

# International Journal of Conflict and Violence

## Vol. 3 (1) 2009

**Editorial** (p. 3)

**Focus:**

**General Theory of Violence**

Guest Editors:

Manuel Eisner and  
Susanne Karstedt

**Introduction: Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?**

Susanne Karstedt / Manuel Eisner (pp. 4 – 8)

**Micro and Macro Theories of Violence** Randall Collins (pp. 9 – 22)

**Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime** Richard B. Felson (pp. 23 – 39)

**The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues**

Manuel Eisner (pp. 40 – 59)

**Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?**

Charles Tittle (pp. 60 – 74)

**Violence as Situational Action** Per-Olof H. Wikström / Kyle Treiber (pp. 75 – 96)

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence** Martin Shaw (pp. 97 – 106)

**Open Section**

**Understanding the Other's 'Understanding' of Violence** Marcel M. Baumann (pp. 107 – 123)

**Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics**

Renate Möller / Uwe Sander / Arne Schäfer / Dirk Villányi / Matthias D. Witte (pp. 124 – 142)

**International Journal of Conflict and Violence – IJCv**

The International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCv) is a peer-reviewed periodical for scientific exchange and public dissemination of the latest academic research on conflict and violence. The subjects on which the IJCv concentrates have always been the subject of interest in many different areas of academic life. Consequently, the journal encompasses contributions from a wide range of disciplines including sociology, political science, education, social psychology, criminology, ethnology, history, political philosophy, urban studies, economics, and the study of religions. The IJCv is open-access: All text of the IJCv is subject to the terms of the Digital Peer Publishing Licence. The IJCv is published twice a year, in spring and in fall. Each issue will focus on one specific topic while also including articles on other issues.

**Editors**

Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Heitmeyer (Editor-in-Chief), University of Bielefeld  
 Prof. Douglas S. Massey, Ph.D., Princeton University  
 Prof. Steven F. Messner, Ph.D., University of Albany, NY  
 Prof. Dr. James Sidanius, Harvard University  
 Prof. Dr. Michel Wieviorka, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris

**Advisory Board**

Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal, Ph.D. (Tel Aviv University)  
 Prof. Tore Bjørge, Ph.D. (Norwegian Police University College, Oslo)  
 Prof. Ronald Crelinsten, Ph.D. (University of Victoria)  
 Prof. Robert D. Crutchfield, Ph.D. (University of Washington, Seattle)  
 Prof.ssa Donatella della Porta, Ph.D. (European University Institute, Firenze)  
 Dr. Julia Eckert (Institute for Social Anthropology, University of Zurich)  
 Dr. Manuel Eisner (University of Cambridge)  
 Prof. Richard B. Felson, Ph.D. (Pennsylvania State University)  
 Prof. Gideon Fishman, Ph.D. (University of Haifa)  
 Prof. Ted Robert Gurr, Ph.D. (University of Maryland)  
 Prof. Dr. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (University of Bielefeld)  
 Prof. Miles Hewstone, Ph.D. (University of Oxford)  
 Prof. Mark Juergensmeyer, Ph.D. (University of California, Santa Barbara)  
 Prof. Dr. Barbara Krahe (University of Potsdam)  
 Prof. Gary LaFree, Ph.D. (University of Maryland)  
 Prof. Didier Lapeyronnie (Université Paris-Sorbonne)  
 Dr. Nonna Mayer (Centre de Recherches Politiques de Sciences Po, Paris)  
 Prof. Dr. Herfried Münkler (Humboldt University of Berlin)  
 Prof. Dr. Friedhelm Neidhardt (Social Science Research Center Berlin)  
 Prof. Thomas Pettigrew, Ph.D. (University of California Santa Cruz, CA)  
 Prof. Leung Ping-kwan, Ph.D. (Lingnan University, Hongkong)  
 Prof. Gonzalo Sánchez Gómez, Ph.D. (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogota)  
 Prof. Peer Scheepers, Ph.D. (Radboud University Nijmegen)  
 Prof. Dr. Helmut Thome (Martin-Luther-University of Halle-Wittenberg)  
 Prof. Jorge Vala (Universidade de Lisboa)  
 Prof. Dr. Loïc Wacquant (University of California, Berkeley)  
 Prof. Dr. Ulrich Wagner (Philipps-University of Marburg)  
 Prof. Dr. Andreas Zick (University of Bielefeld)

**Editorial Staff (University of Bielefeld)**

Stefan Malthaner, M.A.  
 Dipl.-Soz. Julia Marth  
 Dr. Kurt Salentin  
 Dr. Peter Sitzer

**Editorial Office**

Julia Marth  
 University of Bielefeld  
 Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence  
 P.O. Box 100131  
 33615 Bielefeld  
 Germany  
 editorial.office@ijcv.org  
 www.ijcv.org

**Copy-Editing**

Meredith Dale, Berlin  
 medale@t-online.de

**Design by**

meier stracke gbr, büro für gestaltung  
 Ernst-Rein-Str. 40  
 33613 Bielefeld  
 Germany  
 post@meier-stracke.de  
 www.meier-stracke.de

**Typesetting**

Florian Rudt  
 florian.rudt@uni-bielefeld.de

---

# Editorial

## Letter from the editors

For more than two years now the *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* has been publishing the latest findings from the field of research on conflict and violence. The decision to launch an exclusively online journal providing free content to anyone who was interested seemed risky in the beginning. Our concerns have proven unfounded. Our traffic and download statistics show not only that our readership continues to increase steadily over time, but also that one of our main target groups—scientists from less developed countries and regions—can actually be reached, both as readers and authors.

The positive development of the *IJCV* was of course a welcome topic at the Journal's annual Editorial and Advisory Board Meeting this April in Lisbon. We also discussed strengthening the interdisciplinary approach of the Journal and the possibility of holding international multidisciplinary conferences whose scope extends beyond aspects relevant for the Journal, only to stimulate the development of research on conflict and violence in general. We are confident that *IJCV*'s high profile will gain further importance through such initiatives in the future.

The present issue continues our series of guest-edited focus sections. Manuel Eisner and Susanne Karstedt have put together an impressive range of articles on the question "Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?" We are most grateful for the commitment and effort they have put into it.

April 2009

Wilhelm Heitmeyer    Douglas S. Massey    Steven F. Messner    James Sidanius    Michel Wieviorka

## Introduction:

# Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?

Susanne Karstedt, School of Sociology and Criminology, Keele University, United Kingdom

Manuel Eisner, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

“There once was a man who aspired to be the author of the general theory of holes. When asked ‘What kind of hole—holes dug by children in the sand for amusement, holes dug by gardeners to plant lettuce seedlings, tank traps, holes made by road makers?’ he would reply indignantly that he wished for a general theory that would explain all of these. He rejected ab initio the—as he saw it—pathetically common-sense view that of the digging of different kinds of holes there are quite different kinds of explanations to be given; why then he would ask do we have the concept of a hole? Lacking the explanations to which he originally aspired, he then fell to discovering statistically significant correlations; he found for example that there is a correlation between the aggregate hole-digging achievement of a society as measured, or at least one day to be measured, by econometric techniques, and its degree of technological development. The United States surpasses both Paraguay and Upper Volta in hole-digging; there are more holes in Vietnam than there were. These observations, he would always insist, were neutral and value-free. This man’s achievement has passed totally unnoticed except by me. Had he however turned his talents to political science, had he concerned himself not with holes, but with modernization, urbanization or violence, I find it difficult to believe that he might not have achieved high office in the APSA.” (MacIntyre 1971, 260)

The editors only stumbled upon this quote by the renowned political scientist Alasdair MacIntyre after having sent out the call for contributions to this special issue “Is a general theory of violence possible?”. In fact MacIntyre asked a very similar question in his 1971 article, “Is a science of comparative politics possible?”, and as we can imagine from the above quotation, he was not supportive of any such possibility. The response to our call from leading scholars in the fields of violence research and criminology assured us that even if the authors might have been as sceptical as MacIntyre with regard to the answer, they at least found our question sufficiently interesting.

MacIntyre’s satirical comment on the impossibility of such an endeavor can of course be confronted with equally well-founded arguments to the contrary, that general theories are not only desirable but also feasible. The model behind such thinking is the model of general scientific theories. Things as different as apples and pears, feathers and leaves, bricks and roofs all fall to the ground, yet it was possible to

discover a general “law of falling,” which is still regarded as a major breakthrough and one of the great achievements of science. Both Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton were capable of looking beyond the very different substances and shapes of what fell to the ground to find general principles of “falling.” MacIntyre’s pessimistic view on general theories takes issue with the desirability and possibility of such theories in the social sciences. Reading through his comment and just substituting the term “hole-digging” with “violence” or “crime” reminds us of the different routes that research into violence has taken over recent years, with results presumably as mixed as those found for a theory of “hole-digging.”

However, what is decisive in designing new, better and more comprehensive theories is often the question itself and the way it is asked rather than simply the answers. As various legends have it, Newton was preoccupied not with the differences between the things that fell to the ground, but with the question why they fell to the ground at all. Asking new questions and casting problems in a different way—as

Charles Tittle reminds us in his contribution—is the route to more encompassing and thus more general theories.

Drafting a general theory of violence confronts us with a number of intricate problems that make this a particularly difficult task. From a criminological perspective, the existence of both legal and illegal violence poses a problem. Although violence shares that characteristic with numerous other types of behaviour (e.g. economic behaviour), it seems to be unique in the way it is both an organized and collective activity and a deeply personal one, both rational and emotional. Indeed, what are the common features of wars and domestic violence, of genocide and street robbery, police violence and a pub brawl? What are the commonalities between an armada of warships and a rioting crowd? How can we make sense of macro-level changes over time and differences between societies, and simultaneous micro-level and situational causes of violence? Is human capacity for violent behaviour invariable over time, and only needs to be teased out as the Milgram experiments would suggest? What are the implications of distinct historical and cultural manifestations of violence like concentration camps, terrorism, or blood feuds for a general theory of violence.

Before adopting MacIntyre's pessimistic view on building general theories in the social sciences (and he explicitly mentions violence), it might be useful to start our inquiry by turning to the body of research on violence. In fact we find that different types of violence are quite consistently related to each other: levels of interpersonal violence decrease during and also often after wars; interpersonal and state violence overlap and are related to specific cultural patterns that can be described as collectivistic and non-egalitarian. Harsh and more violent punishment is found in societies with generally higher levels of violence. Poor societies have higher levels of all types of violence, and poor people in rich societies are more often victims of violence. This very arbitrary selection of facts concerning different types of violence would suggest that there are particular links between them, and raises the possibility of the existence of common mechanisms. That would point towards the possibility and feasibility of a general theory of violence.

However, these empirical observations, of which the authors in this special issue provide many more, bring the difficulties of a general theory of violence to the fore. How can we define violence in a way that encompasses its diverse manifestations and combines them into a singular explanandum for a single theory to explain? From which level should the necessary process of categorization proceed? Should it start from general features of violence, subsuming violence under general categories and theories of behaviour, like rule-bound or instrumental behaviour? Or should it start from unique features and aims of violence like retaliation, revenge, and protection? Should it focus on the micro-level of violent encounters and distil the micro-mechanisms and the micro-management of violence into essential characteristics that apply to all different types of violence? Is it necessary to include intentions, motivation, and harm done into the conceptual framework on which a general theory can be built? Do we need to conceive violence as interaction—even in an age of long-range weapons and nuclear warfare?

The authors in this special issue have all chosen their own route towards a general theory of violence; even if they are sceptical about the endeavour, they give an indication as to the direction and building blocks of such a theory. Consequently, they differ on many of the issues raised above, and often contradict one another. Nor do they concur on the prospects of developing a general theory of violence, though most would entertain the possibility; some are more optimistic, others less. Perhaps Randall Collins best grasps the general mood at the end of his contribution: “We are not nearly in sight of our end, a comprehensive theory of violence in all its forms. But, as Winston Churchill said, we may be at the end of the beginning” (p. 21). Even if a general theory of violence might not be the final achievement, the fine examples of theory building in this issue offer major insights for criminology, sociology, and other social sciences.

From the outset, the authors of this volume take two different routes, which characterize the theories they develop. Randall Collins and Manuel Eisner develop their theoretical approaches outside of general theories of crime, excluding the distinction between legal and illegal violence. Instead they draw on interaction theory (Collins), and

evolutionary theory in a wider sense (Eisner). Martin Shaw rejects the possibility of ahistorical general theories of violence all together. His focus is on organized violence—from war to revolution, genocide, and terrorism—and he argues that understanding these types of crime and their relation to power is decisive for building a general theory of violence. Richard Felson situates a general theory of violent crime within the dual framework of theories of deviance and aggression. He argues that it is of utmost importance to make correct use of both theories when explaining violent crime. The contributions by Charles Tittle and by Per Olof Wikström and Kyle Treiber start from general theories of crime, thus focusing on illegal violence or violent crime. Per Olof Wikström and Kyle Treiber argue that violence can best be understood as moral action, i.e. based on decisions informed by moral rules about the use of violence. Their Situational Action Theory was originally developed as a general theory of crime but applies equally to violence, as on either side of the legal/illegal divide the use of violence implies moral decision-making. Charles Tittle, finally, identifies the stepping stones and building blocks of general theories in the social sciences, on the basis of his study of the development of general theories in criminology and his own Theory of Control Balance. He proposes that a general theory of violence can be built within the framework of general theories of crime.

Notwithstanding their very different approaches, the authors develop their suggestions within the broad framework of theories of action, and—perhaps with the exception of Martin Shaw—take as their starting point the interactional nature of violence. This is most pronounced in the first contribution by Randall Collins, which is based on his latest book: *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory* (2008). He starts from the proposition that violence is a mostly unsuccessful rare event, and therefore a dangerous and risky choice which human beings try to avoid. He builds his analysis on a “key feature of interaction in violence-threatening situations: confrontational tension and fear,” and concludes that these are the dominant emotions in violent interactions. The successful use of violence requires that this fear be overcome, using “pathways” to get around the barriers of tension and fear. He identifies the following strategies: attacking the weak; audience-oriented staged and

controlled fair fights; confrontation-avoiding remote violence; confrontation-avoiding by deception; and confrontation-avoiding by absorption in technique. In his contribution he demonstrates how these interaction patterns apply to the whole range of violence, from domestic violence to fights between gangs and the breakdown of whole armies and societies in the situation of defeat in war.

Manuel Eisner takes the opposite approach to Randall Collins, starting from the rewards of violence. Though violence might be a risky and dangerous choice, it is extrinsically and intrinsically rewarding. Thus violence is instrumental in attaining goals. Eisner bases his argument for a general theory of violence mainly on evolutionary theory, where violence is seen as a mostly successful functional and adaptive strategy of action (in stark contrast to Collins who deems violence to be mostly unsuccessful). Eisner also explores general social theories like Elias’s “Civilization Process” and criminological theories like Sykes and Matza’s “Techniques of Neutralization” and seeks to realign these with evolutionary theory. He draws on a wealth of data from violence research on phenomena as diverse as domestic violence, blood feuds, gang wars, and genocide to demonstrate the commonality of the reward mechanism in these various types of violence.

Richard Felson bridges the divide between crime and violence. He focuses on violent crime, arguing that it implies both harm-doing and rule-breaking. Like Eisner, he sees both behaviors as instrumental, and a rational choice approach as most suitable for building a general theory of violence. As a consequence, theories of deviance/rule-breaking and theories of aggression are both needed if we are to understand violent crime. However, theories of crime are not capable of explaining differences in violent criminal behavior between different individuals or between different groups, and theories of aggression will not help to explain differences between violent and other types of crime. It is therefore important to establish the relationship between crime (including non-violent crime), harm-doing, and violence. Not all crime is intended to harm the victim (predatory perpetrators, at least, are indifferent to the harm caused). Harm is intended mainly in dispute-related violence. Carving out its explanandum through this relation-

ship is a major stepping stone towards a general theory of violence.

Per Olof Wikström and Kyle Treiber define violence as “situational action,” implying that acts of violence are moral actions and therefore need to be explained within a framework that explicitly takes moral decision-making into account. Arguing that violent behaviour is always bound by rules (if not always by moral rules), they propose their Situational Action Theory as a general theory of violence. Situational Action Theory focuses in particular on the regulated nature of violence in societies. Wars, gang violence, and massacres all imply rules, compliance with rules, and also the breaking of rules. It is the regulation of violence that turns a general theory of crime into a general theory of violence.

Charles Tittle explores the possibilities of general theories of misconduct and deviance within a wider framework of the “maneuvers” of theory building. He argues that “general theories explaining misbehavior already exist, although none yet passes the test of adequacy, and that they apply as well to socially disapproved violence as to any other misconduct, making special theories of violence unnecessary” (pp. 62–63). He opens up a tool-box of theory building, focusing on “tools of abstraction” concerning offences, individual perpetrators, and social relationships. He explores different general theories of crime and analyses how they accomplish the different tasks of abstraction. Such theories provide models for building a general theory of violence, which has similar problems of abstraction to solve (like the diversity of manifestations of violence, of intentions and motivations of actors, and of the social relationships in which violence occurs). Tittle’s own Control Balance Theory certainly has the potential to provide the foundation for a general theory of violence, in particular as power relationships and differentials are amongst its conceptual tools. Our

readers will find that the authors indeed use Tittle’s tools of abstraction: Randall Collins focuses on social relationships, and Felson on the offender and his/her intentions, as well as on types of crime and violence.

Martin Shaw is renowned for his work on war and genocide. He has chosen the most exceptional starting point for his explorations of a general theory of crime, arguing that our understanding of violence needs to proceed from “organized violence” and its relation to power. Organized violence is a source of power, but also negates it (Arendt). Shaw discusses war as the archetype of organized violence, and argues that the division between combatants and civilians—though a most recent achievement in human history—is crucial for understanding all types of organized violence. As power relations change so does organized violence, and in his paper Shaw traces the most recent changes in warfare from what he terms “industrialized total war” to “global surveillance war.” In embedding his analysis in the tradition of social-historical theory-building, he is clearly the most pessimistic as to the possibility of a general theory of violence, which would have to span known human history and encompass all societies and cultures.

Even if we are “not nearly in sight of our end, a comprehensive theory of violence” (Collins, p. 21), it was certainly useful and worthwhile to pose the question. Our authors have teased out fresh theoretical approaches, fascinating categorizations, and useful tools of abstraction. The issue brings together theoretical perspectives that have great potential to integrate the most diverse types of violence, perpetrators, and violent interactions. The authors present a wealth of data, and establish new links between the different manifestations of violence. Even if these different approaches are not incorporated into a general theory of violence, each of them certainly contributes to new ways of understanding violence.

### References

- Collins, Randall. 2008. *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Collins, Randall. 2009. "Micro and Macro Causes of Violence." *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3(1): 9–22.
- Eisner, Manuel. 2009. "The Uses of Violence. An Examination of some Cross-cutting Issues." *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3(1): 40–59.
- Felson, Richard B. 2009. "Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime." *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3(1): 23–39.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair C. 1971. *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy*. London: Duckworth.
- Shaw, Martin. 2009. "Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence." *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3(1): 97–106.
- Tittle, Charles. 2009. "Is General Theory of Socially Disapproves Violence Possible (or Necessary)?" *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3(1): 60–74.
- Wikström, Per-Olof and Kyle Treiber. 2009. "Violence as Situational Action." *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3(1): 75–96.

---

**Susanne Karstedt**

s.karstedt@crim.keele.ac.uk

**Manuel Eisner**

mpe23@cam.ac.uk

# Micro and Macro Causes of Violence

Randall Collins, Department of Sociology, University of Pennsylvania, United States

## Vol. 3 (1) 2009

**Editorial** (p. 3)

**Focus:**

**General Theory of Violence**

Guest Editors:

Manuel Eisner and  
Susanne Karstedt

**Introduction: Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?**

Susanne Karstedt / Manuel Eisner (pp. 4 – 8)

► **Micro and Macro Theories of Violence** Randall Collins (pp. 9 – 22)

**Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime** Richard B. Felson (pp. 23 – 39)

**The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues**

Manuel Eisner (pp. 40 – 59)

**Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?**

Charles Tittle (pp. 60 – 74)

**Violence as Situational Action** Per-Olof H. Wikström / Kyle Treiber (pp. 75 – 96)

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence** Martin Shaw (pp. 97 – 106)

**Open Section**

**Understanding the Other's 'Understanding' of Violence** Marcel M. Baumann (pp. 107 – 123)

**Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics**

Renate Möller / Uwe Sander / Arne Schäfer / Dirk Villányi / Matthias D. Witte (pp. 124 – 142)

---

# Micro and Macro Causes of Violence

Randall Collins, Department of Sociology, University of Pennsylvania, United States

The dominant emotion in violence-threatening situations is confrontational tension/fear (*ct/f*), which causes most violence to abort, or to be carried out inaccurately and incompetently. For violence to be successful, there must be a pathway around the barrier of *ct/f*. These pathways include: attacking the weak; audience-oriented staged and controlled fair fights; confrontation-avoiding remote violence; confrontation-avoiding by deception; confrontation-avoiding by absorption in technique. Successfully violent persons, on both sides of the law, are those who have developed these skilled interactional techniques. Since successful violence involves dominating the emotional attention space, only a small proportion of persons can belong to the elite which does most of each type of violence. Macro-violence, including victory and defeat in war, and in struggles of paramilitaries and social movements, is shaped by both material resources and social/emotional resources for maintaining violent organizations and forcing their opponents into organizational breakdown. Social and emotional destruction generally precedes physical destruction.

## 1. Introduction

There are a large number of kinds of violence, and no simple theory will explain all of them. Domestic abuse does not have the same causes as dueling, not to mention player violence in sports, police violence, war, armed robbery, or ethnic massacre. No theory of individual motives for violence will explain much of what actually happens, not only because motivations for violence are diverse, but because most attempts at violence are abortive and most violent actors are incompetent. Socio-demographic categories are very weak predictors of violence, since there are far more persons who are (to name the usual suspects) male, young, or disadvantaged than the number who are violent. Interactionally, committing legitimate violence (such as war or policing) depends on similar processes to illegitimate (criminal) violence; this is another reason why social backgrounds remote from the interactional situation cannot be a general explanation of violence.

How then can we shape a theory that will explain the varieties of violence? My strategy is to begin with a key feature of interaction in violence-threatening situations: confrontational tension and fear (*ct/f*). Using evidence of photographs, physiology, reports of subjective experience, and behavior, I conclude that the dominant emotion in violent confrontations is tension, sometimes rising to the level of paralyzing fear, and almost always making the performance of violent acts inaccurate and incompetent.<sup>1</sup> Most persons in violent situations do little or nothing, and that minority who do shoot or punch often miss their targets, hit innocent bystanders or their own side. Soldiers and police are much more accurate on shooting ranges than they are in actual combat, and the intention to be violent does not itself determine what will happen when there is an actual confrontation. Humans are not naturally good at violence in real-life situations; direct confrontation with human beings produces physiological stress which makes violence largely incompetent. The existence of anger can lead us to overesti-

---

<sup>1</sup> Evidence for my arguments in this paper are found in Collins 2008; for the ubiquity

of fear among combatants and its effects on violence, see also Grossman 2004

mate its causal importance; although anger is a widespread and evolutionarily based emotion, it does not automatically or easily turn into violence. The expression of anger usually is bluster, impassioned gestures which are characteristic of standoffs rather than actual violence.

In this paper, I draw on a larger work on the micro-sociology of violence (Collins 2008). Its emphasis is on how violence happens or fails to happen, in the immediate situations where humans threaten each other in naturalistic settings. It draws heavily on evidence from video recordings, photographs, ethnographic observations, and in-depth interviews, bolstered where possible by historical comparisons and relevant reports in the research literature. It is micro in its emphasis on small slices of time, sometimes on the order of fractions of seconds, and on the emotions, body postures, sounds, and movements, both synchronized and at cross purposes, that make up the details of violent action. In this case, the main part of the theory is in the details, the micro-mechanisms. The book emphasizes, as well, the diversity of kinds of violence. A common thread among them is the existence of *ct/f*, while their diversity comes from the variety of pathways around the barrier of *ct/f* which otherwise keeps threatened violence from happening. A companion volume, now in progress, connects micro-mechanisms of violence with large-scale macro-violence.

The first part of the paper will examine micro-interactional violence: what happens on the level of situations where individuals or groups confront one another. On this basis, the second part will discuss macro-violence, large patterns over time and space.

## 2. Micro Violence

For violence to be successful, persons must find a pathway around the barrier of confrontational tension. There are five such pathways:

1. Attacking the weak.
2. Audience-oriented staged and controlled fair fights.
3. Confrontation-avoiding remote violence.
4. Confrontation-avoiding by deception.
5. Confrontation-avoiding by absorption in technique.

### 2.1. Pathway I: Attacking the weak

Attacking the weak is the most common form of violence. Photographic evidence of the active phase of crowd violence almost invariably shows the crowd split into small clusters, with a group of three to six persons attacking an isolated individual, who has usually fallen to the ground. The pattern is found in many different ethnic combinations all over the world; it applies alike to police violence, and to violence by nationalists, labor, political movements of any ideology, and by sports fans. The most successful form of gang violence is when a rival individual or dyad is caught by a larger group out of their own turf. Most successful violence is thus very one-sided, not so much a fight as a beating. In contrast, when groups confront each other in concentrated numbers, there is typically a standoff confined to bluster, insult, and eventually deescalation through boredom; and the same is generally true when isolated individuals quarrel.

Professional criminals learn techniques of attacking weak victims; the key is not so much physical dominance as finding those who are situationally weak. Muggers learn to approach from behind and to locate a fearful or startled target; successful robbers develop timing, dramatic gestures (including those made with their weapons) in order to catch their victim interactionally off guard, imposing the attacker's momentum on the situation.

Bullying is a long-term, institutionalized form of attacking the weak. Bullies in schools and prisons do not attack popular and socially connected persons but isolates who are emotionally intimidated; the bullying becomes perpetuated as the victim becomes trained into a subservient relationship, which often constitutes that individual's entire social network. As in most violence, success comes more from attacking the emotionally weak than the physically weak.

One spectacularly atrocious form of attacking the weak takes the form I have called *forward panic*. This is a dynamic sequence over a period of minutes or hours. It begins with a tense conflict, such as a chase or a prolonged confrontation in battle; then one side suddenly shows itself to be weak—by falling down, retreating in confusion, or becoming emotionally dominated; this sets off the other side, which rushes upon the now-weak victim in a mood of

hot rush, piling on, and overkill. Military massacres usually follow a tense standoff which is broken by organizational chaos on one side; at such moments the victims become emotionally passive and unresisting, asymmetrically entrained with the emotional dominance of the attackers. If a retreating enemy cannot be found, forward panic may lead to the killing of civilians who are in the targeted area. The famous atrocities of police violence are typically forward panics begun by high-speed chases. Violence is prolonged into what outside observers perceive as overkill; the attackers are caught up in their own emotional rush, self-entrained in the bodily rhythms of their own violence, for a period of time unable to stop beating the opponent or firing their guns.

Domestic violence comes in several forms. The most violent form of domestic abuse resembles bullying: one partner (usually male) trains the spouse into subservience based on repeated taunting and degradation; like bully victims, such spouses tend to be social isolates whose entire network is comprised by their abuser. Domestic violence however varies across a spectrum; more frequent is symmetrical couple violence, practiced equally by males and females, in minor scuffles and escalated quarrels; here violence is kept within bounds, as equal-sided violence usually is. A third type of domestic violence is forward panic, beginning with tense quarrels, suddenly erupting into angry emotional dominance by one partner, with violence taking the form of a prolonged beating or use of weapons—overkill resulting from emotional self-entrainment. These moments of seemingly irrational, continued frenzy of attack are typically experienced as dream-like or distorted consciousness; I have referred to it as going into the emotional tunnel of violence.

During their interactional history, couples develop their own pattern of emotional equality or inequality which determines the degree and kind of violence. Each type of violence is learned as an interactional skill; in the more repetitive kinds of violence (relationship violence), the interactants learn their roles together. This situational explanation has an optimistic side: police, soldiers, and other official agents can be put on their guard against the emotional dynamics of forward panic; attention to interactional skills

in domestic situations, schools, and total institutions could also head off attacks on the weak.

## **2.2. Pathway II: Audience-oriented, Staged, and Controlled Fair Fights**

The audience-oriented, staged, and controlled fair fight is the idealized and culturally celebrated form of violence. In contrast to attacking the weak, which is dirty, secret, and very unpleasant to witness (hence regarded as atrocity when it comes to light), staged fighters are treated as social elites. Duels, historically, were limited to the aristocracy or gentleman class; they followed rules and were scheduled for particular times and places; although sometimes deadly, duels limited violence to a short period of stylized conflict, and afterwards (unlike vendettas) declared the matter settled. Like all violence, staged fair fights must overcome the barrier of confrontational tension/fear; they do so by directing attention to the audience in front of whom the fighters must perform; micro-interactionally, the fighters are focussed not merely on the confrontation but on how they look while they are carrying out the dispute. A contemporary equivalent of staged fair fights occurs in communities like high schools where reputations are widely known; thus fist-fights are arranged for the playground after school, with an audience cheering on the fight, but also limiting it.

Staged fights are often used as gang initiations, in this case with a degree of asymmetry since the novice must prove himself against a more powerful opponent. Fights inside gangs are generally staged as limited fair fights. Fights between gangs, however, are attempts to find a momentary situation of attacking the weak; drive-by shootings are one-sided, not full-scale battles with firing by both sides. Full-scale fights between gangs have the same problem as military battles: most display of violence between assembled groups is bluster, even when it takes the form of making noise with guns; as long as both sides maintain the confrontation, most shooting is inaccurate. Prolonged violence between gangs thus usually takes the form of a vendetta or cycle of reciprocal killings; this is a series of unfair fights, alternating attacks on an isolated or surprised situationally weak victim from each side in turn. Because such situations are not easy to find, vendettas may take a long time; contrary to idealized images of reciprocity, vendettas often

peter out, through incompetence and loss of emotional energy.

Staged fair fights are the format for many kinds of competitive sports. Fighting among players outside the rules also occurs, and this typically takes the form of symmetrical fights between equal numbers from both sides; it always involves tacit rules which limit the amount of damage, and it is emotionally supported by the crowd of spectators. Player violence follows the emotional rhythm of the game, and is predictable at dramatic moments at the peak of struggle for emotional dominance. We should note, again (as in the case of domestic violence), that several analytically different kinds of violence can take place in what appears to be the same rubric: sports violence is split among several types, since it does not consist of one single technique for circumventing the barrier of confrontational tension, but two different kinds: the players are the honorific elite, who fight fairly (i.e. equally matched); spectators' violence, in contrast, is a form of attacking the weak, such as the mass of the crowd attacking visiting-team players or small minorities of opposing fans. Soccer hooligans, who arrange fights with opposing fans away from the stadium, act like other violent crowds, and unleash violence (as opposed to bluster) only when they have an outnumbered enemy broken into isolated fragments that can be attacked by larger groups. The difference between these subtypes of sports violence shows that fair fights depend on the existence of an audience which treats the fighters as elite; lacking this, sports violence by fans falls back into the easiest form, attacking the weak.

Probably the most frequent audience-oriented violence consists in fights at entertainment venues, bars, and parties. Although the common denominator might seem to be alcohol, my calculations (for both the United States and the United Kingdom) show that the proportion of drunken episodes which lead to violence is on the order of 1 to 7 percent (the higher figure in the United Kingdom).<sup>2</sup> Violence remains difficult to carry off, as *ct/f* must be overcome even

if antagonists are drunk. My comparison of ethnographic episodes shows that the attitude of the crowd is highly influential: when the crowd cheers and supports the fight, it is prolonged; when the crowd is divided or ambivalent, fights are short and mild; when the crowd is uninterested or opposed, fights abort (Collins 2008: 202–6).<sup>3</sup> Drunken violence is also limited by the pattern that one fight per venue takes up the attention of the audience, and eliminates emotional support for additional fights on that occasion.

On the whole, audience-oriented fair fights produce quite limited violence compared to attacking the weak; even dueling with weapons did not cause many casualties because much shooting or sword-play was ineffective, and there were widespread provisions for ending the duel short of death. This suggests a policy implication. More realistic than the utopian ideal of eliminating all violence, the amount of violence could be limited if the types of fights which normally involve attacking the weak (such as drive-bys and vendettas) could be substituted by staged fair fights.

### 2.3. Pathway III: Confrontation-avoiding Remote Violence

The easiest way to carry out violence is entirely to avoid direct confrontation with the opponent. In military combat, long distance (indirect fire) weapons—artillery, aerial bombs, rockets—are psychologically easier to operate and invoke less shirking and non-firing, and also cause more casualties than guns used in direct battlefield confrontation. The difficulty from a military viewpoint is that long-distance weapons are expensive, use up a large amount of munitions per casualty, and may be quite inaccurate without clear identification of the location of the enemy—and nearby civilians. Guerrilla or terrorist tactics using remote-controlled bombs (IEDs) are similarly easy to use insofar as they avoid *ct/f*. Long-distance weapons are much less frequent in violence among civilians; they are generally very expensive or require considerable organization to operate them effectively (even roadside bombs need a team and local complicity). Hence distance weapons—chiefly

<sup>2</sup> Calculations based on surveys of binge drinking, compared to victim surveys of assault (Collins 2008, 265–7).

<sup>3</sup> Total of 89 first-hand observations of violence-threatening confrontations, compiled from my own observations and from student reports.

bombs—are sometimes used in organized crime, but not in ordinary gang fighting or individual crime.

An exception here would be mass poison attacks (such as anthrax) through the mail; nevertheless these are the rarest of violent acts. Long-distance violence is affected by social support, as are all other kinds of violence. Violence carried out by big organizations—governments, armies, guerrilla movements—has a strong ideological component which legitimates and moralizes it at least in the eyes of most members of their communities. Long-distance violence by an isolated individual—someone who mails anthrax letters—is morally condemned by virtually everyone. Lacking social support, such isolated individuals have rarely had much success in causing casualties. Mass murderers and serial killers, in comparison, have occasionally killed dozens or even a few hundred victims; the most prolific of these have been medical personnel who poisoned individuals, one at a time, by clandestine administration of medicine—thus avoiding confrontation via deception, rather than by long-distance weapons. The more typical serial killer engages in confrontation, using conventional weapons (guns, knives); their technique has been to locate a reliable source of weak victims (isolated street prostitutes, immigrant nurses, homeless boys) and to keep up a conventional identity behind which their clandestine violence was intermittently carried out. Such techniques are very unusual; serial killings are by far the rarest type of murder, comprising a fraction of one percent of all murders.

#### **2.4. Pathway IV: Confrontation-avoiding by Deception**

The most competent violence is that which reliably hits its target, achieves its kill. The vast majority of threatened or attempted violence is completely ineffective, remaining abortive. Attacking the weak (technique no. 1) is episodic and can be rather unpredictable (from the point of view of its perpetrators' intentions), and when it happens the result is typically irrational overkill. Audience-oriented staged fights (technique no. 2) usually come off as planned, but the pair format tends to limit the amount of violence done. Long-distance violence (technique no. 3) has serious problems of imprecision and target identification. The most effective violence, with the highest chance of success, is this fourth type, where the attacker gets up close to the victim

and shoots him/her in the head from a few inches away, or carries a bomb right up to the target and detonates it. In order to do so, the key tactic is a clandestine approach, requiring good information about the target and an attacker disguised as normal and non-threatening. The technique is shared by professional contract killers and suicide-bombing terrorists.

