

## Editorial: 2019

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Rigorous, cross-disciplinary research on conflict and violence is as important as ever. Persistent levels of interpersonal violence, the devastating effects of protracted social conflicts, and ongoing efforts to bring about peace and reconciliation all demand robust, ethical scholarship. Submissions to the Journal demonstrate that the research field is in good health and underscore the appetite for cross-disciplinary, internationally-focused research on conflict and violence, and the range of related phenomena such as radicalization, aggression, peace, and extremism. It also remains clear that maintaining an open access, freely available repository for this research is vital in ensuring that people working in this field are able to easily engage with the most up to date scholarship.

Over the past year the Journal has received submissions from scholars across the world working in disciplines including anthropology, economics, political science, international relations, social psychology, sociology and beyond. It is therefore with great pleasure we welcome Prof. Philipp Süßenbach, Professor of Social Psychology and Personality at the University of Applied Sciences of SMEs (FHM) to the Editorial Board. Philipp further strengthens the Editorial Board, and along with our Consulting Editors, means the Journal is able to maintain high levels of scholarship across the range of fields our contributors work in.

## Volume 12: Open Section

The Open Section for 2018 illustrates the breadth and depth of research on conflict and violence. Papers vary in the scope of disciplines they engage with from those clearly defined by particular disciplines such as psychology, to those that combine insights from different fields such as natural science and terrorism studies. Articles also underscore the international focus of the Journal, with contributions focusing on Turkey, Bhutan, Israel, China, Spain, and Germany, as well as those that take a broader comparative approach to specific subjects such as terrorism or place.

The papers in Volume 12 illustrate the ongoing interest in questions of narrative and memory since the ‘narrative turn’ in the social and human sciences. Three of the eight papers focus explicitly on how stories and memories associated with conflict can be powerful vehicles for understanding the potential for reconciliation. Line Kikkenborg Christensen (2018) relied on ethnographic work to examine how narratives about the ethnic conflict in Bhutan influence social relations. Christensen argued that the authorities’ efforts to silence narratives about the conflict have led to a social rift between them and the people, informed by a lack of information and democratic debate. The paper further proposes that a rift has developed among the Bhutanese people due to the limited opportunities to discuss and debate different perspectives about the conflict. Joanna Bocheńska (2018) examined the role of narrative in reconciliation by exploring the scope for Kurdish literary narratives and culture to change Turkish ideas about the Kurds. Bocheńska proposed that Kurdish literature has the potential to ‘humanize’ the Kurds, enabling others to recognize different perspectives and thereby encourage intergroup contact. In time there is the possibility this could facilitate reconciliation.

Looking at the impact of collective memory on intergroup processes in Israel, Ariely (2018) explored the relationship between perceptions about the lessons of the Holocaust and attitudes toward contemporary issues. Ariely found that those who believed the Holocaust was a unique genocide specific to the Jewish people held more exclusionary views about those seeking asylum. In contrast, those who held universalist views, believing that the Holocaust was significant for all of humankind, were more accepting of asylum seekers. The study also found that these attitudes could be influenced. When presented with universalist texts, participants were less negative towards asylum seekers and less opposed to providing medical care to wounded Syrians.

Taking a historical approach to the question of intergroup violence, Herreros and Domenech (2018) investigated the impact of pre-war grievances on violence directed at civilians

in the Spanish Civil War. The paper argues that two conditions are important in understanding how violence unfolds: the extent to which grievances against particular groups have been mobilized before the war, and the collapse of state control when war breaks out. These conditions go some way to explaining violence against civilians during the Spanish Civil War and invite further research to determine if these dynamics are influential in other civil wars.

Looking at the individual level of analysis, Bohner and Schapansky's (2018) analysis of law students' assessments of rape victim's statements illustrates the impact of modern myths about sexual aggression. Replicating previous experiments, the authors found that those who accepted modern rape myths were likely to consider victims less credible, more to blame, and assess the impact of the rape to be less severe and easier to recover from. Extending previous work, the authors also assessed the impact of the victim's emotional state. Female participants who accepted rape myths found victim statements portrayed with sadness were more credible than angry or neutral statements. This illustrates the perhaps greater impact of internal beliefs rather than external factors on judgements about rape victims.

Recognizing the importance of cultural understanding in efforts to bring about peace, Yang (2018) set out a typology of different schools of Chinese thought about conflict resolution. After describing the philosophies, methods, and principles reflected in these traditions, Yang's study reports the findings of a survey of Chinese respondents about their views on these different methods. Findings illustrate that although all eight approaches were employed in China, there was greatest support for methods associated with Confucianism.

Two very different papers push disciplinary boundaries to ask broad questions about violence. Exploring the potential of an approach initially developed to explain how nature works, Barabash and Zhukov (2018) applied 'self-organized criticality' to terrorism incidents from across the world between 1970 and 2014, concluding that this was a useful way of interpreting the scope and dynamics of terrorist attacks. Amanda Kearney (2018) sought to go beyond existing disciplinary traditions to better understand Indigenous epistemological perspectives on violence and place. Through the model of kincentricity, an approach which recognizes that human and non-human life share a common heritage and powerful connection, the paper looks at the impact of violence

on place. Discussing the physical destruction of place, its social disordering and de-signification, and ecological decline and toxicity, the paper demonstrates how these are made possible by particular epistemological traditions that are contrary to Indigenous ways of understanding and relating to place.

