

# Violence: Constructing an Emerging Field of Sociology

Eddie Hartmann, Potsdam University

## Vol. 11/2017

**The IJCV** provides a forum for scientific exchange and public dissemination of up-to-date scientific knowledge on conflict and violence. The IJCV is independent, peer reviewed, open access, and included in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) as well as other relevant databases (e.g., SCOPUS, EBSCO, ProQuest, DNB).

The topics on which we concentrate—conflict and violence—have always been central to various disciplines. Consequently, the journal encompasses contributions from a wide range of disciplines, including criminology, economics, education, ethnology, history, political science, psychology, social anthropology, sociology, the study of religions, and urban studies.

All articles are gathered in yearly volumes, identified by a DOI with article-wise pagination.

For more information please visit [www.ijcv.org](http://www.ijcv.org)

**Author Information:** **Eddie Hartmann**, Potsdam University  
[eddie.hartmann@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:eddie.hartmann@uni-potsdam.de)

**Suggested Citation:** **APA:** Hartmann, E. (2017). Violence: Constructing an Emerging Field of Sociology. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 11, 1-9. doi: 10.4119/UNIBI/ijcv.623

**Harvard:** Hartmann, Eddie. 2017. Violence: Constructing an Emerging Field of Sociology. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 11:1-9. doi: 10.4119/UNIBI/ijcv.623



# Violence: Constructing an Emerging Field of Sociology

Eddie Hartmann, Potsdam University<sup>@</sup>

Recent research in the social sciences has explicitly addressed the challenge of bringing violence back into the center of attention. This has generated substantive progress in terms of both theoretical debate and methodological approaches. However, there is a significant lack of research applying non-reductionist methodological approaches that can, at the same time, be grounded in a theoretical approach to violence as a research subject in its own right. This focus section seeks to address this research gap by strengthening the dialogue between different bodies of literature that pursue disparate strategies of delineating “violence” as the subject of an emerging field of sociology. By synthesizing these literatures, the focus section aims to draw upon insights from social theory and recent developments in the sociology of violence on the one hand, and combine methodological approaches that transcend both micro- and macro-reductionist accounts on the other. In doing so, it offers analytical perspectives for coming to terms with one of the most conspicuous shortcomings in social scientific appraisals of violence: the tendency to treat it as a primarily moral or political problem, instead of conceiving violence as a social fact.

**Keywords:** violence, sociology of violence, social fact, micro-macro bias, fragmentation

Violence has not been a topic of central concern to social theory for many decades.<sup>1</sup> However, for about ten to fifteen years now, many scholars have begun explicitly addressing the challenge of bringing violence back into the center of the social sciences. And even in other disciplines such as experimental psychology, biology, or the neurosciences this global research trend is becoming more and more obvious. In the social sciences, the main challenge of addressing violence today is to identify its distinctiveness, that is, to precisely delineate the empirical subject of an emerging field of sociological research.

Two crucial issues stand out within the context of international debates on violence. For one, the study of violence has become scattered between disciplines and fragmented into specialized sub-fields, each focusing on a very specific form of violence; second, violence is still largely absent from social

theory as a research topic in its own right. The question of violence does appear in social theory of course, but either in the context of rather abstract theories on power relations and state-building processes, or in relation to the nature of social conflicts and their presumed relationship with violence. This twofold tendency has created a persistent programmatic divide between theoretical analysis and empirical research within the field. Relatedly, this has led to methodological divisions between macro level perspectives on society and culture, the meso level of organizations and groups, and the micro level of individual identity, motives, and cognition. That is to say, there is a significant lack of social scientific research systematically investigating violence from the angle of contemporary social theory while methodologically generating a more integrated analysis of crucial empirical factors on the macro, meso, and

<sup>@</sup> Eddie Hartmann,  
eddie.hartmann@uni-potsdam.de

<sup>1</sup> One notable exception that merits mention here is the work of Norbert Elias and his classical concept of the civilizing process (Elias 2000).

micro levels. This has led first and foremost to desiderata concerning the grounding of different methodological approaches in a distinct theory conceiving violence as a research subject in its own right. It is precisely this persistent research gap that informs the theoretical and methodological interest of this focus section of the *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*.

