Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime

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I propose a dual conceptualization of violent crime. Since violent crime is both violence and crime, theories of aggression and deviance are required to understand it. I argue that both harm-doing and rule breaking are instrumental behaviors and that a bounded rational choice approach can account for both behaviors. However, while some of the causes of harm-doing and deviance (and violent and nonviolent crime) are the same, some are different. Theories of crime and deviance cannot explain why one only observes individual and group differences in violent crime and theories of aggression and violence cannot explain why one observes differences in all types of crimes. Such theories are "barking up the wrong tree."

Violent crime involves both crime and violence. Crime involves rule breaking while violence involves intentional harm-doing using physical means. Therefore, an understanding of violent crime requires an understanding of both aggression and deviance. We need to understand why people harm others as well as why they break rules. To gain a theoretical understanding of individual and group differences, we must pay attention to whether individuals and groups vary in their violent behavior or in their criminal behavior. We should establish what facts require explanation before attempting to explain them.

Stinchcombe (1968) emphasizes the importance of proper conceptualization of the dependent variable in his classic work on theory construction. He uses delinquency as an example, pointing out that different kinds of action that concern the police may turn out to have different causes: natural variables that create administrative problems are not the same variables that have a unique set of causes. Sometimes applied researchers formulate this by saying that a natural variable "has multiple causes." From the sci-

entific point of view, this means that the applied researcher is trying to explain the wrong thing. (41)

Violence and crime are overlapping domains: some acts of violence are not criminal or even deviant. For example, violence in self-defense, violence by social control agents (parents and police), and violence in war are typically neither criminal nor deviant. On the other hand, theft and illicit drug use are crimes but do not involve violence. In addition, different types of crime involve different attitudes toward harm. Some offenders want to harm the victim (e.g., most assaults), some do not care (e.g., most robbery, rape, and property crimes), and some commit victimless crimes (e.g., taking illicit drugs). If we are interested in criminal violence, we should be trying to explain why people want to harm others or do not mind harming others, as well as why they are willing to break the law. Identifying the proper outcome or dependent variable is important because it has theoretical implications. A theory of aggression is needed to explain effects that are only observed for violence, while a theory of deviance is needed to explain effects that are observed for all types of criminal behavior.[1]

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[1] Determining the proper dependent variable is also a problem in the study of non-violent crime. It is important to know whether the etiologies of drug use and white-collar crime are the same as the etiology of other crimes.

Because criminologists are not typically interested in crime as harm-doing, they often ignore the extensive social psychological literature on aggression.[2] There are many psychologists in the world and they do a considerable amount of high quality research in this area, so this is a large and important literature to ignore. In addition, those who study violence (from a variety of disciplines) often ignore both theories of aggression and theories of crime. They study particular types of violence: youth violence, sexual violence, violence against women, child abuse, gang violence, hate crimes, workplace violence, homicide, and mass murder. As a result, the study of violence has become Balkanized. Sometimes those working in one of these areas develop special theories to explain the particular type of violence they study. For example, feminist theory is often used to explain violence toward women when the explanations for violence against men and women may be similar (Felson 2002).

If our independent variables are only associated with particular types of violence, we may need more specialized theories. However, one should not assume that a particular type of violence has a special etiology. Parsimony is not everything, but it is an important value in science. It is, therefore, important to examine different types of violence and crime in the same study and compare effects. Then we can determine what it is we are trying to explain and how general a theory we need.

In this essay I attempt to clarify the relationship between violence and crime. I suggest that some of the causes of harm-doing and crime are similar and some are different. One does not need a separate theory to explain them, however. I argue that harm-doing as well as rule breaking involve instrumental behavior, although the incentives and costs are sometimes different. A rational choice perspective, broadly conceived, can explain both aggression and deviance. This approach does not require an abandonment of criminological theories since most of these theories treat crime as instrumental behavior.

I begin by defining violence and indicating how it relates to crime. I then discuss the motivation for violence, and relate it to well-known social psychological processes such as the pursuit of justice, impression management, and social influence. I emphasize the distinction between predatory and dispute-related crime, suggesting that it is related to the offender's attitude toward harm. In a concluding section, I discuss the implications of viewing violent crime as distinct from other crime and as instrumental behavior.

1. Definitions

In science it is important to classify events in a manner that allows us to understand the causes of those events (Kaplan 1964). Good concepts allow us to better understand and explain events while bad concepts impede the development of knowledge. The way one organizes phenomena into descriptive units has important theoretical implications. We prefer to classify together behaviors that have common causes and differentiate behaviors that have different causes. For example, it seems clear that it is useful to classify homicide and suicide separately, since they usually have different causes. Suicide is strongly related to depression, while homicide is not. Certainly, they both involve killing someone, and both may have a few common causes, but it is probably not useful to classify them together.

Crime is a violation of law and therefore an act of deviance, i.e., a rule-violation. Defining aggression (and violence) has proved to be more problematic. I begin with a discussion of the definition and then show its relationships to crime and deviance.

1.1. Aggression

Aggression is most often defined as any behavior whose intent is to harm another person (e.g., Berkowitz 1962). The actor deliberately does something to the target knowing that the target would prefer to avoid it.[3] The definition of aggression as deliberate harm includes behaviors that are intended to harm but are unsuccessful and excludes behav-

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2 Criminologists also ignore social psychological theories of conformity, even though they study deviance.

3 Intent has different meanings, but in this context it only means that the actor harmed the target on purpose. Motives refer to the reasons why actors intentionally harmed the target, i.e., their goals in doing

so. Both proximate and distal goals can be involved. For example, the robber deliberately harms the victim in order to gain compliance (the proximate goal) for the purpose of getting money (the distal goal).

iors that involve accidental harm. Unsuccessful attacks have similar causes as successful attacks while accidental harms do not. Violence is physical aggression, i.e., when people use physical methods to harm others. The harm they produce is not necessarily physical, however. It could be a social harm or a deprivation of resources (Tedeschi and Felson 1994).