In both cases, the killer avoids confrontational tension because he or she (here the term is not merely pro forma, since suicide bombing is the one form of violence in which a substantial number of killers are women) is concentrating on presenting a normal everyday self; the attacker's attention is on the Goffmanian staging rather than on the confrontation with the enemy. The process of deceiving others also helps to deceive oneself; the adrenaline rush which makes confrontation so difficult and violence so inaccurate is replaced with calm. Suicide bombings are the most effective form of terrorism, killing the largest average number per incident. The technique is very far from most other kinds of violence; it lacks the crowd support of audience-oriented violence, and avoids the extreme adrenaline rushes of forward panics; it is very distant, too, from the normal blustering and ritual insulting which makes up most confrontations in crowds and in gangs. Thus it should not be surprising that suicide bombers rarely come from a criminal background, but are quiet, well-behaved middle-class individuals. The technique demands either a background culture of self-restraint and politeness, or highly disciplined learning. The latter appears to be the pathway for professional hitmen (in high-level organized crime, they are virtually all men): within the crime community, they are regarded as a special elite because they are the ultimate insider, viewed with high respect by most other criminals.

There is an important element of clandestine deceptiveness in the techniques of serial killers as well as rampage killers (such as those who attack schools; Newman et al. 2004) Much of their motivational buildup comes from the period of preparation for the attack, secretly storing up weapons, planning the details of the attack, even practicing and rehearsing. They take delight in having an exciting backstage life which is denied to them in conventional social life. It has been noted that school rampage killers are isolated,

socially unpopular, even bully victims; it should be added that they are not gang members or otherwise embarked on criminal careers. The techniques of violence in gangs and in crime are not those of confrontation-avoiding violence, but rather the opposite, the use of flamboyant, message-sending violence, often more as symbolic statement than as real destruction. Because there are a variety of social techniques of successful violence, violent persons can emerge from quite different social contexts; we cannot find a single background profile or personality for violence.

### **2.5. Pathway V: Confrontation-avoiding by Absorption in Technique**

A small number of individuals are very effective at violence. In every arena of violence, a small proportion of the total nominally engaged population does the great majority of the violence; this pattern was initially found in World War II, where 15–25 percent of the frontline infantry were doing almost all the firing, and is paralleled by the small number of active rioters in a rioting crowd, the small proportion of police who account for most of the use-of-force incidents, and the small proportion of criminals who do large numbers of crimes. What is distinctive about this “violent elite,” those who are much better at violence whereas most of their peers are incompetent or hanging back? It is tempting to call them sociopathic personalities; but this does not account for the fact that the pattern is found on both sides of the law, that small numbers of ace fighter pilots account for the majority of enemy aircraft destroyed, and a small number of military snipers kill far more than the average combat soldier. In addition, the sociopathic explanation implies that these individuals are socially incompetent; but in fact, violence is a technique that must be learned; it involves sensitivity to the emotional components of interaction, careful observation of others, and in the case of clandestine approaches, a great deal of self-control. Psychologically reductionist labels point us in the wrong direction; instead we must examine the career trajectories of persons through violence-using groups, which result in some few becoming near-monopolists of the skills of competent violence.

A close-up view of those skills comes from the practices and subjective phenomenology of the highest-performing military killers (Collins 2008: 381–87; interviews in Pegler 2004 are especially useful). Snipers are less sociable and

group-oriented than other soldiers; they spend much of their time observing enemy hiding places and vulnerabilities, and finding hiding places of their own where they can operate without detection. Snipers are unusually focussed on the enemy, and attempt to select particular individuals through high-powered scopes. How then do they avoid confrontational tension? Their key skill is not so much their shooting accuracy as their ability to make themselves invisible to their targets; interaction with the enemy thus lacks the reciprocity of perspectives which is a key aspect of normal social interaction, and which makes confrontation so difficult. Snipers are a subset selected from those who are good at target practice, but many other good shooters fail in the field for lack of these specialized interactional skills. Snipers put aside thinking of their target as a human; they concentrate on the technical calculations of shooting under the given conditions of distance, wind, etc. The combination of deceptiveness and technical absorption results in avoidance of the tension of confrontation, and in highly competent violence. The highest-performing specialists in violence use their technical orientation to avoid confrontational tension; they are able to keep their adrenaline level in violent action down to a point at which it does not interfere with their performance.

Ace fighter pilots, like top snipers and proactive cops, are highly identified with their role, and very aggressive in seeking out targets (Collins 2008: 387–98; see Gurney 1958). Violent cops are action-seekers, proud of their policing skills. The pilots with the highest number of kills developed techniques which concentrated on vulnerable spots in enemy planes and lines of attack which enabled them to approach these spots without being seen. They dominated the social psychology of the skies, finding enemy pilots who were passive and unaware; their technique was that of attacking the weak, but a variant which required considerable learning and subtle perception of others in the social environment. At the same time, ace pilots engaged in a version of confrontation-avoiding form of fighting, similar to the hitman shooting his victim in the head from behind, since the preferred approach was almost always from behind the plane and the enemy’s face was rarely seen; the plane was the kill, not the pilot.

On the micro-level, the crucial skill in violence is dominating the emotional attention space. In ordinary non-conflictual interaction, there is a tendency for individuals to be inducted into a common emotional mood, a shared definition of the situation; the most enjoyable situations are where this emotional contagion reaches the level that Durkheim called collective effervescence (Collins 2004a). This helps explain why violent confrontation is interactionally difficult; there is tension between our normal tendency to align our micro-behaviors and physiology with others, and the action of violence at cross-purposes with the other. This tension causes most violence to abort or to be carried out ineffectively. The small proportion of persons who become effective at violence have found a technique for avoiding or overcoming *ct/f*. Only a small proportion of people can do this because (among other reasons) only a few persons can dominate the emotional attention space at one time; others in their presence are dominated, either as victims, but also as less active members of the winning team. Only one cop can be point man on the SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics) team; and those who are crowded out of the violent elite, we may expect, lose their emotional energy for this role with the passage of time. Less emotional energy means less confidence, and less risk-taking; the behaviors and emotions feed back upon each other. Shifting levels of emotional engagement and disengagement with the exercise of violence can in principle be measured on the micro level, although researchers have yet to attempt this.

A career in crime—but also a career as a police officer, or a sniper or fighter pilot—is a competition in which many are tested in confrontations, and most winnowed out. Thus it is not merely criminals who tend to end their careers by their early twenties, or by age thirty at most. Most other kinds of specialists in violence also face a period of burn-out; on the micro level, this involves loss of emotional energy—of confidence, enthusiasm, initiative—which comes from being overmatched by someone more competent in the micro-emotional techniques of violence. Conversely, those who have developed a trajectory of winning their confrontations become further pumped up by episodes of success; their emotional energy gives them further commitment to look for occasions to use their superior competence at violence.

Through a series of competitions in the display of violence, some gain emotional energy, others lose it.

At least on the micro level, the field of violence is a self-limiting field. It is not possible for everyone, or even a majority of a population engaged in an area of violent conflict to be competent at violence. Emotional dominance of the confrontation is the main prerequisite for successful violence; one must dominate emotionally in order to dominate physically, and emotional dominance is intrinsically scarce. From a practical point of view, this is a hopeful sign. To reduce violence, we need to take advantage of humans' widespread incompetence at it, and the tendency to limit violence to a small number of perpetrators.

## 2.6. Long-term Causal Sequences, Motivation and Personality

I have concentrated on situational pathways around the barrier of *ct/f* because this is the trigger which determines whether or not violence will happen and how much damage will ensue. This may be regarded as the last of a sequence of conditions which lead up to the violent situation and motivate actors to attempt violence. Thus situational theory of circumventing *ct/f* might be integrated into a larger family of theories dealing with the sequence of causes which precede the sticking point.

I would caution that a heavy emphasis on individual motivation can lead us astray, even when treated merely as a condition initiating the sequence that brings about confrontational situations and ends, at times, in violence. Theories which have been constructed to explain common forms of criminal violence (poverty, family, etc.) are useless in explaining violence on the other side of the law, such as police violence, military snipers, ace pilots, not to mention upper-class carousing, and middle-class participation in demonstrations, political movements, or terrorism. In addition, situational conditions can launch otherwise unviolent individuals into violence. Such situations include not only war but also state breakdowns fostering violent crowds and paramilitary activities; there is evidence that individuals who take part in this kind of politically-initiated violence are neither long-term criminals nor even of the disadvantaged classes, but are often recruited from respectable occupations such as teachers, officials, sportsmen, and

even sociology professors (Derluigian 2005; Volkov 2002). Further research is needed on the long-term personality patterns of such individuals, even if on the face of it most of them have not shown violent and anti-social patterns from an early age, but acquired their techniques of violence as the unfolding historical situation presented the opportunities.

Since there are a variety of techniques for circumventing *ct/f*, there may be at least five different personality patterns of violent persons; the carousing party-fighter or pub brawler surrounded by an ebullient clique is a different type than the anti-social, self-withdrawn sniper. Thus we might pursue the research pathway of tracing individual personalities which develop over the course of different kinds of violent careers. I would stress that personality should not be assumed to be constant over long periods of time; this needs to be shown empirically, and the documented pattern of falling-off in at least one type of violence (criminal violence) with age and life-course events suggests that an imputed violent personality is a construct resting upon stable opportunities for circumventing the *ct/f* barrier.

Motivation and personality are both conceptual constructs, abstracted from the ground-zero of social reality, the sum total of persons' interactions in micro-social situations. From a micro-sociological point of view, human life is a sequence or chains of micro-situations; all cognitions, emotions, motivations and behaviors build up in real moments of time, and fade away as well if they are not exercised for a considerable period. Elsewhere I have presented evidence for a model of successful and unsuccessful interaction rituals, which generate varying levels of emotional energy (Collins 2004a): at the high end of the continuum, an individual acquires confidence, enthusiasm, and initiative for particular kinds of social activities; at the low end, failed micro-interactions produce depression, avoidance, and passivity towards those kinds of encounters. Thus motivation for a particular kind of violence (being a military sniper, for instance, or an armed robber, or a school bully) is constructed as a particular kind of success in an interaction ritual chain; and at the core of this success is the development of a technique for circumventing *ct/f* and establishing emotional dominance within the situation. Such emotional dominance is subject to many situational contingencies,

however, and thus the individual who reaches the peak of violent success will not necessarily stay there. The ups and downs of violent careers, personalities, and motivations are best understood in situational chains. In principle, this could be investigated by further research.

### 3. Macro Violence

We turn now to the macro level, where violence is coordinated in large organizations such as states, armies, and social movements. Micro and macro theories cannot be entirely distinct, since macro always contains micro within it. Macro organizations and interorganizational processes are full of pockets of micro; but there are also distinctive macro patterns that connect small events into larger patterns, and these must be theorized in their own right. An organization consists in the sum total of the behavior of its members, although we often conveniently overlook this because the concept of structure concentrates on reciprocal interdependencies among individual actors. But an organization as a whole can do only what its members are capable of as micro-situational actors.

This means that macro violence, to be successful, must find ways by which organizational agents at the point of contact with the enemy can circumvent the barrier of *ct/f*. It should not be taken for granted they will do so. Most soldiers in combat, throughout history, have not consistently fired their guns or used their weapons against the enemy, and when they have done so they were largely incompetent; battles are prolonged and stalemated because both sides typically miss. I have argued that violence on the micro level is largely incompetent and abortive. It should not be surprising if the same were true on the macro level.

What the macro-organization of violence does, above all, is to train, supply, and transport violent agents to the place where they should fight; and it attempts to discipline them to fight and to keep them from running away. Primitive tribal warfare lacked much macro structure, hence battles consisted in brief displays of bravado by a few individuals charging the enemy and quickly running away. Such battles were typically short and ended when there was as little as one casualty. The history of warfare has been the history of social inventions for keeping soldiers under control at the

front, even in unwieldy and vulnerable formations such as marching in lines and columns. Along with this has come a history of technological innovation in weapons, making them more powerful and eventually, more accurate, at greater distances.

Thus armies have gravitated towards micro-technique no. 3, confrontation-avoiding by remote violence. Early muskets, rifles, and artillery were effective mainly when enemies came within a few hundred meters of each other or even closer; this was in the face-to-face confrontational zone and thus put soldiers under great tension in trying to hit anyone or even just to fire their guns. Battles were won or lost depending on which side was able to break through the emotional barrier of *ct/f* and act with a degree of competent violence greater than their opponent. Most of the time both sides are approximately equally incompetent, and the result is a battlefield stalemate. Clausewitz coined the term friction for the fact that in battle hardly anything goes the way it should in the strategic plan; friction is a reflection (among other things) of pervasive *ct/f*. Battles are won, not so much by one's own bravery and competence, but by undergoing a little less friction than the enemy. In combat both armies are unwieldy and their soldiers largely incompetent through *ct/f*; the one that breaks down last can take advantage of the one that breaks down first. If one side loses its organization and breaks up (sometimes merely through traffic problems in attempting to move to another position), runs away, or becomes passive, its opponent can find itself in the position of attacking the weak (micro-technique no. 1) and become energized into a frenzied assault on an emotionally dominated enemy (for an example, see Keegan 1976: 82–114; more widely, Collins 2008: 104–11). In effect, local victory on a battlefield came about through accidents which allowed one side to unleash a forward panic on the other. Most casualties happened after one side had broken down socially; this produced very one-sided casualty ratios in decisive battles, since most killing was done when one side was incapable of resisting.

Such forward-panic victories could happen on particular parts of the battlefield, but remain confined there if the enemy organization held up in other places; in major victories, disorganization in one place spread throughout the

army. Often this happens through attempts to retreat which turn into logistical chaos, resulting in further widespread demoralization and eventually in surrender. This is what happened in the German conquest of France during six weeks in 1940: once the Germans gained momentum in movement, the French were never able to recover their organization or establish an orderly retreat, and were defeated by forces which were no larger than their own in troops and weapons (including equal numbers of tanks). Victory comes through disorganizing the enemy, whether this happens at the meso level of a particular part of the battlefield, or the macro level of an entire war.

There are two main doctrines of how victory is achieved in battle: maneuver and attrition. Maneuver is movement, initiative, surprise, positioning one's troops in locally superior numbers (or sometimes just locally superior emotional energy) to break through the enemy line (although in fact what is broken is not so much a line as a mood and an organization). If the enemy is demoralized into surrendering in large numbers (e.g. World War II battles on both the Western front of 1940 and the Eastern front of 1941–42), actual physical casualties may be rather low (surviving as a prisoner of war was another matter, especially on the Russian front where the logistics of war gave lowest priority to keeping prisoners alive).

The doctrine of attrition has gone under various names, including frontal assault, prolonged bombardment, softening up, and force superiority. Here victory is a matter of sheer size of relative resources; the side with the larger population and the bigger economy will outlast and wear down the other. In the American civil war of 1861–65, Southern generals were better at maneuver warfare; the Union under generals Grant and Sherman eventually hit on an attrition strategy which cost many casualties but won the war through sheer depth of resources. Attrition is chiefly achieved through prolonged use of distance weapons; artillery has caused most casualties throughout the gunpowder era, even though the symbolic glory usually went to soldiers carrying small arms at the point of contact.

What happens when long-distance weapons become so powerful and accurate that the battlefield becomes largely

empty, fighting between forces which hardly see each other? At this point, one would expect *ct/f* no longer to apply; the micro level of confrontation disappears and is replaced by thoroughly macro-organizational war. Western military doctrine since the 1990s (notably in the United States and United Kingdom) has emphasized a high-tech transformation (sometimes labelled by academics as postmodern war) in which precision weapons delivered by aircraft or ground-based rocket and artillery systems, guided by remote sensors (GPS, infra-red, radar-homing, etc.), and coordinated by computers, can hit their targets with a high degree of accuracy, controlled by soldier-managers who may be thousands of miles from the battlefield. US success in the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq are cited as evidence of the superiority of this high-tech system over any previous military technology and its corresponding social organization. From the point of view of violence theory, this is the ultimate shift to long-distance weapons, eliminating *ct/f* and the human emotional element which has historically determined victory and defeat in combat. Thus some claim that Clausewitzian friction has finally been eliminated.

Biddle, however, has argued that current developments are only an extension of a long historical trend towards increasing lethality of distance weapons (2004). He argues that the turning point came during World War I, when machine guns and artillery made face-to-face confrontation impossible to survive in conventional mass combat formations. When two armies equally supplied with modern weapons fought, the result was stalemate; the side that exposed itself in frontal attack would lose; hence war became attrition contests of bombardment in static positions. The state with greater economic resources would eventually win; hence war expanded into attacking the enemy's economic base, which became possible in World War II and subsequent wars by long-distance bombing and missiles, including nuclear weapons. Macro-war thus expanded beyond the battlefield to become a war on the entire society, including civilians.

Biddle, however, argues that maneuver war made a comeback as well (2004); around 1918 all major armies developed new tactics, dividing mass troop formations into small semi-autonomous groups filtering forward into enemy

defenses. Large concentrations of troops and weapons provided easy targets for the enemy's long-distance lethality; the answer was to disperse, both at the point of attack, and defensively in layers of reserve lines many miles in depth. Higher lethality thus expands the battlefield and puts a premium on concealment and movement. Armored tanks alone did not solve the problem of vulnerability to lethal long-distance fire; these too needed dispersion and air cover, and mechanized warfare raised logistics costs and made supplies a key vulnerability. Under these conditions both attrition and maneuver play a part in victory, defeat, or stalemate; as enemies became similar to each other in tactics, sheer resources and political will to use them determine the outcome.

An important variant of modern warfare is asymmetrical war, fought between one side which has high-precision remote weaponry, and the other side which is technologically inferior. The solution for the weaker has also been to adopt their own version of highly lethal remote controlled weapons; roadside bombs detonated by cell phones, for instance, continue the trend to dispersed combat by small groups on an expanded battlefield; suicide bombing is warfare by very small units operating under concealment.

Here war may return to a species of attrition, with victory going to the side with deep resources which is willing to prolong the combat until the other is worn down. The priority given to enemy body counts by the US military in Vietnam was an example of just such an emphasis on measuring the progress of attrition (Gibson 1986). Nevertheless, the human emotional element re-enters in another way. Casualties in dispersed warfare tend to involve the civilian population; modern long-distance communications (especially the mass media) broadcast the horrors of violence and tend to create emotional revulsion in distant populations. An emotional element, equivalent to *ct/f*, reappears on the political side; thus a key weapon of the weak is the mobilizing effect of atrocities committed by the other side. The dynamic of these political-military processes has not yet been well theorized. Do atrocities cause revulsion against a war, and eventual peace? Or do atrocities form a cycle, in which each side's counterattacks provoke moral solidarity within the opposing community, leading to unending retaliation?

It is often said that contemporary war is political war for the hearts and minds of the enemy's supporters; but the trend of long-distance weaponry and non-human remote sensors, together with the dispersed battlefield, is to make the high-tech side repeatedly look guilty of atrocities. The trend to pure distance warfare eliminates *ct/f* but also eliminates the ability to identify targets by personal sight. One might argue that the trend of war is against the high-tech armies because they lose the political war of propagandizing atrocities. Modern peace movements are a part of the trend to long-distance communications and the widening battlefield, which has included expanding mass media coverage of battle; thus large-scale peace movements arose historically only in the early twentieth century, the first major instance being opposition in England to the Boer War. This implies that guerrilla/terrorist tactics always win because hiding in civilian populations makes their opponents guilty of atrocities. But there are counterexamples, such as Israel versus the Palestinians, which suggest that sheer advantage of economic resources (in this case including foreign military aid) plus political will can keep a state in a perpetual state of high-tech war against opponents using the weapons of the weak.

What we need is a theory which includes the mobilization of both material resources (population and economy) and social/emotional resources (group solidarity, organizational cohesion and breakdown, emotional energy both high and low). Escalation and counter-escalation are a process of feedback loops. Typically conflict causes both sides to mobilize more resources, calling up more troops, making more weapons, generating more solidarity, and reinforcing ideological polarization versus the enemy. The publicized atrocities of violence by the other side feed back into emotional mobilization on one's own side. Such a process of counter-escalation, hypothetically, would lead to endless escalation on both sides. But infinitely increasing processes are impossible, and wars do eventually come to an end. Theoretically, this must happen either through exhaustion of material resources (running out of population and goods, especially because they are destroyed by the enemy), or exhaustion of emotional/social resources (becoming disorganized or demoralized), or both. De-escalation through stalemate is also possible, if both sides wear down their resources at an equal

rate. The counter-escalation model thus encompasses both attrition (winning by wearing down material resources) and maneuver (winning by causing the enemy to break down socially). The balance between the two components of victory is not well understood.

What we need above all is a model incorporating time-dynamics, explaining how long social/emotional resources are effective. A classic theory of conflict, first formulated by Simmel ([1908] 1964), holds that external conflict produces group solidarity. But how long does such solidarity last? Examining patterns of displaying emblems of national solidarity after the 9/11/2001 attack, I have estimated that the peak of solidarity following a violent attack is three months, with normal factionalization returning around six months (Collins 2004b). We need many more such studies in a variety of situations to get a full-scale theory of the time-dynamics which govern escalation and de-escalation of violence; the length of time during which escalation can go on differs among riots (a few days), full-scale wars (years, depending on size of the populations and economies), and guerrilla wars (low intensity mobilization which can continue for decades). Doubtless a theory of the time-dynamics of conflict will require a multi-causal theory, since there are many components which go into both material and social/emotional resources.

As I said at the outset, there are a huge number of kinds of violence, and in this short paper I have concentrated chiefly on micro-violence and one type of macro violence—war—which meshes with micro theory most easily through the connection between *ct/f* and Clausewitzian friction. I omit here consideration of holocausts and ethnic cleansing violence (much progress towards theorizing their conditions has been made, e.g. Mann 2005). But ethnic massacres cannot be explained purely on a macro level; allegedly long-standing ethnic hostilities nevertheless are ideologically mobilized at particular points in time; and we cannot assume that the incitements of remote political leaders automatically translate into a chain of command which carries out massacres on the ground. Klusemann (2008) shows through video and other micro evidence that an ethnic massacre has specific situational triggers which establish emotional moods—a window in time and space where a

massacre can be carried out. Here again the micro theory of violence has optimistic implications: turning points to violence also mean that it can be headed off by the right micro situational moves.

Aside from war, a major area of macro violence involves the state. The state itself, in Weber's famous definition, is an organization which claims monopoly of legitimate violence over a territory. Since the work of Skocpol (1979) and Goldstone (1991), it has been recognized that a revolutionary change in power typically requires state breakdown; dissident movements from below are successful only to the extent that the state itself becomes ineffective in its use of repressive force, and this in turn happens through intra-elite conflicts, fiscal crisis of the state budget, and sometimes strains of war. But a state breakdown does not automatically lead to the seizure of power by a new regime; the breakdown can be prolonged in paramilitary conflict or civil war, or it could lead to permanent fragmentation of the old state's territory. The initial phase of revolution—the downfall of the old regime—is generally low in casualties. Most revolutionary violence develops later—whether in a Reign of Terror on the French guillotine, or rival paramilitaries (as in the streets of Germany in the 1920s), or extended civil war (Russia 1918–22; Japan from the Western incursions of the 1850s through 1877; Ireland 1918–23). Klusemann (2009) shows that the amount and kind of violence in situations of post-revolutionary state breakdown depend, like military violence, on rival paramilitary movements solving problems of material logistics, and on amalgamating a number of contending movements into a big movement united by ritual/symbolic tactics which give dominance in the realm of social/emotional resources.

There are a lot of loose ends. On the ultra-macro level, we need to integrate a theory of geopolitics—the centuries-spanning pattern of expansion and contraction in territories of states, including the question of when and why wars start. Our theory is better at the meso question of what

happens during a war, and what causes a war to end. The rise of the modern state, with its violence-monopolizing, tax-collecting, society-penetrating propensities, is itself the framework in which other phenomena of conflict and violence arise. Social movements only became possible with the rise of the modern state, providing a centralizing arena as well as infrastructure to mobilize large-scale movements. The question of when such movements resort to violence, and what kind and degree, remains to be theorized. State penetration also has an effect on macro-trends in crime: for instance efforts at state prohibition or regulation (alcohol, drugs, sexwork, etc.) create the conditions for an illegal economy, and hence for a pseudo-government or protection racket in the form of organized crime. Gangs, as structures of illegal violence, range from small neighbourhood prestige groups to large coalitions to formalized mafias; the conditions for the growth and decline of gangs resemble the early history of the state itself (Tilly 1986). And I have not even touched on the topic of rape, which is tied into so many different institutional levels, micro and macro processes that it needs full-scale treatment in a treatise of its own.

#### 4. Conclusions on General Theory

A general theory of violence is a useful orienting device, pushing us towards consolidating our insights from particular areas of violence and promoting cross-overs which crystallize new causal *gestalts*. What would a general theory of violence look like? Surely it will not take the form of simple statements such as “poverty and discrimination cause violence”; “discipline leads to rebellion”; or “frustration causes aggression.” Any general theory must include nested levels of macro and micro conditions. And it must incorporate, on the micro-interactional level, the barrier of *ct/f* and situational configurations which cause this to be circumvented.

We are not nearly in sight of our end, a comprehensive theory of violence in all its forms. But, as Winston Churchill said, we may be at the end of the beginning.

## References

- Biddle, Stephen. 2004. *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Collins, Randall. 2004a. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- . 2004b. Rituals of Solidarity and Security in the Wake of Terrorist Attack. *Sociological Theory* 22:53–87.
- . 2008. *Violence: A Micro-Sociological Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Derluigan, Georgi. 2005. *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gibson, James William. 1986. *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam*. Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Goldstone, Jack A. 1991. *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grossman, Dave. 2004. *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Combat in War and Peace*. Belleville, IL: PPTC Research Publications.
- Gurney, Gene. 1958. *Five Down and Glory*. New York: Random House.
- Keegan, John. 1976. *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme*. New York: Random House.
- Klusemann, Stefan. 2008. Micro-situational Antecedents of Violent Atrocity. paper under submission.
- . 2009. After State-Breakdown. PhD Dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Pennsylvania.
- Mann, Michael. 2005. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Newman, Katherine S., Cybelle Fox, David Harding, Jal Mehta, and Wendy Roth. 2004. *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*. New York: Basic Books.
- Pegler, Martin. 2004. *Out of Nowhere: A History of the Military Sniper*. Oxford: Osprey.
- Simmel, Georg. [1908] 1964. *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations*. New York: Free Press.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilly, Charles. 1986. War Making and State Making as Organized Crime. In *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Volkov, Vadim. 2002. *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

---

Randall Collins

collinsr@sas.upenn.edu

# Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime

Richard B. Felson, Department of Sociology, Pennsylvania State University, United States

## Vol. 3 (1) 2009

**Editorial** (p. 3)

**Focus:**

**General Theory of Violence**

Guest Editors:

Manuel Eisner and  
Susanne Karstedt

**Introduction: Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?**

Susanne Karstedt / Manuel Eisner (pp. 4 – 8)

**Micro and Macro Theories of Violence** Randall Collins (pp. 9 – 22)

► **Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime** Richard B. Felson (pp. 23 – 39)

**The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues**

Manuel Eisner (pp. 40 – 59)

**Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?**

Charles Tittle (pp. 60 – 74)

**Violence as Situational Action** Per-Olof H. Wikström / Kyle Treiber (pp. 75 – 96)

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence** Martin Shaw (pp. 97 – 106)

**Open Section**

**Understanding the Other's 'Understanding' of Violence** Marcel M. Baumann (pp. 107 – 123)

**Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics**

Renate Möller / Uwe Sander / Arne Schäfer / Dirk Villányi / Matthias D. Witte (pp. 124 – 142)

---

# Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime

Richard B. Felson, Department of Sociology, Pennsylvania State University, United States

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.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> The definition of aggression as deliberate harm includes behaviors that are intended to harm but are unsuccessful and excludes behav-

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

<sup>3</sup> 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 VanE-seltine 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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 seri-

ous 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.<sup>5</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> Their *goal* is usually to use rather than abuse their victims.

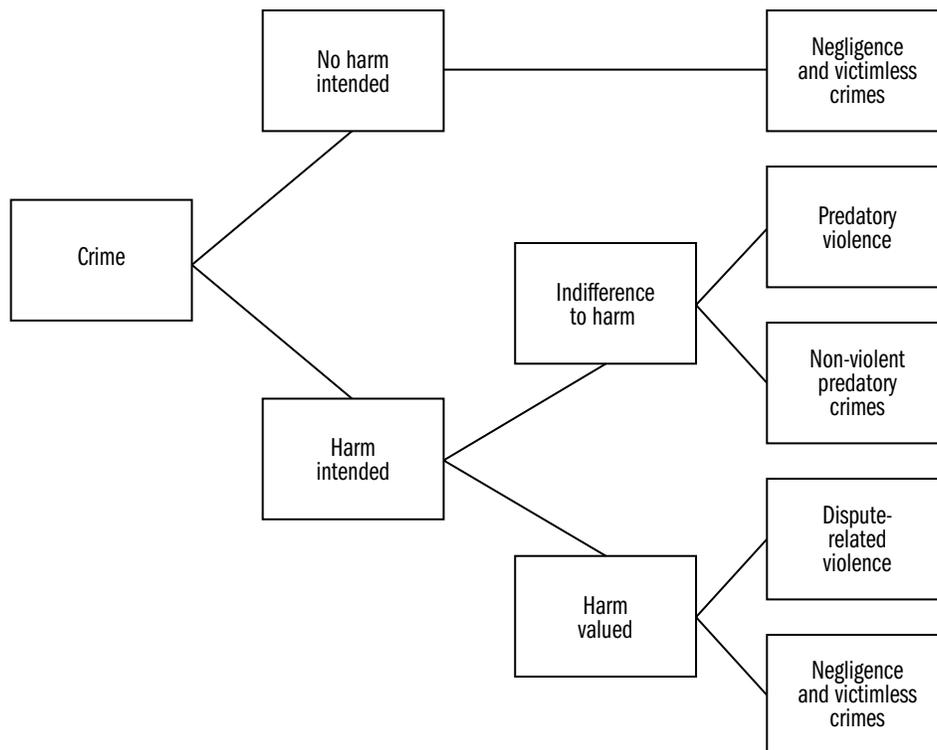
<sup>6</sup> There is a substantial ethnographic literature on the rational thinking of predatory offenders (e.g., Wright and Decker 1997).

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).<sup>7</sup>

The potential for conflict and violence is greater when resources are scarce (Fischer 1969). Yananomomo 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.<sup>8</sup>

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-

<sup>7</sup> 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).

<sup>8</sup> 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 VanE-seltine 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.

## References

- Agnew, R. 1992. Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Delinquency. *Criminology* 30:47–87.
- Akers, R. L. 1998. *Social Learning and Social Structure: A General Theory of Crime and Deviance*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Anderson, D. A. 1999. The Aggregate Burden Of Crime. *The Journal of Law and Economics* 42 (2): 611–42.
- Berkowitz, L. 1962. *Aggression: A Social Psychological Analysis*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- . 1989. Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis: Examination and Reformulation. *Psychological Bulletin* 106 (1): 59–73.
- Black, D. 1983. Crime as Social Control. *American Sociological Review* 48 (1): 34–45.
- Blau, J. R., and P. M. Blau. 1982. The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime. *American Sociological Review* 47 (1): 114–29.
- Blumstein, A. 1995. Youth Violence, Guns, and the Illicit-Drug Industry. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 86 (1): 10–36.
- Blumstein, A., and J. Cohen. 1979. Estimation of Individual Crime Rates from Arrest Records. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 70 (4): 561–85.
- Booth, A., and D. W. Osgood. 1993. The Influence of Testosterone on Deviance in Adulthood: Assessing and Explaining the Relationship. *Criminology* 31 (1): 93–118.
- Brown, R. C., and J. C. Tedeschi. 1976. Determinants of Perceived Aggression. *Journal of Social Psychology* 100 (1): 77–87.
- Buss, D. M. 1989. Conflict between the Sexes: Strategic Interference and the Evocation of Anger and Upset. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56:735–47.
- Chagnon, N. A. 1977. *Yanomano, the Fierce People*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Cochran, J. K., and M. B. Chamlin. 2006. The Enduring Racial Divide in Death Penalty Support. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 34 (1): 85–99.
- Cohen, A. K. 1955. *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. New York: Free Press.
- Cohen, D., R. E. Nisbett, B. F. Bowdle, and N. Schwarz. 1996. Insult, Aggression, and the Southern Culture of Honor: An “Experimental Ethnography.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70 (5): 945–60.
- Cooney, M. 1998. *Warriors and Peacemakers: How Third Parties Shape Violence*. New York: New York University Press.
- Deane, G., D. P. Armstrong, and R. B. Felson. 2005. An Examination of Offense Specialization Using Marginal Logit Models. *Criminology* 43 (4): 955–88.
- Deutsch, M. 1969. Socially Relevant Science: Reflections on Some Studies of Inter-personal Conflict. *American Psychologist* 24:1076–92.
- Dodge, K. A., and D. R. Somberg. 1987. Hostile Attributional Biases among Aggressive Boys are Exacerbated under Conditions of Threats to the Self. *Child Development* 58 (1): 213–24.
- Dollard, J., L. W. Doob, N. E. Miller, O. H. Mowrer, and R. R. Sears. 1939. *Frustrations and Aggression*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Farrington, D. P. 1987. Predicting Individual Crime Rates. *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* 9:53–101.
- Felson, M. 1998. *Crime and Everyday Life*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Felson, R. B. 1978. Aggression as Impression Management. *Social Psychology* 41 (3): 204–13.
- . 1983. Aggression and Violence between Siblings. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 46:271–85.
- . 1996. Big People Hit Little People: Sex Differences in Physical Power and Interpersonal Violence. *Criminology* 34:433–52.
- . 2002. *Violence and Gender Reexamined*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Felson, R. B., J. Ackerman, S. J. Yeon. 2003. The (In)frequency of Family Violence. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (3): 622–34.
- Felson, R. B., W. Baccaglini, and G. Gmelch. 1986. Bar-room Brawls: Aggression and Violence in Irish and American Bars. In *Violent Transactions*, ed. A. Campbell and J. J. Gibbs, 153–66. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Felson, R. B., G. Deane, and D. P. Armstrong. 2008. Do Theories of Crime or Violence Explain Race Differences in Delinquency. *Social Science Research* 37:624–41.
- Felson, R. B., and D. Haynie. 2002. Pubertal Development, Social Factors, and Delinquency among Adolescent Boys. *Criminology* 40:967–88.
- Felson, R. B., and K. J. Lane. 2008. Social Learning, Sexual and Physical Abuse, and Adult Crime. Presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, St. Louis, MO.
- Felson, R. B., A. E. Liska, S. J. South, and T. L. McNulty. 1994. The Subculture of Violence and Delinquency: Individual vs. School Context Effects. *Social Forces* 73 (1): 155–73.
- Felson, R. B., and M. Massoglia. Unpublished. “Cold Blooded” vs. Impulsive Violence.
- Felson, R. B., and S. F. Messner. 1996. To Kill or Not to Kill? Lethal Outcomes in Injurious Attacks. *Criminology* 34:201–27.
- Felson, R. B., and P. P. Pare. 2007. Firearms and Fisticuffs: Region, Race, and Adversary Effects on Assault. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Atlanta, Georgia.
- Felson, R. B., B. Teasdale, and K. B. Burchfield. 2008. The Influence of Being Under the Influence: Alcohol Effects on Adolescent Violence. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 45 (2): 119–41.
- Fischer, C. S. 1969. The Effect of Threats in an Incomplete Information Game. *Sociometry* 32:301–14.
- Gottfredson, M., and T. Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Greenberg, J. 1993. Stealing in the Name of Justice: Informational and Interpersonal Moderators of Theft Reactions to Underpayment Inequity. *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes* 54:81–103.
- Griffiths, E., and J. M. Chavez. 2004. Communities, Street Guns and Homicide Trajectories in Chicago, 1980–1995: Merging Methods for Examining Homicide Trends across Space and Time. *Criminology* 42 (4): 941–78.
- Hearold, S. 1986. A Synthesis of 1043 Effects of Television on Social Behavior. In *Public Communication And Behavior*, ed. G. A. Comstock, vol. 1. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Hirschi, T. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hirschi, T., and M. Gottfredson. 1993. Commentary: Testing the General Theory of Crime. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 30 (1): 47–54.
- Kaplan, A. 1964. *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science*. San Francisco: Chandler.
- Katz, J. 1988. *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions of Doing Evil*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kempf, K. L. 1987. Specialization and the Criminal Career. *Criminology* 25 (2): 399–420.
- Link, B. G., J. Monahan, A. Stueve, and F. T. Cullen. 1999. Real in their Consequences: A Sociological Approach to Understanding the Association between Psychotic Symptoms and Violence. *American Sociological Review* 64 (2): 316–32.
- Link, B. G., and A. Stueve. 1994. Psychotic Symptoms and the Violent/Illegal Behavior of Mental Patients Compared to Community Controls. In *Violence and Mental Disorder*, ed. J. Monahan and H. J. Steadman, 137–60. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Markowitz, F. E., and R. B. Felson. 1998. Social-demographic Attitudes and Violence. *Criminology* 36 (1): 117–38.
- McPhail, C. 1991. *The Myth of the Madding Crowd*. New York: A. de Gruyter.
- Mehrabian, A. 1997. Relations among Personality Scales of Aggression, Violence, and Empathy: Validation Evidence Bearing on the Risk of Eruptive Violence Scale. *Aggressive Behavior* 23 (6): 433–45.
- Messner, S. F., and R. Rosenfeld. 2002. Crime and the American Dream. In *Criminological Theories: Bridging the Past to the Future*, ed. S. Cote, 104–12. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Osgood, D. W., L. D. Johnston, P. M. O'Malley, and J. G. Bachman. 1988. The Generality of Deviance in Late Adolescence and Early Adulthood. *American Sociological Review* 53 (1): 81–93.
- Raine, A., P. H. Venables, and S. A. Mendick. 1997. Low Resting Heart Rate at Age 3 Years Predisposes to Aggression at Age 11 Years: Evidence from the Mauritius Child Health Project. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 36 (10): 1457–64.
- Rossi, P. H., E. Waite, C. E. Bose, and R. E. Berk. 1974. The Seriousness of Crimes: Normative Structure and Individual Differences. *American Sociological Review* 39 (2): 224–37.
- Sampson, R. J., S. W. Raudenbush, and F. Earls. 1997. Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy. *Science* 277:918–24.
- Silver, E., R. B. Felson, and M. VanEseltine. 2008. The Relationship between Mental Health Problems and Violence among Criminal Offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 35:406–26.
- Stinchcombe, A. L. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Sutherland, E. H. 1947. *Principles of Criminology*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.
- Sykes, G. M., and D. Matza. 1957. Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency. *American Sociological Review* 22 (6): 664–70.
- Tedeschi, J., and R. B. Felson, 1994. *Violence, Aggression, and Coercive Actions*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Tilly, C. 2003. *The Politics of Collective Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Toch, H. 1992. *Violent Men: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Violence*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Turnbull, C. M. 1965. *Wayward Servants: The Two Worlds of the African Pygmies*. Garden City, NY: Natural History Press.
- Warr, M. 2002. *Companions in Crime: The Social Aspects of Criminal Conduct*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Westley, W. A. 1970. *Violence and the Police: A Sociological Study of Law, Custom, and Morality*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Widom, C. S. 1989. The Cycle of Violence. *Science* 244 (4901):160–66.
- Wolfgang, M. E., and F. Ferracuti. 1967. *The Subculture of Violence*. London: Tavistock.
- Wright, R. T., and S. H. Decker. 1997. *Armed Robbers in Action: Stickups and Street Culture*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Zimring, F., and G. Hawkins. 1997. *Crime is Not the Problem: Lethal Violence in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

# Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?

