Genocide as Social Control*

BRADLEY CAMPBELL
California State University, Los Angeles

Genocide is defined here as organized and unilateral mass killing on the basis of ethnicity. While some have focused on genocide as a type of deviance, most genocide is also social control—a response to behavior itself defined as deviant. As such, it can be explained as a part of a general theory of social control. Black's (1998) theories of social control explain the handling of conflicts with their social geometry—that is, with the social characteristics of those involved in the conflict. Here, Blackian theories of social control are extended to specify the social geometry of genocide as follows: genocide varies directly with immobility, cultural distance, relational distance, functional independence, and inequality; and it is greater in a downward direction than in an upward or lateral direction. This theory of genocide can be applied to numerous genocides throughout history, and it is capable of ordering much of the known variation in genocide—such as when and where it occurs, how severe it is, and who participates.

In 2002 and 2003 rebel groups—consisting mostly of African Muslims from the Darfur region of Sudan—began to attack and loot facilities operated by the Arab-dominated government (United Nations 2005:22–23). In response government forces and Arab militia groups (known as Janjaweed) have attacked African civilians throughout the Darfur region. These attacks—which have consisted of indiscriminate killing, torture, the burning of villages, and massive population displacement—have resulted in the deaths of 400,000 or more Africans (Hagan, Rymond-Richmond, and Parker 2005; Lemarchand 2006:1; Reeves 2006). Additionally, 2 million Africans are currently displaced from their homes within Darfur (considered internally displaced persons), and more than 200,000 are refugees in neighboring Chad (Lemarchand 2006:1; Straus 2005; United Nations 2005:84). Many of these people, without access to food and medical care, also face death.

The situation in Darfur is one of the most recent examples of the phenomenon that in the 20th century came to be known as genocide.¹ There are numerous other such cases, where large numbers of people were killed because of their ethnicity. For

*Address correspondence to: Bradley Campbell, Department of Sociology, Cal State L.A., 5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90032. E-mail: BradleyKcampbell@gmail.com. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Sociological Society, Charlotte, North Carolina, April 13–16, 2005, and at the annual meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society, Boston, Massachusetts, February 23–26, 2006. The article also received the 2007–2008 Bierstedt Prize given by the sociology department at the University of Virginia. I thank the anonymous reviewers as well as the following for comments on earlier drafts: Donald Black, Mark Cooney, Laura Holian, Kurt Jonassohn, Jason Manning, Dirk Moses, Jeffrey Olick, Roberta Senechal de la Roche, Justin Snyder, and Milton Vickerman.

¹The U.N. report (2005) concluded that the government of Sudan had not pursued a policy of genocide in Darfur, but this is contested (see, for instance, Hagan et al. 2005:528). In my view, the evidence presented in the report indicates that genocide has occurred according to the U.N. definition. Regardless, many of the acts certainly are genocide according to the definition used here (see below). The same applies to other cases discussed in the text unless otherwise noted. That is, whether or not they constitute genocide using other definitions, they are genocides according to the definition given here.
instance, in the 20th century, the following were targets of genocide: approximately 1 million Armenians in Turkey between 1915 and 1916; nearly 6 million Jews and more than 200,000 Gypsies in Nazi-controlled Europe between 1939 and 1945; more than 100,000 Hutus in Burundi in 1972; more than 800,000 Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994; at least 50,000 Kurds in Iraq in 1988; and others.

Can such phenomena be explained? While some have argued that they cannot be, scholars of comparative genocide generally have assumed that genocide is a category of human behavior and that it can be explained. But if so, to what broader category of human behavior does it belong? Many have approached genocide as a type of evil. Consider the titles of several prominent books on genocide: *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Arendt 1977), *Becoming Evil* (Waller 2002), *The Roots of Evil* (Staub 1989), and *Facing Evil* (Woodruff and Wilmer 2001). The implication is that genocide is similar to other evil acts—that it can be explained with a theory of evil. Similarly, genocide may be viewed as "madness" (Aronson 1987) or as a crime that can be explained with a theory of criminality (Alvarez 2001:1–9; Hagan et al. 2005).

To be sure, putting genocide into a broader category of social life is important to understanding it scientifically and avoiding the kind of *ad hoc* explanation that has characterized the field (cf. Kuper 1981:40). But evil, crime, and madness are evaluative labels, not sociological categories of human behavior (Becker 1963:70–82; Durkheim 1933:70–82; Horwitz 1982; Scheff 1984). Acts considered evil, insane, or criminal do not necessarily have any sociological commonality; they may represent different aspects of social life and require different theories for their explanation (Black 1983:42, 2004b:146; Cooney 2006:53–55; Cooney and Phillips 2002). But not only may genocide have little in common with many acts defined as evil, its perpetrators typically define their victims as evil. Classifying genocide as a type of deviance, then, if it does not replace social science with evaluation, obscures its moralistic nature. For example, Herbert C. Kelman (1973) approaches genocide as a type of "violence without moral restraint" and seeks to explain the factors that lead perpetrators to disregard moral decision making. But while genocide typically is condemned by others, it occurs not when moral evaluations are disregarded by its perpetrators, but when they are present and applied. Genocide is moralistic, then, and can be explained with a theory of social control. Here I apply a theoretical strategy developed by Donald Black (known as *pure sociology*) and Blackian theories of social control to the understanding of genocide. But first, since scholars of genocide have been unable to agree on a meaning of the term, I explain what I mean by genocide and how this differs from other definitions.

PREVIOUS DEFINITIONS OF GENOCIDE

The term *genocide* was formulated during World War II by the Polish jurist Raphael Lemkin, who developed the term to describe German war crimes that were aimed at destroying nations. Lemkin's conception of genocide was broad:

2For instance, Dan Diner calls Auschwitz a "no-man's land of understanding, a black box of explanation, a vacuum of extrahistorical significance which sucks in attempts at historiographic interpretation" (1990:144). A more common argument is that genocide *as such* cannot be explained. For example, Thomas Cushman challenges positivistic, naturalistic, and deterministic approaches that assume that "genocide is more or less the same across time and space, and that it is predictable if we can isolate the variables which cause it" (2003:531), and he advocates viewing genocide in the context of particular historical epochs and recognizing its "contingency, unpredictability, and its status as a product of human agency" (2003:524; see also Freeman 1991:194–95).
Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. (Lemkin 1944:79)

Due in part to Lemkin's lobbying, in 1948 the United Nations passed the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, making genocide a crime under international law. The resulting definition was narrower than Lemkin's. Under international law, genocide is defined as:

any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(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 (United Nations 1948).3

Some genocide scholars prefer to use the U.N. definition. Leo Kuper, for instance, says that it is not helpful "to create new definitions of genocide, when there is an internationally recognized definition and a Genocide Convention which might become the basis for some effective action, however limited the underlying conception" (1981:39). Yet the U.N. definition is a legal, not a scientific, definition. Whether it might become the basis for effective action is irrelevant to whether it advances the understanding of social life. Most social scientists studying genocide see the U.N. definition as vague, too restrictive, too broad, or some combination of these. Other definitions, then, have been proposed.