The main objective of the focus section is to present new work by international researchers engaging with these theoretical and methodological problems. It originated at an international conference on *Bringing Social Action Back into Violence Research: How to Integrate Micro-level Interactions with Macro-level Patterns in the Study of Violence?* held in Paris in April 2016, and generously supported by the Paris Institute for Advanced Study.<sup>2</sup> The central motivation behind the focus section is to discuss a conspicuous shortcoming in the understanding of violence in the social sciences that has been raised repeatedly in recent years: “its tendency to approach violence primarily as a moral or political phenomenon” (Reemtsma 2012, 261), instead of conceptualizing violent interaction in its specific context of action as a social fact.

The focus section brings together work by researchers who offer innovative approaches focusing on violent interactions and their particular dynamics such as temporalities, emotional resources, or social processes in ways that emphasize the impact of these relational aspects upon social actors and the unfolding of violent interactions they may be involved in. Drawing on disciplinary perspectives including sociology, political science, anthropology, and peace research, the contributions seek to build a multidisciplinary focus section that, taken as a whole, can enrich the burgeoning scientific debate on the relational dynamic of violent interaction with new theoretical approaches and methodologies. In doing so, we hope to make a substantial contribution to the broader debate on how to overcome static and formalist conceptions of agency, theoretical dichotomies and, most importantly, paradigmatic boundaries in terms of what might still be called the micro-macro bias.

## 1. The State of Recent Research

Recent research in the field has explicitly addressed the challenge of bringing violence back into the center of attention in the social sciences (Walby 2013; Kilby and Ray 2014). Without any doubt, this trend has generated substantive progress in terms of both theoretical debate and methodological approaches. Especially the works of Collins (2008), Wieviorka (2009), Gerlach (2010), Malešević (2010), Schinkel (2010), Buffachi (2011), and Reemtsma (2012) demonstrate how highly dynamic the research field of violence has become over the past ten to fifteen years. Overcoming the marginalization of violence as merely a residual category of social power, the State, or social conflict is of the utmost importance to many of these scholars. However, beyond this minimal consensus, the international debate on violence continues to be extremely scattered, and suffers severe problems that begin with the very definition and conceptualization of violence (Bufacchi 2011; Schinkel 2010). The controversies include in particular the debate between a “limited” concept of violence focusing exclusively on acts of physical harm and an “expanded” concept drawing on conceptual analogies such as structural violence (Imbusch 2017; Galtung 1969) or symbolic violence (Bourdieu 2000), not to mention concepts of non-physical forms of violence such as discrimination and racism, exploitation, or social exclusion. Similar conceptual problems emerge in sociological sub-disciplines such as criminology (Ray 2011).

Important strands of investigation of forms of physical violence in recent years include genocide studies (Shaw 2007), war studies (Kalyvas 2006; Weinstein 2007), and research on civil wars (Dorronsoro and Grojean 2014; Schlichte 2014; Schlichte and Schneckener 2015). In addition, there is a whole array of more sociologically aligned studies on genocide (Campbell 2011, 2013; Owens et al. 2012), suicide (Manning (2014), terrorism (Crenshaw 2011), ethnic violence (Olzak 2006), youth violence (Jones and Rodgers 2009), torture (In-between 2011; Carlson and Weber 2012). The importance of these works for theory-building within the field cannot not be doubted. However, as Sylvia Walby (2013) concisely argues,

<sup>2</sup> This publication project benefitted from a EURIAS fellowship at the Paris Institute for Advanced Studies (France), co-funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie

Actions, under the European Union’s 7th Framework Programme for research, and from funding from the French State managed by the Agence Na-

tionale de la Recherche, programme “Investissements d’avenir,” (ANR-11-LABX-0027-01 Labex RFIEA+).

the main challenge of addressing violence in sociology today is to identify its distinctiveness so that the empirical subject of an emerging field of sociology can be defined beyond the conventional ways of dispersing violence into fragments at the edges of the discipline. Whether that distinctiveness should be primarily contingent upon the occurrence of physical or bodily harm is still an open question. Addressing it would turn the widespread restriction of violence to physical phenomena – an aspect that is rarely problematized within the field (Staudigl 2015) – into one of the key issues of the current international debate.