Charles Tittle, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, North Carolina State University, United States

## Vol. 3 (1) 2009

**Editorial** (p. 3)

**Focus:**  
**General Theory of Violence**  
Guest Editors:  
Manuel Eisner and  
Susanne Karstedt

**Introduction: Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?**

Susanne Karstedt / Manuel Eisner (pp. 4 – 8)

**Micro and Macro Theories of Violence** Randall Collins (pp. 9 – 22)

**Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime** Richard B. Felson (pp. 23 – 39)

**The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues**

Manuel Eisner (pp. 40 – 59)

► **Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?**

Charles Tittle (pp. 60 – 74)

**Violence as Situational Action** Per-Olof H. Wikström / Kyle Treiber (pp. 75 – 96)

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence** Martin Shaw (pp. 97 – 106)

**Open Section**

**Understanding the Other's 'Understanding' of Violence** Marcel M. Baumann (pp. 107 – 123)

**Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics**

Renate Möller / Uwe Sander / Arne Schäfer / Dirk Villányi / Matthias D. Witte (pp. 124 – 142)

# Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?

Charles Tittle, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, North Carolina State University, United States

A model of theoretical science is set forth to guide the formulation of general theories around abstract concepts and processes. Such theories permit explanatory application to many phenomena that are not ostensibly alike, and in so doing encompass socially disapproved violence, making special theories of violence unnecessary. Though none is completely adequate for the explanatory job, at least seven examples of general theories that help account for deviance make up the contemporary theoretical repertoire. From them, we can identify abstractions built around features of offenses, aspects of individuals, the nature of social relationships, and different social processes. Although further development of general theories may be hampered by potential indeterminacy of the subject matter and by the possibility of human agency, maneuvers to deal with such obstacles are available.

Several distinct philosophies guide the study of socially disapproved behavior (deviance), and the nature and import of theories within each of those “philosophies of the enterprise” differ. However, the most common approach to the study of deviance is that called “science” or sometimes, “theoretical science” (Tittle 1995). According to the model of theoretical science, scholarship has as its ultimate goal the development of theories to explain phenomena within some domain of interest. Within a science framework, theory answers the questions of “why” and “how” in a disciplined but abstract manner. Theories tie together various particular “explanations” of more specific phenomena in such a way that the explanations can be derived from more abstract principles, while at the same time those general principles imply potential new predictions and explanations of as yet unexplained phenomena.

Scientific explanations are peculiar to concrete situations, events, or patterns while scientific theories are by their very nature “general” or abstract, intended to provide interconnected explanatory principles that transcend the limitations of time and space. Though theories are general and abstract, they also differ in the degree to which they can be so characterized, and the terminology is not always consistent.

Sometimes scholars use the word “theory” to refer to any discursive effort to explicate any phenomenon, in any way, whether general or specific. However, theoretical science conceives of theory in an encompassing explanatory manner, so here we will use the term in that broader sense to refer to a set of interrelated ideas or statements that provide abstract causal accounts of the phenomena within some domain of inquiry. Theories in this sense often set forth a basic or central causal principle that is theorized to apply with greater or less force under various contingencies, with specification of the mechanisms by which such a principle operates.

## 1. Barriers to a Science of Deviance or Socially Disapproved Violence

Although many embrace the philosophy of theoretical science and the bulk of deviance work in one way or another is devoted to the development and/or testing of theory, there are inherent difficulties in trying to produce a general theory of disapproved behavior (see Tittle 1985). Two such potential obstacles are of particular import in trying to generate general theories about individual actions that encompass acts of violence. One concerns the assumption, necessary to theoretical science, that behaviors to be explained share some common causes. That assumption is especially

relevant to socially disapproved behavior that happens to be criminal. Legal standards of behavior are inherently arbitrary, being products of a political process. As a result, there is no reason to expect the various types of behavior dealt with in any given legal code, much less among legal contexts, to show obvious, manifest, or essential similarity.

An array of criminal behaviors may include everything from failure to pay taxes to taking of human life without state authorization, and may include sexual violations and vice; such an array may also encompass acts prohibited through the influence of special interests as well as acts prohibited for the common good. Contrasts are especially sharp between criminal acts involving property or vice and those pertaining to violence. It is hard for most people to imagine that a theory explaining petty theft or prostitution might also account for homicide or assault, or that a theory providing such explanations could encompass trivial as well as extremely serious acts. And, this problem does not disappear if a theorist sets out to develop a theory of criminal violence. Indeed, given the plethora of behaviors prohibited in law, it appears that the only similarity in criminal behaviors is the fact of their illegality. Therefore, if general theories play on commonalities, the possibility of developing such criminological theories might seem to be exceptionally challenging.

Even if legal standards are by-passed with generic definitions of “normatively unacceptable behavior,” as I am doing here (Tittle 1995; Tittle and Paternoster 2000), or “force and fraud undertaken for self-gratification” (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), the absence of easily observed kinship poses challenges. For example, although there is no consensus about the formal definition, most people would probably think of socially disapproved violence as involving willful behaviors that result in physical harm to victims, even though harm itself might not be intended. But even so, regardless of legality, socially disapproved violence encompasses a range of behaviors, depending on the society in question, extending all the way from domestic abuse to stranger homicide, including along the way suicide and unauthorized killings by agents of a state, and expressing various degrees of willfulness as well as harm. Is it reasonable to think that a single theory can explain the actions of

executives of polluting industries whose initiatives result in sickness to residents of a neighborhood as well as the acts of street gangs in protecting their turf? More pointedly, is it feasible to try to explain acts of socially disapproved violence of any kind using theoretical principles that also apply to non-violent behaviors?

The second especially relevant hurdle to general theories of misconduct is the possibility that some human behaviors, including acts of socially disapproved violence, may not be sufficiently deterministic to permit the identification of “causes” that can be theorized and taken into account empirically (Katsenelinbiogen 1997). As numerous scholars have noted, deviant behaviors often seem to have an emergent quality to them (Felson and Steadman 1983; Luckenbill 1977). That is, they are not the result of straightforward causal forces. Instead, the prohibited actions grow out of complicated situational processes that unfold in unique ways as individuals act, interpret the actions of others, react, and so on, until the interaction eventuates in some outcome—sometimes deviant and sometimes not. Contrary to an extreme deterministic notion that individuals respond to causal forces in the same way that a leaf is subject to the forces of wind, humans are thought to exercise a certain amount of “agency” in deciding what to do and when (see Bandura 1989, 2001; Kahneman and Tversky 2000). So, even when all known predictors of the probability of deviance (Farrington 2000; Loeber, Slot, and Stouthamer-Loeber 2006) are present, individuals are believed to sometimes choose conformity just as they sometimes decide to violate social prohibitions even when all of the known risk factors seem to be against such actions. To the extent that scientific theories assume deterministic outcomes, then, general theories may always be inefficient and perhaps impossible.

## 2. Theoretical Maneuvers: The Tool of Abstraction

Despite the difficulties involved in developing general theories about individuals’ deviant behavior, such theories are nevertheless feasible and desirable. In the remainder of this paper, maneuvers to overcome the problems of apparent non-comparability and indeterminacy are discussed. In addition, it is argued that general theories explaining misbehavior already exist, although none yet passes the test of adequacy, and that they apply as well to socially disap-

proved violence as to any other misconduct, making special theories of violence unnecessary.

While various deviant acts or episodes may appear on the surface to be distinct, it is the job of theorists to look past the obvious in order to find abstract connections among the elements at play in misconduct and from those abstractions to build theories providing answers to questions of “how” and “why.” In fact, the main theme and tool of theory is abstraction. As long as scholars dwell on the manifest aspects of behaviors, they are limited to descriptions, empathetic interpretations, or perhaps *ad hoc* explanations. The first step in building theory is for the theorist to free him/herself from a focus on observable “essentials” of various kinds of actions. Thus, if we think of rape, vandalism, and bank robbery in terms of their evident characteristics, we will likely conclude that they are very different behaviors, each requiring its own explanation. For example, from an evident or “everyday” point of view, one act may be regarded, either by the actor or by others, as a physical act of aggression (or, some might think, passion), another a prank for fun, and the third as an attempt by the perpetrator to gain riches. Alternatively, from a non-theoretical stance, the three acts might be seen to differ in the seriousness of their consequences, with rape being most heinous, bank robbery a little less so, and vandalism least. Yet, those distinctions do not lend themselves to general theorizing. Abstraction, however, permits these three acts to be seen as very much alike in ways amenable to theoretical accounting. The first job for a theorist, then, is to imagine transcendent elements.

“Abstraction” is the name I give to the theory-building tool with which the theorist either perceives or imputes theoretically relevant transcendent qualities. Such abstraction is the key to building general theory because it permits the theorist to rise above the obvious. Abstraction can be employed with various degrees and it can be applied to many elements of deviant action—the acts, the persons, the contexts, or the processes at work. Moreover, abstraction not only permits unification of disparate phenomena, but it also allows for differences within abstract elements that become the tools

for explanation. In other words, by abstracting, a theorist first ignores concrete differences among acts, and then identifies, on a higher plane, new differences among acts or episodes that can then serve as causal variations. Abstracting, however, is not simply “observing” things others may not see, though it may involve some of that. Rather, abstraction, in one sense, represents an “imposition” of a new reality on the phenomena to be explained.

It is this aspect of general theory-building that rankles some scholars who cannot imagine that variables that might be known only to the theorist or researcher, or if known by actors, might actually appear irrelevant, can possibly account for human actions. On this point there is a fundamental difference of orientation among students of deviance. Some try to work with a concrete reality that seems apparent to actors and observers. To them, understanding grows from grasping the social world as it is experienced by the participants in actions of misconduct (Allen 2007), which almost always implies that explanation cannot extend beyond a specific context or, if it does, only to one similar in manifest ways. Others, whom I call general theorists, embrace the idea that even if participants have no awareness of their operation, abstract processes may be at work and may account for outcomes. For general theorists, the key is not whether something makes sense to actors but whether the theoretical structure provides answers to why/how questions posed by a critical, scientifically trained audience that employs the ultimate criterion of predictive capability, certified by derivation and testing of empirical relationships.

### 2.1. Abstraction Concerning Offenses

One form of abstraction that is often employed by theorists has to do with features of various offending actions. Though seemingly distinct, almost unique, offenses may nevertheless be alike in serving theoretically relevant, abstract purposes for the perpetrator. As one example, assault, rape, vandalism, and robbery have all been conceived as alternative control-enhancing mechanisms by which an offender alters his/her position in response to a coercive environment and a provocative, humiliation-generating situation

(see Tittle 1995, 2004, concerning Control Balance Theory).<sup>1</sup> Such a distinction permits a theorist to erect an elaborate theoretical structure providing answers to questions about the conditions under which one or another deviant outcome is likely.

Note that this abstraction concerning the “control enhancing function” of misbehavior may be something about which the offender him/herself has no conscious awareness, intent, or knowledge. Moreover, it is not obvious to observers, whether they be scientists or lay persons, and may become cognitively real only after a theorist has pointed out the distinction. In other words, this characteristic or quality that unites offenses illustrates the point made earlier that abstractions may be entirely “invented” or “imposed.” Yet, such “invented” characteristics are crucial for explanations within larger theoretical frameworks. Whether the explanations provided by that larger framework are adequate by the various relevant scientific criteria remains to be seen, but it is clear that abstraction of offenses provides explanatory leverage that otherwise would not be possible.

It is important to remember that abstraction not only unifies its objects but it also introduces crucial differences that then become explanatory tools. For instance, if offenses are tied together by their capacity to increase an individual’s control, those same offenses may differ theoretically (1) in the degree to which they are likely to increase a person’s overall control in the face of potential counter-control, (2) in the opportunities for their employment by a given person in a specific situation, and (3) in the potential counter-control they are likely to invoke. Moreover, as with other abstractions, such differences may have powerful implications despite an actor’s being unaware of them and despite the fact that prior to the theory, others may not have noticed or imagined such differences or their importance. Thus, theory plays out around abstract similarities and differences,

and one focus of such abstractions can be the potential offenses.

However, some abstract conceptualizations around offenses are more abstract than others and derived theories can be arrayed with respect to a hierarchy of generality. Taking note of that hierarchy is useful because it suggests the possibility of theoretical integration, an important step in increasing the adequacy of general theories (Messner, Krohn, and Liska 1989; Tittle 1995, 2004). Yet, considering levels of generality and degrees of abstractness shows that, though abstraction is an essential process in theory building, it is not sufficient. To underline that point, note that the above example of abstracting offenses in terms of their control-altering possibilities in order to create a theory of control balancing might be regarded as a specific instance of the general formulation enunciated in General Strain Theory (GST) (Agnew 1992, 2001, 2006), and, as such, might be subsumed within that larger account. Indeed, integrating limited theories into more general formulations is an important ongoing process in theoretical science in pursuit of the most general possible theory relevant to a given set of phenomena. However, to accomplish that purpose it is not enough to enunciate an apparently more abstract principle; it is also necessary to find a way to accommodate the details of the theories to be integrated.

Consider General Strain Theory (GST) as a potential absorber of Control Balance Theory (CBT). GST conceives of assault, rape, vandalism, bank robbery, and various kinds of socially disapproved violence with respect to how likely their commission by an individual is to (1) reduce “strain” (a form of internal inconsistency) and/or (2) to help relieve negative emotions associated with such strains. Offending is theorized to be caused by individual efforts to use such offending as a means to overcome strain or the emotions it generates. Obviously, perceptions of having inadequate control, a key variable of CBT, can be conceived as one espe-

<sup>1</sup> Though far more complicated and rich than a brief account can portray, Control Balance Theory (CBT) argues that a person’s control ratio—the amount of control an individual can exercise relative to that which is arrayed against him or her—influences the chances of being provoked, usually by some

form of debasement, into considering the possibility of deviant behavior. Deviant behavior is conceived as a maneuver to extend one’s control—to correct a control imbalance and to relieve feelings of humiliation. So, whenever a person is provoked into an acute realization of a control imbalance and

comes to see deviance as a possible solution, he/she then decides what deviance it might be possible to commit without invoking counter-control greater than the potential gain from deviant behavior. The deviance likely to be selected is theorized as being predictable from the original control ratio.

cially important form of strain, while the process of control balancing can be conceived as a technique to try to relieve a particular kind of strain or the emotions of humiliation associated with it. Thus, the argument of CBT can be subsumed within the GST process of alleviating negative emotions through various forms of coping. Yet, CBT contains crucial details that would be lost if one only observes such a possibility and lets it go at that.

For example, though GST features strain it does not prioritize types of strain, as CBT does in its identification of a “master strain” of control imbalance. GST does not explain why some situations are straining, as CBT attempts to do for what it treats as the most important form of strain individuals can experience. Further, although GST suggests that under some conditions strain gives rise to negative emotions, CBT explains why control imbalances produce a particular negative emotion and describes the conditions under which that occurs. GST identifies numerous conditions that may affect the direction coping might take, but it does not explain exactly what conditions influence the likely coping responses to particular strains or why they produce that effect, as CBT does with respect to control balancing. Thus, theoretical integration must go well beyond formulating a general, abstract process, even when such a process might be more general. In fact, as useful as abstraction is, it can be over-emphasized to the neglect of other necessary elements for successful building of general theory.

One of those additional, crucial requirements for integration is an appropriate infrastructure with a central causal process within which more detailed applications can be accommodated, which GST does not yet seem to have. Moreover, trying to modify GST so that it can accommodate the principles of CBT, as well as other theories such as Coer-

cion/Social Support (CSS) (Colvin, Cullen, and Ven 2002),<sup>2</sup> though laudable and perhaps an important step, is not the ultimate goal. After all, while the causal arguments of CBT can be conceived as an instance of the causal process enunciated by GST, it is also possible to conceive of CBT as the more general account and allow it to absorb GST. In fact, given the deficiencies in GST noted above, it might be more efficient to integrate GST into CBT rather than the other way around. However, the goal is not to make either GST or CBT healthier by importing missing elements. Instead, theoretical science calls for a more encompassing general theory than either GST or CBT would become by consuming the other. The general theory we must strive for will express the processes set forth by control balancing, general strain, and other theories as well. But just as GST falters in its current inability to accommodate specific details of theories that might otherwise be candidates for assimilation, an even more general theory might well fail to a greater extent for the same reason. The criteria for successful theoretical integration, then, go beyond mere generality or abstraction, though both are essential.

## 2.2. Abstraction Concerning Individuals

A second form of theoretical abstraction concerns characteristics of the individuals who might violate norms. The best known usage of such abstraction is Self-Control Theory (SCT) (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990).<sup>3</sup> SCT not only abstracts offenses through their potential for gratifying human needs, but enunciates a causal principle based on another kind of abstraction—the person’s ability, or capacity, to anticipate long-range negative consequences and to restrain him/herself for maximum personal benefit (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). According to the theory, regardless of anything else, a person with low self-control who sees a chance to commit some gratifying act (including

<sup>2</sup> Coercion/Social Support Theory (CSS) contends that the balance of coercive influences relative to social support influences in a person’s life determines various outcomes. For example, a person who enjoys consistent social support, because of the sense of trust it generates, is expected to develop low levels of anger, high self-control, and strong, morally based social bonds that in turn cause pro-social behavior and good mental health. Erratic social support produces a tendency toward exploratory deviance

because the lack of dependability in support generates moderate anger, low self-control, and social bonds based on calculation. Additional predictions are made about the effects of erratic and consistent coercion, with arguments and causal sequences responsible for each outcome specified by the theory.

<sup>3</sup> Self-Control Theory (SCT) argues that specific elements of child rearing affect the degree of self-control a person acquires. The level of self-control learned in childhood is said to remain relatively

constant throughout the life cycle and to explain and predict the chances of misbehavior. Those with low self-control are theorized to be highly likely to offend because offending is potentially gratifying and those without strong self-control are unable to anticipate and act on future negative consequences that almost always accompany misbehavior.

socially disapproved ones) without much risk of immediate costs is likely to commit that act. Such a person simply cannot help it.

The general characteristic of self-control, which is presumed to operate in all circumstances, for all individuals, and with respect to all forms of force or fraud undertaken for self-gratification, allows explanation and prediction far more effectively than other notions about individuals. But, even granting such generalizing ability, one might wonder why self-control is a more abstract notion than, say, honesty, selfishness, or greediness, all of which are common-sense ideas about why individuals misbehave, presumably rooted in everyday observations. Simply stated, the abstract notion of self-control is superior because it ties together six separate individual traits, including impulsivity and a preference for risk taking, while the presumed alternative features of individuals that might bear on deviance stand alone with little ability to unify disparate things to be explained. For instance, selfishness alone does not foreshadow one's inability to restrain deviant impulses in those instances where deviant acts might result in punishment. Focusing on these as separate traits, or on others already mentioned, encourages particularity while focusing on the more abstract concept encourages generality. Thus, honesty may help account for property offenses, but it will not help in explaining violence. And, greed may partially account for the bank robbery but hardly vandalism. Low self-control however, presumably accounts for all of them plus other delicts.

This is not to say that self-control is the only useful theoretical abstraction about individuals, that the theoretical apparatus within which self-control is embedded in SCT is sufficient, or even that Gottfredson and Hirschi's concept of self-control is superior to other related concepts or to the self-control ideas of other theorists (examples: Muraven and Baumeister 2000; Muraven, Tice, and Baumeister 1998). After all, numerous personality characteristics, some inclusive of various traits, have been identified by various scholars, though most have proven elusive and few have the sweeping import of self-control (see Caspi et al. 1994; Moffitt et al. 1995). Indeed, the possibilities for useful theoretical abstraction concerning individual characteristics are vast, particularly if abstraction of individuals is combined with other forms of abstraction. Moreover, just as control

balance ideas might be subsumable under general strain theory, the causal processes of self-control may be encompassed within more general theories, such as that of Social Learning (Akers 1985, 1998, 2000; Bandura 1977; Burgess and Akers 1966) or brought into any number of theories in the form of contingencies for the full operation of various causal mechanisms set forth in those formulations (Agnew et al. 2002; Colvin, Cullen, and Ven 2002; Tittle 2004).

### 2.3. Abstraction Concerning Social Relationships

A third kind of abstraction focuses on the nature of the social networks within which individuals are embedded. The well known theory (theories) of social bonding, or social integration (Briar and Piliavin 1965; Hirschi 1969; Nye 1958; Reckless 1967; Reiss 1951; Toby 1957; see also J. Braithwaite 1989; Felson 1986; Sampson and Laub 1993; Warr 2002) employs abstraction of offenses (see above), concerning the normative status of different behaviors within a social network. But, it pairs that abstraction with another one around which causal forces are marshaled, that of the individual's relationships with the social group within which a norm is relevant (Horowitz 1990). Some acts are prohibited and some encouraged in specific social groups; however, the extent to which an individual fulfills either of those normative mandates is theorized to depend largely on the nature and strength of his or her ties to the network/group. Those who are bonded, or integrated (an abstract notion), are restrained from normative violation and constrained toward normative conformity, regardless of the specific norms. So, the explanatory platform for this theory rests on abstractions of social relationships and abstractions of offenses, not the individual's personal characteristics or various manifest characteristics of situations or people.

Here too, it is useful to remember that even though the abstraction of social relationships is immensely useful, it requires an explanatory apparatus to be theoretically potent. Moreover, the theory of social integration may play an essential part in theoretical integration—when it is brought under some other explanatory umbrella, brings other accounts under its tent, or is integrated with other theories using various kinds of abstractions within an entirely separate formulation.

#### 2.4. Abstraction Concerning Social Processes

A fourth form of useful theoretical abstraction is oriented around social processes. For instance, theorizing that all offenses are products of situational stimuli activating learned cues for action is a powerful abstraction (Social Learning Theory [SLT]: see Akers 1985, 1998; 2000; Bandura 1977; Sutherland 1939; Wilson and Herrnstein 1985). This is particularly so when it is also imagined that cues for action become stored in the human psyche as a result of a prior pattern of relative reward or punishment associated with various lines of action and that humans are fundamentally oriented toward maximizing reward and minimizing costs (Hechter and Kanazawa 1997; McCarthy 2002). With such theoretical armament, a scholar is equipped to explain and predict all offending, in all circumstances, by all people without recourse to any inherent characteristics of the individuals, the offenses, or the situation. This, of course, is in contrast to the common sense idea that offenders are different in essential ways, that acts have inherent appeal or repulsion for individuals who might commit them, and that situations largely determine outcomes by the degree to which they promise certain and severe penalties for norm violation.

With such a broad abstraction of process, not only can almost any individual behavior be explained, but almost all other theories can be subsumed (Akers 1990). However, it is good to remember, again, that abstraction alone does not suffice and that as useful as very general abstraction may be, it can actually be too much. In the case of social learning, the key to understanding, explaining, and predicting misbehavior is knowledge of prior reinforcement patterns. The theory, however, does not itself explain differential exposure to varied reinforcement schedules nor does it make any other key distinctions among people, offenses, or relationships. For instance, as long as reinforcement is similar, SLT makes no distinction among things learned. Thus, in their capacity to compel behavior, moral notions are equal to occupational goals or any other things with equivalent reinforcement histories. Yet, other theories (see in particular Etzioni 1988; Scott 1971; Wikström 2006; Wikström and Treiber 2007) and much research (see Antonaccio and Tittle 2008 for citations) suggests that moral issues may have more force than non-moral issues even when both are products of similar

learning histories. To the extent, then, that the content of learning matters, the very process of abstraction may defeat ultimate goals of theory by permitting one to ignore certain relevant details.

#### 2.5. Summary

A variety of methods of abstraction have been employed in theoretical work to transcend *surface* differences among the variety of offending acts. Though offenses differ in obvious ways, those differences become irrelevant on the abstract level. It is latent distinctions among acts that take on meaning through the abstracting process and that come to have explanatory import. By imagining and identifying those non-obvious, hidden commonalities as well as “new” abstract differences, theorizing to provide explanations embedded in general principles becomes possible. Of course, as emphasized previously, such abstraction is only the beginning. If theories are to be both possible and realized those abstractions have to be encompassed within a causal framework structured to accommodate a variety of generative and restraining forces as well as various contingencies.

In this connection it is important to note that there is no necessary distinction between non-violent and violent deviant acts. If the key to explanation lies in abstract qualities, then the fact that one act causes physical harm to a victim while another only deprives the victim of property or dignity is of no import whatsoever as long as the different kinds of acts share the abstract quality around which the theory is built. Therefore, from the perspective of theoretical science, a general theory of socially disapproved violence is really no different than a general theory of offending (or ultimately even of human behavior *per se*). Since theories of offending can be easily envisioned and in fact already exist, and socially disapproved violence can be conceived within abstract categories and principles, there is no need for special theories of normatively unacceptable violence. The cardinal assumption of a theoretical science of misconduct, which I think has been fulfilled, is that all forms of such offending can be joined through abstraction, with outcomes being explained and predicted from general causal processes concerning those abstractions.

Nevertheless, theoretically important abstract qualities do vary and sometimes those variations are linked to the “fundamental” characteristics of particular deviant acts. For example, most general theories of socially disapproved behavior identify “opportunity” to commit specific acts as an important feature of their explanatory schemes. While various theories seem to imply different things by the concept (see Tittle and Botchkovar 2005: 714–15), opportunity may nevertheless sometimes differentiate violent from non-violent acts of deviance. For instance, in Self-Control Theory (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990, 2003) opportunity appears to imply a situation where a given gratifying act of force or fraud can be committed with a minimal risk of immediate cost (Grasmick et al. 1993). By that definition, fraudulent acts (property crime) ordinarily may be more opportune than forceful acts. Because most people regard disapproved violent acts as more serious (harmful or consequential) than disapproved non-violent acts, they stand in greater readiness to do something about them. Therefore, it is more likely that a person, even one with low self-control, will confront more situations promising stronger risks of immediate consequences for prohibited violent actions than for unacceptable actions of a fraudulent nature. Furthermore, because the long-range consequences of violence are more potent than for fraud, it is harder for a person with weak self-control to remain oblivious to them. Thus, Self-Control Theory may be more effective in explaining violations of norms about property than in explaining disapproved violence (see Pratt and Cullen 2000) because the abstract formulation ties into “fundamental” features of the concrete world.

As another example, Social Learning Theory (Akers 1985, 1998) seeks the commonality of deviant behavior in the degree to which it has been previously “reinforced” (learned), either directly or vicariously, or by self-reinforcement through anticipation of outcomes (see Bandura 1977). Thus, as noted previously, theoretically it does not matter how different an assault may appear relative to writing a hot check. If an individual has experienced (directly or vicariously) the same amount of reward relative to punishment for the two acts, those behaviors are theoretically equivalent in their likelihood of being committed, given their physical possibility and equal chances of situational reward or

punishment. However, in reality, the nature of reinforcement for disapproved violence may be much different than for fraudulent check writing. Given cultural norms emphasizing greater seriousness of violent than property offending, especially those property offenses that do not involve direct invasion of privacy, learning concerning disapproved violence may be more firmly linked to a person’s self-identity and it may have a stronger relationship with moral conscience (Wikström 2006; Wikström and Treiber 2007). If so, then violence and fraudulent check writing, even when equally reinforced, may differ in the likelihood of their expression, thereby reflecting some “fundamental” differences.

Overall, then, inherent, obvious, surface distinctions among deviant acts pose no real barrier to theorizing. The very nature of general theories requires that they be based on abstractions by which acts that appear different take on latent commonalities around which theoretical explanations are built. But, this does not imply that all differences among deviant acts are irrelevant. Good theories invent or recognize differences relative to their own explanatory principles and build in accounts that hinge on those differences. This process of spelling out theoretically relevant differences, sometimes referred to as “scope statements,” “contingencies,” “conditional specifications, or “moderators,” is, in fact, essential to effective theory building (R. B. Braithwaite 1960; Cullen 1984; Walker and Cohen 1985). However, “fundamental” differences among acts of offending may bear on abstract, theoretically relevant differences so they are not always entirely outside the theoretical box. Yet, given the principles of abstraction and “moderation,” general theories can easily relegate most manifest characteristics of offending acts to a back burner. Hence, no special theories are needed to explain socially disapproved violent acts, illegal acts against property norms, acts by females, acts by youth, white collar offenses, or any other acts differentiated by external characteristics.

### 3. Dealing with Potential Indeterminacy

A more serious problem for general theory may be inherent indeterminacy of social phenomena. It is clear that no theory in the current arsenal of deviance studies provides accurate prediction of outcomes. In fact, social scientists

are usually happy if their theories generate predictions that prove to be better than chance guesses. Even the most successful predictive theories fall far short of being completely accurate. For example, tests of hypotheses from self-control theory, which is widely touted as one of our more successful theories (see Goode 2008), generally produce predictive coefficients below .30 (Pratt and Cullen 2000), and tests of hypotheses from social learning theory, often regarded as the leading theory of deviance (Sampson 1999), rarely yield predictions greater than .50 (see Akers 1998, 2000; Akers and Jensen 2003 for citations to the research) and even some of those predictions might be due to tautological measurement (see Rebellon 2006). This predictive “failure” is sometimes taken as evidence of inherent indeterminacy and some assume that such indeterminacy is at least partly due to the exercise of human discretion. If human behavior is largely non-deterministic, particularly if it is subject to free choice by individuals, then successful general theories of human behavior, especially deviance (including socially disapproved violence) may be unlikely, or perhaps impossible.

### 3.1. Attributing Human Agency

The literature now includes a number of arguments concerning human agency and several studies purport to show, by one means or another, its actual operation (see Bottoms 2006). Indeed, even I have raised the specter of human agency in connection with self-control theory, arguing that people can often choose how much self-control they exercise, and offering some indirect evidence to that effect (Tittle, Ward and Grasmick 2004). In addition, as noted before, the apparent lack of success of extant theories presumably following the science model is sometimes taken as an indirect indication of human agency at work. Unfortunately, given the current level of theoretical development, and some methodological barriers, the literature justifies neither a conclusion of general indeterminacy nor that human discretion negates efforts to build general theory.

In fact, the case for indeterminacy may be largely residual, resting on the uncertainty endemic to incomplete theories (see Tittle 1995) and flawed research. No contemporary theory incorporates all or even most causal forces that have been suggested by research or identified by various specific theoretical arguments, and none specifies a full comple-

ment of contingencies. Furthermore, not even our most successful theories spell out complete causal streams with enough tributaries to accommodate even a fraction of the potential complexity of social misconduct. Correspondingly, empirical research guided by such theories has failed to produce full prediction.

Moreover, research suggesting unpredictability of human behavior (examples include Felson and Steadman 1983; Luckenbill 1977) or indeterminacy (see Bandura 1989, 2001; Kahneman and Tversky 2000) does not indicate randomness. Indeed, theorists have set forth a number of strong statements about the forces operative in emergent outcomes (Tedeschi and Felson 1994) and there is good reason to believe that even human agency is exercised within constraining parameters (see especially Kahneman and Tversky 2000). The more that is known about individuals and the relevant constraints affecting their behavior, the better can decisions, even those following mutual reaction patterns, be anticipated. Thus, the science of human decision making, though far from providing full explanation, suggests distinct patterning. Whether a driver will take the right or the left fork may be largely predetermined, if for no other reason than habit (Bandura 1977). Of course, simple, isolated choices are easier to explain than complex series of decisions made in a social context, but the promise of explanation—even of complex choices—is real. At the very least, evidence suggests that good theory, informed by research, can narrow the zone of non-predictability.