Many of these definitions broaden the scope of genocide to include groups such as classes or political groups (e.g., Chalk and Jonassohn 1990:23; Fein 1993b:24; Hinton 2002:4-6; Huttenbach 1988:295; S. Katz 1994:128–31; Melson 1992:26; Porter 1982:12; Rummel 1997:341; Staub 1989:8). Others are more restrictive. Harff and Gurr, for instance, separate politicide—where groups are defined by their hierarchical position or political opposition to the regime—from genocide—where they are defined by their communal characteristics (1988:360). Similarly, for Yehuda Bauer genocide is the "elimination of a genos, an ethnicity, or nationality, or a race, as defined by the perpetrator" (1999:35).

A second issue concerns what actions constitute genocide. Most definitions restrict genocide to direct killing or to acts that result in deaths.4 However, there is less agreement on the degree of destruction necessary. Here, one of the narrowest definitions is that of Steven T. Katz, for whom genocide "applies only when there is

3Like Lemkin, the United Nations includes acts other than killing. However, it does not include attempts to destroy the culture of an ethnic group—such as by prohibiting the use of a language. Such acts are now commonly called cultural genocide (Burton 1991:519–20; S. Katz 1991:220), ethnocide (Chalk and Jonassohn 1990:23), or culturecide (Huttenbach 1988:292) to distinguish them from genocide.

4There are exceptions, however (e.g., Barta 1987; Dadrian 1975; Huttenbach 1988; Porter 1982:12; see Moses 2002:22–28, 2004:26–28 for a discussion of such conceptions).
an actualized intent, however successfully carried out, to physically destroy an entire group” (1994:128). But most definitions are not so restrictive. For instance, Harff and Gurr require only policies that “result in the deaths of a substantial portion of a group” (1988:360), Robert Melson requires policies “whose intent is the destruction in whole or in part of a social collectivity” (1992:26), and Charny requires only the “mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings” (1994:75).

There are other aspects involved in defining genocide. For instance, some stipulate that genocide is committed by governments (e.g., Chalk and Jonassohn 1990:23, 26; Harff and Gurr 1988:360; Melson 1992:26; Porter 1982:12). The definition may also be limited to exclude certain acts of warfare. Helen Fein, for instance, requires that the actions be “sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim” (1993b:24), and Chalk and Jonassohn use the term “one-sided mass killing” to exclude both military and civilian casualties of war (1990:23–24). Another issue is the unit of analysis. That is, if genocide does not require the intended killing of all group members worldwide—as it does for Steven Katz (1994)—what is the lowest level at which it applies—a state, a region, or what? Those who restrict genocide to government killing imply that it would involve the targeting of group members within a state, or perhaps within the government’s sphere of influence. Where the perpetrator is not specified, the issue is not always addressed (e.g., Fein 1993b), though Huttenbach says that genocide involves the destruction of a group “within a given national or even international population” (1988:295).

These are some of the most common criteria on which definitions of genocide differ. Below, I discuss the definition used here and how it addresses these issues.

A DEFINITION OF GENOCIDE

Genocide is organized and unilateral mass killing on the basis of ethnicity. Consider what this definition entails. First, genocide is mass killing. It does not include measures that destroy a group through nonlethal means. Hence, the destruction of a culture—such as the suppression of a language or religion—is not included. Neither is the forcible transfer of children, the infliction of serious bodily or mental harm, or measures to prevent births, each of which is included in the U.N. definition. Similarly, this definition does not include the nongenocidal deportation or forced migration of ethnic groups—often called ethnic cleansing (Bell-Fialkoff 1996:3, 53–54; Naimark 2001).6

Additionally, genocide is organized. Organization refers broadly to the capacity for collective action, and it is present to some degree in any group (Black 1976:85). Groups are more organized, however, where there are administrative officers, where decision making is centralized and continuous, and where collective action itself is greater (Black 1976:85). Genocide, then, may be committed by groups such as governments, armies, and militias; killings by unorganized individuals are not included.

5Chalk and Jonassohn define the perpetrator as “a state or other authority” (1990:23). The “or other authority,” they say, means that the perpetrator may be “a local authority other than a state” (1990:26). This seems to refer to local governments or government agents, but it is not clear from the wording or the discussion exactly what is meant. Dadrian also notes the clumsiness of the phrase “state or other authority,” which he says “blends a concrete entity, the state, with a vague one; a ‘restrictive’ concept is appended to an inclusive one” (1991:219; see also Fein 1993b:13).

6Ethnic cleansing often takes place in conjunction with genocide, however, and in many cases such deportations are genocidal—such as when the Hereros of South-West Africa were driven into the Omaheke desert (Drechsler 1980:155–56) or when Armenian women, children, and elderly were deported to the Syrian desert (Balakian 2003:175–80; Mazian 1990:78–82; Melson 1992:143–47).
Genocide is also unilateral. Violence in general may be unilateral—flowing in one direction from one party to another—or bilateral—flowing in both directions at once (Black 1998:5–6). Unilateral collective violence includes, along with genocide, terrorism, vigilantism, lynching, and rioting; bilateral collective violence includes brawling, feuding, and warfare (Black 2004a:16; Senechal de la Roche 1996:102).

Most significantly, then, since genocide is unilateral, it does not include warfare, which in its pure form is bilateral.7

Finally, genocide as defined here is directed against ethnic groups; it does not include killings where targets are selected on the basis of class, for example, or political identity. The term ethnic group is used here in a broad sense to refer to cultural groups characterized by a notion of common descent (cf. Horowitz 2000:55–57, 2001:48–49; Jaret 1995:71–74; Mann 2005:11; van den Berghe 1981:27; Weber 1978:385–98). Among the groups included as ethnic groups, then, are tribes, castes, nationalities, language groups, and many groups marked by race or religion. These differ from other groups in that identity normally is ascribed at birth and is relatively unchangeable.

Consider also what is not specified by this definition. First, genocide need not be perpetrated by a government. Second, this definition does not require any particular motive, intention, goal, or any other psychological state on the part of the perpetrators or anyone else. Genocide here is an observable sociological phenomenon. Finally, this definition encompasses all levels of analysis, whether macro or micro. This means first of all that genocide is not restricted to the extermination of large ethnic groups.8 Nor must an ethnic group be targeted everywhere its members live. That the Nazis targeted Jews only in Europe, that the Rwandan government and Hutu militia groups targeted Tutsis only in Rwanda, or that the Ottoman government targeted Armenians only in Turkey does not mean there was no genocide. Moreover, since this definition specifies no unit of analysis, neither is it restricted to large units such as a continent or nation-state; genocide might occur only in a single location such as a village or town (cf. Straus 2001:367).9

7 Nonetheless, genocide is related to war in two ways. First, it has much in common with warfare, especially with so-called total war (Bartrop 2002; Markussen 1987:101, 1996:81; Traverso 2003:77–99). Total war involves a “high degree of societal mobilization for war and an extremely high level of death and destruction” (Markussen 1987:102). As with genocide the targets may be noncombatants. But unlike genocide total warfare is bilateral, or reciprocal. Both groups of combatants indiscriminately target citizens of the enemy nation as well as its civilian infrastructure. Second, genocide frequently occurs alongside war (Krain 1997:346–51; Melson 1992:19–20). For instance, during a civil war people may be killed because of their ethnic similarity to members of a rebel group (such as in Sudan and Rwanda), though they are not citizens of enemy nations or residents of rebel-occupied territory. Also, genocide may occur in the aftermath of warfare when mass killings continue after the outcome of a battle or war has been decided (cf. Chalk and Jonassohn 1990:24; Horowitz 2002:37–39). For instance, after the Chinese city of Nanking was occupied by the Japanese in December 1937, Japanese soldiers massacred over 250,000 residents of the city (Chang 1997:102). Similarly, the wars of antiquity were often followed by genocide. The Sumerians, Assyrians, Israelites, Mongols, and others seem to have engaged routinely in mass killings of defeated enemies—often in conjunction with other measures, such as enslavement or ethnicocide (Freeman 1995a:218–21; Jonassohn and Chalk 1987:12–13; Mazian 1990:xi). Such cases, again, are genocides. Once an enemy is defeated and unresisting, any continued mass killing is unilateral rather than reciprocal—and therefore is genocide, not war.