Note that the definition of aggression (and violence) requires that we understand the actor's point of view, not the point of view of victims or observers. The focus on the actor's perspective is central to the social psychological study of human behavior. For example, if someone thinks they have been insulted, but the adversary did not intend the insult, the misunderstanding may lead to aggression, but the initial act is not aggression. If a rape victim feels powerless or humiliated that does not imply that the offender was motivated to produce those outcomes. If a paranoid football fan thinks the players are talking about him in the huddle, he acts on his definition of the situation. It is his interpretation of reality, however wrong or ridiculous, that affects his behavior. That is why mental illness is a causal factor in violence (Link and Steuve 1994; Silver, Felson, and VanEseltine 2008). We should not apply the "reasonable person" standard like they do in the legal system. We should not say that the offender should have known what he or she was doing since most reasonable people would know. Leave that type of thinking to judges and juries; scientists should be interested in cause, not establishing whether the offender is to blame. On the other hand, they should be interested in the offender's attributions of blame, since those beliefs can lead to violent behavior.

1.2. Violence and Deviance

Research shows that most people only label an act of harm-doing "aggression" when they think it is wrong (e.g., Brown and Tedeschi 1976). For them, aggression involves anti-social behavior that is contrary to the norms of society. While they do not label all bad behavior aggressive, there is a tendency to consider all aggressive behavior bad. Actually, it is unlikely that they really believe all harm-doing is bad. They just use different language to describe harm-doing when they think it is legitimate. For example, when the judge sentences the offender to prison, or when parents discipline their children, the behavior is described as *punishment*, not aggression. Alternatively, they could say that the judge or parent has engaged in legitimate aggression and that the "end justifies the means." This explanation is not readily accepted as a justification. Better to use the word "punishment" which has a more positive connotation.

Adversaries are particularly likely to have a different interpretation of events. Those who engage in aggression and violence are often self-righteous (Katz 1988). When someone harms them, it is aggression; when they harm someone else, it is *justice*. Since their adversaries deserved to be punished for their bad behavior, their own attack was legitimate and even pro-social, not anti-social or violent. The adversary's behavior was blameworthy, but their own behavior was not.

If punishment is aggression, or intentional harm-doing, then one can say that aggression and violence are often a response to deviance. When people break rules, others want to harm them to deter future rule-breaking and for the purpose of obtaining justice. In other words, aggression can be a form of social control. Sometimes people use violence instead of relying on the police to redress their grievances and exact punishment. They take the "law into their own hands." This is sometimes called vigilante justice or self-help (Black 1983). In sum, aggression is sometimes deviant, sometimes a response to deviance, and sometimes both.

Justice requires that the wrong-doer is appropriately punished, i.e., that the punishment should "fit the crime." We think punishment is a good thing—an act of justice or retribution—and we condemn judges and parents who are too lenient.[4] Failing to harm someone who deserves to be punished is a violation of the rule of retributive justice. The nonaggressive person is criticized for allowing wrongdoers to "get away with it." Thus, in some instances, the failure to use aggression is considered deviant.

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4 While some people think it is good *in the long run* for the wrongdoer to suffer punishment, that is not an essential element. People sometimes do harm to ultimately help someone. Acts of aggression in the short term can be acts of altruism in the long term. For example, parents think that appropriate punishment is good for their children's development.

An over-reaction or disproportionate response is also perceived as deviant. For example, we might view an insult, but not violent retaliation, as an appropriate response to a verbal attack. Many acts of criminal violence are condemned because they are over-reactions. Anyone would have been angry at the provocation, and prone to use some level of aggression, but the offender's response was disproportionate (Toch 1992). Parents who engage in abuse typically do it in discipline situations, where a child has misbehaved. The parents engage in punishment that is disproportionate to the child's offense; they "go too far." We sometimes use the term "abuse" when we think the punishment is too harsh. To some extent the study of criminal violence is the study of the inappropriate use of aggression.

The attitudes we have regarding when it is appropriate to use aggression and violence are nuanced and context-dependent. Many people are ambivalent about aggressive responses to misbehavior. They sometimes think it is important to "turn the other cheek" or to only use violence as a last resort. They may think that violence is wrong, but at the same time think people should punish wrongdoing and "stand up to bullies."

Of course, people have different attitudes toward the use of violence. Legitimacy is, to some extent, in the eye of the beholder. For example, most Americans think spanking is a necessary method of childrearing while others think it is illegitimate and abusive. It is illegal in some of the Scandinavian countries. However, some social scientists focus too much on acts about which people disagree. They give a few examples of where people differ in their evaluation of specific behaviors and then claim deviance is arbitrary. For example, Americans tend to disagree about the seriousness of drug offenses, but there is a great deal of consensus about most deviant acts, particularly those involving intentional harm-doing (Rossi et al. 1974). We almost all agree that homicide, assault, robbery, and rape are serious offenses. We almost all view violence against women as more serious than violence against men (Felson 2002). Even serious criminal offenders agree that the major violent offenses are wrong, leading Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) to argue that attitudes have no effect on criminal behavior.

In sum, it is important to recognize the similarities between legitimate and illegitimate aggression and violence. The motives are often the same. The reasons criminals use violence are not so different in kind from the motives of parents who discipline their children. In both cases, the harm-doer may be seeking justice or trying to deter the target from engaging in particular behaviors. However, it is also important to recognize the differences between legitimate and illegitimate aggression and the role of deviance.