If theoretical developments concerning disapproved conduct continue at their recent pace, specific theory fragments (often now treated as if they were full theories) are likely to become more encompassing and more adequate. Moreover, it is not out of the question to expect the emergence of a general, overarching, dominant, integrated theory based on a central causal process that accommodates or integrates the forces currently associated with numerous theoretical accounts that try to stand alone. Such a theory may generate far better predictions than now follow from an inchoate theoretical repertoire. As those developments unfold, the zone of apparent indeterminacy may well narrow. This, of course, is an expectation filled with optimism and confidence in the enterprise of theoretical science. Not every-

body shares such a hopeful outlook. My reason for doing so rests on the progress that has been made within the past twenty to twenty-five years. At the beginning of that era, I argued that theoretical science had been underrated, mispracticed, and prematurely judged by students of deviance, and that only time would tell if it could realize its promise (Tittle 1985). Subsequently, we have seen much theoretical ferment, with several innovative formulations having been produced. Some of those efforts have set forth unusual ideas (examples: control balance, Tittle 1995, 2004; coercion/social support, Colvin, Cullen, and Ven 2002; morality–Wikström 2006; Wikström and Treiber 2007; self-control, Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990) and some have elaborated and improved existing notions in an integrative process of borrowing, refining, and transforming extant formulations (for examples see: general strain theory, Agnew 1992; 2006; shaming theory, J. Braithwaite 1989; social control/learning, Heimer and Matsueda 1994; self-esteem/defense theory, Kaplan 1995; institutional anomie theory, Messner and Rosenfeld 2001 [1994]; and social bonds, Sampson and Laub 1993). The net result is a marked improvement in ability to explain deviance and deviance-related phenomena, with consequent enhancement of predictive capabilities. If this trend continues—and there is much reason to think it will—less and less room will be left for speculation about indeterminacy as the process of theoretical science unfolds.

Further progress, however, does not depend entirely on theoretical improvement. Research problems always lurk in the shadows of science, only partly dependent on the adequacy of theories. Theories are intellectual edifices, constructed of abstractions whose inherent meanings exist in the minds of the theorists. However, if such intellectual structures are to be more than simply solutions to cognitive puzzles, they must be applicable to, and account for, the social world, which can only be certified by empirical test. But, testing assumes accurate derivation of hypotheses bearing on the real world, drawn from abstract notions. The confidence of the scientific community in a given abstract formulation depends on the extent to which predictions derived from it hold up when subjected to carefully organized observations.

Two major disconnects, however, characterize the process of translating theoretical arguments into hypotheses (or

series of hypotheses and/or causal models) about the real world and trying to transform concepts into variables. The first stems from unclear theories. Theoretical ambiguity, sometimes inadvertent (see Tittle 2004 for an illustration of this), may lead to hypotheses that do not, in fact, represent relationships implied by the theory, to contradictory hypotheses, or to instances in which diametrically opposite findings are interpreted by some scholars as providing support for a theory and by others as constituting a challenge to that theory. A collective body of evidence supposedly bearing on a theory, therefore, may actually be largely irrelevant, tangential, or misleading.

The second kink, however, occurs when correctly drawn hypotheses are inappropriately tested, often because of weak or misdirected measurement. Measurement is the bridge between two different worlds, the intellectual and the empirical, and so is always somewhat uncertain. It is never entirely clear whether theoretical failure (or success, for that matter) is due to features of the theory itself, such as being impervious to agency, or to the way the concepts are operationalized. Given the difficulties of making a true and faithful translation of an intellectual product into an empirical tool, even very good theories may show diminished empirical performance (or in some cases such as making peer influence the test of social learning, showing more support than may be warranted). Of course, some theories may simply be wrong, but, it is also true that many relatively clear concepts are spoiled by researchers so that “tests” are often invalid. Empirical deficiencies, therefore, make it impossible at the present time to judge the achievements of a deviance studies guided by theoretical science or to conclude that indeterminacy prevails.

These theoretical/empirical deficiencies also impinge on “direct” evidence about human agency, which may appear to show the operation of uninfluenced/undetermined action only because theories are yet incomplete or because research tools are deficient. In view of such possibilities, it is simply too soon to draw a strong conclusion about agency or indeterminacy. Ultimately, both forms of uncertainty may be proven, but in the meantime, there is ample reason to proceed as if it does not matter. We do not know what can be accomplished until the process of science has more

fully unfolded. Unfortunately, theoretical science moves extremely slowly and so far in its focus on socially disapproved behavior the process has only just begun to flourish.

### 3.2. Indeterminacy, Probability, and Social Science

Even if deviant behavior, including socially disapproved violence, turns out to be somewhat indeterminate, such indeterminacy does not necessarily constitute a barrier to general theory. While it would be neater and more convenient if the social world were absolutely known to be determined so that one could imagine complete explanation with accompanying total prediction, science does not require it. There is no logical reason why theories cannot specify causal processes that operate up to a point or specify probabilistic relationships/effects. The fact that most of our research methods are probabilistically based while our theories are deterministic is often taken to be an unfortunate inconsistency. However, it is easy to imagine that our theories and the hypotheses they spawn are, in fact, probabilistically, not deterministically, rooted. Thus, probabilistic research tools may actually match a probabilistic subject domain.

Building general theories to account for a probabilistic rather than a deterministic world requires only slight modification of current practice. First, theorists can do what empirical scholars using regression analysis currently do: explain as much as can be explained and then allocate the remaining unexplained portion to a residual category. Empirical scholars call the residual category an “error term” which is brought into predictive equations to fill out a matrix to avoid statistical problems of mis-specification. Likewise, theorists could specify what part of a phenomenon is to be explained by particular theoretical premises and what part is to be treated as a residual effect. In reality, all social scientists now employ this maneuver in their treatment of biological/genetic influences. Only the most conservative social scientists continue to discount the import of such forces (see, for example, discussions in Ellis and Walsh 1997; Guo, Roetter, and Cai 2008), although there may be much disagreement about the extent of their influence. Nevertheless, even those who recognize that social factors may interact with genetic/biological elements still largely exclude consideration of such influences from theoretical formulations. Similarly, most social researchers simply attribute

those genetic/biological components that might be operative to “error,” which is usually assumed to be relatively small. Social scientists are simply unequipped to deal with the mysterious world of genetic/biological influences whose secrets are slowly being unlocked by physical scientists. In the meantime, the work of social science proceeds with a fair degree of success and with little worry that such influences may eventually have to be accommodated explicitly.

Second, instead of bifurcating phenomena to be explained into explicable and inexplicable zones, all explanations could postulate probabilistic effects all along the causal continuum. The task for theorists then would be to spell out the degrees of chance that are incorporated into given outcomes, to identify the forces that influence them, and to explain why and how those probabilistic processes operate. In other words, while most contemporary social theorists (like their predecessors) conduct their work *as if* social behavior, especially deviance, were determined (even when they may not actually believe it), they do not have to do so. Theorists could, instead, embrace indeterminacy and theorize about it directly.

### 3.3. Summary

While the possibility of indeterminism, particularly involving human agency, is a real concern for theoretical science, it does not necessarily constitute an insurmountable barrier. For one thing, we do not yet know how indeterminate human behavior is or the extent to which such indeterminacy actually hinders progress. Indeed, the results of research on uncertain outcomes and on human decision making suggest that very little human behavior is random, including the exercise of agency. To specify the degree to which human action can ultimately be explained and predicted, theorists must act now “as if” all were determined, letting the final decisions about indeterminacy rest on the products of a more fully exercised scientific process. Theoretical successes of the past two or so decades give cause for optimism in that regard. However, even if theorists do prematurely conclude that indeterminism and human agency must be accepted, they can adopt working strategies to deal with them. One such strategy involves sorting aspects of social phenomena into explicable and inexplicable zones, with the inexplicable parts being allocated to a residual “er-

ror” category much as regression analyses separate components that are accounted for from those left unexplained. A second, little-tried approach is to confront probabilistic effects head on, providing explanations directly suited for uncertain outcomes.

#### 4. Conclusions about General Theories of Offending

Based on the reasoning presented above, general theories of deviance that encompass socially disapproved violence are not only feasible but mandatory if we are to do our jobs as scholars trying to account for the phenomena in our domain. Fortunately, some success has already been achieved in developing such theories, as should be clear from some of the illustrations used in previous sections of this paper. Indeed, the contemporary theoretical tool box contains at least seven general theories of crime/deviance that encompass socially disapproved violence: social learning, general strain, self, social support/coercion, social integration/social control, self-control, and control balance. Each of these formulations contains abstractions designed to answer questions of “why” and “how” about behavioral patterns that are not limited to specific contexts or features. Moreover, all of them state at least one contingency under which the causal forces of the theory are said to operate with greater or less force.

The problem, therefore, is not a dearth of theories; it is that extant theories are not adequate to the job. Adequate theories within the philosophy of theoretical science must fulfill five requirements. First, they have to *explain* the things within their domains. That is, they must answer the questions of “why” and “how” in a way that satisfies the intellectual curiosity of an audience trained to ask deeper

and deeper questions and to be skeptical of answers. Such an audience will naturally expect the abstract formulations to provide explanations of at least a good proportion of the phenomena within their domains within a common causal network. Second, theories must be *testable* and *have been sufficiently tested* to verify them as consistent with the empirical world. That is, their abstract formulations must yield numerous statements of relationships applicable in the concrete world that conceivably can be falsified but in fact turn out to be supported by empirical tests. Third, theories should provide *comprehensive* accounts that accommodate all of the relevant causal forces that come into play. Fourth, adequate theories must be *precise*; that is, they should identify the conditions that influence exactly when and to what degree the causal processes will unfold, the nature of the causal effects (such as the form or shape of a causal relationship), and the time interval between the proposed causes and the expected effects. Fifth, good theories must specify full causal sequences and provide logical rationales for the connections among the parts, a feature called *depth*. None of the contemporary theories listed above measures up to these standards. Some come closer than others but all fall short in one or another respect, and specific ones sometimes fail in multiple respects. One helpful approach for overcoming such deficiencies may be some form of further theoretical integration. Although some of the contemporary theories are themselves integrations of disparate theoretical parts, there still remains much potential complementarity among the seven contenders. Moreover, given that each of the theories cited enjoys some degree of logical and empirical support, at the very least the criterion of comprehensiveness suggests a need for still more integration.

## References

- Agnew, Robert. 1992. Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency. *Criminology* 30:47–87.
- . 2001. Building on the Foundation of General Strain Theory: Specifying the Types of Strain Most Likely to Lead to Crime and Delinquency. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38:319–61.
- . 1990. Rational Choice, Deterrence, and Social Learning in Criminology. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 81:653–76.
- . 1998. *Social Learning and Social Structure: A General Theory of Crime and Deviance*. Boston: Northeastern University Publishing Company.
- . 2000. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*, 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Akers, Ronald L., and Gary F. Jensen, eds. 2003. *Social Learning Theory and the Explanation of Crime*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Allen, Chris. 2007. *Crime, Drugs and Social Theory: A Phenomenological Approach*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Antonaccio, Olena, and Charles R. Tittle. 2008. Morality and Crime among Ukrainians: A Challenge to Self-Control Theory. *Criminology* 46:479–510.
- Bandura, Albert. 1977. *Social Learning Theory*. New York: General Learning Press.
- . 1989. Human Agency in Social Cognitive Theory. *American Psychologist* 44:1175–84.
- . 2001. Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology* 52:1–26.
- Bottoms, Anthony. 2006. Desistance, Social Bonds, and Human Agency: A Theoretical Explanation. In *The Explanation of Crime: Context, Mechanisms, and Development*, ed. P.-O. H. Wikström and R. J. Sampson, 243–90. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Braithwaite, John. 1989. *Crime, Shame, and Reintegration*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Braithwaite, Richard B. 1960. *Scientific Explanation*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Briar, Scott, and Irving Piliavin. 1965. Delinquency, Situation Inducement, and Commitments to Conformity. *Social Problems* 13:35–45.
- Burgess, Robert, and Ronald L. Akers. 1966. A Differential Association-Reinforcement Theory of Criminal Behavior. *Social Problems* 14:128–47.
- Caspi, Avshalom, Terrie E. Moffitt, Phil A. Silva, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, Robert F. Krueger, and Pamela S. Schmutte. 1994. Are Some People Crime-Prone? Replications of the Personality-Crime Relationship across Countries, Genders, Races, and Methods. *Criminology* 32:163–95.
- Colvin, Mark, Francis T. Cullen, and Thomas Vander Ven. 2002. Coercion, Social Support, and Crime: An Emerging Theoretical Consensus. *Criminology* 40:19–42.
- Cullen, Francis T. 1984. *Rethinking Criminal Deviance Theory*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Ellis, Lee, and Anthony Walsh. 1997. Gene-based Evolutionary Theories in Criminology. *Criminology* 35:229–76.
- Etzioni, Amatai. 1988. *The Moral Dimension: Toward a New Economics*. New York: The Free Press.
- Farrington, David P. 2000. Explaining and Predicting Crime: The Globalization of Knowledge. The American Society of Criminology 1999 Presidential Address. *Criminology* 38:1–24.
- Felson, Marcus. 1986. Linking Criminal Choices, Routine Activities, Informal Control, and Criminal Outcomes. In *The Reasoning Criminal*, ed. D. B. Cornish and R. V. Clarke, 119–28. New York: Springer.
- Felson, Richard, and Henry J. Steadman. 1983. Situational Factors in Disputes Leading to Criminal Violence. *Criminology* 21:59–74.
- . 2006. *Pressured into Crime: An Overview of General Strain Theory*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Agnew, Robert, Timothy Brezina, John Paul Wright, and Francis T. Cullen. 2002. Strain, Personality Traits, and Delinquency: Extending General Strain Theory. *Criminology* 40:43–70.
- Akers, Ronald L. 1985. *Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach*, 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Goode, Erich. 2008. *Out of Control: Assessing the General Theory of Crime*, preface, vii-x. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gottfredson, Michael R., and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 2003. Self-control and Opportunity. In *Control Theories of Crime and Delinquency*, ed. C. L. Britt and M. R. Gottfredson, 5–19. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Grasmick, Harold G., Charles R. Tittle, Robert J. Bursik, Jr., and Bruce J. Arneklev. 1993. Testing the Core Empirical Implications of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 30:5–29.
- Guo, Guang, Michel E. Roetter, and Tianji Cai. 2008. The Integration of Genetic Propensities into Social-Control Models of Delinquency and Violence among Male Youths. *American Sociological Review* 73:543–68.
- Hechter, Michael, and S. Kanazawa. 1997. Sociological Rational Choice Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology* 23:191–214.
- Heimer, Karen, and Ross L. Matsueda. 1994. Role-Taking, Role Commitment, and Delinquency: A Theory of Differential Social Control. *American Sociological Review* 59:365–90.
- Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *The Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Horwitz, Allan V. 1990. *The Logic of Social Control*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Kahneman, Daniel, and Amos Tversky, eds. 2000. *Choice, Values, Frames*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaplan, Howard B. 1995. Drugs, Crime, and Other Deviant Adaptations. In *Drugs, Crime and Other Deviant Adaptations: Longitudinal Studies*, ed. H. B. Kaplan, 3–46. New York: Plenum.
- Katsenelinboigen, Aron. 1997. *The Concept of Indeterminism and Its Applications: Economics, Social Systems, Ethics, Artificial Intelligence, and Aesthetics*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Loeber, Rolf, N. Wim Slot, and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber. 2006. A Three-Dimensional, Cumulative Developmental Model of Serious Delinquency. In *The Explanation of Crime: Context, Mechanisms, and Development*, ed. P.-O. H. Wikström and R. J. Sampson, 153–94. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Luckenbill, David F. 1977. Criminal Homicide as a Situated Transaction. *Social Problems* 25:176–86.
- Matza, David. 1964. *Delinquency and Drift*. New York: John Wiley.
- McCarthy, Bill. 2002. New Economics of Sociological Criminology. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:417–42.
- Messner, Steven F., and Richard Rosenfeld. 2001 [1994]. *Crime and the American Dream*, 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Messner, Steven F., Marvin D. Krohn, and Allen E. Liska, eds. 1989. *Theoretical Integration in the Study of Deviance and Crime: Problems and Prospects*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Moffitt, Terrie E., Avshalom Caspi, Phil A. Silva, and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber. 1995. Individual Differences in Personality and Intelligence are Linked to Crime: Cross-Context Evidence from Nations, Neighborhoods, Genders, Races, and Age-cohorts. *Current Perspectives on Aging and the Life Cycle* 3:1–34.

- Muraven, Mark, and Roy F. Baumeister. 2000. Self-Regulation and Depletion of Limited Resources: Does Self-control Resemble a Muscle? *Psychological Bulletin* 126:247–59.
- Muraven, Mark, Dianne M. Tice, and Roy F. Baumeister. 1998. Self-control as Limited Resource: Regulatory Depletion Patterns. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74:774–89.
- Nye, F. Ivan. 1958. *Family Relationships and Delinquent Behavior*. New York: John Wiley.
- Pratt, Travis, and Francis T. Cullen. 2000. The Empirical Status of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime: A Meta-analysis. *Criminology* 38:931–64.
- Rebellon, Cesar. 2006. Do Adolescents Engage in Delinquency to Attract the Social Attention of Peers? An Extension and Longitudinal Test of the Social Reinforcement Hypothesis. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 43:387–411.
- Reckless, Walter C. 1967. *The Crime Problem*, 4th ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Reiss, Albert J. 1951. Delinquency as the Failure of Personal and Social Controls. *American Sociological Review* 16:196–207.
- Sampson, Robert J. 1999. Techniques of Research Neutralization. *Theoretical Criminology* 3:438–50.
- Sampson, Robert J., and John H. Laub. 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Scott, John Finley. 1971. *Internalization of Norms: A Sociological Theory of Moral Commitment*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Sutherland, Edwin H. 1939. *Principles of Criminology*, 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Tedeschi, James T., and Richard B. Felson. 1994. *Violence, Aggression, and Coercive Actions*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Tittle, Charles R. 1995. *Control Balance: Toward a General Theory of Deviance*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- . 1985. The Assumption that General Theories are Not Possible. In *Theoretical Methods in Criminology*, ed. R. F. Meier, 93–121. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- . 2004. Refining Control Balance Theory. *Theoretical Criminology* 4:395–411.
- Tittle, Charles R., and Ekaterina V. Botchkovar. 2005. Self-control, Criminal Motivation and Deterrence: An Investigation Using Russian Respondents. *Criminology* 43:307–54.
- Tittle, Charles R., and Raymond Paternoster. 2000. *Social Deviance and Crime: An Organizational and Theoretical Approach*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Tittle, Charles R., David A. Ward, and Harold G. Grasmick. 2004. Capacity for Self-control and Individuals' Interest in Exercising Self-control. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 20:143–72.
- Toby, Jackson. 1957. Social Disorganization and Stake in Conformity: Complementary Factors in the Predatory Behavior of Hoodlums. *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science* 48:12–17.
- Walker, Henry, and Bernard P. Cohen. 1985. Scope Statements: Imperatives for Evaluating Theory. *American Sociological Review* 50:288–301.
- Warr, Mark. 2002. *Companions in Crime: The Social Aspects of Criminal Conduct*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wikström, Per-Olof H. 2006. Linking Individual, Setting, and Acts of Crime: Situational Mechanisms and the Explanation of Crime. In *The Explanation of Crime: Contexts, Mechanisms and Development*, ed. P.-O. H. Wikström and R. J. Sampson, 61–107. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wikström, Per-Olof H., and Kyle Treiber. 2007. The Role of Self-control in Crime Causation. *European Journal of Criminology* 4:237–64.
- Wilson, James Q., and Richard J. Herrnstein. 1985. *Crime and Human Nature*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

---

**Charles Tittle**

charles\_tittle@ncsu.edu

# The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues

Manuel Eisner, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

## Vol. 3 (1) 2009

**Editorial** (p. 3)

**Focus:**

**General Theory of Violence**

Guest Editors:

Manuel Eisner and  
Susanne Karstedt

**Introduction: Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?**

Susanne Karstedt / Manuel Eisner (pp. 4 – 8)

**Micro and Macro Theories of Violence** Randall Collins (pp. 9 – 22)

**Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime** Richard B. Felson (pp. 23 – 39)

► **The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues**

Manuel Eisner (pp. 40 – 59)

**Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?**

Charles Tittle (pp. 60 – 74)

**Violence as Situational Action** Per-Olof H. Wikström / Kyle Treiber (pp. 75 – 96)

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence** Martin Shaw (pp. 97 – 106)

**Open Section**

**Understanding the Other's 'Understanding' of Violence** Marcel M. Baumann (pp. 107 – 123)

**Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics**

Renate Möller / Uwe Sander / Arne Schäfer / Dirk Villányi / Matthias D. Witte (pp. 124 – 142)

---

# The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues

Manuel Eisner, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

A general theory of violence may only be possible in the sense of a meta-theoretical framework. As such it should comprise a parsimonious set of general mechanisms that operate across various manifestations of violence. In order to identify such mechanisms, a general theory of violence needs to equally consider all manifestations of violence, in all societies, and at all times. Departing from this assumption this paper argues that three theoretical approaches may be combined in a non-contradictory way to understand violence as goal-directed instrumental behavior: a theory of the judgment and decision-making processes operating in the situations that give rise to violence; a theory of the evolutionary processes that have resulted in universal cognitive and emotional mechanisms associated with violence; and a theory of the way in which social institutions structure violence by selectively enhancing its effectiveness for some purposes (i.e. legitimate use of force) and controlling other types of violence (i.e. crime). To illustrate the potential use of such a perspective the paper then examines some general mechanisms that may explain many different types of violence. In particular, it examines how the mechanisms of moralistic aggression (Trivers) and moral disengagement (Bandura) may account for many different types of violence.

“In the course of time Cain presented some of the land’s produce as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also presented an offering—some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but He did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you furious? And why are you downcast? If you do right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must master it.’ Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field.’ And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.” (Genesis 4: 1–8)

Cain’s behavior can be explained in many different ways, of which two are of particular interest to violence researchers. One is to speculate that Cain may have had some pathological personality characteristics (“refuses to comply with adult’s/God’s requests,” “easily annoyed by others,” “angry and resentful,” “spiteful and vindictive”) that could be part of an antisocial and aggressive behavior syndrome, and that this led him to commit the first murder in the Bible. If fol-

lowed through, this approach leads to a violence-as-illness perspective.

An alternative possibility is that Cain was a normal human being who was competing with another human being for a valuable good, namely God’s regard. Angered by the apparently unjust treatment, Cain finds that eliminating the competitor is a way to gain an advantage (which he eventually does). In this perspective Cain was confronted with a universal problem of humans, namely unequal access to valued goods; he felt an urge for revenge, a desire that has roots in human evolution; and he used trickery and physical force to achieve his goal.

The two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In this paper, however, I will mainly explore the second option, arguing that many manifestations of violence in different societies and across long periods of time can be understood as strategic, goal-driven behavior, molded by adaptive processes during the evolution of the human species, and organized and transformed in social institutions.

In arguing along these lines I will draw liberally on arguments and findings from a variety of disciplines, including evolutionary psychology, anthropology, criminology, history, sociology, and decision-making theory.

## 1. What is a General Theory of Violence About?

### 1.1. Definition of Violence

For the purposes of this paper I define violence narrowly as the *intentional but unwanted infliction of physical harm on other humans*. The definition results in several borderline issues, which merit attention.

Like most others I limit violence to *intentional or deliberate* acts. Intentions are immediate aims—as opposed to more distant goals—that guide an action. However, harm that is an unintended side-effect of intentional behavior is not included in this definition. Accordingly, for example, Stalin's conscious strategy of starving millions of Kulaks to death in the Ukraine constitutes violence, while the thirty million Chinese who died from starvation as an unintended consequence of poor economic policy during Mao's Great Leap Forward does not (Rummel 1994).

The notion of intentionality is not without problems (Anscombe 1956; Sheeran 2002). For one thing, the attribution of intent requires a judgment on the motivational process leading to an action that is often hard to obtain. Also, the difference between deliberately inflicting harm and not being bothered about causing harm (e.g. in the slave trade) is gradual rather than categorical. Thirdly, violent actors often cause considerably less or massively more harm than they intended. Finally, intentionality becomes a complex issue when violence is used within an organization (e.g. army, concentration camp, organized crime) and where agents act on the orders of authorities. In such cases the actor who intends and implements the violent action may be far removed from the immediate acts of harm-doing.

By limiting violence to *unwanted* acts the definition excludes acts where the infliction of pain has been mutually agreed and there is no conflict of interests. Thus, tattooing, sado-masochistic sexual practices, assisted suicide, or pain inflicted by medical doctors are not part of this definition of violence. In contrast, mere agreement on the circumstances

of mutual harm-doing (e.g. whereabouts of the battleground, staged fights, duels) does not constitute consent to suffering harm.

I confine the notion of violence to the actual *infliction of physical harm*. Hence the *threat* of harm (e.g. threat of killing somebody, blackmail, public calls for violent action against particular groups, etc.) and depriving somebody of his/her liberty (e.g. hostage-taking, slavery, or imprisonment) are not included unless physical harm is done. Also, unsuccessful attempts to inflict injury are not included. The exclusion of such acts is not unproblematic. Tedeschi and Felson (1994), in particular, have argued that violence should really be considered as a subcategory of the much broader class of coercive acts. However, extending violence to all acts that use threat as means of reducing the freedom of action of others would probably overburden the notion of violence.

Finally, the notion of violence is limited to harm inflicted to humans. This limitation, too, is contested. For example, there is controversy, in contemporary societies, about the extent to which doing intended harm to animals constitutes violence (e.g. in animal protection laws) or about the moment when human life starts (e.g. abortion).

### 1.2. Geographic and Temporal Extent

A general theory of violence should apply to all types of violence, at all times, in all places. Geographically, it should have equal relevance (and equal explanatory power) across all existing human societies, whatever their cultural, economic, or political characteristics (see also Karstedt 2001). This point is important because a large chunk of current empirical knowledge is based on Western (i.e. wealthy, state-regulated, law-bound, and individualistic) societies. Consequently much theorizing is derived from the manifestations of violence that arise under those circumstances. Contrariwise, empirical and theoretical research, especially in criminology and developmental psychology, tends to ignore the sorts of violence that are typical for less developed regions of the globe, including torture, excessive police violence, vigilante violence, genocide, and civil war.

It is more difficult to delineate the temporal domain of a general theory of violence. In examining the roots of aggression amongst mammals and primates, some evolutionary theories refer back to the split between humans and apes about six to eight million years ago (e.g. Wrangham 1999). However, it may be more prudent to restrict the remit of a general theory of violence to the emergence of modern humans, i.e. about 180,000 years ago. Since then the cognitive, genetic, and anatomical outfit of humans has remained essentially unchanged, meaning that one important set of variables can be held constant.

The implications of saying that a general theory of violence should cover all human experience at all places at all times are shown in Table 1. It lists major types of acts that satisfy the above definition. The table also illustrates several points that will be relevant for the subsequent discussion. First, listing *violence in non-state societies* separately serves as a reminder that for most of human history the dualism of crime versus law-based justice is irrelevant. Given that these

societies cover most of the history of humankind, a general theory of violence should be able to understand the role of violence in them.

Secondly, the table lists *punishments* as a separate category, although acts of violence that constitute punishment can also be found in other subheadings (e.g. revenge killings, hitting subordinates, lynching). The separate heading mainly serves the purpose of alerting readers to the fact that corporal punishment in all its forms is an important subtype of violence.

Third, the list comprises different subheadings for violence committed by single individuals and for more organized types of violence that entail the coordination of large numbers of people. Despite the subheadings one should note that the difference between individual and organized violence is gradual rather than discontinuous: Minor insults may turn into a homicide that may trigger feuds, which in turn can escalate into war.

**Table 1: Manifestations of violence to be covered by a general theory of violence**

Childhood Aggression	Interpersonal Criminal Violence	Legitimate and Illegitimate State Violence
Bullying	Assault	Assassination
Fights	Rape	Torture
	Robbery	Wars
Violence in non-state societies	Homicide	Massacres
Ritualized fights	Infanticide	Concentration camps
Revenge killings, feuds	Child abuse	Executions
Violent self-help	Domestic violence	Genocide
Raids		Police use of force
Battles	Punishments	Organized Political Violence
Massacres	Parental corporal punishment	Assassinations
Rape	State capital punishment	Civil war
Assassination of visitors	Flogging, stoning	Extortion of protection rents
Infanticide, senilicide		Terrorism
Torture	Organized Private Violence	Resistance/liberation wars
Human sacrifice	Hitting, beating, raping, killing subordinates and dependents	Revolutionary violence
	Organized piracy and robbery	Riots
	Assassinations	Lynching
	Private warlords	Vigilante violence
	Gang wars	Extremist and hate violence

Note: Grouping under subheadings serves illustrative purposes and does not imply a theory-based classification.

## 2. Tasks of a General Theory of Violence

Violence research does not suffer from a scarcity of theories. We have theories of family violence (e.g. Gelles 1987), theories of child aggression (e.g. Kempes et al. 2005; Patterson, Reid, and Dishion 1992), theories of bullying (e.g. Rigby 2004), theories of sexual violence (e.g. Ward and Beech 2006), theories of political violence (e.g. Muller and Weede 1990), theories of war (e.g. Levy 1998), and theories of genocide (e.g. Neubacher 2006).

I believe that violence research will always need local theories that do well in either explaining specific manifestations of violence or that highlight particular mechanisms on the continuum of biological, psychological, and social layers of reality that are implicated in the causation of violence. In part this reflects the fact that violence is embedded in a variety of social institutions (e.g. schools, family, the state) whose operational logic needs to be understood in order to explain to role of violence within them.

Any general theory, if at all possible, will therefore be a *meta-theory*, i.e. an overarching and parsimonious set of general principles that helps to organize local theories (see Tittle 2009 in this volume). To be useful, such a theory would need to do at least four things: It should identify general mechanisms that operate on different manifestations of violence. For example, it might demonstrate that fights between youth gangs, raids between neighboring tribes in non-state societies, and civil wars have commonalities (e.g. regarding motives, participants, organization, dynamics) worthy of scientific generalization. Secondly, it would demonstrate that a few general principles bring forth similar manifestations of violence across cultures and over time. For example, revenge killings seem to be a universal phenomenon across all human societies. A general theory could help us to understand whether this pattern of conflict resolution can be derived from one underlying mechanism. Thirdly, it would need to integrate disciplinary theories at the biological, the psychological, and the sociological level in such a way that they are non-contradictory and that the resulting explanatory power is higher than that of each primary theory (e.g. Dodge and Pettit 2003). Fourthly, it should show that successful strategies of controlling and preventing different types of violence are based on the

same general principles. It would be useful to understand whether, for example, the prevention of school violence and the strategies for pacifying post-civil war societies apply similar principles that can be derived from a general underlying theory.

Many such meta-theories are possible. In the following I first outline contours of one such theoretical framework and then discuss some cross-cutting themes with a view to examining the potential usefulness of the suggested perspective.

## 3. Violence as an Instrument

Many current theories begin with the notion of violence as a psychological disorder and individual pathology (e.g. Hodgins, Viding, and Plodowski 2009) or as a morally reprehensible “evil” (e.g. Miller 2004). While research on violence as a pathological disorder has made huge progress in identifying genetic, neurobiological, temperamental, and family-related risk-factors associated with aggressive behavior, I am not convinced that these findings can serve as a basis for a general theory of violence. Particularly, it is difficult to explain phenomena such as wars, blood feuds, capital punishment, or assassinations as the outcome of individual pathologies. Rather, a general theory should start by asking about the broader uses of violence in the patterns of interaction that constitute human society, and to consider pathological violence as a special case within such a framework.

Hence the following considerations start with the assumption that violence is *an instrument* that serves to achieve specific goals. It is a tool available to humans as animals with a high degree of behavioral plasticity. It differs from other instruments (e.g. language) in that it serves to constrain, coerce, subdue, and eliminate others—sometimes as an unprovoked attack, sometimes as a fight, and sometimes as a reaction to previous provocation or attack.

This is in line with the usage of the word violence in many languages. One does not commonly say that a person *has* violence or *does* violence. Rather, people *use* violence or force. Also, its instrumental character is reflected in the fact that it happens under highly selective circumstances

against specific people. Also, violence is subject to technological change and humans have devoted a lot of time and energy to developing better and more effective technologies of coercing and killing. Finally, violence can be collectively organized and trained, and unleashed in controlled ways against specific targets.

At first sight, the notion of violence as instrumental behavior seems counterintuitive. Rather, we tend to see violence as a generally unsuccessful behavior, as robbers generally do not succeed in getting rich, domestic batterers end up destroying their partnership, and terrorists do not topple the governments they hate (Baumeister and Vohs 2004). However, it is easy to forget that the unconditional contempt for violence in modern societies is a result of the luxuries of wealth, safety, and protection, and that the stability of state monopolies of violence is a very recent phenomenon.

A “fair” assessment of the uses of violence would need to consider equally the instances when, for example, infanticide or gerontocide helped a band to survive in a harsh environment, when empires were built by conquest, when kings were killed, or when individuals maintained their good reputation by defending their honor when insulted.

Archeological and anthropological research leaves no doubt that Rousseau’s notion of the peaceful savage was wrong. Archeological research has primarily examined skeletal remains for evidence of interpersonal violence, especially cranial injuries and embedded projectile points (for reviews see, e.g. Guilaine and Zammit 2005; McCall and Shields 2008; Schulting 2006; Thorpe 2003). Evidence is scarce for the Paleolithic period (ca. 2.5 million to 10,000 BCE). However, there is much more consistent archeological evidence from the Mesolithic period onwards. Despite the methodological difficulty of distinguishing injuries from intentional violence, archeologists come to the conclusion that lethal interpersonal violence was certainly not unknown and was probably quite widespread. Types of documented violence comprise, amongst others, fights between adult males, raids and wars, large-scale massacres, head-taking, violent cannibalism, and sacrifice (Schulting 2006). However, one should also note that even the limited evidence suggests large

differences over time and between sites, making sweeping generalizations difficult (Thorpe 2003).

Anthropological evidence also suggests that violence was endemic in many societies, although, again, significant differences are found between cultures (Ferguson 2000; Keeley 1996; Otterbein 2004). The world record in lethal killings is probably held by the Waorani, a people in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Based on extensive genealogies over five generations, Yost (1981) found that more than 60 percent of adult deaths were a result of intentional killing: 17 percent a consequence of external raiding and 44 percent from internal feuding related to vendettas, quarrels, or accusations of sorcery (Robarchek and Robarchek 1998). Comparable levels of more than 10 percent of deaths due to intentional killing (a homicide rate of about 200–300 per 100,000) are reported for a considerable number of non-state societies.

On the grounds of its pervasiveness in human history, many theorists of violence therefore find it useful to start with observing that violence is a means to get access to valuable goods that others may be unwilling to share or give away—ranging from lollipops and sneakers to money, horses, land, food, sex, or oil. Humans have developed various ways to co-opt valued goods. They include work, charm, convincing others, exchange, stealing, and trickery. The use of physical force is only one option, but has the important advantage that it is unilateral coercive action and as such does not require cooperation by or negotiation with others.

On the other hand, the use of physical force also has significant disadvantages since it entails a risk of injury to the user and often requires substantive material and temporary resources at the cost of other, more productive activities. If possible, therefore, humans tend to prefer less costly strategies for acquiring desired objects. Generally, however, an instrumental perspective expects that violence is the more likely, the more highly valued the contentious good is, the more the aggressor subjectively expects that violence is an effective way for achieving the valued good, and the less attractive or accessible alternative routes of action are. Street robbers, pirates, rapists, and war strategists found similar answers to the question of how to best strike first: Make sure you are better equipped and in larger numbers

than your target, choose a vulnerable victim, and attack the victim by surprise.

Of course, instrumental rationality is inferred rather than conclusively demonstrated in archeological, historical or ethnological studies. But the assumption of cost-benefit considerations as a determinant of violent behavior finds considerable support in contemporary individual-level studies. For adolescents and young adults a series of studies suggests that instrumental decision-making is involved in the likelihood of violent action (Nagin and Paternoster 1993). In a recent large-scale study of offender decision-making, based on the Denver Youth Survey, Matsueda, Kreager, and Huizinga (2006) found that rational choice processes have a significant impact on violent acts amongst juveniles. Specifically, violence was positively associated with risk preference, the perceived coolness of violence (i.e. a gain in status), and the perceived opportunities, while it was negatively associated with the perceived risk of arrest.

