Chapter 6

Sticks and Stones: When the Words of Hatred become Weapons – A Social Psychological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The present chapter takes a social psychological approach to understanding hate groups and how hate groups use hate as a promotional tool and as an implement of aggression. As a promotional tool, hate groups use hate to attract new members to their organizations and to promote their beliefs to the mainstream public. Hate also serves as an incendiary, to fuel the emotions of their members, to incite them into action, and to wield against their targets. In this chapter we will attempt to explain why people hate and how they justify their hatred and resulting actions through a number of social psychological theories including realistic group conflict (Bonacich, 1972; Sherif et al., 1961/1988) relative deprivation (Catalono et al., 1993; Hepworth & West, 1988; Hovland & Sears, 1940), social identity theory (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Festinger, 1954; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Thoits & Virshup, 1997) and terror management (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 1997; 2005; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991; 2004).

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: A WEB OF HATE

In today’s high-tech and globally connected world, hate groups are reaching out to like minded individuals and groups to spread their beliefs. While some hate groups are changing their image to look and act more mainstream in an effort to reach the average citizen and even influence politics others hate groups are maintaining or enhancing their fear evoking image and extending their reach by collaborating with like minded groups. Two recent examples of the latter are, in the United States, collaboration between the hate gang Public Enemy Number I with the prison gang the Aryan Brotherhood and, in Germany, neo-Nazis and other hate groups collaborating with Football Hooligans to spread anti-Muslim sentiment.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-9938-0.ch006
In March 2007 the Union Times (Flaccus 2007) published a story about the white supremacist gang Public Enemy Number 1 (PENI) teaming up with the Aryan Brotherhood, a powerful white supremacist prison gang. According to the article “The alliance (between the two groups) was cemented in 2005 when Donald Reed “Popeye” Mazza, an alleged leader of Public Enemy No. 1, was inducted into the Aryan Brotherhood.” The alliance has benefited PENI by raising its prestige. According to the article since the alliance PENI, which is known for dealing in drugs and guns, committing white collar crimes such as computer fraud, credit card fraud, identity theft, and violent crimes including assault and murder (Anti-Defamation League, 2007), has more than doubled its ranks. In the article, Flaccus (2007) reports that “heavy recruiting (by PENI) is taking place throughout California and Arizona, and members have been picked up by police in Nevada and Idaho.” This alliance also benefits the Aryan Brotherhood who, because they are recognized by the California Department of Corrections as a prison gang, are segregated from the general prison population in Secure Housing Units. The alliance with PENI allows the Aryan Brotherhood to continue to be influential. Because PENI members are, at least initially, placed in the general population, they can serve as middlemen for the Aryan Brotherhood, conducting criminal business such as drug dealing, both inside and outside of prison on their behalf (Anti-Defamation League, 2007; Flaccus, 2007).

In November 2014 (Germany’s New Right) Spiegel International, in a story about an anti-Islamist Salafist rally that occurred at the end of October in Cologne, reported that almost 5000 Hooligans gegen Salafisten (Hooligans against Salafists), a “…loose association of neo-Nazis, nationalists and football rowdies…,” after being stirred up by the right wing hate rock group Kategorie C marched through Cologne, spreading hate and destroying property. According to the article “Thousands of hooligans appear to have left their football clubs of choice behind in favor of uniting against a common enemy: the presumed danger of Islam. In addition, they have joined forces with neo-Nazis and other racists.” The article suggests that the alliance between the various football hooligan groups can be traced back to 2012 when Borussenfront invited representatives from various hooligan groups to a “cross-club exchange.” After much drinking and complaining about left wing Ultra groups who had been trying to combat racism at football stadiums, those present decided to band together to form the Gnu Honnters (New Hunters). As the Gnu Honnters threatened Ultra groups, attended Kategorie C concerts, and participated in football tournaments such as the “Swastika Cup” their membership grew and they began to attract hate group members. “The hooligans’ success in the battle against the Ultras resulted in a flood of new right-wing members. Meetings began attracting attendees who had previously been active in the ‘Nationalen Widerstand’ (National Resistance) or in now-banned groups such as the ‘Kameradschaft Aachener Land.’ (Germany’s New Right, 2014)”

DEFINING HATE

Researchers have offered a variety of definitions of hate (for a more thorough discussion of hate see Sternberg, 2005). Definitions that are relevant to this chapter are ones that suggest that hate can derive from real or perceived inequities, target a group, and drive behavior. Allport (1954) defines hate as an emotion of extreme dislike or aggressive impulses toward a person or group. Key in Allport’s conceptualization of hate is its relationship to aggressive impulses and that these impulses may be directed to a group. Hate groups target other groups or the members of other groups based on their group membership rather than individual attributes and use the reasons behind their hatred as the rational for their aggression.