### Volume 12: Focus Section

The 2018 Focus Section is dedicated to questions of radicalization and terrorism. The section is the result of an international symposium held in Hannover in 2016 on the "Processes of Radicalization and Polarization in the Context of Transnational Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Research and Public Implications". Concentrating on Islamist radicalization, the eight papers cover the causes of extremism, the impact on societies, and how terrorism might be countered. As Ayanian, Böckler, Doosje and Zick (2018) argue in their introduction, there is much to learn about radicalization and terrorism. This effort is greatly aided by a cross-disciplinary approach that draws on different methodological and conceptual traditions to interpret why and how terrorism emerges.

Two papers looking at the causes of radicalization take a relational approach to explaining how people become involved in extremism. O'Connor, Malthaner, and Lindekilde (2018) examined the interpersonal mechanisms and processes that shape how violent dyads, or radicalised pairs of individuals, behave. They argue that despite such dyads operating in the context of wider radical milieus, it is the intense relationship between the two individuals that shapes the move to violence. Looking at the relational processes at work in specific neighbourhoods, Hüttermann (2018) undertook an in-depth examination of the 'Lohberg Brigade', a group of around 20 people who travelled from Germany to fight in Syria and Iraq. The paper argues that place-space relations help interpret radicalization processes. Rather than looking for individual social features, Hüttermann directed attention to the importance of emergent, long-term social processes that see narratives about discrimination, conspiracy theories, spirituality and gender roles create the context for violent mobilisation.

In a paper that looks both to the causes of radicalization, and efforts to counter it, McCauley (2018) set out a series of pieces of evidence that help understand the relationship between Western foreign policy, radicalization and deradicalization. This includes a poll of Muslims in the United States and

Europe which found that grievances about Western foreign policy and perceived discrimination predict the belief that the war on terrorism is a war on Islam. Further evidence from research on those working with violent extremists (Marsden, 2017) found that practitioners acknowledged and addressed the issue of foreign policy in the effort to support disengagement. In research that examined how interactions between identity groups inform attitudes towards political violence, Obaidi, Thomsen and Bergh (2018) undertook a series of experiments to understand the role of meta-cultural threat. They found that both Muslims' and non-Muslims' perceptions about the symbolic threat to their own culture from the outgroup increases support for political violence against the outgroup.

Efforts to counter extremism are addressed by three papers in the Focus Section. From a communications perspective, Schmitt, Rieger, Ernst and Roth (2018) examined the CONTRA school programme which aims to develop critical media literacy through awareness, reflection and empowerment. They found that programme effectiveness is likely to be enhanced when undertaken in school settings by trained teachers willing to engage with the complex and sensitive nature of extremist material. A paper by Frischlich, Rieger, Morten and Bente (2018) uncovered the role of narrativity in propaganda videos by far-right and Islamist extremists and those made to counter them. The impact of story-telling and narrative was found to be significant in both pro and anti-extremist material. Narrativity increased the persuasive appeal of the videos, and participants' identification and cognitive engagement with them, as well as increasing the perceived attractiveness of extremists, and amplifying people's intentions about the material. Looking in detail at the experience of those working in the countering violent extremism (CVE) space, Lehane (2018) relied on thirty interviews with practitioners. The paper reveals the importance of their personal experiences and resources in carving out a space in the CVE industry for themselves. Practitioners draw on their biography rather than government policy to inform their work, and in doing so find ways of navigating the frustrations and challenges they encounter in the face of what they perceive to be poor policy and limited resources.

Finally, Doosje, van der Veen and Klaver (2018) examined the impact of terrorism on levels of political, institutional and social trust to learn whether societies can experience post-traumatic growth following attacks. Drawing on data from

over 75,000 people who responded to the European Social Survey, they found that overall, neither political or social trust are significantly affected by terrorist attacks, and whilst institutional trust dips immediately following an attack, over the following year it increases again. Looking at the individual country level profiles reveals that some states do reflect a post-traumatic growth pattern. It is the job of future research to explore why this might be the case so that we might better understand how societies respond to large-scale violence.

The research represented in the Focus Section illustrates the vibrant nature of contemporary work on political violence. It also demonstrates the benefits of having an outlet able to accommodate a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives. Contributions from psychology, urban and political sociology, as well as media and communication, underline the benefits of bringing together disciplinary perspectives to understand complex social phenomena such as radicalization.

The papers that have already been published in the 2019 Open Section demonstrate the Journal's commitment to bringing different regional and disciplinary perspectives into dialogue. Contributions on regional instability in the Lake Chad region (Obamamoye, 2019), and the dynamics of xenophobic violence in South Africa (Misago, 2019) will be joined by papers that look at questions of conflict and violence in Asia, Europe, and North America. The Editorial Board members are very much looking forward to continuing to provide a platform for this work to extend understanding of some of the most pressing social and political issues of our times.

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