental to a relationship instead of beneficial because of anxiety and obligation for buying the gift/s.

The first thing I've noticed for both of these papers is that they are generally leaning towards a sociological base: sociologists, human behaviorists, and psychologists. The particular style and the ways they are written is broad enough for a public audience, but readers are only granted one angle of vision on the dilemma: from a scientist.

Both Rugimbana et al. and Ogletree believe that men are usually the gift givers and women are the receivers of those gifts. Rugimbana highlights the study with narrowing down motivations for gift giving while Ogletree focuses mainly on the women's reactions. However, their views on the topic are slightly different. They both research a fairly similar topic "gift giving" on Valentine's Day, but both conduct their research by different motives and sociological habits. Rugimbana et al. has more of a sociological point of view on the Valentine's Day subject when Ogletree is focused more on the psychological view. Ogletree studies the behaviors and beliefs about Valentine's Day for each gender, male and female, while Rugimbana et al. studies the sociological standards and motivations—based off of society—about Valentine's Day. Ogletree, through her research, finds that women are also significant gift givers as well but Rugimbana suggests that men are obligated, self-interested, and altruistic about Valentine's Day gifts. Rugimbana et al. doesn't mention women in his research for the motivations, cutting out a significant portion of information that could improve or gender neutralize his research. Ogletree, in contrast, notes that women also contribute to the statistic of gift giving on Valentine's Day, not just men.

Between Ogletree and Rugimbana et al., only Rugimbana et al. highlights the actual motivations for gift giving in men. Ogletree neglects this idea and only studies who gives, not particularly why they give. For example, the study used in the Rugimbana et al. article gathered information on college-aged men by holding interviews for thirty minutes. However, Ogletree gathered information by providing questionnaires to college students at an undisclosed Texas university, where they had to provide answers for Valentine's Day by attitudes, expectations of valentines, and one particular question about purposefully wearing red on the occasion. The Rugimbana et al. study had a total of 61 respondents for their research while Ogletree provided results based off of 284 respondents, nearly five times that of Rugimbana et al. Ogletree's number of participants improves her credibility compared to Rugimbana et al. because it provides a wider range of students and a higher population, making her results more likely and widespread.

However, Rugimbana et al. has a more in-depth research technique. Interview techniques and focus groups are much more accurate in the supplying of data because, for example, the

researcher is able to ask more specific questions if the researcher feels that the answer the subject gave was inconclusive to the study, thus supplying more accurate and straightforward data. Surveys are less likely to be reliable in the gathering of information compared to interviews and focus groups because they are more open-ended questions and, if confused, the subject may not understand the question, thus giving false data. Rugimbana's information gathering was much more personal and more in-depth than Ogletree's questionnaire surveys.

Excerpt: Genocide

Moshman highlights his experience searching for themes of hatred in a number of case studies about the genocide of Rwanda, Nazi death camps, disappearances in Argentina, the dirty war massacre in El Salvador, and the massacre at Wounded Knee. He turned up few solidified affirmations that hatred was the single driving force. He does, however, state that, "People do hate, and this undoubtedly plays a role in genocide" (Moshman 117). This statement clarifies:

There is, it appears, an emerging consensus among genocide scholars that genocides and mass killings are mostly perpetuated by ordinary people playing social roles in groups, institutions, and practices to which they are politically, religiously, philosophically, ideologically, morally, professionally, economically, and/or personally committed. (117)

So how can these factors be grouped in a way that explains the mentality and the driving force behind genocide? Both of the authors nearly agree on these matters, but have divided the psychology of perpetrators into differing categories, although the underlying consensus is the same. Suedfeld asserts that there is an "interaction among at least three kinds of factors: situational variables (e.g., stressors); universal predispositions governing thinking, memory, perception, and emotion (e.g., cognitive heuristics, *Gestalt* principles); and individual differences in how people cope with the previous two characteristics" (Suedfeld 2). He later explores each in further detail, subgrouping them into *Projection*, *Splitting off*, *us-vs.-them mentality*, and *Groupthink*.