8 For instance, that not all Australian Aborigines as such were ever targeted for destruction does not mean there was no genocide in Australia. As Dirk Moses (2000:93) points out, each extermination of an entire Aboriginal group clearly constitutes a genocide. Thus, “Australia had many genocides, perhaps more than any other country” (Moses 2000:93; see also Moses 2004:19).

9 For instance, after the outbreak of the Black Death in 14th-century Europe, Jews were accused of poisoning wells, and there were massacres of Jews throughout Europe—especially in Germany, Austria, France, and Spain. In Mainz, 6,000 Jews were killed, 2,000 in Strasbourg, and lesser numbers in many other locations (Johnson 1987:216–17). These were so common that in 1350 Charles IV issued pardons to cities that massacred their Jews (Johnson 1987:217). Such events are genocides.
THE LOGIC OF GENOCIDE

As mentioned above, genocide is normally a form of social control—a response to behavior defined as deviant. That is, like other forms of violence, it is usually moralistic rather than predatory (Black 1983, 1998:27–42, 74–79, 2004b:146; Cooney and Phillips 2002; cf. J. Katz 1988:16). The perpetrators express moral grievances against the targeted ethnic group. For instance, the following were among the grievances against Jews in Nazi Germany: Jews were said to be “clannish, aloof, and distant” (Adam 1996:43; cf. Bonacich 1973:591) as well as clever, greedy, dishonest, and striving for power and success. Said to abhor work, they were considered parasites who lived off the labor of others (Friedländer 1997:96; Goldhagen 1996:412; Weitz 2003:108). Jews were accused of disloyalty to the nation and blamed for Germany’s defeat in World War I (Friedländer 1997:73–74; Staub 1989:100). It was said that Jewish doctors harmed their non-Jewish patients and that Jews molested and murdered children (Friedländer 1997:104; Staub 1989:104). They were considered aesthetically repulsive genetic misfits (Lerner 1992:66–67), sexual predators (Weitz 2003:106), and a threat to racial purity (Lerner 1992:35; Staub 1989:104). Jews also were believed to have taken over German culture (Friedländer 1997:107; Johnson 1987:477–81), and they were considered the embodiment of modernity and the source of all the modern ills—such as capitalism, socialism, liberalism, democracy, and urbanism—that threatened the German way of life (Cohn 1969:170). Jews were said to be “wicked creatures” who belonged to an “anti-race” outside of the hierarchy of human races (Goldhagen 1996:411), and it was believed they formed “a conspiratorial body set on ruining and then dominating the rest of mankind” (Cohn 1969:16).

Similarly, in Rwanda Hutus expressed numerous grievances against Tutsis prior to and during the 1994 genocide. Tutsis were said to be clannish, to have a disproportionate share of places in secondary and higher education, and to have infiltrated all aspects of Rwandan society—such as the economy, the church, and political parties (Des Forges 1999:73–74). Tutsi women were said to be physically appealing and to be preferred by foreign and Hutu men (Gourevitch 1998:88; Prunier 1995:292, n. 21), and it was believed that they used their beauty to seduce and manipulate Hutu men (Des Forges 1999:75). At the same time, it was said that they were arrogant and scorned Hutu men they considered unworthy (Des Forges 1999:215). There were also grievances over events in Burundi, such as the 1993 assassination of Burundi’s Hutu president by Tutsi army officers and subsequent massacres of Hutus (Prunier 1995:198–206). But the most immediate grievances concerned the civil war in Rwanda. In 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), consisting largely of Rwandan Tutsi exiles living in Uganda, had invaded and fought against the Habyarimana government. A cease-fire agreement was signed in July 1992, and there was to be a power-sharing agreement. But on April 6, 1994 a plane carrying President Habyarimana of Rwanda and the president of Burundi was shot down, and civil war resumed and genocide began. Though it is still uncertain who shot down the plane (Mann 2005:450–51; Prunier 1995:213–29), it was widely believed among Rwandan Hutus that the RPF was responsible for Habyarimana’s assassination (Straus 2004:254–56). Tutsis were collectively blamed for the actions and supposed actions of the RPF, and

10The concept of social control used here refers to “how people define and respond to deviant behavior” (Black 1998:4). This differs from an older conception in which “social control refers broadly to virtually all of the human practices and arrangements that contribute to social order and, in particular, that influence people to conform” (Black 1998:3–4). My use of the term, then, does not imply that genocide brings about conformity or social order (cf. Black 2004b:155, n. 1).
all Tutsis were said to be RPF accomplices or supporters (Gourevitch 1998:83)—a fifth column who supplied the rebels with food and milk (Straus 2004:265–68). They were also said to constitute a future threat, as their children would grow up to be rebels (Straus 2004:268). Additionally, the civil war was seen in much broader terms. Tutsis were considered to be alien to Rwandan society; they had invaded and conquered Hutus centuries ago (Des Forges 1999:81; Gourevitch 1998:53), and it was said that they now wished to restore the Tutsi monarchy and once again rule over Hutus or perhaps eliminate them through genocide (Des Forges 1999:76–79).

In Sudan the government and the Arab militias also have numerous grievances against the African Muslims of Darfur. Non-Arabs are considered inferior and called “slaves,” and in many of the attacks the aggressors have made reference to their victims’ African origins and alleged inferiority with statements such as “kill the slaves,” “this is the last day for blacks,” and “as you are Black, you are like slaves” (Hagan et al. 2005:543; Prunier 2005:100–01). As in the Rwandan case, the targets were also held collectively responsible for the actions of the rebels, even though most of those targeted had little or no connection with rebel activity (Hagan et al. 2005:543). As in the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide, the perpetrators also accused their targets of attempted genocide. Thus, the insurgency in Darfur was said to be an attempt by Africans to rid Darfur of Arabs (Collins 2006:11).

In other genocides—especially those that are more localized—grievances may be more obviously connected to a specific action on the part of members of the victim group. For example, in 1859 Yuki Indians killed some of the stock being supervised by H. L. Hall, a settler in the Round Valley of California, in retaliation for a lack of payment for work. In response, Hall and his accomplices killed all the Indians they could find (Carranco and Beard 1981:62–63). As in the other cases mentioned, though, there were also more general grievances. For instance, Hall himself, noting that “a knit [sic] would make a louse” (quoted in Carranco and Beard 1981:63), expressed the view that even Indian children constituted a future threat to settlers. Also, whites in California commonly referred to the California Indians as morally and otherwise contemptible. They were said to be ugly, filthy, stupid, indolent, disgusting, effeminate, undiscriminating in what they ate, one of the lowest races of mankind (or perhaps the lowest), and more like beasts than men (Rawls 1984:186–201; see also Stannard 1992:145). One settler said that every time he touched Indian women it caused a “feeling of repulsion just as if I had put my hand on a toad, tortoise, or huge lizard” (quoted in Rawls 1984:198).