Indeed, recent publications drawing on phenomenological accounts indicate that if violence is to be brought back into the center of scientific attention, the debate between wider and narrower parameters of its conception has to be addressed seriously again (Schinkel 2010; Staudigl 2013, 2015; Endreß and Rampp 2013). Michael Staudigl, for instance, seeks to reconcile the controversy by what might be called a radical relational view on the “*manifold vulnerability of the self* that is exploited in different forms of violence” (2013, 15, italics in original). This manifold vulnerability extends the subject of violence from the physical violability of the organic body, “via the disrespect of its normative articulation (in the various forms of social and political exclusion), to the denigration of its practical cultural concretization (in the various forms of, e.g., racist discrimination)” (ibid.). Reemtsma, who also stresses a phenomenological perspective in order to conceptualize violence regardless of perpetrator or intention, emphasizes instead that even for non-physical forms of violence, physical violence is ultimately the point of reference (2012, 55). He proposes conceiving violence in terms of reduction to the body: “The reduction to body found in all violent acts is the reason violence must be understood as primarily physical” (ibid., 67).

Schinkel vehemently opposes the strategy of confining violence to physical phenomena, arguing that “this semantics allows the active violence of the state, as well as the question of the legitimation of the state in general, to remain a blind spot both to itself and to most of its environment. For the common-sense notion of violence – that of intentional physical hurt imparted by one person upon another – is quite simply, by and large, the contemporary state’s definition of violence” (2010,

32). Nevertheless, Schinkel also conceives violence as a form of reduction, as “reduction of being” (ibid., 48). But instead of insisting on the most severe form of reduction (that is, reduction to the body) as ultimate point of reference for the conceptualization of violence, he argues that violence is an ontological precondition of ontic being. For human life and social interaction always necessarily entail a reduction of being: “Violence is precisely that aspect of human interaction which consists of a reduction of being, of selection of ontological aspects and simultaneous non-selection of others. [...] Only when the other is reduced in his being in the sense that he is not allowed to exist in light of other aspects of his being than those that are at one point in (social) time highlighted, does violence turn from primarily constitutive to primarily destructive to the being of the other” (ibid., 49, 60–61). Schinkel offers an inspiring phenomenological account of violence by highlighting the fact that the strategies that the social sciences deploy in order to determine its distinctiveness are necessarily one-sided due to its manifoldness as a social phenomenon. In his book he intends to break through rather rigid classifications of violence by proposing an approach he calls “fractured realism”: a method (in the sense of a way of seeing) of highlighting certain aspects of violence, and of constantly changing between them, knowing that these different aspects cannot then be combined afterwards into any unified and all-embracing approach. For violence does always produce its own distinctions, and there will always be fractures between aspects of violence.

## 2. Delineating the Subject of an emerging Field of Sociology

In order to address the challenge of ongoing fragmentation within research into violence, the focus section suggests that we need to strengthen the dialogue between different bodies of literature that pursue disparate strategies of delineating “violence” as the subject of an emerging field of sociology. There are currently three bodies of literature that merit outlining in greater depth here, as they can be distinguished by their respective ways of accounting for the distinctiveness of violence, and as the search for linkages between them allows for both theoretical and methodological progress in the construction of this field of research: first, recent attempts to move towards a

general sociology of violence that aims at conceiving violence primarily as a social fact and not as a moral or political problem. Here the most elaborated and promising accounts to date are those proposed by Schinkel (2010) and Reemtsma (2012); second, a radical micro-sociological approach, as proposed by and most prominently associated with the work of Collins (2008); and third, a relatively new body of literature on political violence and radicalization that argues for stronger methodological linkage between social movement approaches and violence research. The theoretical and methodological foundations here have largely been laid by Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam and a number of others, arguing for a paradigm shift from classical collective behavior approaches towards resource mobilization approaches and political process perspectives (Tilly 1978, 2003; McAdam 1982). The currently most elaborated research agenda within this body of literature is that developed by Donatella della Porta (1995, 2008, 2012, 2013).

### 2.1. Towards a General Sociology of Violence

A general sociology of violence must first and foremost take the historicity, the social construction, of its subject as its analytical starting point: the empirical forms and modalities of violence do not exist in isolation from historical forms of social (and political) organization, but are always embedded in social frameworks. Both the perception and social expression of violence must always be viewed in relation to the genesis of social meanings and of legitimate forms of control of social action. From this perspective, societies are always characterized by the particular and historically contingent relationship they maintain with “violence.” This relationship depends on how a society’s social order is characterized by what Reemtsma calls its zones or areas of violence: “the areas in which it prohibits, permits, or mandates violence, alone or in combination. No rigorous study of violence can ignore these zones, for they are the backdrop against which all talk about violence takes place” (2012, 104). What is meant here is that every state-regulated society has to legitimize violence in certain places at certain moments and to delegitimize it everywhere else. It also means that “every legitimation (or delegitimation) of violence seeks to

reinforce (or change) presumed zones of permitted, prohibited, and mandated violence” (ibid.).