Prior to exploring each in detail, it is prudent to see that as mentioned, Moshman's categorizing is very similar. He breaks down the factors contributing to genocide into four categories: *Dichotomization*, *Dehumanization*, *Destruction*, and *Denial* (Moshman 115). To compare the two author's assertions first, then to explore them second, Moshman's *Dichotomization* overlaps with Suedfeld's *Us-vs.-Them Mentality*. *Dehumanization* and *Splitting Off* are nearly identical ideas too, as well as *Groupthink* and *Destruction*. Moshman however terms and explores *Denial*, whereas Suedfeld terms and explores *Projection*, each offering new ideas into the mix, independent from each other.

According to Moshman, *Dichotomization* "elevates one dimension of identity over others, and within that dimension, sharply distinguishes two categories: us and them." As seen in the terminology, both authors agree that such a thing takes place. What is persuasive, is that the separation of groups occur first, whereas at one time, more often than not, these groups shared a number of commonalities, particularly nationality, although probably not ethnicity. A number of attributes are then projected onto the other group, dividing them into a category that is distinctly separate.

This flows into *Dehumanization*, which is similar to Suedfeld's *Splitting Off*. *Dehumanization* occurs in the minds and mentality of the dominant group by making the targeted group into things that are clearly not human at all, and therefore not worthy of enjoying or being given the same liberties and rights as the other. *Splitting Off*, however, involves a distinctly different manner of viewing the deeds a genocidal perpetrator enacts, with the way in which they view themselves. In order to do this though, one group must be seen as less than human in order for the perpetrator to not see his deeds as murder, but just his job and his duty.

Destruction follows *Dehumanization* and as Moshman points out while speaking of the happenings on Hispaniola (present day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) in which the colonizing Spanish Explorers annihilated the native population: "The destruction of natives expanded concentrically far beyond Hispaniola in the ensuing decades and centuries, and was widely deemed necessary and justified not only by the Spanish, but by the Europeans as well (Moshman 125). This theme of justified destruction as a necessary means for human" progression is easily analogous to the mentality behind much of genocide and how it fits into its societal motivations. Suedfeld's *Groupthink* also highlights the same principle in which members of a group find justification in destruction by seeing others enact and excuse the same.

One group justifies destructive behavior for its role in progression and those who are associated with the movement join in by mirroring that mentality. With group mentality, it is reasonable to view that a perpetrator's motivations are intertwined with their standing in that group and therefore are not necessarily intrinsically individual, but extrinsically dependent on status and position amongst their peers. Thus, a perpetrator is subject not only to his own convictions, but the convictions of the group and the will of its leaders.

Both Suedfeld and Moshman have a category within their texts that are not in the other's. Suedfeld discusses the term *Projection*, "that the other group embodies all of the immoral acts and thoughts we cannot admit in ourselves, making them unworthy of acceptance and deserving punishment" (Suedfeld 3). Moshman discusses *Denial* as a possibility that by dehumanizing persons, one can deny that they are committing murder. More extensively and thoroughly:

Other methods of genocidal denial range from brute rejection of the facts to more subtle means such as not investigating what we don't want to know; selectively remembering what we already know; gerrymandering the definition of genocide to exclude our own actions; re-contextualizing historical circumstances to render our actions normal, understandable, or inevitable; and educating our children with history textbooks devised primarily for the purpose of instilling patriotism. (127)

Although these last two terms, *Projection* and *Denial*, discuss different ideas, they only serve to compliment each other in psychology's understanding of genocide. The impression that may follow this discussion is that the psychology of a perpetrator is not so abnormal that it is classifiably different, but a very complex and intricate manner of dealing with one's surroundings and succumbing to a number of profoundly powerful influences like *Groupthink* and *Dichotomization*. By classifiably different, it is meant that although a perpetrator deviates significantly from the norm, it is still the act of criminal mentality that is a result of identity processes, all of which can be viewed as human and seen outside of psychopathology.