The strategic character of instrumental violence is also evidenced by a body of research that shows how instrumental beliefs—i.e. beliefs about how effective aggression is in making others comply—predict actual violent behavior (Fagan and Wilkinson 1998). More particularly, instrumental beliefs predict aggressive behavior amongst children (Tapper and Boulton 2004), school bullying (John Archer 2004), physical aggression against partners (John Archer and Graham-Kevan 2003), and corporal punishment (Holden, Miller, and Harris 1999). A recent study in Ghana has replicated these findings in a non-Western context (Owusu-Banahene and Amadahe 2008).

#### 4. Theoretical Perspectives

Conceiving of violence as an instrument means that theory construction must be focused on providing an answer to the questions: What problems does violence solve? Under what circumstances do actors resort to violence as a subjectively promising strategy? And how do social structures create and limit the situations in which violence is seen as a promising strategy to achieve a goal?

#### 4.1. Judgment and Decision-making in Violent Acts

For decades, psychologists made a distinction between situational and person-oriented explanations of violence (Pervin 1986). Situational explanations often refer to the famous Milgram experiments and argue that under specific situational contexts any person can be made to behave aggressively (Zimbardo 2004). Person-oriented explanations emphasize the stability of aggressive behavior during the life course and the robust evidence for links between personality characteristics and behavior outcomes (Loeber and Hay 1997).

However, most current theorists agree that some people are more aggressive than others and that some situations are more likely to trigger aggression than others, in other words that both internal mechanisms and external triggers are operating in social behavior (Pervin 1986). Or, as Buss and Shackelford put it: “No mechanism, no behavior; no input, no behavior” (1997, 607).

The premise that violence is goal-directed intentional action requires an action theory of the judgment and decision-making process involved in assaulting, robbing, or killing other people. In fact, an adequate model of the real-time interaction between the hormonal, neurocognitive, and evaluative processes within a human on the one side and the situational context on the other is the eye of the needle for any violence theory (Wikström 2003).

Several such theories have been suggested recently (e.g. C. A. Anderson and Bushman 2002; Crick and Dodge 1996; Fontaine 2007; Wikström and Treiber 2009). Most of these assume bounded rationality in the sense that humans have preferences and make decisions about how to achieve their goals, but that their judgments depend on—amongst others—their cognitive abilities and personality, their interpretation of the situation, their pre-existing behavioral routines, the speed at which they need to decide, and their emotional state. They thus combine assumptions about goal-directed behavior with psychological models of cognition and information processing (Nagin 2007). Often, such models incorporate more general action and decision-making models such as, for example, the Fishbein/Ajzen model

of planned action (Ajzen 1988) or variants of rational choice models such as the subjective expected utility model (SEU).

Probably the most complex integrative model currently available is the one developed by Anderson and Bushman (2002). Their General Aggression Model incorporates several domain-specific theories and explicitly conceives of humans as processors of information who use knowledge structures (“scripts”) that guide them through situations. Essentially the model starts with the confluence in time and space of a person with a situation. This “input” includes all the biological, environmental, psychological, and social characteristics of the person and the context. On the side of the person, the combination of these inputs determines a latent preparedness to aggress. The interaction between situation and person is then assumed to trigger change in the internal state of the person. This entails the application of cognitive scripts, emotional reactions, arousal, and the activation or neutralization of moral inhibitions. Depending on an appraisal and decision process a violent or a non-violent strategy is then chosen.

#### 4.2. Evolutionary Perspective

Research from all angles has produced convincing evidence that some features of violence are remarkably similar across time and space. These commonalities comprise: the sex distribution of people involved in fighting (mostly men); the approximate age at which people are most likely to engage in violence (about 18 to 35); essential goals over which fights are fought (material resources, power, and sex); situations that are prone to violence (e.g. humiliations in the presence of others); individual characteristics associated with violence (e.g. courage and risk-seeking); and emotional processes involved in violent encounters (e.g. arousal and anger).

Such commonalities are difficult to understand from a purely cultural perspective. Rather, it is becoming increasingly clear that any general theory of violence will need to integrate an evolutionary perspective on human nature (Pinker 2002). In an insightful paper, Wood (2007) has recently laid out how and why an evolutionary perspective is an essential element for the way social scientists understand violence both historically and across societies.

On the most general level, an evolutionary perspective serves as a corrective to the view, long cherished amongst social scientists, that the human mind is essentially a blank slate, ready to store and retrieve whatever happens to characterize a given culture (Pinker 2002). In contrast, evolutionary psychologists emphasize that the “hard-wired” architecture of our brain evolved over long periods of time as a solution to the adaptive problems posed by the environmental conditions and problems in the ancestral world (Tooby and Cosmides 1992). Hence the human brain is theorized to be a network of “regulatory circuits” that “organize the way we interpret our experiences, inject certain recurrent concepts and motivations into our mental life, and provide universal frames of meaning that allow us to understand the actions and intentions of others” (Tooby and Cosmides 1997).

In an influential paper, Buss and Shackelford (1997) proposed an evolutionary framework for understanding human aggression. They suggest that such a perspective should develop empirically testable answers to a cluster of related questions, such as: What specific adaptive problems might be solved by aggression? What are the specific features of emotional and cognitive processes associated with violence, and can they be predicted and explained by hypotheses about the adaptive functions of aggression? What contexts trigger aggression, and can they be predicted and explained by specific hypotheses about the adaptive functions of aggression?

In developing answers to these questions Buss and Shackelford (1997) suggest that aggression is a highly context-specific collection of strategies that have evolved as an adaptation to recurrent problems that humans were confronted with during the history of human evolution. They may be grouped into strategies of proactive aggression developed to inflict costs on rivals and reactive strategies that have developed to deter rivals and to defend one’s interests. The proactive use of aggression entails violence as means to gain access to resources that are valuable for reproduction (land, water, food); as a strategy to win in competitions against intrasexual rivals; and a way to negotiate status and power hierarchies. Reactive uses include strategies where violence is used to defend against attack, situations where it serves

as a way to gain a reputation as aggressive in order to deter rivals from future aggression, and reactions that deter long-term mates from sexual infidelity (jealousy).

Over the past twenty years, scholars have examined various types of violence from an evolutionary perspective. These include, for example, the studies by Wilson and Daly (1985) on patterns of homicide, research by Archer (1994) on the causes of male-to-male violence, work by Nell (2006) on the evolutionary bases of cruelty, and analyses by Wrangham (1999) on the evolution of coalitionary killing.

#### 4.3. Social Institutions

The third theoretical resource that I will assume to be necessary for a general theory of violence is a consideration of *social institutions*. By social institutions I mean the relatively permanent arrangements of behaviors, roles, norms, and values that structure aspects of human activity in patterned ways (Berger and Luckmann 1966). This is hence similar to what historians or cultural anthropologists call *culture*. Institutions provide individuals with scripts that limit the contingency of situations and reduce the burden of decision-making. Also, institutions regulate access to and distribution of goods such as wealth or education. Examples of social institutions are the state, the family, the police, or schools.

Social institutions are a necessary element of a general theory of violence for several reasons (also see Messner and Rosenfeld 1994). First, social institutions make use of the instrumental character of violence by storing, organizing, distributing, and technologically enhancing violence in order to achieve specific goals. The most important such institution that has emerged during the history of humanity is the state with the army and the police as its prominent violence specialists (e.g. Giddens 1985; Tilly 1985).

Second, social institutions produce normative behavior expectations, mechanisms for solving problems, and scripts for behavioral routines. As such they modify the parameters that are relevant for individual judgment and decision-making processes. For example, societies differ in the extent to which “wife-beating” is considered to be a legitimate reaction to perceived “misbehaviors” within the institution

of marriage (Haj-Yahia 1998; Haj-Yahia and de Zoysa 2007; Sakall 2001), which in turn can be expected to influence actual behaviors.

Finally, institutions can selectively cultivate or contain the personality characteristics and abilities associated with violence. For example, there are significant differences over time and between societies in the extent to which ideals such as self-control, diligence, frugality, and sobriety are reinforced in the family or in schools (e.g. Eisner 2008) Such controls over spontaneous impulses may affect situational decision-making processes when a conflict arises.

#### 5. Three Cross-cutting Themes

The perspective outlined above does not represent a theory. It is an analytical framework organized around the idea of violence as goal-directed instrumental action. Its usefulness as a basis for a general theory of violence depends on the extent to which it can help to elucidate general mechanisms that operate similarly across a variety of manifestations of violence. In the following section I will use this framework to explore three themes that are likely to be implicated in the goal-directed use of violence.

##### 5.1. Revenge and Protection

###### 5.1.1. Revenge

As retaliation for an actual or perceived initial wrongdoing or provocation, revenge is a powerful motivator of violence. Keeley (1996, 199), for example, has reviewed anthropological findings on the causes of the recurrent wars in non-state societies. The data he presents suggest that revenge was a motive in more than 70 percent of all pre-modern wars, probably making it the most universal motive for war in human history. Similarly, vengeance and feuding represent a major motivational force in many societies with high levels of intra-group killing such as medieval Scotland (Wormald 1980), Corsica (S. Wilson 1988), and the Balkans (Boehm 1984) in the nineteenth century, and the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan (Knudsen 2008), or the South of the United States (Cohen and Nisbett 1994).

Furthermore, revenge has also been the motive for painful corporal punishment by the state. Thus, many early criminal laws are essentially price-lists for taking revenge

in a more rationalized and disciplined way (e.g. Barrett and Harrison 1999, 1). Also, a major purpose of the public hanging, burning, and dismembering practiced widely across Early Modern Europe consisted in establishing the state as the emerging monopolist of revenge. Finally, much aggressive behavior amongst children and adolescents belongs to a group of acts that have been classified as reactive aggression, i.e. aggressive responses to a perceived threat or a provocation (Dodge 1991; Kempes et al. 2005; Price and Dodge 1989).

Across the various disciplines different terms have been used to describe this bundle of behaviors. Frequently used terms are *reactive aggression* (Dodge 1991), *retaliatory violence* (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003), *revenge* (Chagnon 1988), *moralistic violence* (Cooney 1997), *self-help* (Black 1983), or *punishment*. Their instrumental core is that they are committed to righting a wrong, whether this is a previous attack, an insult, an unpaid debt, disobedience, an act of sexual infidelity, or an assault. The associated universal emotional mechanism is anger (Kempes et al. 2005); as Thomas Aquinas recognized eight hundred years ago, “anger is a craving for vengeance” (Aquinas 1920).

### 5.1.2. A General Mechanism?

Evolutionary psychologists and economists have long been interested in the underlying logic of the anger-retaliation mechanism amongst humans (e.g. Buss and Shackelford 1997; Fehr and Gächter 2002; McCullough 2008; Trivers 1971). Essentially they argue that violence-as-retaliation is an adaptive behavioural pattern. It evolves in any world where unconditional confidence in the positive intentions of others is not a successful strategy and where cooperation in a group needs to be protected. Primarily, it solves three interrelated problems (McCullough, 2008):

First, revenge deters aggressors from aggressing again. Unless effective measures are taken, the costs of attack approach zero for the aggressor. For the target, in contrast, the likelihood of oneself incurring costs in terms of losing vital resources, forfeiting freedom, or suffering injury or death become extremely high. Revenge increases the transaction costs of taking advantage of a person or his/her resources. In other words: aggressors have to consider the risk of being

hurt, killed, or losing status when attacking another person or group.

Second, revenge warns would-be harm-doers to back off. Revenge thus has a warning effect on third-party observers. If you let somebody harm you without retaliating, others might be tempted to do the same. If, however, you maintain a reputation for fighting back, others will show deference and interact more carefully with you. Experimental studies by social psychologists suggest that this is actually the case: Victims retaliate more strongly when an audience witnesses the provocation (Kim, Smith, and Brigham 1998). Similarly, cross-cultural and historical research suggests that societies with high homicide rates are characterized by the predominance of fights between men in public space, where observers can easily assess the retaliatory ability of the combatants (Eisner 2008).

The third and probably most important mechanism was initially formulated in a ground-breaking paper by Trivers (1971). In his seminal paper, Trivers examined formally how the existence of reciprocal altruistic behavior, i.e. helping each other, sharing food, contributing to defense efforts, can be explained. The core of this problem is how humans can be brought to contribute to a collective task rather than taking advantage and leaving the work to others—a problem formally represented in game theory as the free-rider problem (Fehr and Gächter 2002). Trivers argued that the evolved adaptive mechanism to solve this problem is *moralistic aggression*, a bundle of emotional and behavioral reactions that humans show when norms of reciprocity are violated, i.e. the initial behavior is perceived as an attempt to gain unjust or unfair advantage. The emotional process connected to moralistic aggression is anger, the feeling that mobilizes retaliation in face of a provocation.

### 5.1.3. Retaliation and Social Order

One important function of retaliatory violence is hence the maintenance of social order (also see Black 1983). For example, many traditional societies condone killing as a reaction to insult, adultery, or sorcery, or in retaliation to prior attack. In such societies there is little difference between retaliatory murder and capital punishment. In a fascinating study, Knauff (1987) examined violence amongst

the Gebusi, a simple egalitarian society in the highlands of New Guinea. After collecting data on the causes of death over five generations he found that 33 percent of 394 deaths were homicides, equivalent to an annual homicide rate of about 570 per 100,000. Examining the situational contexts he found that most homicides occurred as reactions to sorcery: The process is triggered by the death through sickness of a community member, which is believed to result from sorcery. During a divinatory death inquest a medium then names a sorcery suspect, followed by further public divinations to confirm the evidence. If the outcome is unfavorable, the suspect is often killed on the spot. This killing of sorcery suspects by adults is regarded as a communal duty and rarely results in any further retributions. In fact, Knauff (1987, 475) emphasizes that child-rearing patterns are highly affectionate and that anger and aggressiveness are strikingly absent from day-to-day life (Knauff 1987).

Often revenge is associated with a culture of honor, which emphasizes pride in manhood, masculine courage, assertiveness, physical strength, and warrior virtues (Figueredo et al. 2004). Examples include the Albanian code of honor and blood feuding known as the Kanun (Arsovska 2006), the tradition of blood-revenge and honorable cattle-theft in nineteenth-century Sardinia and Corsica (S. Wilson 1988); or the culture of masculine assertiveness among the Suri in Southern Ethiopia (Abbink 1998). In such societies the ability to retaliate effectively is valued highly. Those who lose in fights are likely to lose face, honor, and reputation. Those who win are respected, gain in social status, and are often admired by women.

In their culture of honor theory, Cohen and Nisbett (1996) develop an argument about the structural underpinnings of honor cultures. It assumes that private retribution and honor cultures emerge in the absence of effective state control. This is particularly the case in herding economies, where “Herdsman must be willing to use force to protect themselves and their property when law enforcement is inadequate and when one’s wealth can be rustled away” (Cohen et al. 1996). In such conditions, a man must seek to do right, but when wrong is done to him, he must punish the wrongdoer to restore order and justice in the world.

Remarkably, similar cultural codes emerge in modern societies under conditions where the state provides insufficient or no protection from threat, or where illegal markets require private protection. Thus, several researchers have examined the conditions under which “codes of violence”—essentially justifications of violence as a means of conflict resolution and acquisition of status—emerge in US neighborhoods (E. Anderson 1999; Matsueda, Drakulich, and Kubrin 2006). Results suggest that a code of the street emerges in impoverished neighborhoods where the state fails to provide protection from threat. This code is associated with safeguarding respect; “watching one’s back;” deterring transgression by clothing, demeanor, and way of moving; retaliating if respect is lacking; and taking care of oneself in the face of danger (E. Anderson 1994).

#### 5.1.4. Protection

Even if regulated by cultural conventions, revenge systems based on kin obligations, such as the blood-feud, tend towards an equilibrium with very high mortality rates. They generate self-reinforcing circles of retaliation and counter-retaliation that sometimes only come to a halt through elimination, domination, or exhaustion of resources (Boehm 1984). Their capacity to produce protection therefore hinges on the ability to limit circles of retaliation, a goal that revenge societies found chronically difficult to achieve.

In more complex societies retaliation by members of kin is superseded by larger organizations that specialize in using violence to produce coercion and protection. Such protection entrepreneurs are likely to emerge when there are good chances to make a profit from controlling a territory, when there is demand for skilled retaliators, and when there is no effective protection at a higher level of social organization. Manifestations of violent protection entrepreneurs include vigilante groups, organized crime, pirates, warlords, emerging states, and possibly—to some extent—youth gangs.

As Hobbes (1968 [1660]) recognized long ago, such institutions represent solutions to the freerider-anger-revenge problem in that they try to reduce private self-help by monopolizing the use of force.

Frederic Lane analyzed the problem over fifty years ago in a seminal article on the “economic consequences of organized violence” (1958, 1979). Lane argued that very early in the history of the division of labor large enterprises emerge that specialize in using violence against outsiders and in controlling violence within their area of influence. Typically, such enterprises strove to establish territorial monopolies and demanded payment for the protection they provided. Some of these entrepreneurs eventually turned into states that effectively monopolized violence and commanded regular taxes, but for many centuries they coexisted with feudal lords, private warlords, pirates, bandits, or other organizers of violence who used racketeering to produce both violence and protection.

In Europe, the past thousand years can be characterized as a long-term trend towards the disappearance of most protection entrepreneurs (e.g. feudal landlords, private warlords, pirates) and the monopolization of its production in nation-states (see also, e.g. Elias 1976; Giddens 1985; Tilly 1985). In effect, Lane argues that states had an incentive to produce effective protection at low costs as it attracted enterprises and generated protection rent, which could be used to maintain courtiers, to expand bureaucracies, or to control colonial territories. To the extent that these monopolists increasingly produced legitimate mechanisms of conflict resolution that people used when norms of reciprocity were broken, private self-help and revenge became gradually more marginalized—a process that may account for the significant decline in interpersonal violence since the Middle Ages (Eisner 2003).

In contemporary societies, a recurrent phenomenon on the border between legitimate and illegitimate violence is *vigilantism*, i.e. groups of people who defend a given legal and sociopolitical order without a legal entitlement to do so (D. M. Anderson 2002; Johnston 1996; Rosenbaum and Sederberg 1974). Vigilante action is both policing and crime. It usually comprises some kind of taxation, the protection and surveillance of territories, and instant private justice—but may also entail drug trafficking, death squads, and public lynchings. Vigilante groups typically emerge when the state monopoly of force crumbles in weak states, when the state and the police are perceived as corrupt, inefficient, and

illegitimate, or when civil strife or revolutions undermine effective state control (Tankebe 2009).

Recently, Sobel and Osoba (forthcoming) have developed a similar argument regarding youth gangs. They argue that youth gangs evolve under conditions where the government fails to protect younger individuals from violence. Under such circumstances youth gangs are comparable to protection firms that use coercion and violence to enforce their rules. The authors test the assumption on the basis of monthly data on gang membership and homicide in Los Angeles. Their results suggest that an increase in homicide predicts gang membership but that the inverse is not true. In a similar vein, Skaperdas and Syropoulos (1997) speak of gangs as primitive states.

Overall, these arguments suggest that revenge, retribution, justice, and the state are part of a continuum and generated by one underlying mechanism. The analysis of such phenomena illuminates the Janus-faced character of violence both as a means for causing harm and a technique for providing protection from attack.

## 5.2. Intrinsic Rewards

Despite his pessimistic view of human nature, Hobbes (1688 [1660]) did not think that humans would find causing harm to others a desirable goal in itself: “For, that any man should take pleasure in other men’s great harms, without other end of his own, I do not conceive it possible.” He may have been wrong in this respect. Certainly most people in most situations do not experience pleasurable emotions when watching or inflicting death (Bandura 2006). However, there is considerable evidence that amongst some social groups and in some contexts a significant proportion of participants report agreeable emotions, and that this can’t be reduced to individual pathologies (Baumeister and Campbell 1999; Nell 2006).

Some of this evidence relates to watching the infliction of pain and suffering. Historical research, for example, suggests that in many societies public torture, human sacrifice, staged deadly fights, executions, or the public burning of heretics attracted large crowds of spectators who were excited watching cruel spectacles (August 1972; Dülmen 1990;

Kyle 1998; Spierenburg 1984). In modern societies, watching violent media contents or playing aggressive computer games is associated with physiological reactions such as arousal and excitation that significant proportions of young men experience as pleasurable (e.g. C. A. Anderson 2003; C. A. Anderson and Bushman 2001).

Excitement and arousal are also reported as correlates of violence in ethnographic analyses. For example, Katz's analyses of street robbery provide ample evidence that gang members experience the power, domination, and humiliation associated with a robbery as lustful, exciting, and interesting (Katz 1988). Examining street robberies in England, Bennett and Brookman (2008) also found that buzz and excitement were prominent amongst the motives for street violence. Similarly, a recent study on school violence reported that about 70 percent of middle-school students found at least some kinds of violence to be fun and enjoyable (Kerbs and Jolley 2007).

Possibly, these findings have more to do with the arousal resulting from doing something risky rather than with violence as such. Disturbingly, however, there is also evidence that the actual violent act has an intrinsically rewarding component (Baumeister and Campbell 1999; Grossman 1996). For example, Bourke (1999), who analyzed the experiences of British, Australian, and American troops in World War I, World War II, and Vietnam, found that killing was not only stressful and disturbing. A significant proportion of soldiers also reported intense feelings of pleasure once their resistance to killing had been overcome by training (also, e.g. Grossman 1996; Jones 2006). Similarly, Bar and Ben-Ari (2005) found that Israeli snipers reported joy and satisfaction as well as distress, guilt, and horror when killing their adversaries. This confluence of antagonistic feelings seems widespread, while "pure" enjoyment of violence is rare. Thus Grossman (1996) estimates that about 2 percent of soldiers may be regarded as "sociopaths" who do not feel any remorse at any stage before, during, or after the killing.

Finally, there is evidence that during massacres and genocidal killings the initial inhibitions against doing harm can quickly be replaced by an emotional state of collective rage, in which people with no prior signs of psychosis engage in

rape, torture, mutilation, dismemberment, or the killing of children. These conditions appear to be characterized by a confluence of extreme emotional states, but triumph, arousal, and pleasure often play a significant part (Dutton 2007; Dutton, Boyanowsky, and Bond 2005).

Admittedly, findings on the intrinsic rewards of violence come from a range of very different sources and little has yet been done to systematically review the evidence. Also, even at a superficial glance the attraction of violence appears as a mix of different mechanisms and emotional reactions. In particular, one should distinguish between the physiological and emotional processes associated with passively watching staged violence, the arousal in anticipation of violence, the emotions during the immediate involvement in violent acts, and the long term coping processes after having committed a violent act. Nonetheless, the similarity of findings across cultures and the association of agreeable emotions with very different types of violence require explanation.

As far as I can see no such explanation is currently available, although various authors have provided tentative suggestions. Nell (2006), for example, examined whether the apparent rewards of cruelty can be explained from an evolutionary perspective. He argues that the pleasurable emotions associated with cruelty (experienced by some people in some situations) have two distal causes. For one, the underlying arousal and pleasure is a by-product of predation. Secondly, cruelty is associated, within human societies, with social inequality and power whereby cruelty serves to express dominance, humiliation, and degradation.

Acknowledging that much is currently unknown about when any violence has an intrinsic appeal, Baumeister and Campbell (1999) tentatively suggest three circuits of intrinsic rewards that may be associated with violence. The first is sadism, the achievement of pleasure from harming others. More specifically, referring to the opponent-process theory proposed by Solomon and Corbit (1974), Baumeister and Campbell argue that by repeating violent acts (or, I would add, by experiencing support from a group of other perpetrators) the initial aversive, distressed response is reduced and the more pleasant aspects become more dominant.

Secondly, rather than being associated with the harm-doing itself, intrinsic rewards may be linked to doing something arousing, risky, and stimulating, thus providing an escape from boredom. Violence may thus satisfy a need for risk- and sensation-seeking, a personality characteristic that varies between the sexes (men higher than women) and over the life course (declining from age 20) in a way that is compatible with the distribution of many manifestations of violence (Zuckerman, Eysenck, and Eysenck 1978).

The third form of intrinsic appeal involves affirming the self by harming someone who has threatened one's own positive self-image. This is the reward mechanism that is associated with violent reactions to perceived insult, challenged masculinity, or injustice. It is thus linked to the themes of revenge, self-help, and power discussed above. However, rather than emphasizing the extrinsic motivations inherent in such dynamics, Baumeister and Campbell highlight that violence in itself may help to stabilize and indeed inflate notions of dominance and superiority.

It may well be that the satisfaction resulting from successful predation, the arousal in anticipation of risky tasks, and the pleasures of showing prowess and dominance over the enemy are evolved mechanisms of intrinsic gratification associated with violence. Also, there are well-documented differences, within each society, in the extent to which individuals enjoy watching violence or doing risky and exciting things that may end with somebody getting injured (Zuckerman, Eysenck, and Eysenck 1978).

However, historical and cross-cultural evidence also suggests that cultural norms embedded in social institutions are powerful forces that sometimes amplify and sometimes successfully control and marginalize the pleasures of violence. Probably the best evidence for this effect is long-term change in the sensitization to violence that historians of violence have documented in great detail, and that Norbert Elias described as a civilizing process (J. Anderson 2001; Wood 2004; Elias 1978; Spierenburg 1984; Wiener 2004). It is visible in the gradual disappearance of the "spectacle of suffering" enacted in public displays of judicial revenge from the late-seventeenth century onwards. But it is also evident,

for example, in the relentless efforts of nineteenth-century elites to control, and finally bring to an end, public prize fights that attracted huge crowds and often ended with the death of one of the combatants.

### 5.2.1. Sweet Revenge

At first sight the notion of intrinsic rewards seems to contradict the idea of violence as goal-directed instrumental behavior. However, recent research suggests interesting links between the two. Most particularly, de Quervain and colleagues (2004) explored the physiological processes involved in the kind of altruistic punishment (i.e. aggression in reaction to perceived wrongdoing) described in the previous section. In experimental studies they find that reward-related regions in the brain are activated when participants punish defectors (i.e. players who do not cooperate) and that the stronger the chosen level of punishment, the greater are these physiological rewards. They interpret these findings as evidence that revenge in the sense of retaliation against somebody who breaks rules of reciprocity is satisfying—that revenge is sweet.

### 5.3. Justifications

Violence differs from other types of human action in that it causes pain, suffering, and death. However, in contrast to other animals, humans are generally able to comprehend the suffering that they cause by harm-doing. This ability is present from a very age. For example, sympathetic and empathic responding can be observed by the age of two to three years (Zahn-Waxler and Radke-Yarrow 1990). Also, children as young as five or six years clearly recognize facial expression of pain and this ability is fully developed by the age of about eleven or twelve (Deyo, Prkachin, and Mercer 2004). This nearly universal ability to feel compassion for the pain of others probably evolved as an evolutionary advantage as it is linked to lending assistance to in-group members who suffer or who are in peril (Trivers 1971).

The ability of humans to feel empathy (cognition of others' emotions) and sympathy (ability to feel others' emotions), and to anticipate the harm caused by violent action poses a significant hurdle to violence. Hence violence in all its forms and manifestations is in need of *justifications*, i.e.

narratives that lower the inhibitions against violence and rationalize violent conduct (Lamnek 2003).

In “Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency,” Sykes and Matza described and analyzed this mechanism more than fifty years ago (Maruna and Copes 2005; Sykes and Matza 1957). They identified techniques that are closely related to the concept of *moral disengagement* developed by Bandura (Bandura 1990, 1999; Bandura et al. 1996). Bandura argues that humans have self-regulatory systems that guide them to behave in accordance with their moral standards. However, these control system are not perpetual overseers of conduct but only operate when activated. Mechanisms of disengagement permit actors to minimize the impact of self-sanction during the judgment and decision-making process that accompanies to harmful action. Bandura (1999) distinguishes three main points at which moral control can be disengaged.

A first set are *cognitive reconstructions of the injurious behavior* itself. Moral justifications are techniques of portraying detrimental conduct as being in the service of valued social or moral purposes, for example to protect honor, the family, or liberty. Euphemistic language is a tool to couch destructive action in words that mask the suffering caused by violent action, whether individual or collective. Robbers, rapists, generals (“collateral damage”), and mass murderers (“final solution”) all use this strategy. Advantageous comparison refers to the strategy of comparing one’s own conduct with reprehensible conduct by others, thus providing moral justification for destructive action. This is the mechanism inherent in feuding or persistent gang wars, where highlighting the despicable nature of the acts of others helps to legitimize the next round of violent action.

The second set of disengagement practices aim at *minimizing the subjective importance of individual agency* entailed in aggressive acts. Displacement occurs when actors view their action as springing from social pressures, external circumstances, or dictated by others rather than their own deliberate decision. Diffusion occurs when personal agency is obscured by distributing action over a series of seemingly innocuous action steps or by spreading responsibility across a whole group.

Finally, Bandura and colleagues (1996) describe a set of disengagement practices that operate on the *victims of violent action*. Moral self-censure is more likely when the harmed other is perceived as a human being with feelings and hopes that one can identify with. This moral control mechanism can be disengaged by techniques of dehumanization. Dehumanization entails divesting others of their human qualities. It is applied to the targets of violent acts. Once dehumanized, divested of human qualities, people are no longer viewed as persons with feelings, hopes, and concerns but as subhuman objects. They no longer evoke feelings of empathy from the perpetrator and can be subjected to horrendous treatment (Bandura et al. 1996, 366).

The important achievement of Bandura’s social-cognitive theory is that it hypothesizes a set of universal justification mechanisms that interfere with all aspects of intentional harm-doing. It identifies cognitive and moral mechanisms that respond to a universal problem of violent acts, namely the infliction of suffering on others. For a perpetrator, who acts on the basis of goal-driven considerations, moral disengagement minimizes the subjective costs of harm doing and maximizes the subjective “benefits.” In part, such justifications are probably mechanisms that operate after a first violent act has occurred. As such they are within-individual processes that reduce self-sanctions and facilitate the repetition of similar acts. However, the cognitive scripts that facilitate moral disengagement are also transmitted through the family, schools, army officials, or ideologists. As such they are social mechanisms, transmitted through the institutions of a society.

Empirically, moral disengagement has been found to be a highly relevant predictor of various manifestations of aggressive behavior (Bandura et al. 1996). Specifically, moral disengagement predicts physical and verbal aggression amongst children at the elementary and junior high school levels (Bandura et al. 1996; Pelton et al. 2004). Also, moral disengagement has been found to characterize moral-cognitive processes amongst perpetrators of hate crime (Byers, Crider, and Biggers 1999), personnel involved in executions (Osofsky, Bandura, and Zimbardo 2005), and torturers (Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, and Zimbardo 2002).

Furthermore, the combination of dehumanization and attribution of blame has been a highly successful strategy, throughout human history, for facilitating the most disastrous types of collective and state-led violent action (Day and Vandiver 2000; Haslam, 2006; Neubacher, 2006). In fact, Bandura (1996) argues that the concept of moral disengagement has a particular potential to explain deliberate acts of destructiveness committed by ordinary, otherwise considerate people.

Remarkably, the criteria by which certain groups or bearers of certain criteria can become dehumanized are extremely variable across human history. They are the outgrowth of religious principles, righteous ideologies, or nationalistic imperatives. Techniques of dehumanization served to justify the beheading of supposed enemies of the revolution during the *terreur* in the French Revolution (Tackett 2000), the massacre of people who wore glasses (as a sign of belonging to the educated bourgeoisie) during the Khmer Rouge mass killings in Cambodia (Dutton, Boyanowsky, and Bond 2005), or Stalin's planned mass starvation of Kulaks in the Ukraine.

### 5.3.1. Free-Riders and Cheaters

Bandura's theory of moral disengagement is a social cognitive theory, i.e. it identifies mental operations that can be learned and that, when internalized, support violent conduct. It hypothesizes that essential patterns of justifying violence are similar across cultures, over time, and for different types of violent acts. If true, it would provide a cross-cutting basis for understanding important universal social-cognitive mechanisms associated with violence.

However, it does not tell us *why* these mechanisms should be similar across cultures and situations. I cannot fully examine this question here. But it may be that part of the answer is related to the moralistic aggression mechanism mentioned earlier: As noted previously, humans appear to have a universal tendency to react with moralistic anger when rules of reciprocal cooperation are violated, i.e. when others try to be free-riders. This is one reason why people find retaliatory violence more legitimate than unprovoked attacks. Remarkably, some of the moral disengagement mechanisms identified by Bandura use precisely this

freerider-anger-punishment mechanism. They manipulate the interpretation of the situation in such a way that harm-doing looks like a retaliation against persons or groups allegedly trying to be free-riders.

In effect, it seems that all political manipulators, when stirring up collective hatred, abuse the mechanism of moralistic aggression. They present the target group as failing to reciprocate (e.g. as a fifth column, as parasites, as exploitative scum) and thus mobilize the emotional responses needed to trigger extreme violence.

## 6. Conclusions

A general theory of violence in the strong sense of a set of universal laws that replaces local theories and explains all manifestations of violence is unrealistic. However, it may be possible to develop a general theory in the sense of a meta-theoretical framework that comprises a set of general mechanisms that operate across various manifestations of violence. In order to identify such mechanisms, a general theory of violence needs to equally consider all manifestations of violence, in all societies, and at all times.

This paper has argued that a general theory should not be based on the patterns of individual criminal violence, which can be observed in wealthy, well-ordered, state-controlled societies. Understanding these manifestations of violence is important. However, for a general theory it has the adverse effect that a systematic structural, temporal, and geographical bias is built into the very foundations of the theory. In contrast, this paper has argued that the role and functions of violence need to be considered equally throughout the whole of human history and across the complete range of human cultures.

Similarly, this paper has made a case for a theory that does not start with the distinction between prohibited criminal violence and legitimate state use of force, which is then limited to explaining crimes. Besides the fact that the notion of crime does not apply to non-state societies—i.e. most human experience for most of human history—I have argued that the dual role of violence as a means of maintaining order and as a strategy that transgresses accepted rules needs to be a cornerstone of a general theory of violence.

Based on these considerations I have suggested elements of a meta-theoretical framework that assumes that violence is best understood as an instrument to achieve goals. Three theoretical approaches may be combined in a non-contradictory way to understand violence as goal-directed instrumental behavior: a theory of the judgment and decision-making processes operating in the situations that give rise to violence; a theory of the evolutionary processes that have resulted in universal cognitive and emotional mechanisms associated with violence; and a theory of the way in which social institutions structure violence by selectively enhancing its effectiveness for some purposes (i.e. legitimate use of force) and controlling other types of violence (i.e. crime). I have finally explored three cross-cutting themes in order to examine whether some general mechanisms, associ-

ated with an instrumental notion of violence, may help to understand different manifestations in various societies. The goal here was not to fully develop theoretical models and to examine all their empirical implications. Rather, the aim was to demonstrate that empirical and theoretical research can profit from transgressing the narrow borders of specific kinds of violence and highly specific mechanisms. For example, I have argued that the theory of moralistic aggression as an evolved mechanism to solve the free-rider problem and to encourage reciprocal cooperation provides an elegant model for understanding a large variety of manifestations of violence and to understand some foundations of social order.