The issue here is thus not a society’s relationship with violence per se but rather the extent to which social actors or groups of actors in a given society interpret violent interactions as violent and characterize them as prohibited, permitted, or mandated. Obviously, these characterizations are not self-evident but subject to constant and diverse social struggle over the production of cultural meanings. The specific configuration of these zones of violence is therefore always subject to processes of historical transformation. The first contribution to this focus section deals directly with this issue. Jenny Pearce argues that we are only beginning to discuss and conceptualize violence as a social fact in its own right. She shows how violence has always been attached to the Weberian tradition, leading us to learn to discuss it not as a genuinely sociological phenomenon but always as more or less derived from other areas of interest such as politics, the State, and especially, legitimacy. What this dominating perspective omits is the human agency, the social action *on* violence, involved in the naming and delegitimization of many forms of violence previously unrecognized as such. In line with Schinkel’s argument about the paradoxical logic by which the State would lose its core function without the existence of private violence, which is the spontaneously “active” violence juxtaposed to the “reactive” violence of the State (Schinkel 2010, 31–32), Pearce argues that social action on violence can at least begin a process of reconceptualizing the State and political life as possible without violence. As she demonstrates, this involves an iterative process involving new emerging sensibilities to violence leading to social action on violence and to recognition as “violence” of varied acts of somatic harm previously not named as such. As a result, violence itself can be seen as a tractable human problem rather than an ontological one that is constitutive of politics and the State.

### 2.2. A Radical Micro-sociological Approach

A second theory-building strategy consists of what has become known as radical micro-sociology of violence. The term “situation” or “situational dynamic” has come to play a key role in this particular cluster of sociological research on violence.

Especially since Randall Collins published *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory* in 2008, we have witnessed a tremendous upsurge of theoretical and methodological approaches that are particularly concerned with micro-interactional dynamics of violence. Drawing on Collins's main argument that whether violence takes place is determined not so much (if at all) by what might be called causal or background factors, but by interactional dynamics in antagonistic encounters between co-present actors, these approaches stress the importance of situational factors that enable individuals to commit violence and that shape the specific forms of violent interaction. First of all, for violence to take place, social actors need to circumvent the barrier of confrontational tension and fear, which automatically arise in face-to-face situations of antagonistic confrontation. One of the most important results of these programmatic endeavors, which might be referred to as micro-sociological situational approaches to violence, has been a challenge to established theories and methods – in particular macro-reductionist accounts such as background explanations or various forms of micro-reductionist perspectives focusing on, for instance, personality traits or psycho-pathologies (Collins 2008, 23).

According to Collins, there are five main pathways to circumvent the barrier of confrontational tension and fear: (1) attacking the weak, especially a person or group that is emotionally dominated; (2) social support from a coordinated group of fighters; (3) fighting in front of an audience; (4) violence without face confrontation, for instance, striking at a distance, especially with military weapons; and (5) clandestine attack, “where the attacker pretends there is no confrontation until the very last minute; this is the technique of suicide bombers, and more traditionally Mafia assassins who lure their victim into an unguarded moment and attack at close range and from behind” (Collins 2017, 2). Isabel Bramsen's contribution generally supports – but also critically assesses – Collins's typology of the five main pathways. Challenging Collins's assertion that violence is preceded by emotional dominance and his insistence on the one-sided or asymmetrical character of the situational dynamics of violent interaction, Bramsen shows how violence can also be considered a reciprocal ritual without being subsumable to pathway two (support from a coordinated group

of fighters) or three (fighting in front of an audience). She argues that once violence breaks out it tends to acquire its own self-perpetuating action-reaction mechanism, whereas emotional domination of the situation becomes less important. Bramsen's paper is part of a recent trend in the field of research into violence focusing on visual data such as photographs and video recordings of violent events, for example in the context of riots or political demonstrations. Based on video material from the uprisings in Bahrain, Tunisia, and Syria as well as interviews with activists, opposition politicians, and journalists from the three selected countries, she argues that “violence can be considered an interaction ritual in its own right, with similar characteristics as solidarity interaction; that is, rhythmic entrainment and mirroring the actions of the other part” (Bramsen 2017, 2).