2. A Rational Choice Approach

The explanations scholars give for aggression and violence are often different from the explanations they give for other human behavior (including deviance). They attribute most aggression to a special mechanism involving frustration or aversive stimuli (Berkowitz 1989; Dollard et al. 1939). Aversive stimuli lead the person to experience negative affect which instigates "reactive" or "expressive aggression." The link between negative affect and the desire to hurt others is biological.[5] It leads people to lash out after experiencing stress, pain, failure, or suffering of any sort, unless they are inhibited by the costs. When it is too costly to attack the person who made them feel bad, they may displace their aggression onto innocent third parties. Those who take a frustration aggression approach do not claim that all aggression is expressive, however. They acknowledge that there is instrumental aggression as well, but claim it is much less frequent than expressive aggression.

2.1. Violence as Instrumental Behavior

I suggest that all aggression is instrumental behavior, even when it involves anger. From this perspective, the motive to harm others is related to basic human desires. People attempt to influence others, since many of our rewards are provided by other people. They want to be treated fairly

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5 Without the biological connection, expressive aggression is difficult to explain. Why else would exposure to pain and many other aversive stimuli lead to a desire to harm others? If the mechanism is innate, one might also wonder what evolutionary process would produce it.

and they think those who fail to do so should be punished. They usually target the person who has offended them, not innocent third parties. They also want the esteem of others and to think favorably of themselves, so they retaliate when they are attacked to avoid a loss of face. Finally, some people engage in risky activities because they enjoy the thrills. Violence is a dangerous and therefore exciting activity.

Aggression and violence, then, are based on basic social psychological processes. People harm others because it gets them something they want at not too great a cost. Aggression can be a method of getting retribution when one has a grievance, a method of impressing others, a method of getting others to comply, and a form of thrill-seeking. By forcing others to comply, the actor can get money, sex, and other rewards. We, therefore, do not need a special theory to explain it. We do not even need a general theory of aggression; rather, we can use the most widely accepted theory of human behavior, one that emphasizes rewards and costs. Such an approach is preferable on grounds of parsimony.

Another reason to view aggression as instrumental behavior is the evidence against the major competition: frustration-aggression approaches. Participants do not respond with aggression to aversive stimuli in the laboratory unless they blame someone for it (see Tedeschi and Felson 1994 for a review). Only certain types of aversive stimuli—perceived wrong-doing and intentional attack—lead to anger and dispute-related aggression. Pain, illness, and death of loved ones, the most aversive stimuli in the human experience, do not have this effect. Bad news makes people upset but it does not usually make them aggressive. A bad mood after an aversive experience may facilitate an aggressive response because it interferes with careful decision-making, but it is not an instigator. A strong biological link between aversive stimuli and aggression has not been demonstrated.

Treating violence as instrumental behavior is sometimes described as taking a rational-choice approach. Rational choice theorists use the name reluctantly because of the excess baggage it carries with it. They know that rationality is "bounded," i.e., that behavior reflects subjective judgments about payoffs, and that individuals often make careless decisions that can have disastrous outcomes. Many aggres-

sive acts are performed impulsively and with great emotion. Violent crime is more likely to be committed impulsively than nonviolent crime, although both are often committed on impulse (Felson and Massoglia unpublished). However, while violent offenders sometimes fail to adequately consider costs and the moral aspects of their behavior, they are still making decisions and they are still pursuing something they value. The fact that the incentives for violence are often symbolic —e.g., status, retribution—and the fact that people can get very angry when provoked does not negate the instrumentality of the behavior.

A rational choice approach is also useful in the analysis of collective violence. For example, the current approach to understanding riots emphasizes the purposive behavior of individuals or small groups within the larger gathering (McPhail 1991). Scholars no longer emphasize the irrationality of "mobs" operating out of control and as a group (e.g., Le Bon 1895). In most riots only a minority of the participants engage in property destruction and looting, and an even smaller percentage engage in interpersonal violence (McPhail 1991). The motives are similar to the motives for individual violence. Participants in protest riots often have grievances with the government or the police: a common precipitating event is some violent action by the police (Tilly 2003). Participants in communal riots have grievances against another group. On the other hand, some participants in riots have no grievance, but view the decline in capable guardianship as an opportunity to loot for profit, or to destroy property for entertainment. Thrill-seeking is probably the motivation for participants in celebration riots, as well as for the large number of people who come to watch any civil disorder.

2.2. Deviance as Instrumental Behavior

It is not necessary to switch theories in order to explain crime and deviance. Most of the major criminological theories treat crime as instrumental behavior. Most focus on the cost side of the equation, although each emphasizes different costs. Hirschi's control theory (1969) emphasizes the costs produced when people have strong social bonds to conventional others. People are less likely to break the law when they anticipate it will spoil important relationships or cause them to lose their investments in conventional enter-

prise. Deterrence theory emphasizes costs produced by the criminal justice system, while social disorganization theory emphasizes the costs produced when a neighborhood has high "collective efficacy" (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). Finally, the routine activity approach emphasizes costs produced by capable guardianship (M. Felson 1998). Each of these is posited as a separate theory, but they all treat crime as instrumental behavior, so they are compatible. There is no reason to rule out any of these costs playing some role in criminal behavior, whether it involves violence or not.

Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime (1990) treats crime as instrumental behavior. It is essentially a theory of deviance: impulsive people engage in a variety of deviant behaviors, some illegal and some not, because of their careless decision-making. Because of their low self-control they fail to consider or adequately assess the costs or morality of their behavior. Offenders are still making decisions, however, and pursuing common desires.