## References

- Abbink, J. 1998. Ritual and Political Forms of Violent Practice among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia (Formes Rituelles et Politiques des Pratiques Violentes chez les Suri d’Ethiopie Méridionale). *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* 38 (150/152): 271–95.
- Ajzen, I. 1988. *Attitudes, Personality, and Behavior*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Anderson, C. A. 2003. The Influence of Media Violence on Youth. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 4 (3): 81.
- Anderson, C. A., and B. J. Bushman. 2001. Effects of Violent Video Games on Aggressive Behavior, Aggressive Cognition, Aggressive Affect, Physiological Arousal, and Prosocial Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Scientific Literature. *Psychological Science* 12 (5): 353–59.
- . 2002. Human Aggression. *Annual Review of Psychology* 53 (1), 27–51.
- Anderson, D. M. 2002. Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya. *African Affairs* 101:531–55.
- Anderson, E. 1994. The Code of the Streets. *The Atlantic Monthly* 273 (5): 81–94.
- . 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: Norton.
- Anderson, J. 2001. Pugilistic Prosecutions: Prize Fighting and the Courts in Nineteenth Century Britain. *The Sports Historian* 21 (2): 37–57.
- Anscombe, G. E. M. 1956. Intention. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 57: 321–32.
- Aquinas, T. 1920. *Summa Theologica* (Literally Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province). <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/>.
- Archer, J. 1994. Violence Between Men. In *Male Violence*, ed. J. Archer, 121–144. London: Routledge.
- . 2004. Which Attitudinal Measures Predict Trait Aggression? *Personality and Individual Differences* 36 (1): 47–60.
- Archer, J., and N. Graham-Kevan. 2003. Do Beliefs About Aggression Predict Physical Aggression to Partners? *Aggressive Behavior* 29 (1): 41–54.
- Arsovska, J. 2006. Understanding a “Culture of Violence and Crime”: The Kanun of Lek Dukagjini and the Rise of the Albanian Sexual-Slavery Rackets. *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice* 14:161–84.
- Auguet, R. 1972. *Cruelty and Civilization: The Roman Games*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Bandura, A. 1990. Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement. In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. W. Reich. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . A. 1999. Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3 (3): 193–209.
- . 2006. A Murky Portrait of Human Cruelty. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 29 (3): 225–6.
- Bandura, A., C. Barbaranelli, G. V. Caprara, and C. Pastorelli. 1996. Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71 (2): 364–74.
- Bar, N., and E. Ben-Ari. 2005. Israeli Snipers in the Al-Aqsa Intifada: Killing, Humanity and Lived Experience. *Third World Quarterly* 26 (1): 133–52.
- Barrett, A., and C. Harrison, eds. 1999. *Crime and Punishment in England – a Sourcebook*. London: UCL.
- Baumeister, R. F., and W. K. Campbell. 1999. The Intrinsic Appeal of Evil: Sadism, Sensational Thrills, and Threatened Egotism. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3 (3): 210–21.
- Baumeister, R. F., and K. D. Vohs. 2004. Four Roots of Evil. In *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*, ed. A. G. Miller, 85–101. New York: Guilford.
- Bennett, T., and F. Brookman, F. 2008. The Role of Violence in Street Crime: A Qualitative Study of Violent Offenders. *Int J Offender Ther Comp Criminol*: 0306624X08323158.
- Berger, P. L., and T. Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City: Anchor.
- Black, D. 1983. Crime as Social Control. *American Sociological Review* 48 (1): 34–45.
- Boehm, C. 1984. *Blood Revenge: The Enactment and Management of Conflict in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Bourke, J. 1999. *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare*. New York: Basic.
- Buss, D. M., and T. K. Shackelford. 1997. Human Aggression in Evolutionary Psychological Perspective. *Clinical Psychology Review* 17:605–19.

- Byers, B., B. W. Crider, and G. K. Biggers. 1999. Bias Crime Motivation: A Study of Hate Crime and Offender Neutralization Techniques Used Against the Amish. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 15 (1): 78–96.
- Chagnon, N. A. 1988. Life Histories, Blood Revenge, and Warfare in a Tribal Population. *Science* 239 (4843): 985–92.
- Cohen, D., and R. E. Nisbett. 1994. Self-Protection and the Culture of Honor: Explaining Southern Violence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 20 (5): 551–67.
- Cohen, D., R. E. Nisbett, B. F. Bowdle, and N. Schwarz. 1996. Insult, Aggression, and the Southern Culture of Honor: An “Experimental Ethnography.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70 (5): 945–60.
- Cooney, M. 1997. The Decline of Elite Homicide. *Criminology* 35 (3): 381–407.
- Crick, N. R., and K. A. Dodge. 1996. Social Information-Processing Mechanisms in Reactive and Proactive Aggression. *Child Development* 67 (3): 993–1002.
- Day, L. E., and M. Vandiver. 2000. Criminology and Genocide Studies: Notes on What Might Have Been and What Still Could Be. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 34 (1): 43–59.
- de Quervain, D. J.-F., U. Fischbacher, V. Treyer, M. Schellhammer, U. Schnyder, A. Buck, and E. Fehr. 2004. The Neural Basis of Altruistic Punishment. *Science* 305 (5688): 1254–8.
- Deyo, K. S., K. M. Prkachin, and S. R. Mercer. 2004. Development of Sensitivity to Facial Expression of Pain. *Pain* 107 (1–2): 16–21.
- Dodge, K. A. 1991. The Structure and Function of Reactive and Proactive Aggression. In *The Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression*, ed. D. J. Pepler and K. H. Rubin, 201–15. Hillsdale: Erlbaum.
- Dodge, K. A., and G. S. Pettit. 2003. A Biopsychosocial Model of the Development of Chronic Conduct Problems in Adolescence. *Developmental Psychology* 39 (2): 349–71.
- Dülmen, R. v. 1990. *Theatre of Horror: Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dutton, D. G. 2007. *The Psychology of Genocide, Massacres, and Extreme Violence: Why “Normal” People Come to Commit Atrocities*. Westport: Praeger.
- Dutton, D. G., E. O. Boyanowsky, and M. H. Bond. 2005. Extreme Mass Homicide: From Military Massacre to Genocide. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10 (4): 437–73.
- Eisner, M. 2003. Long-Term Historical Trends in Violent Crime. *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* 30:83–142.
- . 2008. Modernity Strikes Back? A Historical Perspective on the Latest Increase in Interpersonal Violence (1960–1990). *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 2 (2): 289–316.
- Elias, N. 1976. *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und Psychogenetische Untersuchungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1978. *The Civilizing Process*, vols. 1 and 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fagan, J., and D. Wilkinson. 1998. Social Contexts and Functions of Adolescent Violence. In *Violence in American Schools*, ed. D. S. Elliott, B. A. Hamburg, and K. R. Williams, 55–93. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fehr, E., and S. Gächter. 2002. Altruistic Punishment in Humans. *Nature* 415:137–40.
- Ferguson, R. B. 2000. The Causes and Origins of “Primitive Warfare”: On Evolved Motivations for War. *Anthropological Quarterly* 73 (3): 159–64.
- Figueredo, A. J., I. R. Tal, P. McNeil, and A. Guillén. 2004. Farmers, Herders, and Fishers: The Ecology of Revenge. *Evolution and Human Behavior* 25 (5): 336–53.
- Fontaine, R. G. 2007. Toward a Conceptual Framework of Instrumental Antisocial Decision-Making and Behavior in Youth. *Clinical Psychology Review* 27 (5): 655–75.
- Gelles, R. J. 1987. *Family Violence*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Giddens, A. 1985. *The Nation-State and Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grossman, D. 1996. *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Guilaine, J., and J. Zammit. 2005. *Origins of War: Violence in Prehistory*. London: Blackwell.
- Haj-Yahia, M. M. 1998. A Patriarchal Perspective of Beliefs About Wife Beating among Palestinian Men from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. *Journal of Family Issues* 19 (5): 595–621.
- Haj-Yahia, M. M., and P. de Zoysa. 2007. Beliefs of Sri Lankan Medical Students About Wife Beating. *J Interpers Violence* 22 (1): 26–49.
- Haslam, N. 2006. Dehumanization: An Integrative Review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 10 (3): 252–64.
- Hobbes, T. 1968 [1660]. *The Leviathan*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Hodgins, S., E. Viding, and A. Plodowski. 2009. *The Neurobiological Basis of Violence: Science and Rehabilitation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holden, G. W., P. C. Miller, and S. D. Harris. 1999. The Instrumental Side of Corporal Punishment: Parents’ Reported Practices and Outcome Expectancies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (4): 908–19.
- Huggins, M. K., M. Haritos-Fatouros, and P. G. Zimbardo. 2002. *Violence Workers: Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities*. San Francisco: University of California Press.
- Johnston, L. E. S. 1996. What Is Vigilantism? *Br J Criminol* 36 (2): 220–36.
- Jones, E. 2006. The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of British Soldiers During the First World War. *Journal of Contemporary History* 41 (2): 229–46.
- Karstedt, S. 2001. Comparing Cultures, Comparing Crime: Challenges, Prospects and Problems for a Global Criminology. *Crime, Law and Social Change* 36 (3): 285–308.
- Katz, J. 1988. *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil*. New York: Basic.
- Keeley, L. H. 1996. *War before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kempes, M., W. Matthys, H. de Vries, and H. van Engeland. 2005. Reactive and Proactive Aggression in Children: A Review of Theory, Findings and the Relevance for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 14 (1): 11–19.
- Kerbs, J., and J. Jolley. 2007. The Joy of Violence: What About Violence Is Fun in Middle-School? *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 32 (1): 12–29.
- Kim, S. H., R. H. Smith, and N. L. Brigham. 1998. Effects of Power Imbalance and the Presence of Third Parties on Reactions to Harm: Upward and Downward Revenge. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull* 24 (4): 353–61.
- Knauff, B. M. 1987. Reconsidering Violence in Simple Human Societies: Homicide among the Gebusi of New Guinea. *Current Anthropology* 28 (4): 457.
- Knudsen, A. 2008. *Violence and Belonging: Land, Love and Lethal Conflict in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Kubrin, C. E., and R. Weitzer. 2003. Retaliatory Homicide: Concentrated Disadvantage and Neighborhood Culture. *Social Problems* 50 (2): 157–80.
- Kyle, D. G. 1998. *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*. London: Routledge.
- Lamnek, S. 2003. Individual Violence Justification Strategies. In *International Handbook of Violence Research*, ed. W. Heitmeyer and J. Hagan, 1131–1127. New York: Kluwer.
- Lane, F. C. 1958. Economic Consequences of Organized Violence. *The Journal of Economic History* 18 (4): 401–17.

- . 1979. *Profits from Power: Readings in Protection Rent and Violence-Controlling Enterprises*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 1998. The Causes of War and the Conditions of Peace. *Annual Review of Political Science* 1 (1): 139–65.
- Loeber, R., and D. Hay. 1997. Key Issues in the Development of Aggression and Violence from Childhood to Early Adulthood. *Annual Review of Psychology* 48:371–410.
- Maruna, S., and H. Copes. 2005. Excuses, Excuses: What Have We Learned from Five Decades of Neutralization Research. *Crime and Justice* 32:221–320.
- Matsueda, R. L., K. Drakulich, and C. E. Kubrin. 2006. Race and Neighborhood Codes of the Street. In *The Many Colors of Crime: Inequalities of Race, Ethnicity, and Crime in America*, ed. R. D. Peterson, L. J. Krivo, and J. Hagan, 199–220. New York: New York University Press.
- Matsueda, R. L., D. A. Kreager, and D. Huizinga. 2006. Deterring Delinquents: A Rational Choice Model of Theft and Violence. *American Sociological Review* 71: 95–122.
- McCall, G. S., and N. Shields. 2008. Examining the Evidence from Small-Scale Societies and Early Prehistory and Implications for Modern Theories of Aggression and Violence. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 13 (1): 1–9.
- McCullough, M. E. 2008. *Beyond Revenge – the Evolution of the Forgiveness Instinct*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Messner, S. F., and R. Rosenfeld. 1994. *Crime and the American Dream*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Miller, A. G., ed. 2004. *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Muller, E. N., and E. Weede. 1990. Cross-National Variation in Political Violence: A Rational Action Approach. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 34 (4): 624–51.
- Nagin, D. S. 2007. Moving Choice to Center Stage in Criminological Research and Theory: The American Society of Criminology 2006 Sutherland Address. *Criminology* 45 (2): 259–72.
- Nagin, D. S., and R. Paternoster. 1993. Enduring Individual Differences and Rational Choice Theories of Crime. *Law & Society Review* 27 (3): 467–96.
- Nell, V. 2006. Cruelty's Rewards: The Gratifications of Perpetrators and Spectators. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 29 (3): 211–24.
- Neubacher, F. 2006. How Can It Happen That Horrendous State Crimes Are Perpetrated? An Overview of Criminological Theories. *J Int Criminal Justice* 4 (4): 787–99.
- Osofsky, M. J., A. Bandura, and P. G. Zimbardo. 2005. The Role of Moral Disengagement in the Execution Process. *Law and Human Behavior* 29 (4): 371–93.
- Otterbein, K. F. 2004. *How War Began*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.
- Owusu-Banahene, N. O., and F. K. Amadahe. 2008. Adolescent Students' Beliefs About Aggression and the Association between Beliefs and Reported Level of Aggression: A Study of Senior High School Students in Ghana. *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology* 8:64–71.
- Patterson, G. R., J. B. Reid, and T. J. Dishion. 1992. *Antisocial Boys*. Eugene: Castaglia.
- Pelton, J., M. Gound, R. Forehand, and G. Brody. 2004. The Moral Disengagement Scale: Extension with an American Minority Sample. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 26 (1): 31–39.
- Pervin, L. 1986. Persons, Situations, Interactions: Perspectives on a Recurrent Issue. In *Violent Transactions; the Limits of Personality*, ed. A. Campbell and J. J. Gibbs. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Pinker, S. 2002. *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. London: Penguin.
- Price, J. M., and K. A. Dodge. 1989. Reactive and Proactive Aggression in Childhood: Relations to Peer Status and Social Context Dimensions. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 17 (4): 455–71.
- Rigby, K. 2004. Addressing Bullying in Schools: Theoretical Perspectives and Their Implications. *School Psychology International* 25 (3): 287–300.
- Robarchek, C. A., and C. J. Robarchek. 1998. Reciprocities and Realities: World Views, Peacefulness, and Violence among Semai and Waorani. *Aggressive Behavior* 24 (1): 123–33.
- Rosenbaum, H. J., and P. C. Sederberg. 1974. Vigilantism: An Analysis of Establishment Violence. *Comparative Politics* 6 (4): 541–70.
- Rummel, R. J. 1994. *Death by Government*. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Sakall, N. 2001. Beliefs About Wife Beating among Turkish College Students: The Effects of Patriarchy, Sexism, and Sex Differences. *Sex Roles* 44 (9): 599–610.
- Schulting, R. 2006. Skeletal Evidence and Contexts of Violence in the European Mesolithic and Neolithic. In *The Social Archeology of Funerary Remains*, ed. R. Gowland and C. Knusel, 224–36. Oxford: Oxbow.
- Sheeran, P. 2002. Intention-Behavior Relations: A Conceptual and Empirical Review. *European Review of Social Psychology* 12 (1): 1–21.
- Skaperdas, S., and C. Syropoulos. 1997. Gangs as Primitive States. In *The Economics of Organized Crime*, ed. G. Fiorentini and S. Peltzman, 61–82. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sobel, R. S., and B. S. Osoba. Forthcoming. Youth Gangs as Pseudo-Governments: Implications for Violent Crime. *Southern Economic Journal*.
- Solomon, R. L., and J. D. Corbit. 1974. An Opponent-Process Theory of Motivation: I. Temporal Dynamics of Affect. *Psychological review* 81 (2): 119–45.
- Spierenburg, P. 1984. *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression: From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sykes, G., and D. Matza. 1957. Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency. *American Journal of Sociology* 22:664–70.
- Tackett, T. 2000. Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789–1792. *The American Historical Review* 105 (3): 691.
- Tankebe, J. 2009. Self-Help, Policing and Procedural Justice: Ghanaian Vigilantism and the Rule of Law. *Law and Society Review* 43 (2): 245–69.
- Tapper, K., and M. J. Boulton. 2004. Sex Differences in Levels of Physical, Verbal, and Indirect Aggression amongst Primary School Children and Their Associations with Beliefs About Aggression. *Aggressive Behavior* 30 (2): 123–45.
- Thorpe, I. J. N. 2003. Anthropology, Archaeology, and the Origin of Warfare. *World Archaeology* 35 (1): 145–65.
- Tilly, C. 1985. War Making and State Making as Organized Crime. In *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol, 169–86. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tooby, J., and L. Cosmides. 1992. The Psychological Foundations of Culture. In *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*, ed. J. Barkow, L. Cosmides, and J. Tooby. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 1997. *Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer*. Center for Evolutionary Psychology. <http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html>.
- Tremblay, R. 2000. The Development of Aggressive Behavior During Childhood: What Have We Learned in the Past Century? *International Journal of Behavior Development* 24:129–41.
- Trivers, R. L. 1971. The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism. *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 46 (1): 35.
- Ward, T., and A. Beech. 2006. An Integrated Theory of Sexual Offending. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 11 (1): 44–63.

- Wiener, M. J. 2004. *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness and Criminal Justice in Victorian England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wikström, P.-O. 2003. Crime as Alternative: Towards a Cross-Level Situational Action Theory of Crime Causation. In *Beyond Empiricism: Institutions and Intentions in the Study of Crime*, ed. J. McCord. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Wikström, P.-O., and K. Treiber. 2009. Violence as Situational Action. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3 (1).
- Wilson, M., and M. Daly. 1985. Competitiveness, Risk Taking, and Violence: The Young Male Syndrome. *Ethology and Sociobiology* 6:59–73.
- Wilson, S. 1988. *Feuding, Conflict and Banditry in Nineteenth-Century Corsica*. Cambridge.
- Wood, J. C. 2004. *Violence and Crime in Nineteenth Century England: The Shadow of Our Refinement*. London: Routledge.
- . 2007. The Limits of Culture? Society, Evolutionary Psychology and the History of Violence. *Cultural and Social History* 4 (1): 95–114.
- Wormald, J. 1980. Bloodfeud, Kindred and Government in Early Modern Scotland. *Past and Present* 87 (1): 54–97.
- Wrangham, R., W. 1999. Evolution of Coalitionary Killing. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 110 (S29): 1–30.
- Zahn-Waxler, C., and M. Radke-Yarrow. 1990. The Origins of Empathic Concern. *Motivation and Emotion* 14 (2): 107–30.
- Zimbardo, P. G. 2004. A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding How Good People Are Transformed into Perpetrators. In *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*, ed. A. G. Miller, 21–50. New York: Guilford Press.
- Zuckerman, M., S. Eysenck, and H. J. Eysenck. 1978. Sensation Seeking in England and America: Cross-Cultural, Age, and Sex Comparisons. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 46 (1): 139–49.

# Violence as Situational Action

Per-Olof H. Wikström, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Kyle H. Treiber, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

## Vol. 3 (1) 2009

**Editorial** (p. 3)

**Focus:**

**General Theory of Violence**

Guest Editors:

Manuel Eisner and

Susanne Karstedt

**Introduction: Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?**

Susanne Karstedt / Manuel Eisner (pp. 4 – 8)

**Micro and Macro Theories of Violence** Randall Collins (pp. 9 – 22)

**Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime** Richard B. Felson (pp. 23 – 39)

**The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues**

Manuel Eisner (pp. 40 – 59)

**Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?**

Charles Tittle (pp. 60 – 74)

► **Violence as Situational Action** Per-Olof H. Wikström / Kyle Treiber (pp. 75 – 96)

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence** Martin Shaw (pp. 97 – 106)

**Open Section**

**Understanding the Other's 'Understanding' of Violence** Marcel M. Baumann (pp. 107 – 123)

**Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics**

Renate Möller / Uwe Sander / Arne Schäfer / Dirk Villányi / Matthias D. Witte (pp. 124 – 142)

# Violence as Situational Action

Per-Olof H. Wikström, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Kyle H. Treiber, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Violence comes in many forms and occurs in many different circumstances for many different reasons. Is it really possible to develop a single theory that can explain all these disparate acts? In this paper, we argue it is. We make the case that acts of violence are essentially *moral actions* and therefore can, and should, be analysed and explained as such. We maintain that *all* acts of violence can be explained within the general framework of a theory of moral action. We present just such a theory – *Situational Action Theory* – and demonstrate how it can be applied to the explanation and study of violence.

People get into bar fights because someone spills beer on them. Police officers beat up suspects who insult them. Terrorists blow up planes and vehicles to achieve political goals. Mothers hit their children because they misbehave. Youth gangs attack members of other gangs to defend their turf. Soldiers shoot enemies to stop them advancing. Husbands hit their spouses because they disagree about family finances. State officials execute offenders as a form of punishment. Adolescents get into schoolyard fights over rude remarks. Drug-dealers kill rivals to protect their businesses. Disgruntled employees go on shooting sprees in their workplaces because they are made redundant.

Violence comes in many forms and occurs in many different circumstances (see McClintock 1963; McClintock and Wikström 1992; Wikström 1985, 1991) for many different reasons (see Curtis 1974; Wolfgang 1958). Is it really possible

to develop a single theory that can explain all these disparate acts? We will argue it is.

In this paper we will make the case that acts of violence are essentially moral actions and therefore can, and should, be analysed and explained as such.<sup>1</sup> We will maintain that *all* acts of violence can be explained within the general framework of a theory of moral action. We will present just such a theory – *Situational Action Theory* (e.g., Wikström 2006, forthcoming) – and demonstrate how it can be applied to the explanation and study of violence.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Situational Action Theory

Situational Action Theory (SAT) was originally developed to overcome key problems identified in prominent criminological theories (Wikström 2004, 2005), including the problem of the definition of crime (theories are often unclear about what it is they aim to explain); the problem

<sup>1</sup> Morality is often discussed in terms of whether particular actions are good or bad (virtuous or reprehensible), or whether or not they are justified in relation to some superior moral principle. It is important to stress that we do not use and discuss morality in these terms but rather focus on understanding how people's actions are guided by rules about what actions are right or wrong under particular circumstances; we classify these rules

as *moral rules*. We do not make any judgements about whether existing rules are justified or not. Consequently, we also avoid terminology like “inappropriate”, “antisocial” or “immoral”. Our aim here is to explore how human action is guided by moral rules, not why we have the moral rules we have. We recognise that this is a very important question, but not one we address in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> SAT has already been applied to other forms of moral action, including acts of terrorism (Bouhana and Wikström 2008).

of distinguishing between causes and correlates and the consequently poor understanding of causal mechanisms (theories often fail to distinguish between attributes and markers and actual causes because they lack an accurate understanding of relevant causal processes); the problem of integrating levels of explanation (theories often lack a proper theory of action through which individual and environmental levels of explanation can be integrated);<sup>3</sup> and the problem of explaining development and change (theories often fail to adequately explain relevant processes of development and change).<sup>4</sup>

Subsequently, SAT has developed into a more general theory of moral action which aims to explain why people follow and break moral rules, in which crime is regarded as a subclass of a more general category of acts of moral rule-breaking (Wikström 2006, forthcoming; Wikström and Treiber 2009). The chief rationale for expanding the scope of the theory is that there is no fundamental difference between explaining why people (follow or) break moral rules in general (for example, informal rules about talking in a library, drinking alcohol before noon or skipping ahead in a queue) and why they (follow or) break moral rules *defined by law*. The basic causal processes are the same; hence the basic explanation is the same.

### 1.1. A Brief Summary of the Foundations and Key Propositions of SAT

Situational Action Theory aims to overcome the enduring (but unfruitful) divide between individual and environmental explanations of moral action, such as acts of violence. It achieves this by proposing a *situational mechanism* (a perception–choice process), which links a person and his/her environment to his/her action. It postulates that all actions (including acts of crime and violence) may be seen as the outcome of (i) what action alternatives a person perceives, and (ii) what action choices he/she then makes.

Situational Action Theory is based on explicit assumptions about human nature and its relation to social order. Humans are viewed as essentially rule-guided actors and social order as fundamentally based on adherence to common rules of conduct (i.e., the social order is essentially a moral order). Explaining human moral action such as acts of violence ultimately has to do with understanding the *interplay* between common moral rules of conduct and a person's own moral rules in shaping his/her moral development and providing grounds for his/her moral actions.

SAT also aims to reconcile the role of deterministic and voluntaristic forces in the explanation of human action. SAT integrates deterministic approaches (behaviouristic) and voluntaristic approaches (free will) to the explanation of moral action and crime. It does so by recognizing that human action (including law abidance and acts of crime) may be caused either by *habit* or more rational *deliberation*. It argues that people exercise free will and self-control (internal controls) and respond to deterrence cues (external controls) only when they deliberate. Whether a choice of action is deliberate or habitual depends on the actor's familiarity with the circumstances in which he/she operates; repeated exposure to particular circumstances leads to action becoming automated (habitual), rather than deliberate, in those and similar circumstances (Wikström 2006, forthcoming; Wikström and Treiber 2009).

The fundamental arguments of Situational Action Theory concerning the explanation of violence are (Wikström forthcoming):

- i. Acts of violence are *moral actions* (i.e., actions guided by what it is right or wrong to do, or not to do, in a particular circumstance) and therefore need to be explained as such.
- ii. People engage in acts of violence because they (i) come to see such acts as viable *action alternatives* and (ii) *choose* (habitually or deliberately) to carry them out.

<sup>3</sup> The perspective we propose is neither individualistic nor collectivistic, but *situational*; rather than explaining how individual or environmental factors lead to action, it focuses on how their *interaction* leads to action.

<sup>4</sup> Not all criminological theories fail on all these fronts, but we argue that the vast majority fail on at least one, and often several.

- iii. The likelihood that a person will come to see an act of violence as an action alternative and choose to carry it out ultimately depends on his/her *propensity* to engage in violence (grounded in his/her action-relevant moral rules and emotions and ability to exercise self-control) and its *interplay* with his/her *exposure* to settings conducive to violence (defined by their action-relevant moral rules and level of enforcement).
- iv. The role of *broader social conditions* and their changes (such as social integration and segregation), and the role of *individual development and change* (life histories), should be analysed as the causes of the causes of acts of violence.
- v. Relevant *causes of the causes* of acts of violence are *only* those social conditions and life events that can be demonstrated to influence the development of people's propensity to engage in acts of violence (their action-relevant morality and ability to exercise self-control) and the emergence of, and people's differential exposure to, settings with features pertinent to acts of violence (settings whose moral context and deterrent qualities may encourage or discourage violence).

### 1.2. Defining Acts of Violence

Concepts like aggression and violence are used and defined in many different ways (e.g., Baron 1977; Brenner 1971; Buss 1961; Cahoon 1972).<sup>5</sup> We define violence as *acts intended to bring about physical harm to other beings*. What we aim to explain, then, is a type of action. *Acts* are bodily movements under the guidance of a person (e.g., speaking or hitting). We only consider acts *intended* to cause harm, because excluding intention from the definition would mean accidents which (unintentionally) cause harm would classify as acts of violence (for example, accidentally shooting someone when cleaning a gun) while unsuccessful attempts to harm someone would not (for example, shooting to kill someone, but missing). We have also restricted the concept of violence to acts intended to bring about *physical* harm, that is, acts intended to cause pain, bodily injury or death. However,

our explanation applies equally well to intentional acts which cause emotional harm (for example, verbal abuse) and material damage (vandalism).<sup>6</sup>

Harming another being can be a *goal in itself* (sometimes referred to as “expressive” violence) or a *means to another goal* (sometimes referred to as “instrumental” violence). SAT applies equally well to expressive or instrumental acts of violence, thus there is no need for separate explanations. We will, however, discuss some of the differences in circumstances which lead to expressive and instrumental violence.

The *intentions of the object of the violence* are not part of our definition. Acts are regarded as violent regardless of whether the object of the intended harm explicitly or implicitly agrees to be subjected to pain or injury (for example, as they may in certain sports and sexual activities). There is no need to construct different explanations for cases in which the victim does and does not agree to be subjected to physical harm. They can all be explained as moral actions.

### 1.3. Violence as Moral Action

When explaining acts of violence, the most important fact is *not* that they intend to bring about physical harm but that they are *moral actions* guided by rules about what it is right or wrong to do in a particular circumstance. There is principally no difference in explaining the causal processes that make a person hit someone, lie to someone or steal someone's belongings. What differs are the *moral rules* that guide particular kinds of action (the action-relevant moral rules). What differentiates acts of violence from other moral actions is therefore not the basic *processes* which make people engage in violence (versus another moral action) but the *input* (action-relevant moral rules) which guides the perception of violence as an action alternative and the choice between violence and other alternatives in a particular circumstance. To fully understand why people engage in

<sup>5</sup> For example, aggression may refer to a drive or a behaviour.

<sup>6</sup> We regard violence as a subclass of the more inclusive concept of *aggression*, defined as *acts intended to bring about harm to other beings*. Aggression so defined includes acts intended to cause

physical as well as *emotional* harm (e.g., feelings of distress). We reserve the term *vandalism* for actions intended to damage or destroy others' material possessions without the owner's express permission.

a *particular* kind of moral action, one needs to comprehend the particular moral rules which regulate that action.

Because violence takes many forms – one of the reasons it has proven difficult to develop an effective general theory – there is considerable variation in the moral rules which regulate different kinds of violence in different settings. Moral rules regulate not only whether the use of violence is right or wrong in a particular circumstance, but also what kinds and levels of violence are permitted. For example, the use of violence in a boxing ring is permitted *if* boxing is legal, *if* the person hitting is a boxer, *if* the person being hit is his opponent, *if* that opponent is wearing the right equipment, *if* the referee has indicated the match is underway, and so forth. What is common to all cases of violence is the fact that there are *always* moral rules guiding its use, and a particularly important form of moral rules which regulate violence is the law.

#### 1.4. The Law as Moral Rules

The use of violence is generally regulated by law. Violence is illegal in some circumstances, but far from all. The circumstances in which violence is legal vary between countries and have changed within countries over the course of history. A good example is the use of violence in domestic circumstances (e.g., a husband's right to use violence against his wife, a parent's right to use violence against his/her child and a teacher's right to use violence against his/her pupils).

Laws are rules of conduct that tell people what they are allowed or not allowed to do (Ehrlich 2008). Hence laws are moral rules. They are not the only set of moral rules in a given country, but are usually the most important (with the possible exception of religion in some countries).<sup>7</sup> There are, of course, other sets of moral rules outside the law (and religion), which are more or less generalized, more or less formalised, and which guide people's use of violence in dif-

ferent circumstances. The law and other sets of moral rules may conflict in the form and degree of violence they permit in particular circumstances. The extent to which particular laws are effectively normative (homogeneously internalised) may vary within a jurisdiction. Changes in law can be used to try to change people's moral rules (as a tool of social engineering). Criminalising the use of violence in domestic circumstances is a good example. The fact that many special interest groups (such as environmentalists) campaign to have their agendas recognized by law is another good illustration of the perceived power of the law (i.e., its rules of conduct) as a major force influencing human action.

#### 1.5. Moral Rules as Causal Powers

The reason why moral rules are important in the explanation of human action is that they have *causal powers* (powers to bring about certain actions).<sup>8</sup> They influence people to act in certain ways. They influence people to see certain action alternatives and to make certain choices in response to particular circumstances. In fact, we would argue that moral rules are *key* causal powers in explaining moral actions such as acts of violence. One main reason why people engage in acts of violence is because moral rules allow them to see and choose violence as a viable action alternative in response to a particular circumstance. However, moral rules are not the only relevant causal powers in the explanation of human actions such as violence. Another main kind of causal power affecting moral action is what may be referred to as controls.

#### 1.6. The Role of Controls in Moral Action

We submit that it is analytically advantageous to conceptually distinguish "moral rules" and "controls" in the explanation of moral action. Moral rules convey to people what actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances. People do not always follow moral rules. Controls kick in as an additional causal power when people deliberate over

<sup>7</sup> One of the essential elements of a religion is a code of conduct which applies to its adherents (e.g., the Ten Commandments). The overlap between legal and religious rules may be substantial in some jurisdictions.

<sup>8</sup> The idea that rules have the power to guide human action has been forcefully argued by Harré and Secord (1972, 12): "It is the self-monitored following of rules and plans that we believe to be the social science analogue of the working of generative causal mechanisms in the processes which produce the non-random patterns studied by natural scientists."

Durkheim (2002, 41) refers to rules as being what he calls "genuine forces" that influence human action: "Thanks to the authority vested in them, moral rules are genuine forces, which confront our desires and needs, our appetites of all sorts, when they promise to become immoderate."

whether or not to follow a moral rule. We define *controls* as “enforcements of moral rules”. They are processes that support adherence to moral rules, such as those regulating the use of violence. Effective controls are enforcements that make people act in accordance with moral rules they consider breaking. These can be moral rules that promote or prohibit a moral action. Controls are only activated when people *deliberate* over action alternatives. Controls do not play a major role in *habitual* action in which the action is an “automated” response to a repeated exposure to the particular circumstance (see below and Wikström 2006).

There are two main types of enforcements of moral rules: those originating from inside the person (self-control) and those originating from outside the person (deterrence). Self-control comes into play when there is a conflict between a person’s motivation to act and his/her morality. For example, if a person is provoked by someone and motivated to hit him/her, but thinks and feels that hitting someone is wrong, the outcome will depend on the strength of the factors influencing the actor’s ability to exercise self-control. We define *self-control* as “the inhibition of perceived action alternatives or the interruption of a course of action, which conflicts with the agent’s own morality” (Wikström and Treiber 2007). A person’s ability to exercise self-control will depend on factors such as his/her ability to process information or suppress emotion, but also momentary influences such as his/her level of stress or intoxication (for further details see Wikström and Treiber 2007).

*Deterrence* is the main causal mechanism through which formal and informal social controls (external interventions) influence a person’s moral actions. *Deterrence* is defined as “the felt worry about or fear of consequences when considering breaking a moral rule or committing an act of crime” (for further details see Wikström 2007). Deterrence comes into play as a causal force when there is a conflict between the moral rules that apply to a setting and a person’s own

morality. For example, if a person has no problem hitting someone who makes a rude remark but the moral rules of the setting (e.g., laws) prohibit such an action, the outcome will depend on the strength of deterrence originating from the conditions of the setting (i.e., the perceived likelihood of effective intervention and seriousness of potential consequences).

Controls are *only* relevant when there is a discrepancy or conflict involving the application of moral rules. In cases where the person’s own morality and the moral rules of the setting tell him/her not to use violence, violence will be unlikely. On the other hand, in settings where the person’s morality and the moral rules of the setting tell him/her that violence is permitted, violence will be likely. In all other cases, the strength of the controls (self-control or deterrence) will play a role in whether violence is the outcome.

### 1.7. The Role of Motivation in Moral Action

Motivation (defined as goal-directed attention) is a situational concept. People have particular *desires* (wants, needs) and *commitments* and when they encounter an *opportunity* to fulfil a desire or honour a commitment they are likely to be *tempted* to do so (i.e., to focus their attention on the possibility of acting to satisfy a desire or honour a commitment). Temptation may be regarded as one major class of motivators.

People also face *frictions* (unwanted interferences) which, depending on a person’s *sensitivity*, may cause a *provocation* (feelings of upset or anger directed towards the perceived source of the friction).<sup>9</sup> Interferences can be physical (e.g., standing in someone’s way) or verbal (e.g., insulting someone). Provocations may be regarded as another major class of motivators.

Temptations and provocations may not be the only motivators, but they are some of the most, if not *the* most, impor-

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most famous motivational theory of aggression is Dollard and colleagues’ *frustration-aggression hypothesis* (1944), which claims that “aggression is always a consequence of frustration” and “the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression” (1). In this theory, aggression is

defined as “a sequence of behavior, the goal-response to which is injury to the person towards whom it is directed” (7) and frustration as “an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response” (5). Although we accept that frustration may be a major motivator of violent action, we stress there

are many others. We also prefer the conceptual pairing of frictions and provocations, which underlines the situational nature of motivation.

tant classes of motivators in moral action. While temptations originate from within (being initiated when a person's desires and commitments connect to an opportunity), provocations originate from without (being initiated by unwanted external interferences). Acts of violence may be motivated by temptations or provocations. A person may hit a stranger to obtain a CD he/she desires, a member of a rival gang to honour a commitment (not necessarily because he/she wants to) or a peer who insults his/her partner (an interference). However, people may and commonly do use alternatives other than violence to deal with their motivations. The crucial question is *why* some people respond violently to a motivation, while others do not.