Michel Naepels sets out to apply a combined micro and macro perspective on one particular violent situation, specifically a murder that took place in New Caledonia in 2012. The paper situates itself in the tradition of historical anthropology and argues – at once with and against Collins – that the study of violence would particularly benefit from focusing more on specific historical contexts, in order to explain the social relations constituting the internal dynamics of situations in which violence unfolds. Regarding the internal dynamics of the violent situation his paper focuses on, Naepels places strong emphasis on the significance of *ambiguity*. The indications are that neither side of the confrontational encounter described in the paper really wants a murder. However, as the author clearly fleshes out, the ambiguity of the situation might add to the emotional tension of confrontational interactions, and can itself become a trigger in potentially violent situations. Roger Gould (2003) was one of the first to systematically elaborate the crucial role of ambiguity in violent encounters (in his case, ambiguity about social rank). The murder in New Caledonia that Naepels meticulously describes is a revelatory case for exploring what happens at moments of ambiguity on different social scales, as the author draws an insightful parallel between the ambiguity of a conversational interaction on the micro-situational level and the ambiguity on the macro-structural level of segmentary kinship: although lineages may unite to

fight common enemies, they also divide to fight each other in certain structurally fraught situations.

Randall Collins offers a unique perspective on how to aggregate from micro-interactional processes to macro patterns of violence. His main argument is that micro and macro are not ontologically different but that macro is always composed of micro events, covering long periods of time and large spaces. Collins shows how attrition conflicts can emerge out of micro situations and how the extensiveness of attrition conflicts, in turn, plays out in series of connected micro atrocities. Collins's paper concisely argues that the crucial question of how macro patterns of violence are empirically composed of micro-situational dynamics of violent interaction can only be addressed by showing how techniques of overcoming confrontational tension and fear are learned in different social and institutional contexts or simply spread by imitation. It can be argued that for Collins's theory this aspect constitutes the essential empirical link between micro and macro, and that therefore its analytical focus on the micro-situational level necessarily transcends the social situation as such. For the interactional setting in which violence unfolds is always conceived here as a complex configuration of (a) micro-situational encounters of co-present actors embedded within (b) patterns of social interaction or social practices (that is, the social contexts in which techniques of overcoming confrontational tension and fear can be learned), which are, in turn, embedded in (c) durable social relationships and moral boundaries (for example, varying forms of group organization or reputation system across time and space). From the conceptual angle proposed in his paper, micro and macro are thus of the same stuff, constituting a micro-macro continuum. However, establishing methodological links between them, that is, empirical relationships between intensive detail of micro-interactional dynamics of violent interaction and extensive overview analyses of macro trends requires systematic zooming in and out of this conceptual lens along these different levels of analysis.

### 2.3. The Processual Turn in Violence Research

The third body of literature is primarily concerned with collective violence and aims at examining violent events such as

genocides, revolutions, violent demonstrations, or riots as processual, rather than a static, phenomena. It is impossible to outline the basic explanatory perspective of this approach without conjuring up the name of Charles Tilly. Before Tilly began publishing on phenomena of collective violence such as the French Revolution (Tilly 1964), most sociologists treated collective violence as a pathological phenomenon. That is, collective violence had mostly been addressed through the so-called strain and breakdown theories of collective behavior. These theories broadly emphasized macrostructural changes leading to a weakening of social constraints, resulting in the social psychological condition – alienation, deprivation, or disaffiliation – that led people to norm-violating behaviors, like violence (Smelser 1959; Gurr 1970).

This line of research placed strong emphasis on cultural cohesion and irrational actors, and violent behavior as such tended to appear as the result of deficits in the internalization of integrative norms and values or, in other words, of social disintegration. Tilly begins from a very different set of assumptions: “He treats conflicts between different groups as an inevitable feature of social life and argues that collective violence typically arises when groups act to defend or extend their own interests – however they are conceived – against others. Hence collective violence, far from being an irrational outburst of anomic and disturbed social marginals, is usually the consequence of purposeful collective action of a constituted group of some kind” (Sewell 1990, 528). From this perspective, incidents of collective violence become indicators of the basic power struggles, fundamental loyalties, and social ties in a given context of social order. Or as Sewell puts it: “Tilly has demonstrated that the study of violence leads straight to the most basic processes of social change” (ibid.).

