

# Research proposal on social psychological implications of genocide on women

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Genocide remains at its core an act that has plagued human beings for many centuries. It simply refers to the intentional destruction of a group of individuals such that the death toll almost defies belief (Prunier 1997). For example, the genocidal regimes in the 20th century alone resulted in the annihilation of sixty million people (Kuper 1981). Among the most notorious was the Nazi Germany where tens of millions who were characterized as “savage” indigenous people were annihilated in the name of “progress”(Kuper 1981).

Genocide however remains a difficult event to analyze since it represents the most horrible of deeds. How can we comprehend such levels of atrocities? It has also been argued that an analytical explanation of genocide especially by those who did not experience it is a futile exercise, one that falls short in its task of elucidation (Jongman 1996). Nevertheless, finding an explanation to the causes of such atrocities are prerequisites to restoring social order. While remaining sensitive to the victims of genocide, many scholars believe that such atrocities are a result of human behaviour, albeit an extreme one (Halpern & Kideckel 2000).

## **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

While genocide has been given vast and lengthy coverage in other disciplines, the relatively lack of research on genocide within the field of anthropology is surprising. For example, until the mid - 1980s, anthropologists have remained silent with regards to the Holocaust (Hinton 2002). Also there are very few anthropological articles exploring the

Armenian genocide. This raises a fundamental question. Why have anthropologists failed to engage with the genocide topic more critically? As Fein (1990) suggests, this neglect is shared by other social sciences which have pushed the genocide topic into the realm of specialty studies. There might have been hesitancy among anthropologists on tackling this matter because of its perceived threat to the concept of cultural relativity or perhaps they shied away from politically volatile issues. Whatever the reasons, they began to engage more actively in this topic during the 1980s. In contributing to the small body of work on genocide in this field, this dissertation will examine the social and psychological implications of genocide on women. The dissertation will seek a deeper understanding of the most heinous crimes in history from an anthropological perspective. The researcher will not only describe the occurrence of such events, but also give an explanation for such an occurrence. The study will thus take new points of view which would be helpful in understanding the magnitude of past atrocities and in developing strategies to prevent the reoccurrence of such future massacres at the heart of humanity

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this study are:

- To investigate the social and psychological effects of genocide on women
- To understand the magnitude of past atrocities and give an explanation for such an occurrence from the perspective of anthropologists.
- To develop strategies to preventing the reoccurrence of future atrocities.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

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Whereas research focusing on genocide is vast, relatively few studies that explore on genocide from anthropological perspective have been published. In his book, *Genocide: A sociological perspective*, Fein (1990) describes the evolution of the genocide concept. Fein outlines key issues in the anthropology of genocide and laments the lack of academic research in this field. The author further proposes a criterion for distinguishing genocide and suggests new directions for further genocide research in the field of social sciences.

Zygmunt (1991) explores on modernity and the holocaust. He argues that the Holocaust was a product of modernity since it constituted of a coalescence of several aspects of modernity. While sharing a similar view, Bodley (1999) argues that the annihilation of indigenous people is a subject of modernity. In his book, "victims of progress", he notes that genocide has been justified on grounds of modernity - the idea of "progress". These pieces along with other seminal works from a few other anthropologists constitute the genocide studies in the field of anthropology showing the lack of academic research in this field.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The scope and content of this research will be guided by the following research questions

- What are the social and psychological implications of genocide on women?
- What are the possible causes of past atrocities?
- What strategies can anthropologists employ to prevent the reoccurrence of such future massacres?

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## METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH APPROACH

A quantitative research approach has been considered for this dissertation because such an approach would be more useful in obtaining a broader depth of analysis on the impact of genocide on women. Given the nature of this study, it would be more tenable to conduct a quantitative research.

### RESEARCH STRATEGY

Secondary data sources will be employed as the main method of data collection and analysis. An important part of the strategy will be to ensure the availability and easy retrieval of the relevant data, given the vast amount of secondary data. This is important because archived secondary data are usually very large and retrieving the relevant information can be time consuming.

### DATA COLLECTION

Survey will be used as the primary instrument for data collection. The researcher will survey archival documents on genocide research. Survey documents will be obtained from the British and US archives.

### DATA ANALYSIS

In analyzing the data obtained above, the researcher will utilize publications from other sources in order to supplement the findings. The study will utilize scholarly and academic journals, textbooks and relevant publications on the implications of genocides on women, especially the book entitled “annihilating difference: the Anthropology of genocide”. The report by

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USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) will also form an important contribution in this study. This report evaluates gender issues in postconflict societies while focusing predominantly on the impact of genocide on women (Dadrian 1995).

#### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main ethical issue likely to emerge in this study is the issue of obtaining consent with the primary researcher. It should be noted that informed consent cannot be presumed where there are sensitive data involved. However, given that it might not be feasible to seek additional consent, a professional judgment will have to be made by the researcher regarding the re-use of data and whether this amounts to violation of contracts made between the primary researchers and the subjects of genocidal regimes.

#### CONCLUSION

In view of the above, it can be concluded that this analysis is of paramount importance. Besides giving the social and psychological implications of genocide on women, the research will be helpful in understanding the magnitude of past atrocities and in developing strategies to prevent future occurrence of such massacres at the heart of humanity.

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