There are no particular motivations that (always) cause people to act violently. People turn to violence for all sorts of motives (they may or may not use violence as part of dealing with particular desires, commitments or frictions). Motivation exerts a *general directional influence* on the kinds of action in which a person may engage. People *vary* in individual factors influencing their motivations (e.g., their particular desires and commitments and sensitivity to frictions) and therefore in the kinds of action in which they may be motivated to engage.

Whether or not a particular motivation results in an act of violence crucially depends on the interplay between a person's morality and the moral rules of the setting, which acts as a *moral filter* for the kinds of action he/she considers, and, when relevant (i.e., when a person deliberates over the application of moral rules to a choice of action), is influenced by the strength of the controls operating in the particular circumstance. Motivation is therefore a necessary, but not sufficient, factor in the explanation of moral actions such as acts of violence.

### 1.8. Moral Choices

When a person is motivated (has goal-directed attention) he/she will, depending on the moral filter, perceive certain action alternatives in relation to the motivation and, based

upon that, make certain moral choices. This *perception-choice process* can be either (predominantly) habitual or deliberate. In a process characterized by moral habit, the person sees only one causally effective action alternative, while in a deliberate process, when the person makes a moral judgement, he/she has to decide which is the best of several perceived alternatives.

#### 1.8.1. Moral Habits

Habitual action choices occur when people perceive only one alternative for action; the choice of action is then automatic.<sup>10</sup> The actor does not exhibit free will or self-control because he/she allows the setting to determine the action by complying with the first alternative which that setting (or a factor in that setting) causes to “spring to mind” (Wikström 2006; Wikström and Treiber 2007).

Habits are acquired when a person learns to act in a particular way in a particular setting after being repeatedly exposed to that setting and responding to it with a particular action (which obtains a desire, fulfils a commitment, or addresses a source of friction). Through repetition that action may become *prepotent*, i.e., the first alternative he/she perceives upon entering the setting, and subsequently habitual, the *only* alternative he/she perceives.

Habits may be very specific or generalized. Just as perceiving an action as an alternative in one setting may increase the likelihood one will perceive it as an alternative in other settings, habitually choosing an alternative in one setting may increase the likelihood that one may habitually choose that alternative in other settings as well (Huesmann 1997).

The acquisition of habits is supported by the *somatic marker system*, by which the brain summates information about the somatic outcomes of each instance of an action into an intuitive “marker” which signifies the action's significance (Damasio 1994, 1996). This marker is activated by action-relevant contexts and helps to steer goal-directed

<sup>10</sup> Note that “doing x” and “not doing x” are two alternatives and therefore do not lead to an automatic choice. An automatic choice occurs

when a person perceives the option of “doing x” but not the option of “not doing x”.

attention. Most of the information these markers convey is emotional. Emotions can benefit perception by redirecting attention to unremarkable action-relevant factors, or impair it by redirecting attention to action-irrelevant ones (Bechara, Tranel, and Damasio 2000; Damasio 1994, 1996; Hinson, Jameson, and Whitney 2002; Huesmann 1997; Lösel and Schmucker 2004; Turnbull et al. 2005). Very strong emotions may lead an actor to see only one alternative and act habitually.

Although under-researched, habits have important implications, especially for our understanding of persistent patterns of behaviour, such as how they arise, why they persist and, potentially, how they may be disrupted.

### 1.8.2. Moral Judgement

Moral judgements occur when actors *deliberately* consider more than one alternative for action. Deliberation involves gathering and analyzing information relevant to different alternatives, and using that information to determine which alternative is preferred (Fuster 1997; Goldman-Rakic 1987). This process is facilitated by areas of the brain which store, retrieve and manipulate sensory information from the environment and internalized knowledge (Adcock et al. 2000; Best, Williams, and Coccaro 2002; Cohen et al. 1997; Prabhakaran et al. 2000; Schoenbaum and Setlow 2001; Smith and Jonides 1997).

Deliberation allows people to internalize control of an action. Self-control is important for moral action because it allows people to act in accordance with their personal moral rules even when they are motivated to break them (Wikström and Treiber 2007). This process is supported by brain areas which suppress emotions and habits and redirect attention from salient motivators (opportunities and sources of friction) to less salient deterrents (e.g., moral rules and consequences) (Best, Williams, and Coccaro 2002; Nobre et al. 1999).

Although the ability to exercise self-control is influenced by relatively stable personal characteristics (*executive capabilities*), it is also susceptible to transient influences, such as intoxication, emotional volatility and levels of stress (Wikström and Treiber 2007). Thus it is not a material or

personal factor, but a *situational* factor which characterizes a person's engagement with a particular setting – i.e., an action process.

Self-control requires something *to* control, and therefore will only play a role in action processes in which the actor deliberates because he/she perceives conflict between his/her (externally driven) motivation to act and his/her personal moral rules. His/her ability to exercise self-control will determine if he/she successfully controls the action and acts in accordance with those rules.

### 1.8.3. Real-life Moral Choices

Although most choices are predominantly habitual or deliberative, many *choice processes* may involve elements of both habituation and deliberation (Damasio 1994; Kahneman 2003; Sloman 1996). To understand action, and how to prevent certain kinds of action, we need to understand these disparate types of choice and what kinds of actions they help explain.

## 2. Applying Situational Action Theory to Violence

We have argued that the Situational Action Theory provides a framework for explaining all acts of violence because acts of violence represent a type of moral action guided by rules about intentionally harming others, and all moral actions can be explained by understanding why certain people perceive those actions as alternatives they choose to pursue (the perception–choice process). Different types of moral action *will* differ, however, in the *content* which feeds this process. That content includes the moral context (action-relevant moral rules and their enforcement in the setting) and the actor's personal morality (internalized action-relevant moral rules and emotions) and ability to exercise self-control.

Acts of violence differ from other types of moral action because they occur when people with weak personal moral rules and emotions *opposing* the intentional harming of others (people who do not think intentionally harming others is wrong in a given circumstance, or do not care much about doing so even if they think it is), or strong personal moral rules and emotions *supporting* the intentional harming of others (people who think intentionally harming others is the right thing to do in a given circumstance and

would feel justified in doing so) encounter opportunities or frictions which may tempt or provoke them to act violently in settings which have a violence-conducive moral context (settings in which rules promote violence or in which rules prohibiting violence are weakly enforced). The intersection of such people and such settings may lead those people to perceive intentionally harming others as an alternative (and possibly *the only* alternative) which they choose to pursue.

In the following sections, we will discuss in detail the content which distinguishes violence as a moral action and the unique implications for its explanation and prevention. We will also consider the content which distinguishes different types of violence, particularly instrumental and expressive violence, which are often treated as separate categories of action. We will conclude by discussing the antecedent factors (the *causes of the causes*) which influence the acquisition of and changes in personal characteristics conducive to violence (relevant personal moral rules and emotions and the ability to exercise self-control) and the emergence of and changes in settings conducive to violence (relevant moral contexts) (Wikström 2005; Wikström and Treiber 2009). In doing so, it is our intention to show how violence, which is often treated as a special class of action requiring a special explanation, is explicable within the framework of Situational Action Theory, like any other moral action.

### 2.1. Perception of Violence as an Alternative

Most explanations of action focus on how people choose amongst (predetermined) alternatives, as if those alternatives were plain to everyone (see, for example, Clarke and Felson 1993; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). SAT, alternately, argues that before the process of choice a person engages in a *process of perception* by which he/she identifies viable alternatives for responding to a temptation or provocation.

To perceive violence as a viable alternative a person needs to be willing to intentionally harm others – he/she must not think intentionally harming others is wrong in the particular setting, or care very strongly about doing so even if it is. That setting must present factors which tempt or provoke

him/her to intentionally harm others. The interaction between such an actor and setting will determine whether that actor is *motivated* to commit an act of violence.

#### 2.1.1. Action-relevant Moral Rules and Values

Acts of violence are generally regulated (rule-bound) to some extent; even in circumstances where violence is permitted it is typically limited to certain actors and certain actions. We previously gave the example of sporting events such as boxing; other circumstances in which intentionally causing physical harm to others may be permitted include war, medical procedures and self-defence. To avoid misunderstanding, we reiterate that we do not make assertions about whether intentionally causing physical harm to others should or should not be permitted in these (or any other) circumstances; we regard any action which follows or breaks the rules which regulate that action as moral action, regardless of whether those rules are defined by law or other codes of conduct, such as rules of professional practice (see footnote 1).

In circumstances in which violence is permitted, rules typically regulate who is allowed to intentionally harm whom. This is true in the boxing arena, where the boxers are permitted to intentionally harm each other (but not the referee, trainers, spectators, etc.); in war, where soldiers are only permitted to harm enemy soldiers (but not one another, or aid workers, or civilians);<sup>11</sup> in certain medical procedures, where a doctor is permitted to intentionally harm only legitimate patients (according to strict legal and professional rules); and in cases of self-defence, where a victim can intentionally harm his/her assailant (but not bystanders). At the same time, during a boxing match referees, trainers and spectators are not permitted to hit each other or either boxer; aid workers and civilians are not permitted to harm each other; patients are not permitted to intentionally harm their doctors; and, of course, assailants are not supposed to harm their victims.

An interesting and relevant phenomenon is the *monopoly of violence*, which generally refers to the fact that an authority figure or group is permitted to use violence more freely

<sup>11</sup> This is regulated, for example, by international treaties such as the Geneva Conventions.

than subordinate figures or groups. Governments often have a monopoly on violence in their power to regulate military activities, police conduct and the use of violence by the criminal justice system (e.g., capital and corporal punishment). In most western societies, governments are endowed with this power in order to protect their citizens. In some societies, however, it is assumed by the government (or a dictator) in order to control its citizens. In these contrasting cultures, rules about the use of violence in different settings will differ significantly, and have very different implications for its expression.

Alongside rules regulating who may intentionally harm whom are rules regulating what forms of violence may be used and what degree of each form is permissible. In boxing, only certain blows are permitted to certain parts of the body; in fencing one can be banned from a competition for hitting an opponent too hard or engaging in impermissible violent actions like throwing one's weapon or one's mask. In war the degree of violence is regulated by rules of engagement, while the form of violence is regulated by the kinds of weapons and assault tactics which soldiers are trained and allowed to use (this is regulated, for example, by treaties such as the Hague Conventions and the Geneva Protocols, although not all regimes accept or apply these rules). In medical practice one can intentionally harm someone to the degree that it will ultimately help him/her, and this will take the form of specific (highly regulated) procedures. Finally, in the case of self-defence the form and degree of violence permitted is determined by need; one is generally expected to inflict intentional harm only to the extent necessary to protect oneself.

It is possible that this differential permissibility may impact people's general violence-relevant moral rules (internalized rules guiding their use of violence in certain circumstances) and emotions (their emotional response to following or breaking rules about the use of violence), their tendency to perceive violence as an alternative across many settings, and the consequent spread of violent behaviour between settings (contagion effects). This may be counterbalanced, however, by the fact that there are almost always rules regulating who, what, when and where as far as violent behaviour is concerned. Whether or not one follows those rules will first

and foremost depend on whether a person agrees with them (his/her personal moral rules) and cares about following them (his/her moral emotions).

### 2.1.2. Personal Moral Rules and Violence

People's personal morality may be conducive to violence if they do not think acting violently in a setting is wrong, even if it is regulated, and if their moral emotions do not deter violence (they do not feel shame or guilt for acting violently) or even support it (they feel righteous or virtuous for acting violently).

Many people, for instance, will accept that hitting someone is wrong (because it breaks a rule or has significantly negative outcomes), but some will experience shame and guilt if they hit someone (or even think about doing so) and therefore feel particularly strongly that they (and others) should not do so. Others will not experience shame and guilt and will therefore attach less importance to hitting someone even if it breaks a moral rule and they think doing so is wrong, making them more likely to do so. Some people in some circumstances may even experience a feeling of self-righteousness – for instance, when they intentionally harm someone who has insulted them, their partner, mother, sibling, etc. – which will increase their tendency to see hitting someone as an alternative under those circumstances. Others, of course, may feel self-righteous when they *do not* hit someone who, for example, insulted them (etc.), strengthening their tendency to perceive *not* doing so as an alternative; many religions rely on this process to regulate their followers' moral behaviour.

To perceive violence as an alternative, a person must not only have personal moral rules and emotions conducive to violence, he/she must also take part in settings which lead him/her not only to see violence as possible, but also propitious.

### 2.1.3. Factors which Motivate Acts of Violence

For a person to undertake an act of violence he/she needs to perceive violence as an alternative *which he/she is motivated to pursue*. SAT suggests that once an individual perceives an alternative, he/she will be motivated to pursue it *if he/she believes that action will satisfy a desire or fulfil a com-*

mitment or address a source of friction. In the former case, he/she is *tempted* by an opportunity; in the latter he/she is *provoked* by an interference.

A person will be motivated to pursue an act of violence if he/she believes that he/she can acquire desired outcomes or fulfil commitments by intentionally harming others, and consequently sees opportunities to intentionally harm others as *tempting*; or if he/she sees intentionally harming others as a way of addressing a source of friction and consequently is *provoked* to commit an act of violence.

#### 2.1.3.1. Opportunities and Temptation

Certain people may have certain characteristics which lead them to (1) desire the outcomes of acts which intentionally harm others, or form commitments which can be fulfilled through intentionally harming others, and/or (2) see intentionally harming others as an acceptable method for obtaining those outcomes or fulfilling those commitments. Arguably, only these people will perceive opportunities to intentionally harm others as tempting. The outcomes of acts of violence which people may desire include a range of feelings, such as power and dominance, physical prowess, justness or righteousness, daring, and legitimacy (having proved oneself); and the acquisition of desired effects, such as material possessions, vengeance, justice, the esteem of others, or the “right” to others (“winning” the girl or access to a group or gang), or safety or security (for oneself or one’s family, friends, gang members, etc.). Commitments which may be fulfilled through acts of violence include defending or establishing one’s group (for example, one’s family, one’s country, or one’s gang); upholding the honour of one’s group; or performing one’s duties to one’s group. Some people will perceive acts of violence as acceptable means for acquiring these outcomes or fulfilling these commitments; others will not, depending on their personal moral rules and emotions and the current circumstances.

Opportunities to obtain desired outcomes or fulfil commitments through acts of violence need to be present in order to tempt people. Such opportunities require a potential victim and factors which suggest that harming him/her may achieve desired outcomes or fulfil commitments. Such factors will include characteristics of the victim which suggest

that harming him/her may lead to feelings of dominance, legitimacy, etc.; characteristics of the circumstance which suggest that harming the victim is the right thing to do; the presence (or knowledge) of others who approve of actions which harm the victim, and the absence of those who might disapprove or interfere; and the presence of desirable objects which may be obtained by harming the victim.

#### 2.1.3.2. Frictions and Provocation

Certain people may have certain characteristics which lead them to (1) perceive other people as sources of friction, (2) experience negative affect in response to sources of friction, and/or (3) see intentionally harming people who represent sources of friction as a viable alternative. Arguably, only these people will be *provoked* to intentionally harm others.

People become sources of friction when they interfere with another person or that person’s course of action, for example, when a police officer stops a burglar from escaping the scene, or a drunk hassles a couple on a train. The degree to which a person will be provoked by an interference will depend on his/her *sensitivity* (the negative affect he/she experiences). Strong affect may reduce the perception of other alternatives by focusing goal-directed energies on addressing the source of friction directly.

The perception of other people as sources of friction may also be influenced by a person’s *perceptual biases*, i.e., his/her tendency to interpret the actions and motives of others in a particular way. One of the most popular and relevant perceptual biases is the *hostile attribution bias*, which leads a person to interpret the actions and motives of others as inherently antagonistic (Dodge and Crick 1990). A person with this bias may be more likely to perceive the actions of others as intentional interferences.

The negative affect associated with friction is consistent with the concept of *frustration* within the familiar “frustration-aggression hypothesis” (Dollard et al. 1944). However, not all aggressive, or violent, actions are motivated by friction (provoked) Some people have weak enough violence-relevant morality that they see nothing wrong with acting violently in a given setting, and therefore do not need strong emotions to motivate them to do so. In this case, it may be

a *lack* of strong emotions (i.e., guilt and shame) which leads to aggression.

#### 2.1.4. Motivation and Instrumental vs. Expressive Acts of Violence

The motivation to commit either expressive or instrumental acts of violence is explicable within this framework. People may be tempted or provoked to use violence expressively, i.e., with the *express* desire to harm someone, or instrumentally, i.e., as a tool to obtain outcomes other than the harm itself (for example, material items, group access, etc.).

People may be motivated to exhibit instrumental violence when they are tempted by opportunities to gain desired outcomes or fulfil commitments, or provoked to address sources of friction, through the use of violence. For example, a person might be motivated to kill someone to obtain an inheritance, or to fulfil a commitment to his/her partner (who desires the inheritance). People may be motivated to exhibit expressive violence when they perceive opportunities to cause intentional harm to others as tempting or when a source of friction provokes them to see harming someone as desirable. For example, a man might hit his wife to feel in control, or his daughter to punish her because she knocks over his beer.

Most provocations which lead to violence lead to expressive violence, because harming the source of friction becomes the desired outcome. Greater sensitivity to friction increases the desire to cause harm to its source. Provocations will lead to instrumental violence when a person responds violently to someone who obstructs a course of action only if harming him/her is incidental to removing him/her as an obstacle to action. Greater sensitivity to reward, in this case, and insensitivity to the suffering of others (lack of empathy), may maintain goal-directed attention upon the original course of action.

#### 2.1.5. Emotions and the Motivation to Act Violently

Emotions are how people experience motivation, i.e., how people interpret the sensation of physically “gearing up” for action (the increase in heart rate, respiration, perspira-

tion, etc.). Emotions supplement motivation by signalling whether a situational factor should be approached or avoided, how significant it is to action, and what responses to it may be promising, risky or perilous. People will differ in their emotional response to the same opportunities and frictions because they will differ in the strength of their desires, sensitivity and moral emotions.

Emotion plays a particularly important role in violence. Those who commit acts of violence are typically very sensitive to conducive temptations and/or provocations, and/or very insensitive to the consequences of their actions and relevant moral rules. Strong emotions evoked by an opportunity or source of friction may compel immediate action, encouraging a violent response and potentially affecting the perception of other alternatives by monopolizing attention; especially weak emotions (e.g., a lack of guilt or shame) may lead a person to neglect or disregard relevant moral rules and foreseeable consequences.

Intentionally harming others may present a fast and effective way of addressing sources of friction, which may be appealing to people who are sensitive to friction and experience strong negative affect. People may become sensitive to friction if they have experiences which lead them to see frictions as significant, or perceptual biases which lead them to misinterpret frictions as significant, and consequently experience strong emotions when faced with interferences. Such strong emotions may lead some people to break personal moral rules which oppose violence, or others to follow personal moral rules which support violence. Some people in some settings will see violence as the right way to deal with a particular opportunity or source of friction, and this may be supported by strong moral emotions (feelings of righteousness).

People who have weak moral emotions opposing violence may simply see violence as a useful tool for dealing with interferences, and no reason not to use it. Many political and social authorities, for example, utilize violence as a tool for dealing with the friction caused by people denying their

authority. Such violence may take the form of torture and/or execution and will not necessarily have a significantly emotional component.<sup>12</sup>

Emotions play a role in the process of choice as well as the motivation to act by providing information which can help a person identify a preferred alternative or deal with conflict between his/her motivation to act and his/her personal moral rules. Motivation, however, will determine the nature of the choice process; if one's motivation to pursue one action occludes the perception of other alternatives, a person will not need to deal with conflict and the initial motivation (and relevant emotions) will prevail. Only if a person is motivated by more than one alternative will he/she need to take affective information into account in a more reasoned, conscious fashion.

## 2.2. Choice of Violence as *the Alternative*

Perceiving intentionally harming others as a viable alternative for action and being motivated to do so are necessary but not sufficient elements of the explanation of violence; once a person perceives the opportunity and is motivated to intentionally harm another, he/she must then *choose* to do so.

Situational Action Theory argues that two types of moral choice – habitual and deliberate – characterize all types of moral action. Arguably, then, acts of violence should be explained by either habitual or deliberate moral choices. People will habitually choose to harm someone (or not harm someone) if they see doing so (or not doing so) as the only action alternative. People will see violence as the only alternative when they do not see violence as wrong (i.e., when they have weak violence-relevant moral rules) and their motivation to harm someone is supported by strong conducive emotions (e.g., anger, righteousness) and/or not opposed by strong deterrent emotions (e.g., shame or

guilt), and is not qualified by attention to other factors and alternatives.

People act deliberately when they consider more than one alternative for action; that deliberation takes the form of moral judgement when at least one alternative conflicts with their own morality (motivates them to act in a way which they think and/or feel is wrong). People will choose violence as the preferred alternative if they judge harming others to be the most effective, expedient and attractive method for satisfying their desires or addressing a source of friction, or if they are unable to inhibit a violent response even when they deem it wrong.

The *content* of a choice process leading to violence will differ from the content of choice processes which lead to other actions mostly in the degree to which emotions and inhibition play contrasting roles. Because of the many formal and informal rules about the use of violence and their typically high degree of monitoring and enforcement, strong emotional incentives are often needed to motivate a person to see violence as an alternative in the face of external controls (deterrents). Alternatively, very weak emotional commitment to moral rules which oppose the use of violence can also lead to violent moral rule-breaking if a person fails to experience any conflict between those rules and his/her motivation to harm someone. This kind of violence may be referred to as *psychopathic*, because it is characterized by a *lack* of strong emotions (e.g., feelings of guilt and shame).<sup>13</sup>

Strong emotional incentives can be counteracted by strong internal controls (inhibition, i.e., self-control); here self-control will play an important role in whether a person motivated to intentionally harm someone ultimately chooses to do so. A lack of emotional deterrence can also be counteracted by cognitive self-controls. Hence the choice to intentionally harm someone, whether habitual or deliberate, depends substantially upon a person's emotional

<sup>12</sup> Those who carry out the act of violence may have a stake in the authority being denied, but are often not the authority itself. Their actions, consequently, represent the fulfillment of a commitment to that authority, rather than a direct response to a source of friction. Violent actions which fulfill commit-

ments may also lack a strong emotional component, as the motivation to act is instrumental and not driven by an actual desire to cause harm.

<sup>13</sup> We use the term *psychopathic* descriptively, as what is known as a psychopathic personality or psychopathic behaviour is characteristically typified by emotional detachment or impairment (Cleckley 1976; Hare 1993; Herpertz et al. 2001).

involvement in the violent course of action and whether or not he/she is capable of inhibiting, or compensating for, that emotional impetus and exhibiting self-control.

### 2.2.1. Violent Moral Habits and Emotion

An actor will habitually choose to harm others if he/she sees doing so as the only viable alternative for action. He/she will see it as the only alternative if he/she does not happen to, or bother to, recognize other alternatives. A person's emotional response to a source of friction or temptation may be so strong he/she does not attend to other alternatives. This type of violence may be referred to as *reactive*. Alternatively, a person's emotional response may be so weak (because of his/her personal morality) that he/she does not see anything wrong with acting violently in a particular circumstance, and therefore does not look for other alternatives. This is what we have referred to as *psychopathic* violence. Both reactive and psychopathic violence, in these forms, are also *habitual*.

While emotions, whether heightened or diminished, play a critical role in habitual acts of violence, self-control does not. Because habits involve the perception of only one alternative, there are no conflicting motivations, and consequently nothing to control. In habitual acts of violence there is no attempt to counteract strong emotions, or counterbalance a lack of emotion with reason. Any "control" of habitual choices occurs during the process of perception when a person's own moral rules and emotions lead him/her to perceive other alternatives, and/or deterrent factors, which refocus his/her goal-directed attention (the moral filter).

#### 2.2.1.1. Forming Violent Moral Habits

People form habits when they learn to repeat a behaviour in a particular setting (or type of setting) in which they regularly spend time. Acts of violence become habituated if a person regularly spends time in settings which present regular opportunities to act violently or regular sources of friction, and if he/she has weak enough relevant moral values to perceive those opportunities or frictions and find them tempting or provoking enough to disregard or discount other alternatives, in the case of reactive violence, or tempting or provoking and not inconsistent with his/her

personal moral rules and emotions, in the case of psychopathic violence.

Young people, for example, regularly spend time in the schoolyard which, despite the best efforts of school staff, offers regular opportunities to act violently and/or sources of friction which may provoke violence. An adolescent may address the friction caused by being insulted by his classmates by hitting them. As he repeats this behaviour it becomes automated; he stops thinking (deliberating) about what to do when he is insulted and lashes out automatically (see Wikström 2006). He may also begin responding to insults by other people in other settings, or to other sources of friction, in the same way, leading to a contagion effect.

This habituation would be supported by somatic markers; if the adolescent regularly achieves positive outcomes by hitting his classmates when they insult him (for example, a sense of security, self-worth or even self-righteousness), he will develop a somatic marker which signifies that hitting someone who insults him will have positive outcomes. Whenever he is insulted, this marker is activated and directs attention towards hitting someone as a favourable alternative. Because violence often has unpredictable and sometimes conflicting outcomes (e.g., different degrees of victim resistance or retaliation, different levels of physical discomfort, both positive and negative emotions), somatic markers may play an important role in how a person interprets those outcomes as a whole – for example, how he/she deals with strong emotional and somatic information which may indicate stress, fear, anticipation or excitement. How the brain amalgamates this information will influence how a person evaluates, and what he/she expects from, opportunities to act violently in the future.

#### 2.2.1.2. How Violent Moral Habits Spread

The more one experiences opportunities to commit violence and the more one finds that violence satisfies a desire as expected, the more one will recognize opportunities for violence, even in different settings, and the more one will see those opportunities as tempting. This predicts an escalation in the frequency of violence, and the spread of violence to different contexts. Similarly, people who use violence as a means for addressing sources of friction caused by other

people (e.g., for “resolving” interpersonal conflicts) may be more likely to perceive violence as an alternative, and even a preferred alternative, across different interpersonal settings.

Like other habits, violent moral habits may be specific or generalized. Some people might, for example, perceive violence as a viable alternative only when they are insulted by a particular person (a sibling or schoolyard rival), in a particular setting (outside but not inside a pub), or in reference to a particular subject (their appearance, romantic partner or favourite football team). The more they habitually respond violently to these particular circumstances, however, the more likely they may become to do so under other circumstances. Such a scenario requires that they regularly spend time in settings which present regular opportunities for violence or sources of friction, for example, in which they (or their partner or football team, etc.) are regularly insulted. This concentration of and prolonged exposure to opportunities for violence and sources of friction may strengthen the salience and perceived emotional significance of those opportunities and frictions, and potentially other opportunities and frictions, in other settings.

It is also possible for violence to become a habitual response to negative emotions more generally. For example, the negative affect associated with friction helps to drive violent habitual responses. Over time, those violent responses may become primed not only by a particular source of friction, but other sources of friction, and potentially negative emotions in general. This could be linked to more indiscriminate patterns of aggression.

#### **2.2.1.3. Breaking Violent Moral Habits**

Habits are broken by a salient change in the action context, such as the appearance of a strong deterrent factor, which refocuses goal-directed attention so that a person perceives, and considers, other alternatives. For example, were a person who habitually responded violently to being insulted to find himself insulted by someone carrying a knife or accompanied by a posse of older friends, he might consider alternatives other than violence. Violent moral habits can also be broken by changes in a person’s violence-relevant moral rules and emotions which lead them to conflict with those habits, prompting the perception of other alternatives.

As violent moral habits may arguably facilitate, and perpetuate, some persistent patterns of violence, understanding how to break them can have important implications for intervention, possibly for some of the most serious and prolific offenders.

#### **2.2.1.4. Types of Violence that Might Be Driven by Habit**

Certain persistent forms of violence may be driven by habitual processes, which may also have implications for prevention. Types of violence which could be driven by moral habits would be actions which occur in a setting which the actor regularly takes part in and which consistently presents opportunities or frictions conducive to violence, and few deterrents. Examples include domestic violence, which occurs in a specific setting (the home) where the actor regularly spends time, and which presents regular opportunities and frictions (via the presence of certain family members and social contexts) but few deterrents (is private and regulated by informal rules, many of which will be determined by the aggressor); and gang violence, which occurs in specific geographic areas (territories), presents regular opportunities and frictions (via the presence of fellow gang members, rival gang members and those “transgressing” on gang “turf”) and few controls (is regulated by the rules of gang membership) (Wikström and Treiber 2009). Understanding the habitual processes and moral contextual features which drive these persistent behaviours may offer new insights into how to prevent them.

#### **2.2.2. Violent Moral Judgments and the Role of Self-Control**

Although more conscious and reasoned than habitual choices, deliberate choices may still lead to acts of violence, despite the fact that in most cases violence breaks a moral rule. People deliberately choose to intentionally harm others when they judge doing so to be the best method for satisfying a desire or addressing a friction, or if they are unable to inhibit violent actions when they believe those actions are wrong.

People may judge acts of violence favourably if they lack information about outcomes or other alternatives (e.g., because they lack experience or exhibit failures in perception), fail to reactivate and apply information (e.g., about their personal moral rules and emotions), fail to effectively

value information (e.g., ascribe appropriate emotional significance), or fail to act upon relevant information (such as knowledge about whether an act is right or wrong). These all represent failings in information processing, either during sensation, encoding, retrieval or application. The processing of information relevant to action is a function of *executive capabilities*, one's cognitive ability to assemble action-relevant information so that it can be used to guide action. Executive capabilities support the exhibition of self-control by moderating emotional responses, directing attention, organizing information and delaying impulsive action.

People who deliberately harm others may do so because they fail to take into account action-relevant information about other alternatives, or adjust misguided goal-directed emotions. For example, a gang member may assault a police officer who is interfering in gang-related activities, even though he knows it is wrong, because he fails to attend to the fact that the cop is armed, bigger than him, that he will feel remorse for his actions, that there are witnesses, etc. By leaving out such action-relevant details, the gang member cannot effectively plan his action and predict its outcomes. Applying this and other information to the action decision could help him reassess his urge to assault the cop and redirect those energies to other actions with fewer potentially negative consequences. Application of this information to the decision making process represents the exercise of self-control.

### 2.2.3. Moral Choices and Expressive vs. Instrumental Violence

Expressive acts of violence are those for which causing physical harm to others is the desired outcome. People often see harming (or not harming) others as the only alternative because they have weak (or strong) personal moral rules and emotions deterring violence (respectively), or experience strong emotions which support (or oppose) an act of violence and override their perception of other alternatives. For example, a parent may hit her child because the child regularly makes her angry and she sees nothing wrong with addressing that anger through violence (e.g., feels no guilt or shame), or because she fails to moderate that anger. People often deliberately choose to harm others because they fail to effectively exhibit self-control. For example, a parent

may hit her child deliberately because she fails to take into account relevant information about the moral implications and consequences of her action or to suppress her motivation to act violently.

Deliberate acts of violence in which the actor fails to exhibit self-control (here referred to as *impulsive* acts of violence) may be very similar to *reactive* habitual acts of violence – both are typically driven by strong emotions and lack controls. These types of violence are more likely to be expressive than instrumental, because reactive or impulsive action choices generally fail to take outcomes and consequences into account, and are therefore less likely to be focused on outcomes other than the desire to cause harm.

Instrumental acts of violence are those for which harm to others is a means of obtaining another desired outcome. Instrumental acts may be opportunistic and therefore habitual – a school bully may learn to beat up classmates to get their lunch money and over time cease to consider other alternatives for action. Instrumental acts may also be carefully planned – for example, an heir may murder his/her parents to acquire an inheritance, but undertake a sequence of actions to ensure the deaths appear accidental. This type of action requires substantial information processing as the perpetrator “problem-solves” how best to remove a source of friction or obtain a desired outcome.

Premeditated acts of violence will almost inevitably involve deliberation as they typically entail sequences of actions which must be planned and often carefully considered. They certainly exhibit weak violence-relevant moral rules and emotions, and may exhibit a lack of self-control if the actor perceives conflict between his/her actions, and those rules, but fails to act accordingly. As actions often involve elements of habit and deliberation, it is likely that many such premeditated acts of violence end in habitual violence when the perpetrator becomes so set on his/her course of action that he/she fails to perceive action-relevant deterrents, conflict between his/her actions and moral rules, or other alternatives.

#### 2.2.4. Moral Choices and the Motivation to Act Violently

Opportunities to commit acts of violence to expressly cause harm or instrumentally acquire other outcomes may be limited, as they rely on transient factors like the presence and accessibility of the victim and a dearth of deterrents (which are often significant in the case of violence). For an act of opportunistic violence to be effective it may need to be immediate. This need for immediacy may feed into the action choice process, supporting a habitual and/or impulsive response, and is facilitated by strong emotions.

Opportunities may reoccur or can be recreated; violent responses to these opportunities can be deliberately chosen. These deliberate actions (or action sequences) often require planning and potentially the intentional selection of conducive contexts of action.

Interferences generally cause immediate friction; therefore the motivation to address that friction is also immediate, and only immediately relevant; the emotional impetus will fade over time. This may increase the motivation to act habitually, overriding perception of other alternatives. In some cases, however, the emotional response to an interference can be sustained (for example, by changing one's desires), allowing the response to be delayed until it is more opportune.

Delaying a violent response will always involve deliberation, as it requires goal setting, maintenance and problem solving, such as the location or creation of settings in which the action will be opportune. A person's moral rules and emotions will determine whether each sequential action leading towards a delayed act of violence is perceived as a viable alternative; arguably many such sequences will reach a point where the actor no longer finds them morally viable, for example, at the point of following someone home or voyeurism, or even simply fantasizing about the act. If, however, a person's moral values and emotions do allow him/her to perceive each sequential action as morally viable, his/her moral reasoning and ability to exercise self-control may come into play.

#### 3. Violence and Moral Correspondence

SAT suggests that people's actions (e.g., acts of violence) are ultimately an outcome of the causal interaction between their propensity (to engage in a particular act, such as violence) and their exposure (to a setting conducive to a particular act, such as violence). People's *propensity* to engage in a particular kind of action depends on their morality (action-relevant moral rules and emotions) and their ability to exercise self-control. *Exposure* occurs when a person faces a temptation or provocation to engage in a particular act in a particular moral context. A moral context is defined as the action-relevant moral rules that apply to a setting and their level of enforcement. At any given time, people vary in their propensity and exposure and that interaction largely explains their actions. Thus acts of violence can be seen as an outcome of the causal interaction between a person's *propensity* to engage in acts of violence, and his/her *exposure* to environmental inducements to engage in acts of violence:

$$\text{Propensity} \times \text{Exposure} = \text{Action}$$

The *principle of moral correspondence* states that the more a person's morality (moral rules and emotions) correspond to the moral context (its moral rules and their enforcement) in which he/she operates, the less likely he/she is to break the moral rules of that context. If a person is exposed to moral contexts which correspond with his/her moral rules (i.e., which uphold and enforce those rules), he/she is likely to abide by those rules, namely because he/she will not see breaking them as a viable alternative, and because he/she is less likely to experience conflict between those rules and his/her motivation to act. In the case of violence, this would, for example, mean that if a person thinks hitting his/her spouse in response to a disagreement is wrong, and lives in a country where hitting one's spouse in these circumstances is against general moral norms and the law, he/she is unlikely to break that law because he/she will not see hitting his/her spouse as an alternative for action in response to a disagreement.

If a person is exposed to a moral context which does not correspond with his/her morality, however, he/she will be more likely to perceive actions which break the rules of that context as viable alternatives, and more likely to experience conflict between those rules and his/her motivations to act.