As seen in these cases, genocide is typically a means of handling grievances against an ethnic group. Such grievances may refer to real actions of members of the targeted group or they may be “fantastical” (Goldhagen 1996:412). Regardless, the logic is the same: grievances are handled through mass killing.

Yet some genocide may be predatory rather than moralistic—an act of exploitation rather than justice. Several typologies of genocide include a category that corresponds with predatory genocide (see Fein [1993b:28] and Straus [2001:368–70] for comparisons of typologies of genocide). For instance, Vahakn Dadrian (1975:209) and Roger Smith (1987:25) include a category of “utilitarian genocide,” and Chalk and Jonassohn (1990:29) say that genocide may occur to acquire economic wealth. Yet most of the cases put into these categories can be classified as social control. Though there are predatory elements, they also occur in response to grievances.

Consider three of the cases mentioned by Chalk and Jonassohn as examples of genocide to acquire economic wealth: the destruction of the Pequot Indians of New
England in 1637, the Hereros of South-West Africa between 1904 and 1907, and the Tasmanian Aborigines in the early 19th century (Chalk and Jonassohn 1990:36-37). Each of these genocides also occurred in the course of conflict. For instance, colonists blamed the Pequots for the murder of Captain John Stone in 1634 and John Oldam in 1636, which led to a retaliatory raid against the Indians of Block Island and the Pequots. When the Pequots countered with a series of raids and ambushes (resulting in the deaths of 30 Europeans), colonists made war against them, ultimately resulting in the deaths of one-quarter to two-thirds of the tribe and the dissolving of the Pequots as a nation (Freeman 1995b:286-89; S. Katz 1991:208-13). In South-West Africa, Herero grievances against Germans over such matters as trade, the German treatment of Herero women, and general physical abuse and legal inequality led to an uprising against German imperialism, which consisted of guerilla warfare, attacks against adult male civilians, and conventional warfare against the German army. The German army responded with total warfare and genocide, in which the Germans eventually pushed the Herero into the Omaheke desert where they could not survive (Drechsler 1980:132-67; Madley 2004:181-89; Maybury-Lewis 2002:48). The same pattern can be seen in the genocide and expulsion of Tasmanian Aborigines in the 19th century. Here, predatory behavior on the part of the British settlers—such as the expropriation of land, the routine rape of women, and the enslavement of women and abduction of children—led to aboriginal resistance and then to genocide. Aborigines raided settlers’ property and engaged in guerilla warfare. Colonists responded with search-and-destroy parties to hunt down Aborigines. After their population was reduced, the remaining Aborigines were removed to Flinders Island (Madley 2004:170–76; Maybury-Lewis 2002:45; Reynolds 1995, 2001:49–85, 2004).

These cases, though they occurred in the exploitative context of colonialism, are instances of social control. Still, there may be cases that are mostly predatory, such as the killings of Ache Indians in Paraguay from 1968 to 1972, which (according to some accounts) included manhunts by armed raiding parties resulting in mass killing and enslavement on reservations (Arens 1976; Münzel 1974, 1976). These were conducted largely by rural workers of large companies specializing in stock farming (estancias) in order to make the forest areas where the Ache lived profitable to the companies (Münzel 1976:39–40). But some of the killing expeditions were clearly moralistic. For instance, in August 1971, after two dead cows belonging to an estancia were found, a manhunt was formed to retaliate against the Ache (Münzel 1976:23). Even in this case then, genocidal acts (if this is what they were) occurred at least some of the time in response to a grievance, and, as noted above, this is the pattern that is found in most genocides previously considered predatory (such as those of indigenous peoples on colonial frontiers). That is, while the overall relations between ethnic groups may be described as predatory, genocide occurs in response to the resistance of natives to colonists’ predatory behavior (cf. Barta 1987:242; Carranco and Beard:59, 75; Madley 2004:167–68).

11 Hill and Hurtado (1996) dispute the claims of Arens (1976), Münzel (1974, 1976), and others. For instance, they say that the largest number of Ache killed in a single raid was four, that only 61 Northern Ache were killed by Paraguayan in the 20th century, and that no Ache were killed in the process of forcing them onto the government reservation (Hill and Hurtado 1996:168-69). If this is the case, little or no genocide occurred in this situation.
12 Hill and Hurtado also say that raids occurred in retaliation for the Aches’ eating of horses and cattle (1996:169).
So most genocide is moralistic and thus can be explained with a theory of social control. As social control, genocide belongs to a family of social life that includes law, gossip, avoidance, sorcery, psychotherapy, dueling, brawling, feuding, lynching, terrorism, and warfare (Black 1998:xiv–xii). Using the elements of the definition given above, we can consider how genocide resembles or differs from various other forms of social control. For instance, like the discipline of a child or the torture of a prisoner, it is unilateral. Like an execution or a war, it is lethal. Like a protest march or a terrorist attack, it is organized. Like a blood feud or the deportation of an ethnic group, it involves collective liability, where targets are chosen according to their social location—in this case, their ethnic location—rather than according to their individual conduct (Black 1998:49–50, 2004a:16). But why does social control vary along these dimensions? The nature of the grievance does not in itself explain how a conflict is handled; social control varies because the social structures of conflicts vary (Black 1998:74–94, 2004b:145–47). Conflicts across greater social distances, for instance, are more lethal, and conflicts between social equals are more reciprocal (Black 2004b:152–54). Whether a conflict becomes genocidal depends upon its social structure. Here I draw upon Blackian theories of social control to order variation in genocide. But first, because these theories employ a strategy of explanation that differs from conventional sociology, I summarize the strategy to be used.

THE STRATEGY OF EXPLANATION

Black's strategy of pure sociology is distinguished from other sociological paradigms by its unique conceptualization of both the subject of study and the locus of its explanation—that is, the dependent and independent variables. These conceptualizations eliminate conventional units of analysis, and pure sociology is thus neither macrosociology nor microsociology. First, pure sociology explains human behavior with its location and direction in social space. Known variously as the shape of social space, social structure, or social geometry, this consists of the social characteristics of everyone involved in any instance of human behavior (Black 1995:853). Social geometry, then, is not a characteristic of a society, group, organization, or person, but of human behavior itself. The subject of study is also unique. Pure sociology explains human behavior, but it reconceptualizes it as the behavior of social life (Black 1976:1, 1995:859). It thus addresses variation in social life rather than variation in, say, personalities or societal characteristics. Social life is the subject of study, then, and it is explained by its social geometry. And neither social life nor social geometry is a macro- or microphenomenon; the size of each is variable (cf. Black 1995:853). Pure sociology thus makes the distinction between macro and micro obsolete.

