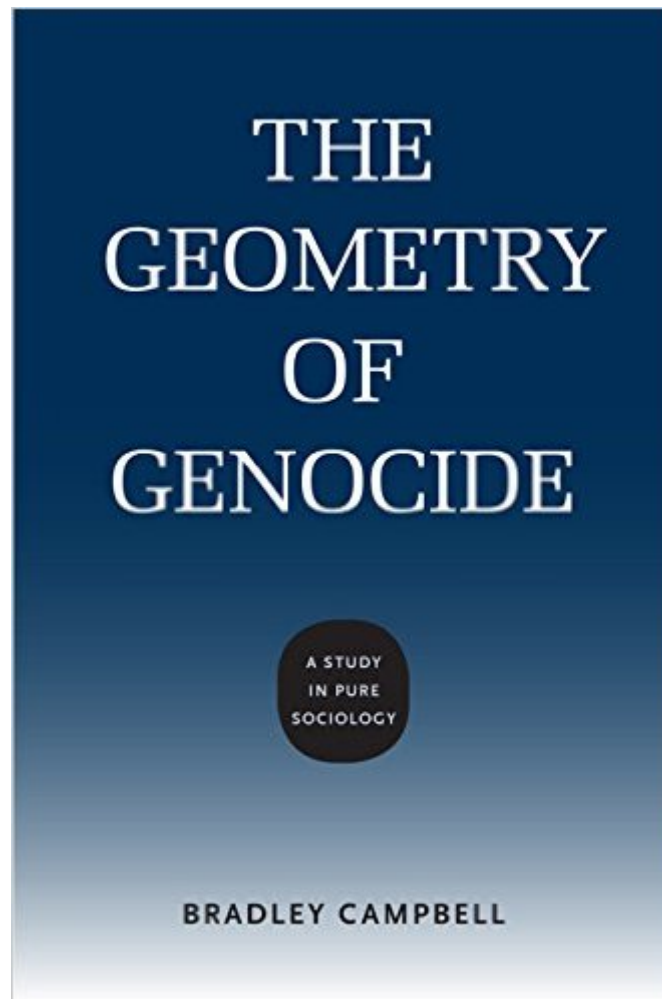


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The Geometry Of Genocide: A Study In Pure Sociology (Studies In Pure Sociology)



Synopsis

In *The Geometry of Genocide*, Bradley Campbell argues that genocide is best understood not as deviant behavior but as social control—a response to perceived deviant behavior on the part of victims. Using Donald Black's method of pure sociology, Campbell considers genocide in relation to three features of social life: diversity, inequality, and intimacy. According to this theory, genocidal conflicts begin with changes in diversity and inequality, such as when two previously separated ethnic groups come into contact, or when a subordinate ethnic group attempts to rise in status. Further, conflicts are more likely to result in genocide when they occur in a context of social distance and inequality and when aggressors and victims cannot be easily separated. Campbell applies his approach to five cases: the killings of American Indians in 1850s California, Muslims in 2002 India and 1992 Bosnia, Tutsis in 1994 Rwanda, and Jews in 1940s Europe. These case studies, which focus in detail on particular incidents within each instance of genocide, demonstrate the theory's ability to explain an array of factors, including why genocide occurs and who participates. Campbell's theory uniquely connects the study of genocide to the larger study of conflict and social control. By situating genocide among these broader phenomena, *The Geometry of Genocide* provides a novel and compelling explanation of genocide, while furthering our understanding of why humans have conflicts and why they respond to conflict as they do.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Campbell's book is one of the best works I've ever read in the sociology of violence. Extremely clear

and compelling, it combines an elegant general theory with detailed historical descriptions that paint a vivid picture of what genocide looks like at the ground level: neither the antiseptic bureaucratic process emphasized by some Holocaust scholars nor the deeds of mustache-twirling villains who revel in their own evil, most genocides involve brutal, up-close violence meted out with righteous indignation by killers operating in a frame work of one-sided moralism. It can be chilling to read Campbell's examples, but also scientifically exhilarating to see him show how the same sociological patterns appear again and again, from one case to another, showing that a few simple principles can explain a wide range of behavior around the world and throughout history. As "A Study in Pure Sociology," this book also provides a great introduction to the pure sociology paradigm, and illustrates a particularly powerful application of that approach to explaining human behavior. I highly recommend the book to those interested in the sociology of violence and sociological theory as well as those with a general interest in genocide, morality, or human conflict.

The Holocaust is often characterized as an unprecedented and inexplicable evil. The second part of this characterization communicates that the Holocaust was an evil of an absolute or supernatural kind, outside the grasp of human rationality. This is a valuable moral characterization, but it is empirically wrong. Dr. Campbell provides a parsimonious scientific explanation of the Holocaust, and he does so by identifying its commonality with other genocides. Campbell compares the Holocaust to four other genocides, and with just a handful of theoretical principles, he explains the occurrence of genocide, who will participate as perpetrators, how severe or expansive a genocide is, and among other aspects, the contradictions within genocides. His theory relies neither on the biographies of perpetrators nor their psychology -- "willing executioners" or the opposite, entrapment by "banal evil." This is sociology at its finest and should be read by anyone who seeks to understand human monstrosity.

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