The research perspective that Tilly stands for in his numerous works is closely related to what came to be known as resource mobilization theories (McCarthy and Zald 1977). This branch of social movement scholarship, which arose in the late 1970s, stresses rational, agency-oriented collective action wherein solidarity, resources, and organizational interests displace deterministic factors on the macro level. Political process theory (or the concept of political opportunity structure) was likewise crucial for this theoretical adjustment (Buechler

2004). By substituting the concepts of political opportunities and organizational interests for those of breakdown and strain, these theorists stressed the importance of social movements' organizational capacity to mobilize different sorts of (initially material, then also immaterial) resources when the political context appeared to provide opportunities for redress (Tilly 1978; McAdam et al. 1996). It is in this particular context of theory development that the contentious politics paradigm comes up as a fine-grained framework to analyze recurrent relational mechanisms of political conflicts that can sporadically tip toward violence (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). In a similar vein, and to some extent drawing on this line of research, scholars of political violence started during the 1980s to stress processual perspectives on terrorist groups and their militant actions, alongside the particular dynamics of radicalization and violent escalation (Neidhardt 1981; della Porta and Tarrow 1986; della Porta 1995). Their main argument regarding the distinctiveness of violence refers to what might be called the self-reinforcing dynamics of violent processes: "It seems that the crucial factors/dynamics are found not in individual or societal predispositions, but in process trajectories in which various conditions shape a system of action, and which, in circular interaction, affect each other and themselves" (Neidhardt 1981, 244, quoted from Malthaner 2017, 2). From this angle, while environmental conditions and individual predispositions might impinge on violent processes at the outset, the latter are always driven and shaped by social dynamics that they themselves generate, thereby transforming initial conditions and changing motivational structures and patterns of cognition.

The fifth and last contribution to this focus section situates itself within this broader trend towards processual analyses. More precisely, Stefan Malthaner's paper can be situated within a new body of literature on political violence that seeks to come to terms with the processual and relational dynamics of radicalization and political violence by strengthening the methodological links between social movement approaches and the study of violence, terrorism, and political extremism (Blee 2017; Bosi, Demetriou, and Malthaner 2014; della Porta 2008, 2012, 2013; della Porta and LaFree 2012; Snow and Byrd 2007). Malthaner critically points out how, despite the

striking analytical benefits of this recent trend, this methodological shift remained largely disconnected from recent developments in the sociology of violence – among them, in particular, the micro-sociological situational approaches advanced most prominently by Randall Collins. Against this background, Malthaner argues that the theoretical value of the radical micro-sociological perspective for a genuinely processual approach to political violence is twofold: "Firstly, it allows us to capture unintended outcomes of situational interactions – the way violent encounters develop a 'logic of their own', which can account for the sudden emergence or escalation of violence – thus shedding light on the micro-contingencies that shape broader processes of political conflict. Secondly, and somewhat counter-intuitively, I argue that situational interaction approaches provide analytical tools to refine our understanding of meso-level processual dynamics by examining how they shape and 'produce' situational conditions and constraints that facilitate and induce violent escalation" (Malthaner 2017, 1-2). Malthaner shows how a micro-sociological focus on violent events can considerably enhance our understanding of meso processes, and that it is therefore high time that the dialogue between the second and the third body of literature became systematically consolidated.

### 3. Concluding Remarks

The main challenge of addressing violence in the social sciences today is to apply non-reductionist methodological approaches that can, at the same time, be grounded in a theoretical approach to violence as a research subject in its own right. In line with this journal's emphasis on interdisciplinary discourse and methodological pluralism, this focus section seeks to address this challenge by strengthening the dialogue between different bodies of literature that provide suitable theoretical approaches and methodological choices for this ambitious endeavor. By synthesizing these literatures, the focus section aims to draw upon insights from social theory and recent developments in the sociology of violence on the one hand, and combine methodological approaches that transcend both micro- and macro-reductionist accounts on the other. In doing so, it addresses a significant lack of sociological research on violence and offers analytical perspectives for