Pure sociology is also distinguished from other sociological paradigms by what is absent. For instance, it explains social life without teleology—the explanation of human behavior as a means to an end. Pure sociology thus does not address the goals or purposes of societies, groups, or individuals (Black 1995:861–64, 2000:346). Also missing is psychology. Human subjectivity is entirely ignored (Black 1995:848–50). Moreover, it is made irrelevant by the nature of the explanatory strategy; for unlike persons or perhaps societies, social life has no subjectivity—no mind, no thoughts, no frustrations, and no collective conscience. Pure sociology, then, minimizes speculation

13 This does not mean that there are no predatory elements in genocides classified as social control. While most genocide is primarily moralistic, predation is often a secondary aspect—for instance, when perpetrators seize their victims' property. Genocide also creates opportunities for predation, and so persons without grievances against the victims may kill for profit. Predatory violence may also occur alongside other types of moralistic violence (Cooney and Phillips 2002:92–94).
and produces more parsimonious theory by refusing to address unobservable phenomena such as teleology and psychology. Pure sociology is also characterized by another absence, which involves an even more radical break from previous sociological theory. That is, pure sociology explains social life without reference to people. Since social life alone is the subject of study, the person as such is eliminated (Black 1995:858–61, 2000:347–48).

This paradigm can be employed to explain the behavior—that is, the variation—of any form of social life. It has been applied to the behavior of art (Black 1998:168–69), welfare (Michalski 2003), medicine (Black 1998:164–65), supernatural beings (Black 1995:856–57), and scientific discovery (Black 2002b). Most often, however, the strategy has been applied to various aspects of social control, such as law (Baumgartner 1992b; Black 1976; Cooney 1994), gossip (Black 1995:855, n. 129), employee theft (Tucker 1989), feuding (Black 1995:855, n. 130, 2004b:153–54), lynching (Senechal de la Roche 1997, 2004), corporal punishment (Tucker and Ross 2005), collective violence (Senechal de la Roche 1996, 2001), interpersonal violence (Baumgartner 1992a, 1993; Cooney 1998, 2003; Phillips 2003; Phillips and Cooney 2005), international conflict management (Borg 1992), the social control of mental illness (Horwitz 1982), social control among suburbanites (Baumgartner 1988), and social control on reality television (Godard 2003).

There exists, then, a large body of research and theory on social control that utilizes a strategy of pure sociology. Like all social life, the behavior of social control can be explained with its location and direction in social space. Specifically, each conflict has a social geometry that determines how it is handled. The theory of law, for example, predicts how much law—or governmental social control—is brought to bear on a conflict. This may range from no law, to a call to the police, to a call to the police followed by an arrest, and so forth, on up to a conviction and execution (the highest degree of law in the contemporary United States). Law is therefore a quantitative variable (Black 1976:3). Numerous theoretical propositions in The Behavior of Law (Black 1976) explain the quantity of law with the social geometry of conflicts. Consider one proposition: Within a society, law varies directly with relational distance (Black 1976:40–46, 1989:11–13). This means that a conflict between intimates (such as friends or family members) will attract less law than a conflict between strangers. Among other things, then, killings of family members or friends should be treated less severely than killings of strangers. And they are (see, for instance, Lundsgaarde 1977:16). Similarly, the theory explains why acquaintance rape is treated less severely than stranger rape (Black 1995, n. 44; Williams 1984).

Nonlegal forms of social control also are explained by the social geometry of the conflict. Consider violence. The location and direction of a conflict in social space explains whether a conflict becomes violent, how much violence is used, the particular form it takes, and its logic and language (Black 2004b). Violence, like all social control, is a function of social geometry. To explain violent social control, then, we need to identify the particular configurations of social space that give rise to violence and its various aspects. Will a conflict become violent? If so, will it be lethal? If violent and lethal, will it be collective? If so, will it take the form of feuding, brawling, warfare, terrorism, rioting, lynching, deportation, politicide, or genocide? Here I address the following question: What is the social geometry of conflicts conducive to genocide?14

14The focus on the social structure of conflicts differs from explanations of genocide that focus on the ideologies (such as racial or nationalist ideologies) that underpin genocide (e.g., Cohn 1969; Goldhagen
THE GEOMETRY OF GENOCIDE

To identify the social geometry of genocide, I draw from Roberta Senechal de la Roche's theory of collective violence as social control. Senechal de la Roche (1996, 2001) uses Black's strategy of pure sociology to explain collective violence. Unilateral collective violence in general varies directly with relational distance, cultural distance, functional independence, and inequality (Senechal de la Roche 1996). And the degree of these variables predicts which type of collective violence will be used. Collective violence characterized by individual liability—such as lynching or vigilantism—occurs at lower levels of social polarization, while collective violence characterized by collective liability—such as terrorism or rioting—varies directly with the degree of social polarization, or the degree of relational and cultural distance, inequality, and functional independence (Senechal de la Roche 1996:116–17).

Genocide is a form of collective violence characterized by an extreme degree of collective liability; accordingly, it arises in conflicts between members of highly polarized ethnic groups. Thus, genocide varies directly with immobility, cultural distance, relational distance, functional independence, and inequality. Additionally, genocide is greater in a downward direction (toward socially inferior ethnic groups) than in an upward or lateral direction. This predicts not only the likelihood of genocide, but also its severity, which refers to the extent of collective liability and the extent of the killing.

Immobility

A degree of immobility must be present for violence to occur. The participants “must be mutually accessible and share a social arena, however superficially” (Black 1998:77). While immobility must be present for all violence, genocide is greater at high levels of immobility, and it is more likely as immobility increases and thus decreases the possibility of exit or expulsion (cf. Valentino 2004:5). Jonassohn and Chalk (1987:17) note that deportation has decreased and genocide increased along with growth of populations, the spread of nation-states, and the decline of relatively empty territories. For instance, while “it was possible for England, France, Spain, and Portugal to expel the Jews at different times, it was not possible for Hitler to expel the millions of Jews living in Germany and its occupied territories” (Jonassohn and Chalk 1987:17).

Additionally, other factors made deportation less feasible in this case. In 1939 and 1940, Nazi Jewish policy focused on plans to forcibly resettle the Jews under German control (Browning 1992:6; Gellately 2003:248; Valentino 2004:170–76). The first of these plans involved deporting the Jews to the outskirts of the German empire—the 1996). Such ideologies are an important component of genocide as conceptualized here insofar as they involve grievances against members of the victim group. Nevertheless, I do not deal with ideology for two reasons. First, the explanation I offer is an explanation of social control, not conflict. That is, I do not seek to explain the grievances, only how such grievances are handled. Second, I do not seek to explain the handling of grievances with the nature of the grievances themselves. This is not to say this is not important; the nature of a grievance may affect how it is handled. This should be considered a constant, then, in the theory offered, which answers the following: Given a conflict, what determines whether it will be handled with genocide?

15 Even so, the degree of collective liability may vary. In many genocides only certain segments of an ethnic group are targeted. For instance, it may be that only male members of fighting age are killed; in more severe genocides liability extends to women, children, and the elderly.

16 Senechal de la Roche does not include immobility in her theory but notes that a degree of immobility is assumed (1996:115; n. 22).