Social learning theory is an alternative version of the rational choice approach. It treats crime as instrumental behavior but emphasizes socialization and the role of models as a source of information about what behavior is likely to provide a good payoff (Akers 1998). It is one of the few theories used in criminology that recognizes the social psychological literature. Cultural theories and differential association are derivatives of social learning theory that emphasize the learning of attitudes and behavior from one's peers (e.g., Sutherland 1947). Obviously, people do not learn in isolation.

Finally, some versions of strain theory imply that offenders rationally turn to crime for money or status when they anticipate that the probability of achieving success using conventional means is too low (e.g., Cohen 1955). On the other hand, some versions of strain theory do not treat crime as instrumental behavior. For example, according to general strain theory, people violate the law in response to any type

of aversive stimulus (Agnew 1992). Why bad experience leads people to misbehave is unclear. The link appears to be based on a frustration-aggression mechanism.

2.3. Predatory vs. Dispute-related Violence and Crime

Behavior has multiple consequences; some consequences are goals while others are incidental outcomes. Robbers and petty thieves want the victim's money or property. They know they are harming the victim, but the victim's financial loss is usually incidental to them. Of course, a consequence that is incidental to the offender may be quite costly for the victim.

The offender's attitude toward harming the victim is different in predatory and dispute-related crime. In dispute-related incidents, harm is the offender's proximate goal. These offenders have grievances with their victims, they are angry, and they want to see their victims suffer. Most homicides and assaults stem from disputes.

Harm is incidental to predatory offenders, and not a goal. They deliberately harm victims but do not have a particular desire to harm them. Rather, they have some other goal in mind and they are willing to harm the victim in order to achieve it. One might refer to these behaviors as incidental rather than judgmental aggression.

Robbery and rape typically involve predatory violence. Robbers and rapists use violence to force the victim to comply because compliance will allow them to get something they want. For example, compliance is the robber's proximate goal while money is the distal goal. Most robbers are indifferent to the victim's suffering. For them, victims are interchangeable, although they may prefer some victims over others when they think the payoff will be better or the risks lower. Robbers and rapists know that they must frighten or physically incapacitate the victim in order to carry out their crime. They deliberately produce harmful outcomes, but that is not what motivates most of them.[6] Their *goal* is usually to use rather than abuse their victims.

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6 There is a substantial ethnographic literature on the rational thinking of predatory offenders (e.g., Wright and Decker 1997).

Theft and fraud can be said to involve aggression because the offender deliberately harms the victim. The offender relies on deception or stealth rather than violence. Since the harm is incidental to most thieves and swindlers—who have no grievance with the victim—these are typically predatory offenses. They desire the stolen object but do not care whether the victim suffers. The offender's beliefs about harm can be ambiguous, however. Shoplifters may deny that anyone is harmed when they target large stores. In the mind of these offenders, *no–one* is really harmed except the large corporations that can afford the loss. From their point of view, they are engaged in a victimless crime. Some of them would never steal from an individual, perhaps because the harm would be undeniable. Neutralization techniques, sometimes called rationalizations or accounts, probably have an important impact on deviant behavior (e.g., Sykes and Matza 1957).

On the other hand, some acts of robbery, rape, theft, and fraud do stem from disputes and the offender's goal is to harm the victim (Black 1983). Perhaps they have a grievance with the victim and theft or rape is the way they exact punishment. People have a variety of ways of harming their victims when they are angry at them. For example, Greenberg (1993) found that employees who thought they were underpaid punished their employer through theft. This motivation is more likely to be involved when the offender knows the victim. People are not as likely to have grievances with strangers.

Figure 1: The relationship between crime, harm-doing, and violence
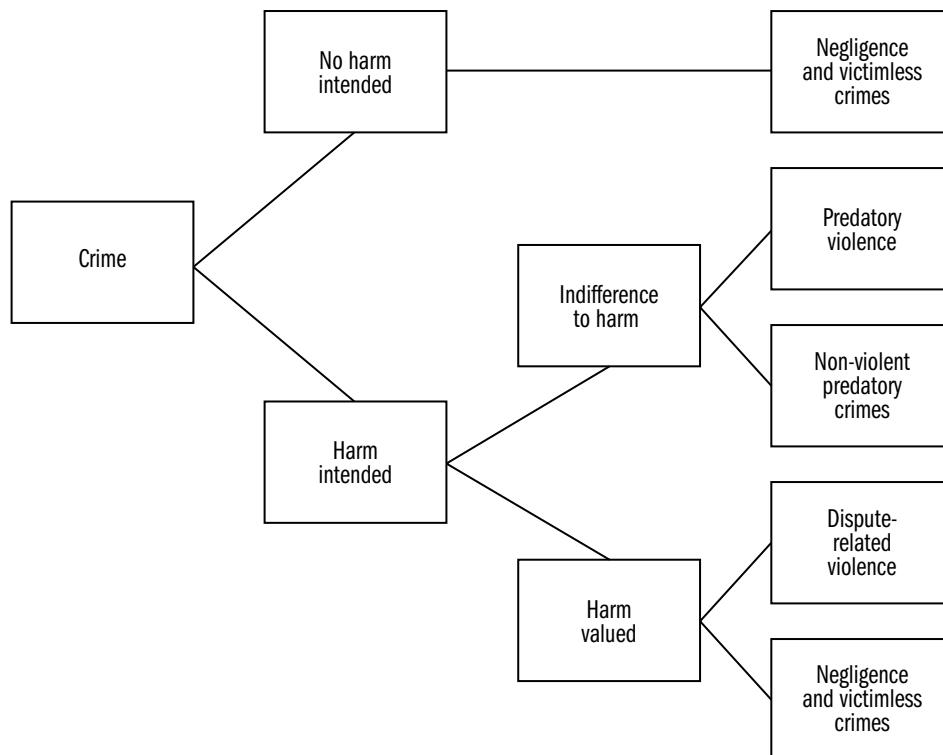
Richard B. Felson. 2004. *A Rational Choice Approach to Violence in Violence: From Theory to Research*, edited by Margaret A. Zahn, Henry H. Brownstein & Shelly L. Jackson. Newark, NJ: LexisNexis/Anderson.

