One of the central strengths of *Sign Wars* is that Goldman and Papson illustrate their analyses of advertising's changing signifying practices with literally hundreds of examples drawn from TV advertising of the mid-1980s to early 1990s. These examples will resonate with most readers' experiences and make it easier to follow the carefully crafted critique. Another strength is that the many examples of changing signifying strategies are located within the dynamics of the communication process between advertisers and audiences. The authors emphasize the active role of audiences, whose interpretive labors are central to the dynamics of sign wars. As viewers become savvy to the signification strategies in ads, advertisers are forced to find newer, more clever ways of hailing the spectator. Thus audiences play a major role in producing one of the key casualties of sign wars—"breakdowns in the signifier-signified circuit" (p. 273). This more critical assessment of the role of active audiences is a welcome corrective to the many current interpretations in cultural studies that emphasize how active audiences use media to empower themselves and resist the powers that be.

*Sign Wars* is an excellent example of the sociological imagination at its best. Problems of the American milieu, e.g., fractured selves, alienated spectators, nostalgic consumers, cynical citizens, degraded environments, crises of meaning, and powerful corporations, are all connected to the broader political economy of sign value. The only thing missing from this fine analysis is some mention of what could or should be done to avert the further escalation of sign wars and the accompanying cultural contradictions. Nonetheless, this is a powerful critique of advertising and the dynamics of contemporary consumer culture. Those interested in postmodernism, advertising, cultural studies, critical theory, and mass communications will find great value in this richly detailed and sophisticated sociological critique.

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*Mass Hate* tries to explain large-scale destructiveness and authoritarian demonology from a social-psychological perspective. In eight chapters, the author addresses long-standing debates familiar to political and social psychologists interested in authoritarianism, obedience, prejudice, and genocide: Are the perpetrators of mass atrocities "normal" people caught in "abnormal" situations? What does it take to turn "normal" people into sadomasochistic killers? What
makes some people resistant to ideologies and programs of mass hate while others seem to thrive on them? Are social structures and impersonal forces the decisive factors in instances of mass hate and violence, or should the focus be on individual personalities and social character? What is the relationship between behavior and attitude? How effective is education in reducing or eliminating propensities for destructiveness?

Kressel approaches these questions by examining, in separate chapters, “the minds of the haters” in Nazi Germany, Rwanda, Bosnia, and the U.S. His discussion of the U.S. context centers on Muslim extremism and terrorism. These chapters are brief historical sketches, minimal really, but they provide a sufficient presentation of the historical trends, social forces, and psychic logic in each context. The chapters concerning Rwanda and Bosnia are especially useful because of their emphasis on sociologically relevant issues such as the consequences of colonialism and imperialism. Another interesting theme that runs, mostly implied, through Kressel’s examination is the human confrontation with modernity. This aspect comes to the surface most clearly in his discussion of Muslim fundamentalism.

The author follows these substantive chapters by outlining the limitations of situationist theories such as the “obedience to authority” and “banality of evil” perspectives and arrives, later, at two conclusions regarding the dialectic between individual personality and social structure. First, situational pressures shape the way people act, think, and feel but are not the determining factors in explaining mass genocide. Secondly, since even the most rigid and authoritarian social organizations contain inherent contradictions and room for personal decision making, the key to understanding mass genocide lies in individual and social character structure (pp. 213–214). Hence, Kressel focuses on the particular types of personalities that predispose people to take part in or reject programs of mass hate.

Kressel examines various theories such as frustration-aggression theory, learning theory, and the idea of the locus of control. The center of his discussion on personality, however, is on the “fascism-prone personality,” and the research that followed in the wake of Adorno’s *The Authoritarian Personality*. Kressel’s stance is that even with its problems, the theory of authoritarianism has not been proven false (p. 222) and that more fruitful work lies in that direction.

The book’s approach, the examination of authoritarianism at the level of character structure and personality, is again shared by many political psychologists and other social scientists today. The author rightly indicates that research into the *phenomena* of authoritarianism largely ceased after 1950 and was displaced by a long string of methodological critiques (Hyman and Sheatsley) and reactionary political rebuttals (Shils). Not until the late ’70s and early ’80s did research again turn to questions of social and psychological importance such as anti-Semitism and fascism.
Writers interested in the problem of anti-Semitism have returned to *The Authoritarian Personality* and its precursors for insight into demonological hatred (e.g., Shulamit Volkov and Stephen Wilson), while researchers interested in political authoritarianism, such as McFarland, Ageyev, Abalakina-Paap, and Meloen's Dutch group, are now putting the work of Adorno et al. to good use. While Kressel is moving in this direction, *Mass Hate* has limits, and these limitations, primarily a shortage of theoretical novelty, will reduce the size of its readership.

Kressel says that "This book will draw together the results of six decades of research on the psychology of mass hate" (p. 2). It does; however, readers will not find any new theoretical syntheses. *Mass Hate* is mostly juxtapositions of familiar debates and literatures applied to new and interesting data. Those people who have read the literature on authoritarianism and Nazism will find little that is new here. However, *Mass Hate* is very well suited as a springboard for lecturing in undergraduate social psychology seminars.

*Mass Hate* is a good book and worth reading—especially for those unfamiliar with the literature on authoritarianism and genocide. There are only a few curious omissions in the works cited, and the author works from a solid, if mainly implied, theoretical model that avoids behavioristic reductionism and retains the importance of character, in Fromm’s sense of the concept, as the level of analysis for understanding large-scale destruction.

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