17 The severity of the killing itself is also an aspect of the severity of genocide. Killings accompanied by torture and mutilation, for instance, are more severe (Senechal de la Roche 2004:216).
Lublin region of Poland. When this proved impractical, plans were devised to deport Jews to the African island of Madagascar. The inability of the Nazis to quickly defeat Great Britain, however, made this impossible and the plan was largely abandoned by September 1940 (Browning 1992:19; Valentino 2004:172). War with the Soviet Union further reduced possibilities for resettlement, and in 1941 Nazi policies increasingly focused on mass killings of Jews (Aly 2000:73–75; Browning 2004:187–88; Pohl 2000:86–90; Weitz 2003:129).

Consider also conflicts between white settlers and American Indians in the United States. Genocide and warfare against Native Americans occurred sporadically from the time of European arrival in North America (Jennings 1975:186–227; Nash 2000:25–138; Stannard 1992:104–46). Yet as long as there was unsettled land available, Indians might be deported, or they might emigrate when war was unsuccessful. For instance, in 1715 the Creeks and Yamasee fought an initially successful guerilla war against South Carolinians. However, when the Carolinians allied with the Cherokees and began to launch effective counterattacks, the Creeks fled to their old homeland on the Chattahoochee, and the Yamasee fled to Florida (Nash 2000:124–25). Other groups also migrated away from white settlements, while others were forcibly deported. As whites moved westward, Indians increasingly were relocated. In the early 19th century, the Indian Removal Act was used to relocate groups of eastern Indians to lands west of the Mississippi (Thornton 1987:113–18). But as whites advanced to the west coast, there were fewer available areas for relocation or flight. In California, genocides against Indians were more widespread, numerous, and severe than elsewhere. There, in part due to massacres, the Indian population was reduced in a short period of time by almost two-thirds, from 100,000 in 1849 to 35,000 in 1860 (Thornton 1987:107–09).

Many observers at the time noted this difference between California and the eastern states. For instance, three federal treaty commissioners in California published a message in the Daily Alta California on January 14, 1851. Articulating their fears of an Indian war, they noted that since there was “no farther west” for the Indians to go, the only alternatives were “extermination or domestication” (quoted in Hurtado 1988:135). Similarly, in 1860 the California state legislature issued the Majority Report of the Special Joint Committee on the Mendocino War—a plea for the protection of the Indians and a halt to the “slaughter of beings, who at least possess the human form, and who make no resistance”—which noted that there “is no longer a wilderness west of us that can be assigned to them” (quoted in Heizer and Almquist 1971:37).

Cultural Distance

Cultural distance refers to cultural diversity, or differences in the content of culture (Black 1976:73–74). Ethnic groups that have the same religion, for instance, are culturally closer than those that do not. And those with similar religions—such as different branches of Christianity or Islam—are closer than those with less similar religions. Other aspects of culture are language, dress, music, art, etc.

Some degree of cultural distance must be present for genocide to occur. Ethnic distinctions must exist. Leo Kuper similarly proposes that plural societies provide the structural base for genocide (1981:57). Such societies are characterized by “the presence of a diversity of racial, ethnic and/or religious groups” (Kuper 1981:57). But this is not enough; plural societies are further characterized by “persistent and pervasive cleavages between these sections” (Kuper 1981:57). That is, “racial or ethnic
or religious differentiation is elaborated in many different spheres” (Kuper 1981:57–58; see also Hinton 2002:29; Mazian 1990:243–44). So the same ethnic divisions present in one aspect of society, such as the economy, are reproduced in the political realm, in education, in residence patterns, in voluntary associations, and so forth. Kuper’s theory focuses on the characteristics of societies rather than particular conflict structures, but a geometrical approach would also predict that plural societies so defined increase the likelihood of ethnic violence. Where more areas of society are organized along ethnic lines, there is a higher degree of ethnic visibility throughout the society. Other factors may also increase ethnic visibility. For instance, where physical differences between groups—such as differences in color—are markers of ethnicity, ethnicity is easier to identify and harder to change or disguise (Horowitz 1971:240–44). Where ethnic visibility is greater, then, cultural information is more available, and violence and genocide are greater (cf. Black 1989:64, 2002a:115).

Such a situation was present prior to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups were culturally similar. They spoke the same language, for instance, and had the same religion. Still, ethnicity was highly visible. Each person had a single ethnic label, traced through the male line (Hintjens 1999:249). About half of Rwandans could be distinguished as Hutu or Tutsi by physical appearance alone (Mann 2005:432), and everyone was required to carry an identification card containing ethnic information (Gourevitch 1998:56–57; Mann 2005:433). Additionally, Rwanda was a “plural society” where most sectors of society were organized along ethnic lines. Following the 1959 revolution (in which a Hutu-controlled government came to power), Tutsis were almost completely excluded from the government and from the army, and quotas limited their numbers in schools, universities, and in the civil service (Prunier 1995:75; Straus 2004:40). Here, though the cultural distance between groups was not extreme, there was a high degree of ethnic visibility.

Ethnic distinctions are necessary, then, for genocide. Additionally, all things equal, genocide is greater in conflicts between more culturally distant ethnic groups. For instance, David Stannard notes that despite many similarities between British imperial expansion into Ireland and North America, British relations with the Irish were less genocidal than relations with the more culturally distant American Indians (1992:223–25). Large numbers of Irish were killed, but to a lesser degree than in North America. Violence was less exterminatory, and the overall policy was ethnocide rather than genocide. In Ireland, writes Stannard, “the English were always determined that in time they would assimilate all the Irish within English culture and society” (1992:225). Differences in cultural distance among the Irish also resulted in differences in the extent of violence. The Gaelic Irish were treated more severely than the culturally closer Old English, who were descended from earlier Anglo-Norman conquerors—this despite the fact that the Old English were commonly considered by the British to be more dangerous opponents (Stannard 1992:224).

Relational Distance

Genocide also varies directly with relational distance. This refers to the extent to which people participate in each others’ lives. There are many dimensions of

18 In their extreme form, plural societies are characterized not just by ethnic divisions in each realm, but also by a “superimposition of inequalities” (Kuper 1981:58). That is, the same groups are dominant or subordinate in each realm. This is also important, but it is a matter of inequality rather than cultural distance.

19 Stannard, however, attributes this difference to British racism (1992:224).
relational distance, such as “the scope, frequency, and length of interaction between people, the age of their relationship, and the nature and number of links between them in a social network” (Black 1976:41). Thus, ethnic groups whose members have less contact, lower rates of intermarriage, and have lived together for a shorter duration of time are more relationally distant. One indicator of relational distance is in-migration, which increases the number of relationally distant members in the community (Senechal de la Roche 1996:107). Where in-migration is ethnic, members of ethnic groups become more distant, and genocide becomes more likely. Just before the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, for instance, there were about 200,000 Hutu refugees from Burundi, who had fled from the violence in Burundi that followed the 1993 assassination of President Ndadaye. These refugees—relationally distant from local Tutsis—had leading roles in starting massacres in south-central Rwanda, and they were known for practicing the most extreme means of torture (Mamdani 2001:205). Rwandan Hutu refugees from the civil war may also have been disproportionately involved in the genocide (Mann 2005:465).