Figure 1 depicts the relationship between harm-doing, violence, and crime. Crime in which *no harm is intended* includes victimless crimes and accidents resulting from criminal negligence. Harming others is not on the mind of these offenders and is irrelevant to their motivation. These offenders are engaged in crime (or, in some cases, a civil wrong) but they are not engaged in aggression or violence. For other crimes—crimes involving aggression—*harm is intended* (or deliberate). These crimes are either predatory or dispute-related, depending on whether harm is an incidental consequence or deliberately sought. In the case of predatory crime perpetrators deliberately harm the victim but they do not particularly value harm—they are indifferent to whether the victim suffers. In dispute-related crime, the offender values harm either because they think the victim deserves to be punished for wrong-doing or because harm implies victory and an enhanced image for themselves.

3. Implications

I have conceptualized violence as related to but distinct from crime, as instrumental behavior, and as often stemming from disputes. These characteristics of violence have important implications. The fact that much violence stems from interpersonal (and group) conflict suggests that we need to incorporate the social psychological literature on conflict. The fact that it involves personal confrontation with an adversary suggests that we need to consider "adversary effects." Finally, the distinction between violence and crime is necessary for an understanding of individual and group differences. I now discuss each of these issues.

3.1. Violence and Conflict

Because drivers on the roads are going in different directions and competing for space we must have lanes and intersections, and we must contend with drivers who cross our path. We have rules for turn taking, including stop signs and traffic lights, but drivers sometimes act selfishly or make mistakes. When other drivers perceive violations, they may punish the offender with a well-known nonverbal gesture. Sometimes the accused retaliates and, on rare occasions, the incident escalates and becomes violent.

Similarly, in social life people are often at cross-purposes. We have rules for turn taking and establishing priorities when interests diverge, but conflict is inevitable. These disputes sometimes lead to violence. Unfortunately, most discussions of aggression and violence ignore the central role of interpersonal conflict. Conflict is a ubiquitous aspect of social life and an important source of aggression and violence. The most violent people may be cordial and polite until their interests differ from others or they think they have been mistreated. Then they have something to fight about.

Divergent interests are common in social life, particularly in families. Husbands and wives may love each other but they have plenty to fight about. Husbands and wives often argue over sex and money (Buss 1989). Violence may also result from extra-marital affairs, divorce settlements, and conflicts over child custody. Conflict is inevitable when people have illicit liaisons, or lose interest and pick new partners. We should not be surprised that violence sometimes occurs in domestic relationships. In fact, when one controls for the level of conflict, violence is much *less* likely to occur among intimate partners than among other people. Individuals are generally less likely to use violence during an altercation if the antagonist is a family member than if the antagonist is a stranger (Felson, Ackerman, and Yeon 2003). People apparently have stronger inhibitions about hitting family members than hitting strangers, and as a result, domestic violence is infrequent relative to the level of domestic conflict. The absolute frequency of domestic violence is high because family members often have conflicts (and because they spend so much time together). Yet, the literature on intimate partner violence focuses on sexism and largely ignores the role of conflict.

Young siblings have conflicts over tangible goods and the division of labor (Felson 1983). For example, they fight over the use of the family television set and who should perform a particular chore. These may be realistic conflicts, unrelated to jealousy, or sibling rivalry for status or parental attention. The potential for conflict is high between siblings because of competition for resources and unclear ownership of these resources. While property legally belongs to parents, siblings often have some claims on their clothes and other items. In addition, the rules for the division of

labor are often unclear. These ambiguities create potential for conflict between siblings which may help explain why children fight more frequently with their siblings than they fight with all other children combined (Felson 1983). Sibling violence declines when the children get older, in part, because they are less likely to have divergent interests.

The inherent conflict between social control agents and their charges creates opportunities for violence. Thus, the interaction between the police and suspects and other citizens creates opportunities for violence (Westley 1970). Many violent conflicts in bars are between bartenders and patrons, when the bartender refuses to serve patrons who are underage or extremely intoxicated (Felson, Baccaglini, and Gmelch 1986). Child abuse typically occurs in disciplinary situations when parents have difficulties controlling their children (Tedeschi and Felson 1994).[7]

The potential for conflict and violence is greater when resources are scarce (Fischer 1969). Yananomo men of Brazil fight over scarce females (Chagnon 1977) while Mbuti men fight over hunting territories (Turnbull 1965). Drug dealers fight over the drug market and what territory they control. Fischer (1969) found in an experiment that the greater the scarcity of resources available to bargainers the more they used threats to get those resources.

Sometimes targets comply and the violent actor is successful, but other times targets retaliate and the conflict escalates. Those who resist with violence sometimes deter further violence, and sometimes encourage it. Violence involves an interaction between at least two parties and the cooperation of both is required for a peaceful solution. This basic dilemma is the subject of game theory and the basis for strategic thinking about war. Nobel Prizes have even been awarded for work in this area (i.e., to Robert Aumann, Thomas Schelling, and Robert Nash). Yet, the literature on violent crime ignores the literature on conflict.

Third parties play an important role in dispute-related violence, serving as mediators, instigators, guardians, and audience. Sometimes third parties egg on the adversaries, making it difficult for them to back down without losing face. Sometimes third parties act as mediators, allowing both sides to back down without losing face (Felson 1978). However, the intervention of third parties on behalf of weaker adversaries can increase the likelihood of violence. For example, sibling fighting is more frequent when parents intervene on behalf of the younger sibling (Felson and Russo 1988). The younger and usually weaker sibling is more willing to fight because they have a protective ally.