coming to terms with one of the most conspicuous shortcomings in social scientific appraisals of violence: the tendency to treat it as a primarily moral or political problem, instead of conceiving violence as a social fact (Hartmann 2014b). The notion of a “social fact” refers to the Durkheimian idea of the “coercion” of the social upon the individual. The endeavor of redefining this aspect from the angle of contemporary social theory and of methodologically examining crucial aspects of violent interaction on the macro, meso, and micro level not only aims at elaborating on the dynamic interplay between exteriority (society) and interiority (individual), as do numerous approaches in the social sciences in general, but rather takes the *social group* as the lynchpin of sociological analysis of violence (Hartmann 2014a, 2016, 2017). Social facts are characterized by two interrelated modes of empirical existence. One is located in the mind-body complex of individuals (for example affects, emotions, or cognitions such as motives) while the other is situated on a collective level (for example shared representations, social practices, forms of social control). Thus, conceiving violence as a social fact means that it has to be analyzed within a framework that emphasizes the dynamic relations between individual behavior and group-making social processes. Moreover, it means systematically elaborating on the argument that the impact of these relations upon social actors and their behavior is achieved through collective representations of one’s own position or place in society. Hopefully this volume can initiate further steps in that direction.

## References

- Blee, Kathleen. 2017. How the Study of White Supremacism is Helped and Hindered by Social Movement Research. *Mobilization* 22 (1): 1–15.
- Bosi, Lorenzo, Chares Demetriou, and Stefan Malthaner, eds. 2014. *Dynamics of Political Violence: A Process-Oriented Perspective on Radicalisation and the Escalation of Political Conflict*. Farnham and London: Ashgate.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1997. *Méditations pascaliennes*. Paris: Seuil.
- Bramsen, Isabel. 2017. How Violence Breeds Violence: Micro-dynamics and Reciprocity of Violent Interaction in the Arab Uprisings. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 11:1–11. doi: 10.4119/UNIBI/ijcv.625
- Buechler, Steven M. 2004. The Strange Career of Strain and Breakdown Theories of Collective Action. In *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, 47–66. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bufacchi, Vittorio, ed. 2011. *Rethinking Violence*. London: Routledge.
- Campbell, Bradley. 2011. Genocide as a Matter of Degree. *British Journal of Sociology* 62 (4): 586–612.
- Campbell, Bradley. 2013. Genocide and Social Time. *Dilemas: Revista de Estudos de Conflito e Controle Social* 6 (3): 465–88.
- Carlson, Julie A., and Elisabeth Weber, eds. 2012. *Speaking About Torture*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Collins, Randall. 2008. *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Collins, Randall. 2017. Two violent trajectories on the micro-macro continuum: emotional tipping-point conflicts, and dispersed attrition conflict. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 11:1–7. doi: 10.4119/UNIBI/ijcv.628
- Crenshaw, Martha. 2011. *Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes, and Consequences*. London and New York: Routledge.
- della Porta, Donatella. 1995. *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- della Porta, Donatella. 2008. Research on Social Movements and Political Violence. *Qualitative Sociology* 31 (3): 221–30.
- della Porta, Donatella. 2012. Social Movement Studies and Political Violence. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence*, ed. Marie Breen-Smyth, 243–60. Farnham and London: Ashgate.
- della Porta, Donatella. 2013. *Clandestine Political Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- della Porta, Donatella, and Sydney Tarrow. 1986. “Unwanted Children”: Political Violence and the Cycle of Protest in Italy, 1966–1973. *European Journal of Political Research* 14 (5–6): 607–32.
- della Porta, Donatella, and Gary LaFree. 2012. Guest Editorial: Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 6 (1): 4–10.
- Dorronsoro, Gilles, and Olivier Grojean. 2014. *Identity, Conflict and Politics in Turkey, Iran and Pakistan*. London: Hurst.
- Elias, Norbert. 2000. *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, rev. ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Endreß, Martin, and Benjamin Rapp, eds. 2013. *Violence – Phenomenological Contributions*. *Human Studies* 36 (1). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Galtung, Johan. 1969. Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (3): 167–91.
- Gerlach, Christian. 2010. *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gould, Roger. 2003. *Collision of Wills: How Ambiguity about Social Rank Breeds Conflict*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Gurr, Ted R. 1970. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hartmann, Eddie, ed. 2014a. *Violence et sciences sociales: Plaidoyer pour un relationisme méthodologique*. *Revue de synthèse* 135 (4).
- Hartmann, Eddie. 2014b. Ordre social, légitimité et violence: La violence physique comme ‘fait social’. *Revue de Synthèse* 135 (4): 297–330.
- Hartmann, Eddie. 2016. Symbolic Boundaries and Collective Violence. A New Theoretical Argument for an Explanatory Sociology of Collective Violent Action. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 46 (2): 165–86.
- Hartmann, Eddie. 2017. In the Zone of Spoiled Civil Identity. The Riots in Suburban France in 2005. In *The Transformation of Citizenship*, vol. 3: *Struggle, Resistance, and Violence*, ed. Jürgen Mackert and Bryan S. Turner, 39–55. London and New York: Routledge.
- Imbusch, Peter. 2017. “Strukturelle Gewalt”: Plädoyer für einen unterschätzten Begriff. *Mittelweg* 3626 (3): 28–51.
- Inheteen, Katharina. 2011. Towards a Body Sociology of Torture. In *On Cruelty*, ed. Trutz von Trotha and Jakob Rösel, 377–87. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Jones, Gareth A., and Dennis Rogers, eds. 2009. *Youth Violence in Latin America: Gangs and Juvenile Justice in Perspective*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kilby, Jane, and Larry Ray, ed. 2014. *Special Issue: Violence and Society: Toward a New Sociology*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell and The Sociological Review.
- Malešević, Siniša. 2010. *The Sociology of War and Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malthaner, Stefan. 2017. Processes of Political Violence and the Dynamics of Situational Interaction. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 11: 1–10. doi: 10.4119/UNIBI/ijcv.627