Prior to the Holocaust, eastern European Jews had immigrated in large numbers to the cities of Germany and Austria—dramatically increasing the numbers of highly visible Jews who were relationally (and culturally) distant from their neighbors. In 1852, for instance, there were 11,840 Jews living in Berlin. This had increased by 1890 to 108,044—or 5.02 percent of the population (Rubenstein 1983:146; see also Brustein 2003:104–07). Additionally, where there is variation, members of the victim group who are relationally closer to members of the aggressor group may be spared. Though Bulgaria was allied with Nazi Germany, for instance, the government resisted Nazi orders to deport Jews, and no Jews from Bulgaria’s prewar territory were deported. In the 1930s, however, Bulgaria had acquired territory from Rumania, Greece, and Yugoslavia, and 96 percent of the Jews in these territories—who were less relationally and culturally close to non-Jewish Bulgarians than the Jews of the prewar territory—were deported (Fein 1979:159).

Intermarriage is another indicator of relational closeness, and it is accordingly a factor in protecting against genocide (cf. Chirot and McCauley 2006:117–19). For instance, though Italy was allied with Germany in World War II, genocide against Italian Jews did not begin until after Nazi occupation. And in Italy there were high rates of intermarriage. According to a 1938 Italian census, in 43.7 percent of marriages involving Jews, one of the partners was not Jewish (Brustein 2003:91, 172). This was about three times higher than the rate in Germany just before the

20 In addition to the in-migration of eastern European Jews, the relational and cultural distance between German Jews and non-Jews also increased prior to the Holocaust due to policies enacted by the Nazis. The 1935 Nuremberg Laws, for instance, stripped German Jews of their citizenship and prohibited marriage and sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews. Measures such as these may increase the distance between members of opposing groups even where preexisting social cleavages of the kind described by Kuper are weak or absent. As Valentino points out, such preexisting divisions are not necessary for mass killings—or even ethnic mass killings—to take place (2004:16–17). Valentino argues that in addition to such factors, one must also take into account the goals and opportunities of political elites. But in terms of the theory presented here, relational and cultural distance increase the likelihood of genocide even if they are of recent origin, and even if they result from policies enacted by the same persons who later orchestrate the genocide. In the case of the Holocaust, then, there were preexisting divisions that were exaggerated further prior to the genocide.

21 Bulgarian Jews were also relationally closer to Christians than Jews in Germany and many other parts of Europe. They were an old community—largely the descendents of Sephardic Jews who came from Spain after 1492—and they were highly assimilated (Brustein 2003:338).
Nazis came to power (Brustein 2003:172). Where genocide occurs, intermarried members of the perpetrator group are likely to be less involved, and intermarried members of the victim group are likely to be spared. For instance, though a sample of perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide showed that nearly 70 percent had a Tutsi family member, the lack of a Tutsi family member was strongly correlated with the degree of participation (Straus 2004:214–15). And in Germany 98 percent of officially registered full German Jews who survived the Holocaust were married to non-Jews (Stoltzfus 1996:xxvii). Intermarried Jews and their children were initially exempted from the Final Solution, though plans were made in 1942 to deport them (Stoltzfus 1996:xxii). Still, most of them survived. For instance, on February 27, 1943, in what was meant to be the final roundup of Jews from Berlin, intermarried Jews and Jews working in armaments factories were arrested. The intermarried Jews (mostly men married to non-Jewish women) were separated from the others and held at Rosenstrasse, a welfare office. Though separated to make it appear that their fates were to be different from the others, the plan was to deport them to the east. However, after a massive protest from their wives and others, the men were released, and almost all of them survived the war (Stoltzfus 1996:209–57).

Functional Independence

Functional interdependence refers to “the extent to which individuals and groups cooperate with one another economically, politically, militarily, or otherwise” (Senechal de la Roche 1996:111). Genocide is greater under conditions of functional independence—where groups do not depend on one another for their livelihood. Even in situations characterized by a high degree of ethnic conflict, then, genocide is normally absent where ethnic groups are functionally interdependent. For instance, in South Africa under the apartheid regime, Africans, Indians, and Coloureds made up an overwhelming majority of workers, and whites were dependent upon their labor. Kuper describes this as “an infrastructural restraint on genocidal attacks on the subordinate group by reason of the dependence on its labor” (1981:207). Colin Tatz notes that whites would harass blacks, “arrest them, imprison them and sell them, beat them, relocate them, control their movements and regulate their lives... but they always wanted more of them, not fewer of them” (2003:121). Ethnic relations were antagonistic and violent but not genocidal.

Another situation where genocide seems to have been inhibited by functional interdependence is in the relations between Muslims and Jews in Morocco. Here, Jews were subordinated to Muslims, but massacres of Jews on the scale of those that occurred at various times in Europe were largely absent. And in Morocco, Jews were bound more closely economically to the dominant group than elsewhere. Patron-client relationships “were marked by dyadic contracts between an individual Jew and his family on the one hand, and a powerful Muslim and his family on the other” (Zenner 1987:264).

Relations between European settlers and American Indians reveal a similar pattern. Where functional interdependence was greatest, genocide was absent. For instance, in the 17th century, the French—whose settlements were established to enable fur trading with the Indians—had more peaceful relations with American Indians than the English. In New France, those settlers who were not there to trade furs were

22Italy also had experienced relatively little Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe (Brustein 2003:162).
there to evangelize among the Indians; both of these tasks required cooperation (Nash 2000:44; see also Senechal de la Roche 1996:117). In the early 18th century, however, when the French began permanent settlements along the lower Mississippi, trade with the nearby Natchez was minimal, and conflicts became violent. Eventually, the French killed at least 1,000 Natchez and sold 400 of them into slavery. Others fled to find refuge among other tribes, and the Natchez ceased to exist as a sovereign people (Nash 2000:47-48).

Similarly, changes in functional interdependence between whites and Indians in California seem to have contributed to genocide. Prior to the 1849 gold rush in California, Indian laborers worked as near-slaves for Mexican and American ranchers. Ranch owner John Marsh noted that “throughout all of California the Indians are the principal laborers; without them the business of the country could hardly be carried on” (quoted in Sousa 2004:196). During this period, “despite the Mexicans’ and Americans’ debasing treatment of Indians, their cruelties stopped short of outright extermination” (Sousa 2004:196; cf. Hurtado 1988:101). Even after the discovery of gold, ranchers at first found it profitable to use California Indians as miners, but immigrants during the gold rush sought wealth through their own labors (Sousa 2004:196–97). As relations between whites and Indians became less interdependent, policies toward Indians became increasingly genocidal.

When functional interdependence between ethnic groups decreases, even formerly peaceful relations may become genocidal. Rwanda and Burundi provide clear examples. In both societies, precolonial relations between the dominant Tutsis and subordinate Hutus were characterized by close patron-client ties between pastoralist Tutsi chiefs and Hutu agriculturalists. A German observer in Rwanda during this period described these relationships of interdependence as a system of “intertwining fingers” (quoted in Prunier 2001:110). Under this system, there was little or no violence between the two major ethnic groups. Warfare was frequent, but it involved Tutsis and Hutus fighting together against rival kingdoms (Prunier 1995:14–15). After colonial rule and independence, however, political and economic changes had made the traditional forms of clientship obsolete (Prunier 1995:42). Since this time, ethnic conflict has been frequent and genocide has occurred in both Rwanda and Burundi.

Functional independence also increased prior to the genocide in Darfur. In Darfur, African farmers and Arab herdsmen had long been in competition over land and water, but in the past such disputes between ethnic groups were typically settled by conferences of traditional leaders. Competition over resources increased greatly, however, with severe drought in the 1980s. Along with this, thousands of automatic weapons were introduced into the area, and the traditional mechanism of dispute settlement began to break down (Collins 2006:6; see also Flint and de Waal 2005:35–36; Prunier 2005:49–50).