3.2. Adversary Effects

Violent situations, unlike other criminal events, involve personal confrontation with an adversary. People are likely to have strong concerns about the reaction of their adversaries since the consequences of an attack are potentially catastrophic (Tedeschi and Felson 1994). Their concerns are likely to be particularly strong if they live in communities where guns are prevalent and retaliation is likely. One response to this precarious situation is for people to arm themselves or to otherwise adopt an aggressive posture.

Adversary effects play a prominent role in Anderson's description of the code of the streets in African-American neighborhoods (1999). He argues that many blacks in inner city communities adopt an aggressive posture, in part, to avoid victimization. Even youth who are not otherwise prone to use violence—the "decent kids"—follow the code of the streets. Subcultural arguments, on the other hand, emphasize the effects of third parties (e.g., Cooney 1998; Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967). Actors learn attitudes favorable to crime from others or comply because they are concerned about audience opinion (Felson et al. 1994). In the case of violence, however, adversaries may have a greater impact than third parties.[8]

Adversary effects are likely to produce *contagion*, i.e., violence spreading geographically in a community or rates increasing over time. Violent crime may be more contagious than nonviolent crime because it involves adversary effects as well as the effects of third parties. In addition, the ten-

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7 People also have conflicts over means rather than ends. Parents may agree that a child's behavior should be changed, but disagree about how to correct it. Conflicts that are based on incompatible goals are usually more difficult to resolve than those based on incompatible means (Deutsch 1969).

8 Adversary effects are likely to be important in any type of competitive relationship.

dency for individuals to arm themselves with guns may lead to an "arms race." Thus, Griffiths and Chavez (2004) find a diffusion of gun homicides from the most violent neighborhoods to adjacent neighborhoods in Chicago. This diffusion was not observed for homicides that involved other weapons or no weapon. An arms race may have developed in African-American neighborhoods where individuals carry guns to protect themselves from others who are armed (Blumstein 1995; Deane, Armstrong, and Felson 2005).

3.3. Explaining Individual Differences

The situations that lead to violent crime are often different from the situations that lead to nonviolent crime and deviance. For example, verbal disputes and grievances are much more likely to precipitate violent crime. The individual differences that predict violent and nonviolent crime may also be different. If harm-doing is more relevant to violent crime than other crime, then the offenders who commit violent and nonviolent crime are likely to be somewhat different.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1993) claim that most offenders commit a variety of offenses; they do not specialize. They cite studies of arrest histories showing that the probability that violent offenders will be arrested for another violent crime is not much higher than the probability that they will be arrested for non-violent crimes (e.g., Blumstein and Cohen 1979; Kempf 1987). They also point out that offenders tend to engage in a variety of noncriminal forms of deviant behavior, such as sexual promiscuity, smoking, heavy drinking, excessive gambling, and fast driving, and that they perform poorly in school and at work. The evidence on the versatility of offenders suggests that some individual characteristics are common to all deviant behavior, whether it involves deliberate harm or not, and whether it is illegal or not. They claim that the common element is low self-control. Offenders believe that their behaviors are wrong, but do not act on their beliefs, because of their impulsivity. Offenders share conventional values, but behave hypocritically because they are careless decision makers.

Gottfredson and Hirschi made an important contribution, but they exaggerate. Offenders do specialize to some extent. For instance, Osgood, Johnston, O'Malley and Bachman

(1988) found that while half of the stable and reliable variance in a variety of deviant behaviors was shared variance, half was not. More recently, Deane, Armstrong, and Felson (2005) find strong evidence for offense specialization among adolescents. They show that violent offenders are much more likely to engage in additional violent offenses, while nonviolent offenders are much more likely to engage in additional nonviolent offenses. Clearly, the versatility cup is half empty and half full. There is enough versatility to suggest that a general theory of deviance such as Gottfredson and Hirschi's helps us understand criminal violence. There is enough specialization to suggest that there is a need for explanations of individual differences in violence, independent of the tendency to engage in deviance.

The versatility argument also ignores what might be the strongest pattern of crime: most offenders are limited in what crimes they are willing to commit. While those who commit more serious offenses usually also commit less serious crimes, the reverse is not true. That is why minor crimes occur *much* more frequently than serious crimes. Violent crimes tend to be more serious than nonviolent crimes. Thus those who commit violent crime tend to commit nonviolent crime but those offenders who commit nonviolent crime often do not commit violent crime. Some offenders may use illegal drugs but would prefer not to harm others. Many petty thieves will not commit robbery and serious assault. Most offenders are inhibited, at least to some extent, in the crimes they are willing to commit. They may take a "cafeteria style" approach to crime, but they are not putting everything on their plate.

Clearly, some of the individual characteristics that produce violence and other crime are similar and some are different. As suggested by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), low self-control can help explain the behavior of versatile offenders who engage in a variety of deviant behaviors. However, self-control probably plays a greater role in violent offenses since they are more likely to be committed on impulse (Felson and Massoglia unpublished). In addition, individual differences in thrill seeking and the enjoyment of risk offer an alternative explanation of versatile offending. From this perspective, individuals view risk itself as a value rather than as a reflection of potential costs. They seek it rather

than avoid it. Versatility is not necessarily due to low self-control or careless thinking.

Research suggests that individual differences in sensation seeking reflect, at least in part, biological differences (Raine, Venables, and Mendick 1997). People who engage in antisocial behavior tend to be physiologically under-aroused, as indicated by lower resting heart rate levels. These persons may seek out exciting activities to compensate for their physiological under-arousal and bring some physiological balance to their system. Resting heart rates have also been shown to be lower for violent offenders than nonviolent offenders (e.g., Farrington 1987), suggesting that thrill seeking may be a more important motive for violence than for other criminal behavior—violence is more exciting. It may also be that fear is more likely to inhibit violent crime than nonviolent crime because of the danger resulting from the confrontation with the victim.