- Manning, Jason. 2014. Suicide and Social Time. *Dilemas: Revista de Estudos de Conflito e Controle Social* 8 (1): 97–126.
- McAdam, Doug. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds. 1996. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McAdam, Doug, Sydney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2001. *Dynamics of Contention*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald. 1977. Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory. *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (6): 1212–41.
- Neidhardt, Friedhelm. 1981. Über Zerfall, Eigendynamik und Institutionalisierbarkeit absurder Prozesse: Notizen am Beispiel einer terroristischen Gruppe. In *Soziologie in weltbürgerlicher Absicht: Festschrift für René König zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Heine von Alemann and Hans P. Thurn, 243–57. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Olzak, Susan. 2006. *The Global Dynamics of Racial and Ethnic Mobilization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Owens, Peter B., Yang Su, and David A. Snow. 2012. Social Scientific Inquiry Into Genocide and Mass Killing: From Unitary Outcome to Complex Processes. *Annual Review of Sociology* 39:69–84.
- Ray, Larry J. 2011. *Violence and Society*. London: Sage.
- Reemtsma, Jan Philipp. 2012. *Trust and Violence: An Essay on a Modern Relationship*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Schinkel, Willem. 2010. *Aspects of Violence: A Critical Theory*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Schlichte, Klaus. 2014. When “The Facts” Become a Text: Reinterpreting War with Serbian War Veterans. *Revue de synthèse* 135 (4): 361–84.
- Schlichte, Klaus, and Ulrich Schneckener. 2015. Armed Groups and the Politics of Legitimacy. *Civil Wars* 17 (4): 409–24.
- Sewell, William H. 1990. Collective Violence and Collective Loyalties in France: Why the French Revolution Made a Difference. *Politics and Society* 18 (4): 527–52.
- Shaw, Martin. 2007. *What Is Genocide?* Cambridge: Polity.
- Smelser, Neil J. 1959. *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution: An Application of Theory to the British Cotton Industry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Snow, David A., and Scott C. Byrd. 2007. Ideology, Framing Processes, and Islamic Terrorist Movements. *Mobilization* 12 (2): 119–136.
- Staudigl, Michael. 2013. Introduction: Topics, Problems, and Potentials of a Phenomenological Analysis of Violence. In *Phenomenologies of Violence*, ed. Michael Staudigl, 1–32. Leiden: Brill.
- Staudigl, Michael. 2015. *Phänomenologie der Gewalt*. Heidelberg: Springer.
- Tilly, Charles. 1964. *The Vendée*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Tilly, Charles. 2003. *The Politics of Collective Violence*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Walby, Sylvia. 2013. Violence and Society: Introduction to an Emerging Field of Sociology. *Current Sociology* 61 (2): 95–111.
- Weinstein, Jeremy. 2007. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wieviorka, Michel. 2009. *Violence: A New Approach*. London: Sage.