**Inequality**

Inequality of status is associated with unilateral violence of all kinds (Senechal de la Roche 1996:112–13). Genocide is less likely to occur where ethnic groups are equal
in size and other resources, and where it does occur it is less likely to be extreme. Additionally, genocide is more likely to be downward—against socially inferior ethnic groups—than upward.26 Consider again Rwanda and Burundi. Both countries have a minority Tutsi and majority Hutu population, and genocide occurred in both countries—in Rwanda against Tutsis (the most extreme case in 1994) and in Burundi against Hutus (the most extreme case in 1972). Yet both genocides had a downward direction. While historically Tutsis were the dominant group in both societies, in postcolonial Rwanda the Tutsis, already smaller in size, were excluded from the government and other key sectors of power. Moreover, by the time of the 1994 genocide, Tutsis had been the targets of many episodes of violence, discrimination, and propaganda, thus lowering their respectability.27 In Burundi, where Tutsis kept control of the government, Hutus retained their subordinate status. Still, as a group the Hutus were greater in size, and the genocide in 1972—where mainly Hutu elites were targeted—was more discriminate than the 1994 genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda.

In these cases—and in the Holocaust, Darfur, and numerous other genocides—genocide was perpetrated mainly by the state and its agents. This is not always the case; in colonial situations in particular, settlers often plan and participate in genocidal attacks (Palmer 1998:104–05, 2000:209–10). Yet states are involved often enough that many scholars, as noted above, have defined genocide exclusively as a government activity, and the most extensive large-scale genocides have been state genocides. Inequality explains why. As states become more elevated in status—when they become more centralized and when their involvement in other aspects of society becomes more extensive—they become more violent (Cooney 1997:328, 1998:56–59; Rummel 1994:1–28, 1995). Thus, totalitarian regimes, such as the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, are more violent (especially toward their own citizens) than authoritarian regimes, and authoritarian regimes are more violent than democracies (Rummel 1994:14–21). We would expect, then, that where other conditions favorable to genocide also occur—such as ethnic division and the exclusion of an ethnic group from governing—that state power would increase the likelihood and scale of genocide. And this is the pattern we see; as with other forms of violence, democracies are less genocidal than authoritarian states, and authoritarian states less so than totalitarian states. Rummel (1995), for instance, found genocide strongly associated with government power, as did Fein (1993a:92–93) and Harff (2003:62–63).

Nonstate genocides are similarly likely to occur downwardly and under conditions of great inequality. Genocide occurred more frequently in Australia than perhaps anywhere else (Moses 2000:93). And here the Aborigines generally had less societal complexity than natives elsewhere.28 K. R. Howe notes that race relations between British settlers and natives were strikingly different in Australia and New Zealand.

26 Even so, some victims of genocide (e.g., Armenians in Turkey, Jews in Germany, and Tutsis in Rwanda) are elevated on certain dimensions of status. Where there is such incongruity—where otherwise low status ethnic groups have high levels of, say, wealth or education—this is often a component of the grievances against them (cf. Melson 1992:20–21). But overall, such conflicts have a downward direction in social space.

27 Respectability refers to the extent to which a person or group has been subjected to social control in the past (Black 1976:111). Those subjected previously to social control have a lower degree of respectability.

28 Australian Aborigines were hunter-gatherers who lived in small groups and had relatively low levels of technology and little capacity for collective action. The Aborigines of Tasmania, who lived in isolation for 10,000 years, lacked even the technologies widespread among the Aborigines of mainland Australia and other hunter-gatherers. When first encountered by Europeans, for instance, they lacked “barbed spears, bone tools of any type, boomerangs, ground or polished stone tools, hafted stone tools, hooks, nets, pronged spears, traps, and the practices of catching and eating fish, sewing, and starting a fire” (Diamond 1999:312).
GENOCIDE AS SOCIAL CONTROL

(1977:vi), and he attributes this largely to the relative size and military strength of the indigenous societies (1977:1–10, 84–85). The hunter-gatherer Aborigines of Australia were scattered widely about the continent; population density was low, and there was little political or cultural cohesion. The horticulturalist Maoris of New Zealand, in contrast, were more numerous overall, more settled, lived in larger groups, spoke a common language, and were more politically and militarily organized (Howe 1977:3–6). Accordingly, Maori resistance was met with conventional warfare and attempts at the “amalgamation” of Maoris into the colonial society rather than with extermination (Howe 1977:39–42).

Relations in the Americas, where natives had varying levels of societal complexity, were also less genocidal than in Australia, and genocide was more frequent and extreme where status differences were greater. For instance, in California, where genocide against American Indians became most widespread and severe, genocides were committed mainly by white miners against hunter-gatherers who had fewer resources, a lower capacity for organization, and who had long been subject to legal inequality, violence, and other forms of social control. Still, there was some variation by region. The central and southern mines, for instance, were generally similar in their ethnic relations. Indians outnumbered whites in the southern area, however, but not in the central area. After the onset of the gold rush, miners in the central region often indiscriminately killed Indians, and they prohibited them from working except in the most undesirable jobs (Hurtado 1988:101–11). In the southern mines, however, relations between whites and Indians mostly remained peaceful (Hurtado 1988:112–17). ²⁹

CONCLUSION

I have defined genocide as organized and unilateral mass killing on the basis of ethnicity. Most such killings occur in response to behavior defined as deviant. Genocide can thus be explained as part of a general theory of social control. As a theory of social control, the theory offered here does not explain the conflicts themselves—such as how ethnic grievances come to be formulated—only how they are handled. Conflict structures associated with extreme collective liability, extreme violence, organization, and unilateralism give rise to genocide. Genocide is therefore more likely and more extreme as the social structures of ethnic conflicts are greater in immobility, cultural distance, relational distance, functional independence, and inequality, and when they have a downward direction. Otherwise similar grievances might be handled with genocide, ethnocide, expulsion, segregation, lynching, or some combination of these. How a conflict is handled depends on its social geometry.

This is unlike any previous theory of genocide. Unlike many others, for instance, it makes no reference to the goals of the participants, to their psychological states, or to any other unobservable characteristics. Also following Black’s strategy of pure sociology, the theory is neither micro nor macro. Genocide itself is explained rather than genocidal persons or societies. The explanatory variables are also unusual. Relational distance, functional independence, and the others are aspects of the social geometry of conflicts. Previous theories may explain genocide with societal characteristics (e.g., Fein 1979; Kuper 1981), individual characteristics (e.g., Kelman 1973),

²⁹Genocide was also widespread and severe in the northwestern mining region, where Indians also outnumbered whites. Here, though, they were more relationally distant and functionally independent from whites than the Indians in the southern and central districts (Hurtado 1988:117–24).
regime characteristics (e.g., Rummel 1994, 1995, 1997), or historical events (e.g., Melson 1992), but pure sociology focuses on generic properties of social life (cf. Turner 2002:664). The theory offered here is thus highly general. It is applicable to all cases of genocide and to all observable aspects of the variation in genocide, and it employs variables potentially relevant to all cases and aspects of genocide.

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