Any characteristic that makes a person more willing to engage in deviance should lead to criminal behavior generally, not just violations involving harm-doing. For example, alcohol intoxication is most likely to result in violent crime but it also apparently leads to vandalism, car theft, and graffiti writing (Felson, Teasdale, and Burchfield 2008). Testosterone and pubertal development are associated with a variety of crimes, not just violence (Booth and Osgood 1993; Felson and Haynie 2002). To understand these effects, we need to know why testosterone and puberty lead males to engage in deviant behavior.

On the other hand, it is likely that the tendency to deliberately harm others has some distinctive causes. Any characteristic that increases a person's desire or indifference to harming others is likely to lead to crimes involving deliberate harm but not necessarily to victimless crimes or crimes of negligence. For example, a hostility bias is likely to be related to dispute-related violence (and other dispute-related crime). Someone with a hostility bias is more likely to interpret the behavior of others as aggressive and retaliate (Dodge and Somberg 1987). A hostility bias may help explain why mental illness has a stronger relationship to violence than to other crime (Silver, Felson, and VanEseltine 2008). Some mentally ill people have paranoid beliefs

and these beliefs have been shown to be related to violence (Link et al. 1999; Link and Stueve 1994). In addition, people who are empathic—who "feel the pain" of others—may be less likely to harm others (e.g., Mehrabian 1997). Finally, people who are more punitive should be more likely to engage in dispute-related crime when they think they have been mistreated (Markowitz and Felson 1998). While everyone thinks wrong-doers should be punished, some are more punitive than others. On the other hand, people who are tolerant and empathic may take drugs and drink and drive, but they will not intentionally harm others. They may shoplift, thinking there is no victim, but they will not steal from individuals. They will be limited offenders.

Criminal behavior involving harm-doing (but not other deviant behavior) should be negatively related to altruistic behavior (Cochran and Chamlin 2006). These crimes are more likely to involve selfishness than crimes in which no one is harmed. It would be interesting to know whether those who engage in crimes involving harm are less likely to treat their friends well: Is there "honor among thieves?" Perhaps one should only expect this relationship for altruistic behavior in which there is no external reward.

The relationship between individual difference factors and violence is complicated because of adversary effects. Physical strength, fighting skills, and favorable attitudes toward violence may increase the tendency to engage in violence but they may deter potential adversaries. Powerful people may not find it necessary to engage in overt violence because others fear them. In addition, one does not need physical strength to be successful when one has a firearm. Felson (1996) found that individuals were more likely to engage in unarmed violence toward people who were physically weaker than them, but that this relationship did not hold for armed violence.

Individual differences are sometimes attributed to modeling effects. Scholars interested in social learning theory, however, rarely consider exactly what types of behavior children model. The assumption has been that children imitate the violent behavior of others. However, evidence shows that children exposed to media violence in field experiments engage in anti-social behavior generally, not

just violent behavior (e.g., Hearold 1986). The fact that viewing the violent film has broader effects suggests that the effect does not reflect the modeling of violence specifically. Perhaps the pattern is produced by sponsor effects. When adults sponsor violent films some children may think that they are in a permissive environment and that misbehavior generally is more likely to be tolerated.

The evidence is mixed as to whether the intergenerational transmission of violence is due to the modeling of parental violence or whether children who have been mistreated in any way are more likely to engage in a variety of anti-social behaviors. Widom (1989) found that children who had been physically abused were as adults just as likely to commit nonviolent offense as violent offenses. In addition, physical abuse had no greater effect than parental neglect on the likelihood that the child would commit violent offenses as an adult. Perhaps these outcomes are due to the effects of poor attachment or weak social bonds on deviant behavior (e.g., Hirschi 1969). On the other hand, a study of prison inmates found special links between physical abuse and violent offenses and between sexual abuse and sexual offenses (Felson and Lane, 2008). This research suggested that the inmates did specifically model violent and sexual behavior. Further research examining multiple forms of mistreatment and multiple outcomes is needed before we can determine whether intergenerational effects are due to the modeling of specific behaviors or some other mechanism.

3.4. Explaining Race, Regional, and Class Differences

Research on race differences in crime is typically based on measures of criminal violence. This strategy is reasonable if violent behavior is viewed as an indicator of crime or serious crime. However, in the United States we observe race differences primarily in violent crime, not crime generally. For example, analyses of Add Health data reveal race differences in violent behavior but not nonviolent delinquency, when socioeconomic status and other variables are controlled (Felson, Deane, and Armstrong 2008).

Social disorganization theory and other theories of crime and deviance cannot explain this pattern. How can a neighborhood's level of social disorganization explain race differences when the race difference primarily involves violent crime? Socially disorganized neighborhoods should experience more property and drug crime as well. The theory may explain neighborhood variation in crime rates but it cannot explain why we observe race differences in violence, but not crime and deviance generally.

Perhaps one could make an argument that violent crime tends to be more serious and, for some reason, disorganized neighborhoods only produce serious crime. However, the Add Health data suggests that race is not related to minor or serious property and drug crimes. A theory of violence is therefore required to explain racial patterns. Scholars who use criminological theories are trying to explain the wrong phenomenon.

Evidence suggests that race is most strongly related to armed violence among adolescents (Felson, Deane, and Armstrong 2008). Evidence from adult victimization surveys show that blacks are much more likely to be victims of armed assault but slightly less likely to be victims of unarmed assault (Felson and Pare 2007). These patterns suggest that because of adversary effects, violence in African-American communities is more likely to involve guns, but that the presence of guns inhibits fist fights. Fighting without weapons becomes too dangerous when adversaries are likely to be armed with guns. Serious stuff drives out minor stuff. As a result, in the most violent communities, violence may be more serious but it is not necessarily more frequent.

This adversary effect may help explain why southern whites have higher rates of gun homicides and assaults than northern whites, but not homicides and assaults committed without firearms (Felson and Pare 2007). This pattern cannot be explained by an honor culture in the South (e.g., Cohen et al. 1996). Perhaps the South does have an honor culture—there is supportive evidence—but a suppressor effect is operating. It may be that the presence of guns discourages knife and fist fights, because they are too dangerous when adversaries are likely to have guns.

Finally, evidence suggests that socioeconomic status is related to violence but not other types of crime and deviance. Felson, Deane, and Armstrong (2008) found that adoles-

cents from lower status families are more likely to engage in most forms of violent crime but no more likely to engage in drug or property crime. In fact, adolescents with educated parents are *more* likely to engage in drug-related and minor property offenses. Socioeconomic status of youth, like race, is most strongly associated with armed violence. Theories of violence, not crime and deviance, are required to explain this pattern.

3.5. Explaining High Homicide Rates in the U.S.

Sometimes criminologists develop a theory to explain group differences in crime when differences are only observed for homicide. For example, the United States has a much higher homicide rates than European countries. However, homicide is a relatively rare phenomenon and high homicide rates do not necessarily reflect high rates of violence or crime. In fact, the United States does not have higher rates of assault or non-violent crime than European countries, according to the International Crime Victimization Survey. Thus, Zimring and Hawkins entitle their book about violence in the United States: "Crime is Not the Problem" (1997).

Since the United States does not have higher rates of violent or non-violent crime, neither theories of violence nor crime provide adequate explanations. For example, differences in income inequality or institutional anomie cannot explain this pattern (e.g., Messner and Rosenfeld 2002). They would both predict national differences in property crime rates or in crime rates generally. One could argue that we only observe effects for homicide because of greater error in measuring other crimes, but victimization surveys are thought to provide adequate measurement.

More refined analyses of the dependent variable suggest that our tendency in the United States to carry handguns is critical in explaining why we have higher homicide rates than European countries. We have a *much* higher rate of gun homicides than European countries. However, we also have a somewhat higher rate of non-gun homicides (Zimring and Hawkins 1997). Therefore it would appear that the prevalence of guns cannot fully explain the difference. I suspect that guns and "adversary effects" help explain the pattern. Because of our pistol packing, American offend-

ers encounter more dangerous adversaries, and tactical concerns sometimes lead them to have lethal intent. They desire to kill their adversaries during assaults not just injure them. When adversaries may be armed, better "finish 'em off." Thus, research suggests that, during assaults, offenders are more likely to kill adversaries from groups that pose a greater threat to them (Felson and Messner 1996).

4. Conclusion

I have suggested that we need a dual conceptualization of violent crime. In studying individual and group differences, it is important to understand that violent crime involves both aggression and deviance. We need to understand why people deliberately harm others as well as why they violate the law. We cannot rely upon theories of crime to explain why variables predict violent crime when those variables do not predict other crime, and we cannot rely upon theories of aggression and violence to explain correlates of criminal behavior generally.

We do not need different theories to explain violence and deviance if we view both types of behavior as instrumental. A special frustration-aggression mechanism is not necessary to explain why people engage in violence in response to provocations. I have argued that a general theory, based loosely on bounded rational choice, is sufficient. The basic idea is that it is important to consider incentives and costs when studying aggression or deviance. The same principles apply to collective violence and the violence of authorities. However, certain types of violence have some special causes. For example, group processes are more important for collective violence.

While some of the causes of violence and other crime are similar, some are different. The versatility of many offenders implies that common causes, such as low self-control and thrill-seeking, are important. However, the reluctance of some offenders to commit violent crimes implies that inhibitions about harming others or using physical violence are also important. Some people will only commit deviant acts that do not involve harm-doing.

Harm-doing does have some distinctive characteristics and causes. It often stems from conflict and it usually involves

personal confrontation. Impulsiveness and alcohol intoxication play a more important role in violence than in other crime. Adversaries and third parties also have important effects on violent crime. Because of adversaries, violence and other harm-doing is more likely than deviance to be physically dangerous, and more likely to be contagious. However, that contagion is moderated by the fact that serious violence can drive out less serious acts of aggression and violence. In addition, because of the social interaction process involved in disputes, the outcomes are more unpredictable. Finally, sometimes the motives for violence and deviance are similar and sometimes the motives are different. Harm-doing often involves an attempt to produce compliance and gain retribution, whereas deviance does not involve these motives. Harm-doing is more likely than deviance to be motivated by thrill seeking and the desire for a favorable identity.

I have suggested that the distinction between predatory and dispute-related aggression is important. In predatory aggression, offenders intentionally harm their victim but that

is not their goal. They want to force compliance, promote an identity, or have some fun at the victim's expense. In dispute-related aggression, the proximate goal of offenders is to harm, but their motives are deterrence, retribution, and saving face. It is not clear whether there are individual differences between offenders who desire harm and those who tolerate harm.

In discussing group differences it is important to distinguish between harm-doing and deviance. In our theoretical explanations, we must be cognizant of the fact that race and socioeconomic status are primarily related to violent crime but not other crime. We cannot use theories of crime, such as social disorganization or control theory, to explain these effects. Neither can theories of crime explain why the United States has higher homicide rates than European countries when we do not observe this pattern for other crimes. We must develop a theoretical explanation that acknowledges the role of guns and lethal intent. Those of us who study violence must make sure that we understand what it is we are attempting to explain.

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