In this case, he/she is *more* likely to break those rules. Thus if a person thinks hitting his/her spouse is permissible if he/she is provoked, even though it is against the law where he/she lives, he/she may still perceive doing so as a viable alternative for action, making him/her more likely to break that rule. He/she is also more likely to be motivated to break the rule even if there are other alternatives, and therefore may need to rely on his/her self-control to help him/her act in accordance with the moral context. Figure 1 illustrates this interaction for the special case of violent action:

**Figure 1: Situational context and violent action**

Situational Context		
Propensity	Exposure to Moral Context	
	Conducive to violence	Not conducive to violence
Conducive to violence	Violence is likely	Violence will depend on the level of deterrence
Not conducive to violence	Violence will depend on the actor's ability to exercise self-control	Violence is unlikely

When the conduciveness of a person's propensity to intentionally harm others corresponds with the conduciveness of the setting to intentionally harming others, the outcome is predictable; if both are conducive, the person is likely to act violently; if neither are conducive, the person is unlikely to act violently.

When the two do not correspond, the situation is less clear. If a person whose propensity is conducive to intentionally harming others takes part in settings which are not conducive to harming others, the moral context is less likely to activate that propensity, and may in fact suppress it. If that person does intentionally harm someone, his/her action will be driven more from the personal than the contextual level. He/she may, for instance, misinterpret frictions as antagonistic, and provoking, and fail to recognize the cogency of the moral context (the risk of being caught and sanctioned for intentionally harming someone). *Deterrence* will play a key role under these circumstances; the

degree and salience of deterrent factors, and how a person perceives them, will determine whether he/she is externally dissuaded from breaking the violence-relevant moral rules which he/she does not internally perceive as significant to his/her action.

If a person whose propensity is not conducive to intentionally harming others takes part in settings which are, factors in the setting may motivate him/her to do so, in which case his/her violence will be driven more from the contextual than the personal level. He/she may need to exhibit self-control to act in accordance with his/her violence-relevant moral values, which are not reinforced by the setting. However, if he/she has strong moral values, he/she may not perceive intentionally harming others as a viable alternative even if doing so is opportune or he/she encounters a source of friction, and therefore will not perceive violence as tempting or be provoked.

If a person's propensity and exposure, as posited by SAT, interact as shown above in causing him/her to act violently, *changes* in his/her violent actions will stem from changes in his/her propensity to engage in violence and/or his/her exposure to settings conducive to violence (Wikström 2005; Wikström and Treiber 2009).

$$(Change) Propensity + (Change) Exposure = (Change) Action$$

This suggests that to change (prevent) violence we need to direct our energies towards changing people's propensity to engage in acts of violence and/or their exposure to moral contexts conducive to acts of violence.

Change in propensity and change in exposure also interact developmentally; changes in exposure may lead to changes in propensity, for example, by changing a person's exposure to relevant moral influences, or his/her habitual behaviour (by creating new or breaking existing habits). At the same time, changes in propensity may lead to changes in exposure by leading people to take part in different settings (i.e., through selection effects). Figure 2 illustrates this developmental relationship:

Figure 2: Developmental context and violent action

Developmental Context		
Propensity	Exposure to Moral Contexts	
	Conducive to violence	Not conducive to violence
Conducive to violence	Violence remains stable (person is likely to engage in violence)	Inducement to reduce the propensity to engage in violence
Not conducive to violence	Inducement to enhance the propensity to engage in violence	Violence remains stable (person is unlikely to engage in violence)

One of SAT’s most important developmental mechanisms is *moral education*. SAT argues that people acquire their own moral rules (and related emotions) by internalizing wider moral rules and their experiences with those rules (moral experiences), a process of learning which takes into account others’ responses to one’s actions and one’s observations of others’ actions, and their positive and negative consequences.

If the conduciveness of a person’s propensity to engage in violence corresponds with the conduciveness of the settings in which he/she develops, his/her pattern of violence will remain stable: those whose propensity is conducive to intentionally harming others and who take part in settings conducive to doing so are likely to *continue* doing so; those whose propensity is not conducive to intentionally harming others and who develop in settings which are not conducive to doing so are unlikely to *start* doing so. In neither scenario will a person observe dissonance between his/her own moral rules and the rules of the settings in which he/she takes part, which might trigger a moral “re-education” process.

However, a person whose propensity is conducive to intentionally harming others who spends time in settings which are not will experience pressure to conform his/her propensity to those settings (by readjusting his/her own moral rules) potentially reducing his/her propensity to engage in violence. At the other end of the spectrum, a person whose propensity is not conducive to intentionally harming oth-

ers who spends time in settings which are may experience pressures which *increase* his/her propensity to engage in violence, for instance, temptations or provocations which weaken his/her moral resolve and/or self-control, increasing his/her tendency to perceive violence as a viable alternative, and/or choose it as the preferred alternative.

Just as the contexts in which people take part will influence their propensity to engage in violence, that propensity will influence the settings in which they take part. For example, there may be certain personal characteristics which lead a person to take part in settings conducive to violence or, alternatively, settings which are not conducive to violence. The unique role personal and contextual factors play in causing violence is, consequently, incredibly difficult to disentangle. These *selection effects* are only just beginning to be unravelled. What is plain, however, is that both personal and contextual factors are important, and that they interact in causing acts of violence.

### 3.1. Causes of the Causes of Violence

Antecedent factors which affect the emergence and continuity of propensity and behaviour settings may be regarded as the *causes of the causes* of action. In the case of moral action, the most pertinent *causes of the causes* are factors which influence the emergence and continuity of certain moral contexts, and factors which influence the acquisition and stability of certain personal moral rules and emotions as well as the ability to exercise self-control. In the case of violence, the causes of the causes are factors which influence the emergence and continuity of moral contexts conducive to violence (those in which rules promote violence or in which rules prohibiting violence are weakly enforced), the acquisition and stability of violence-relevant personal moral rules and emotions, and the ability to exercise self-control.

Social environmental characteristics will affect the emergence and stability of settings conducive (or not conducive) to violence. For instance, societies will vary in their *general moral correspondence*: the degree to which their violence-relevant moral rules (e.g., their laws) correspond with the violence-relevant moral rules of their members; the greater this general moral correspondence, the less likely members

of a society will be to break its violence-relevant moral rules.

Characteristics of the social environment, such as *social cohesion*, may affect the emergence of this correspondence. *Social cohesion* may be seen as the degree to which members of a society have adapted their personal moral rules and emotions to match those of the settings in which they take part. The less people, or groups of people, adjust their moral rules and emotions to match those of the settings in which they live, the less they will become socially (and morally) integrated, and the more likely they will be to break moral rules. Thus if a person emigrating to a new social environment does not value its violence-relevant moral rules (and does not experience shame or guilt when committing actions sanctioned by those rules), he/she will be more likely to perceive violence as an alternative for action, less likely to experience conflict between his/her motivation to act violently and his/her own moral rules, and consequently more likely to commit an act of violence.

*Social integration* may be seen as the process by which a person adjusts his/her moral rules and emotions to correspond with a moral context. Societies which pose obstacles to this process will display weaker social cohesion and, as a consequence, weaker moral correspondence and more moral rule-breaking. If a person emigrating to a new social environment integrates successfully, he/she will acquire personal moral rules which correspond with the rules of the settings in which he/she now takes part, and will be less likely to break those rules (for example, to commit a prohibited act of violence).

Typically, differences in violence-relevant moral rules between social or cultural groups concern specific acts in specific contexts, such as whether or not one is allowed to hit one's spouse or one's children or one's pets, take part in or watch violent sports (for example, bull fighting, cage fighting), or the extent to which violence can be used instrumentally (as in capital punishment, self-defence and torture). Differences in some of these contexts between cultures may lead to changes in behaviour as a person becomes socially integrated. In contexts which do not differ substantially (for example, the domestic context) changes in behaviour may

depend on more individual-level changes in awareness of and concurrence with violence-relevant moral rules.

This highlights the question of the impact of rules which permit (or even condone) violence in certain contexts on the general acceptance of violence in a society or culture, and the slackening of moral rules restricting violence in other contexts. One might envision a contagion effect whereby acts of violence became less and less supervised across contexts; this is the kind of effect suggested by theories which posit that violent actions may be influenced by violent movies, television programmes, computer games and rock music.

Changes in the social environments to which people are exposed (e.g., political, economic and social changes) may affect the kinds of moral contexts present in a society, the degree to which certain groups of people are exposed to certain moral contexts, their moral correspondence and, consequently, the rate of moral rule-breaking. Changes in the social environment which affect the distribution of settings conducive to violence may affect who encounters those settings, and consequently impact the general moral correspondence and rates of violence. In the short term, changes in the rate of violence may be due to changes in the interactions between certain people and certain moral contexts which lead to changes in their violence-relevant perception-choice processes, such as the breaking of old and the acquisition of new moral habits. In the longer term, change may occur due to changes in moral educational influences which affect people's personal moral rules and emotions, leading to changes in their violence-relevant perception-choice processes, such as their perception of violence as a viable alternative.

Changing levels of violence in a society is ultimately a question of changing the moral contexts (violence-relevant moral rules and their enforcements) which characterise the settings in which people *develop* (propensities) and *act* (encounter exposures).

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that a general theory of violence is indeed possible. Violence, we have submitted,

can be understood as a kind of moral action, and therefore can be explained as such. We presented a general theory of moral action (Situational Action Theory) that integrates individual and environmental individual and environmental influences through the framework of an action theory. We

then applied this theory to the explanation of violence. We suggest that Situational Action Theory provides a general, comprehensive and unified approach to the understanding and study of violence.

## References

- Adcock, R., R. Constable, J. Gore, and P. Goldman-Rakic. 2000. Functional neuroanatomy of executive processes involved in dual-task performance. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 97, no. 7: 3567-3572.
- Baron, R. A. 1977. *Human aggression*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Bechara, A., D. Tranel, and H. Damasio. 2000. Characterization of the decision-making deficit of patients with ventromedial prefrontal cortex lesions. *Brain* 123, no. 11: 2189-2202.
- Best, M., M. Williams, and E. Coccaro. 2002. Evidence for a dysfunctional prefrontal circuit in patients with an impulsive aggressive disorder. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 99, no. 12: 8448-8453.
- Bouhana, N., and Wikström, P-O H. 2008. *Theorising terrorism: Terrorism as moral actions*. London: Jill Dando Institute. University College of London.
- Brenner, C. 1971. The psychoanalytic concept of aggression. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 52: 137-144.
- Buss, A. H. 1961. *The psychology of aggression*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Cahoon, D. 1972. A behaviouristic analysis of aggression: The psychological record. *Physiological Record* 22: 463-476.
- Clarke, R. V., and M. Felson. 1993. *Routine activity and rational choice: Advances in criminological theory, vol 5*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Cleckley, H. 1976. *The mask of sanity: An attempt to clarify some issues about the so-called psychopathic personality*. St Louis: Mosby-Year Book Inc.
- Cohen, J., W. Perlstein, T. Braver, L. Nystrom, D. Noll, J. Jonides, and E. Smith. 1997. Temporal dynamics of brain activation during a working memory task. *Nature* 386: 604-607.
- Curtis, L. A. 1974. *Criminal violence*. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books.
- Damasio, A. 1994. *Descartes' error: Emotion, reason and the human brain*. London: Vintage Books.
- . 1996. The somatic marker hypothesis and the possible functions of the prefrontal cortex. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences* 351, no. 1346: 1413-1420.
- Dodge, K. A., and N. R. Crick. 1990. Social information-processing bases of aggressive behavior in children. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 16: 8-22.
- Dollard, J., L. Doob, N. Miller, O. Mowrer, and R. Sears. 1944. *Frustration and aggression*. London: Kegan Paul.
- Durkheim, E. 2002. *Moral education*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Ehrlich, E. 2008. *Fundamental principles of the sociology of law*. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Fuster, J. 1997. *The prefrontal cortex: Anatomy, physiology and neuropsychology of the frontal lobe*. Philadelphia: Lippincott-Raven.
- Goldman-Rakic, P. 1987. Circuitry of primate prefrontal cortex and regulation of behavior by representational memory. In *Handbook of physiology: A critical, comprehensive presentation of physiological knowledge and concepts. Section 1: The nervous system, volume v: Higher functions of the brain, part 1* ed. V. Mountcastle, F. Plum and S. Geiger:373-417. Bethesda, Maryland: American Psychological Society.
- Gottfredson, M., and T. Hirschi. 1990. *A general theory of crime*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hare, R. 1993. *Without conscience: The disturbing world of the psychopaths among us*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Harre, R., and P. F. Secord. 1972. *The explanation of social behaviour*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Herpertz, S., U. Werth, G. Lukas, M. Qunaibi, A. Schuerkens, H. Kunert, R. Freese, M. Flesch, R. Mueller-Isberner, M. Osterheider, and H. Sass. 2001. Emotion in criminal offenders with psychopathy and borderline personality disorder. *Archives of General Psychiatry* 58, no. 8: 737-745.
- Hinson, J., T. Jameson, and P. Whitney. 2002. Somatic markers, working memory, and decision making. *Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Neuroscience* 2, no. 4: 341-353.
- Huesmann, L. 1997. Observational learning of violent behavior: Social and biosocial processes. In *Biosocial bases of violence*, ed. A. Raine, P. Brennan, D. Farrington and S. Mednick:69-88. London: Plenum Press.
- Kahneman, D. 2003. Maps of bounded rationality: A perspective on intuitive judgment and choice. In *Les prix nobel. The noble prizes 2002*, ed. T. Frangmyr. Stockholm: Nobel Foundation.
- Lösel, F., and M. Schmucker. 2004. Psychopathy, risk taking, and attention: A differentiated test of the somatic marker hypothesis. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 113, no. 4: 522-529.
- McClintock, F. H. 1963. *Crimes of violence*. London: MacMillan & Co. LTD.
- McClintock, F. H., and Wikström, P-O H. 1992. The comparative study of urban violence. *British Journal of Criminology* 32: 505-520.
- Nobre, A., J. Coull, C. Frith, and M. Mesulam. 1999. Orbitofrontal cortex is activated during breaches of expectation in tasks of visual attention. *Nature Neuroscience* 2, no. 1: 11-12.
- Prabhakaran, V., K. Narayanan, Z. Zhao, and J. Gabrielli. 2000. Integration of diverse information in working memory in the frontal lobe. *Nature Neuroscience* 3: 85-90.
- Schoenbaum, G. and B. Setlow. 2001. Integrating orbitofrontal cortex into prefrontal theory: Common processing themes across species and subdivisions. *Learning and Memory* 8: 134-147.
- Slooman, S. 1996. The empirical case of two systems of reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin* 119, no. 1: 3-22.
- Smith, E. and J. Jonides. 1997. Working memory: A view from neuroimaging. *Cognitive Psychology* 33, no. 1: 5-42.
- Turnbull, O., C. Evans, A. Bunce, B. Carzolio, and J. O'Connor. 2005. Emotion-based learning and central executive resources: An investigation of intuition and the Iowa Gambling Task. *Brain and Cognition* 57, no. 3: 244-247.
- Wikström, P-O H. 1985. *Everyday violence in contemporary Sweden: Ecological and situational aspects*. Stockholm: Liber förlag.
- . 1991. *Urban crime, criminals and victims*. New York: Springer Verlag.
- . 2004. Crime as alternative: Towards a cross-level situational action theory of crime causation. In *Beyond empiricism: Institutions and intentions in the study of crime. Advances in criminological theory*, ed. J. McCord, 13:1-37. New Brunswick: Transaction.
- . 2005. The social origins of pathways in crime: Towards a developmental ecological action theory of crime involvement and its changes. In *Integrated developmental and life course theories of offending. Advances in criminological theory*, ed. D. Farrington, 14. New Brunswick: Transaction.

- . 2006. Individuals, settings, and acts of crime: Situational mechanisms and the explanation of crime. In *The explanation of crime: Context, mechanisms and development*, ed. Wikström, P-O H. and R. Sampson:61-107. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2007. Deterrence and deterrence experiences: Preventing crime through the threat of punishment. In *International handbook of penology and criminal justice*, ed. S. Shoham, O. Beck and M. Kett:345-378. London: CRC Press: Taylor & Francis Group.
- . forthcoming. Situational Action Theory. In *Encyclopedia of criminological theory*, ed. F. Cullen and P. Wilcox. London: SAGE Publications.
- Wikström, P-O H., and K. Treiber. 2007. The role of self-control in crime causation: Beyond Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime. *European Journal of Criminology* 4, no. 2: 237-264.
- . 2009. What drives persistent offending? The neglected and unexplored role of the social environment. In *The development of persistent offending*, ed. J. Savage. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wolfgang, M. 1958. *Patterns in criminal homicide*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Per-Olof H. Wikström

pow20@cam.ac.uk

Kyle H. Treiber

kht25@cam.ac.uk

# Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence

Martin Shaw, Department of International Relations, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

## Vol. 3 (1) 2009

**Editorial** (p. 3)

**Focus:**  
**General Theory of Violence**  
Guest Editors:  
Manuel Eisner and  
Susanne Karstedt

**Introduction: Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?**

Susanne Karstedt / Manuel Eisner (pp. 4 – 8)

**Micro and Macro Theories of Violence** Randall Collins (pp. 9 – 22)

**Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime** Richard B. Felson (pp. 23 – 39)

**The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues**

Manuel Eisner (pp. 40 – 59)

**Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?**

Charles Tittle (pp. 60 – 74)

**Violence as Situational Action** Per-Olof H. Wikström / Kyle Treiber (pp. 75 – 96)

► **Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence** Martin Shaw (pp. 97 – 106)

**Open Section**

**Understanding the Other's 'Understanding' of Violence** Marcel M. Baumann (pp. 107 – 123)

**Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics**

Renate Möller / Uwe Sander / Arne Schäfer / Dirk Villányi / Matthias D. Witte (pp. 124 – 142)

# Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence

Martin Shaw, Department of International Relations, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

The possibility of violence is ubiquitous in human social relations; its forms are manifold and its causes complex. Different types of violence are inter-related, but in complex ways, and they are studied within a wide range of disciplines, so that a general theory, while possible, is difficult to achieve. This paper, acknowledging that violence can negate power and that all forms of social power can entail violence, proceeds on the assumption that the organisation of violence is a particular source of social power. It therefore explores the general relationships of violence to power, the significance of war as the archetype of organised violence, the relationships of other types (revolution, terrorism, genocide) to war, and the significance of civilian-combatant stratification for the understanding of all types of organised violence. It then discusses the problems of applying conceptual types in analysis and the necessity of a historical framework for theorising violence. The paper concludes by offering such a framework in the transition from industrialised total war to global surveillance war.

A general theory of violence is a large demand. If the possibility of violence is ubiquitous in human social relations, its forms are manifold and its causes complex. What appear as general theories of violence often concern, in reality, a specific, even if broad, range of violent practices. Nevertheless different types and contexts of violence are often related to each other. For example, Charles Tilly (1982) classically investigated positive connections between warmaking, organised crime and state formation. And more recently it has been noted that sexual violence has become widespread in armed conflicts. However relationships between different types can be negative as well as positive. Thus Anthony Giddens (1985) saw the “pacification” of societies by nation-states leading to the “extrusion” of violence from domestic societies into the international system. This in turn increased internal pacification in some contexts: for example, violent crime levels in British society were far lower during the Second World War than in the subsequent period of peace. These interconnections of forms of violence that are generally seen as categorically different raises the possibility of a general theory, but they are difficult to encapsulate in simple generalisations. Moreover any survey of violence

in human society is surely likely to show that the forms and incidence of violence are historically variable, so that the most fruitful level of conceptualisations and theories may not be transhistorical, but specific to certain historical periods.

## 1. Violence, Power and Politics

The most general theorisations often concern relationships with power. Violence is often conceived as the expression or extension of power, as in Carl von Clausewitz’s classic dictum that war “is the continuation of political intercourse by other means” (Clausewitz [1832] 1976). Yet Hannah Arendt (1970) seminaly argued that violence is a negation of power, properly conceived. Of course, it can be argued that power has “two faces” (and maybe more) and that Clausewitz and Arendt are talking about different aspects of power, the “zero-sum” and “cooperative” respectively. Violence may be an expression of the antagonistic exercise of power, but work in opposition to its cooperative exercise.

Clausewitz’s axiom suggests that the most important type of socially organised violence is specifically connected to

political power, but little reflection is needed to recognise that violence is possible within the context of all major power types. Thus Mann (1986, 1993) distinguishes four “sources” of macro-social power: economic, ideological (which subsumes cultural), political and military. To these we may add another which is more commonly exercised at a micro-level, namely familial (although in some cases – monarchies, financial dynasties, etc. – this may be tightly connected to the four macro-types which Mann identifies). It is evident that all five forms of power may be contexts of violence, as well as of cooperative social relations that contain violence. Yet it is not equally true of all five types: military power is specifically concerned with the management of violence, and (if Clausewitz is right) political power has, in general, a tighter relationship with military power than have economic, ideological or (for that matter) familial power. Indeed Mann is unusual in recognising military power as a major type in its own right; more commonly it is subsumed within political power in this order of theory.

However these five types of power vary considerably in their forms and relationships through history – indeed the distinction of “the economic” and “the political”, etc., is a specifically modern idea. Likewise the relationships of these power types to violence also vary. The connection of politics and war, for example, was clearly tightened with the rise of the modern nation-state and its achievement, in some cases, of something like the monopoly of legitimate violence with which Max Weber ([1922] 1964) classically credited it; the relationship was different in earlier epochs. Moreover this relationship had transformative implications for all the other types of violence: as the state came closer to being what Giddens (1985; following Weber) calls a “bordered power container”, violence was “squeezed out” of economic relations, which came to be centred on what Karl Marx called the “dull compulsion” of the market mechanism. Indeed, insofar as Weber was right about the state’s “monopoly”, violence was subdued, or at least regulated, not only in economic but in cultural and familial relations. Modern nation-states, after all, go so far in eschewing violence “internally” that in many cases they have renounced the right to execute citizens even for crimes like murder. Although none have so far renounced the right to prosecute war, many smaller and weaker states, especially within the

North Atlantic alliance and the European Union, have de facto ceded their warmaking capacities to alliances and more powerful states.

One of the themes of recent scholarship is that the conventional Weberian notion that states claim a “monopoly” of legitimate violence is inadequate (Mann 1993; Shaw 2000). According to Mann, it overstates the exclusivity of legitimate violence to the state – he reformulates latter’s definition more flexibly as “(1) a differentiated set of institutions and personnel, (2) embodying centrality, in the sense that political relations radiate to and from a centre, to cover a (3) territorially demarcated area over which it exercises (4) some degree of authoritative, binding rule-making backed up by some organised political force” (Mann 1993, 55). And of course much recent study (e.g. Kaldor 1999) focuses on forms of violence involving irregular armed groups, which reflect the increasing failure of states in much of the world to achieve anything near the classic monopoly of violence – even states that are not viewed as “failed” often have to deal with other organisers of violence. Although this violence is often called “political”, it is clearly entwined with economic and cultural (e.g. ethnic) themes, so that the continuing relevance of this kind of labeling may be at least partially questioned. These developments only stress the complexity of the challenge of developing a general theory even just to cover modern social violence. The difficulty of this task is only compounded by the fact that the academic study of violence is carried out in specialist fields (e.g. gender studies, criminology, strategic studies, security studies, political sociology, history, law, etc.) which often have little contact with each other.

## 2. War as the Archetype of “Political Violence”

In the remainder of this paper my approach will therefore be to attempt a systematic analysis of the area that we can (while acknowledging the difficulties just mentioned) provisionally call *political* violence, within which I have reasonably broad expertise, and explore more provisionally some of the ways in which the argument might be extended from that base. I argue that before we can approach a theory of violence we need a conceptual framework which encapsulates some principal types, so allowing us to pose the ques-

tions of relationships while acknowledging the differences that have been commonly recognised.

Although violence is explicitly or implicitly accepted in many areas of social relations, Arendt's argument that it dissolves social power is profoundly relevant. However much violence can be seen as reinforcing some kinds of power, it is always in some sense a disruption of social relations and cooperative power, and a means of harm to individuals or groups. Because of this, the way in which it is studied is generally affected by the tensions that violent practices produce. This is as true of the conceptual as of the theoretical and empirical terrains. Concepts are often controversial: thus many scholars are unhappy with the ideas of "terrorism" and even "security", because of the ways they are implicated in official political-military discourses; while the application of the "genocide" label is often problematic because of its moral, legal and political overtones. Because of this, scholars often resort to relatively neutral concepts: "conflict" instead of "war", "political violence" instead of "terrorism", "ethnic cleansing" (a perpetrator-derived euphemism) instead of "genocide", "humanitarian crisis" (surely oxymoronic) instead of all of these, and so on. It is argued here that "terrorism", "genocide", etc., do have viable meanings and we should avoid euphemisms. We need to extricate the concepts from the ideologies within which they are often contained, and we need to define them in coherent ways which are not illegitimately loaded with political meanings.

In fact, even the blander, apparently euphemistic terms may also have rational cores. Conflict is after all a central category of sociology, and had long been recognised as such in Max Weber's sociology, and the "conflict sociology" of the late 1950s onwards (e.g. Dahrendorf 1959). Social relations of all kinds entail conflict, but conflict is not generally or necessarily violent. "Conflict" becomes euphemistic only in relation to violence: for when conflicts move from "normal" social and political antagonism into the realm of violence, their meaning and dynamics change in very significant ways, and this requires conceptual recognition which simple reference to "conflict" seems to deny. "Armed conflict" is more useful because it differentiates violent conflict from social conflict in general, but still seems an

analytically blunt term because it lacks the coherent definition and theorisation that has been offered for "war", "genocide", etc. The idea of "political violence" is less established – Clausewitz, for example, would not have recognised such a term because he believed that politics made violent could be described as war. The term is also problematic precisely because the movement from politics to violence is always fraught and contested. Yet it seems useful because so much violence develops in relation to politics, and "political violence" provides an overall description of the field which can encompass a range of particular forms. Yet no more than "armed conflict" does "political violence" have a coherent definition, let alone theorisation. Both of these terms may be employed, as I have used the latter here, when we wish to indicate a broad field including diversity of action and conflict, but not when we really wish to pin down, describe and explain what is going on.

Thus it is the specific terms ("war", "genocide", etc.) which actually capture specific types of relationship and are most analytically useful, if not necessarily so easy. Although the assimilation of politically directed violence to war may appear increasingly problematic, "war" remains a compelling central term for this field. For this reason I begin with war, and I shall explore other concepts mainly in relation to this pivotal idea. The centrality of war is historically very deep and should not be avoided. It is in war that violence has been broadly legitimate for thousands of years, and as states have tended to monopolise legitimate violence, the contrast between the legitimacy of international war and the illegitimacy of violence in a domestic context has grown and grown. The increasing political pacification of northern industrial societies has sharpened this tension: despite the chronic low-level violence found in the larger cities of Western industrial societies, the gulf between this and the violence of the wars that Western states wage in other places is huge. In many parts of the non-Western world, on the other hand, the synergies of war with other forms of violence, e.g. organised crime, urban gang conflict, are often striking.

Clausewitz's theorisation of war remains seminal for the modern understanding of the phenomenon. Although his aforementioned axiom can be, and has been, read as a reduction of war to politics, so enabling the easy incorpora-

tion of violence within political logics, its deeper significance lies in the “otherness” of the means that war offers for realising political goals. Clausewitz views war as at once a type of *action* carried out by a single (but of course collective) actor, and a type of *conflict* between two (or more) actors, in which the action of each is conditioned by that of the other. While politics in general could be characterised in similar terms, it is war’s character as violent conflict which determines its distinctiveness. Although war is fought for political objectives and may be limited by them, war reconditions those objectives through the medium of violence. Whereas politics in general is concerned with renegotiating power between actors, the violence of war leads actors to seek to destroy the other’s power. Whereas political contests in general involve the indeterminacy that goes with reciprocal action, the reciprocity of violence is especially open-ended and unpredictable: “there is no limit to an act of force”, Clausewitz argued, presenting escalation as a general tendency of war. The generalisability of this view of war is wide. While Clausewitz himself presents war as normally an activity of states, the logic of his arguments applies to armed conflict even where the actors are not states (guerrilla war is treated by him as a variant, “small war”).

Clausewitz was what is now called a strategic theorist, concerned with the options for commanders in the practice of war. However the strength of his theorisation is partly due to the broadly sociological treatment that he offers, both in his presentation of war as a type of social action and conflict, and in the ways he deals with the relationships between war and other types. Thus he famously compares war to commerce, comparing the moment of “realisation” of military preparations, organisation and activity, namely battle, with the moment of realisation of commercial activity, namely exchange. The logic of violent conflict makes battle a rare event, messy and unpredictable, compared to the frequency and regularity of the moment of exchange in markets. This has all sorts of consequences for war as a social activity: for example, Mary Kaldor showed that Western weapons systems had become increasingly “baroque” in the decades after 1945, because they had mostly not been tested in battle (1982).

The model of war presented by Clausewitz is best understood as an ideal type, in the sense later advocated by Weber, and the ways in which real wars relate to this vary considerably. Clausewitz himself recognised that both the character of the political objectives and the circumstances in which war was fought could affect the intrinsic tendency towards escalation. Thus although there was a tendency for war to become “absolute”, in reality “friction” due the conditions in which it was fought would prevent it producing complete, mutual destruction. He was writing, of course, before the industrialisation of war (generally dated from the mid-nineteenth century) enabled war to become far more destructive (MacNeill 1982). In the twentieth century, “total war” became the dominant form, with total mobilisation of economies and societies leading to increasingly total destruction. Moreover nuclear weapons threatened to abolish traditional types of friction (constraints of geography, climate, etc.) and enable instantaneous, complete destruction of a kind which Clausewitz could only regard as hypothetical.

Contemporary armed conflicts are of course mostly much more limited than the total wars of the mid-twentieth century, or the nuclear war threatened by the arsenals of the Cold War. Certainly many conflicts vary so much from the ideal type that it has been argued that war today is “post-Clausewitzian” (van Crefeld 1991; Kaldor 1999). Few wars are between states; they often seem to be concerned with controlling economic resources and expelling “other” ethnicities rather than destroying other power centres; and they rarely seem to be resolved by the decisive violent moments, or battles, that were central to the traditional model. Violence appears not to be about destroying the enemy’s power, but seems to be embedded in more limited instrumentalities connected with the private interests of commanders and fighters.

### 3. War and Revolution, Terrorism, Genocide

I shall return to this transformation of warfare, but only after reviewing other types of political violence that have been theorised. I shall argue that although other types have often been conceptualised and theorised more or less independently from warfare, their specificity as forms of violence is best grasped in relation to the classic concept of war.

We begin with *revolution*, which of these is the one most clearly regarded as a political form of violence. The classical model of revolution, based on the French Revolution of 1789 and adopted by nineteenth-century revolutionary theorists as well as influencing social and political historians in the twentieth century, is one in which violence plays a secondary role. Revolutions are mass social upheavals of largely unarmed civilian populations seeking social and political transformation, although they also involve revolutionary parties and organisations which are sometimes, to a greater or lesser extent, armed organisations.

In this classical perspective, most forcefully argued by Leon Trotsky in his *History of the Russian Revolution* ([1932] 1965), violence is the byproduct of more fundamental social processes. According to Trotsky, organised violence is necessary only in the final seizure of power (which follows a fundamental shift in the balance of forces achieved by more organic movements of the masses which themselves involve only limited, spontaneous violence), and then only because of the organised resistance of the old order. Trotsky highlights the relatively small death toll even in this final stage (in the Russian case, the Bolshevik seizure of power). Of course, this perspective is partial, since even in cases where violence plays a relatively small part in the revolution itself, the threat which it poses to domestic and international power relations usually leads to much greater violence. Thus the relatively low-casualty Russian revolutions of February and October 1917 led to the extensive bloodshed of the internationalised civil war which lasted until 1921. While in Trotsky's perspective the onus for this lay primarily on the counter-revolution, from an analytical point of view it is difficult to separate the civil war from the revolution which gave rise to it. What this case does suggest, however, is that when revolutionary processes produce *organised* violence they are best understood under the rubric of war. Clearly the later twentieth-century history of revolution deviated from the classical model, in that in most cases revolutions actually developed as organised military campaigns rather than mass social movements: the Chinese case is the principal model of this new type.

The problem of *terrorism* (in historical perspective, a relatively minor form of political violence) is another which is often considered apart from war, but which ultimately needs to be assimilated to the military framework. The reason for the often-made analytical separation is that terrorism is correctly understood as symbolic politics, rather than serious military coercion. Terrorist methods involve terrorising civilian populations, usually through publicised killings of a number of civilians, so as to produce political effects. Terrorism can therefore be considered a form of oppositional politics; but nevertheless, *qua* violence, it represents a negative case of the logic of war. Terrorism is, as often remarked, the warfare of the (militarily) weak: its often self-styled, would-be warriors adapt to their military weakness by adopting tactics which compensate for their inability to inflict serious military damage by inflicting symbolic damage instead.

*Genocide* is clearly a very different (and historically more important) case. Whereas terrorism involves a contest between organised armed actors (typically, insurgent groups versus states), and revolutions involve contests between politically organised social movements and states, typically leading to armed contests between revolutionary parties and states (and hence civil war), genocides are typically conceived as campaigns of organised, armed power (states, regimes, parties, armies, militias) against largely unorganised and unarmed populations. Genocide has therefore often been conceptualised as completely "one-sided" violence (e.g. Chalk and Jonasson 1991), directed at essentially helpless victims, and therefore not as conflict at all. The problem with this characterisation is not only that genocide generally occurs in the context of political and (usually) military conflict, but also that it generally leads to resistance and can thus be conceptualised as conflict.

Certainly, the *qualitative asymmetry* between the organised, armed character of genocidal power and the militarily unorganized, unarmed, social power of the attacked population is essential to genocide, and differs in principle from the quantitative asymmetry between non-state and state armed actors which is often labelled "asymmetrical war". Yet genocide necessarily involves social relationships between attackers and attacked, and so can be seen as a form

(however unequal) of social and political conflict. Genocidists attack their target groups in ways which anticipate resistance (often “decapitating” political elites or murdering adult men as potential resistance fighters). Attacked groups are never pure “victims”, but always resist: in the cases where they are weakest, mainly in constrained forms of civilian resistance, but usually also, at least to a token extent, through armed resistance. They will always align themselves with armed opponents of their attackers, whether armed movements or states. Indeed in many cases genocide occurs in the context of armed conflicts, and it can even be a mutual attempt of two armed actors to destroy each other’s ethnic or national groups. Thus genocide can also be seen as a deviant form of war, involving a clash between armed power and unarmed civilians, which often occurs in the context of more conventional war and sometimes leads to new phases of it.

#### 4. The Centrality of Civilian-Combatant Stratification

From the narrow point of view of strategic theory, even armed revolution and terrorism are relatively minor forms of violence, and genocide is not within the frame. It is mainly from a sociological point of view that we can identify the commonalities between these different types of violence, and their linkages to the central frame of war. Central to both the distinctions and the commonalities between the types is the idea of a type of stratification common to all organised violence, centred on the distinction between combatants and non-combatants (or civilians). Mainstream sociology has not, of course, recognised this among the main forms of stratification (class, status, gender, ethnicity, etc.); this absence is a function of sociology’s historic neglect, marginalisation and exceptionalisation of war. For it is clear that all organised violence produces sharp forms of combatant-civilian stratification. After examining the development of this type of stratification even in situations like anti-Nazi resistance where bonds between civilians and armed fighters are strongest, I argue that this is an irreducible dimension of all forms of armed conflict. (Shaw 2007, chapter 8).

This stratification is of course institutionalised outside periods of actual violence, when a soldier is generally identified as a uniformed member of an official armed

force, and a civilian as non-uniformed or a non-member. However, from a sociological perspective the key distinction is between those who take up arms and those who do not, and this distinction is generally reproduced in violent conflict. Certainly, this core distinction needs to be amplified to take account of more complex relationships: many civilians actually participate in armed forces, both in war and non-war, as unarmed or non-uniformed members or employees; many more participate in war and war preparations through employment in military industries; most civilians support wars carried out by states or other armed organisations that they see as representing their society. Yet civilians, as non-combatants, are *militarily* innocent, even if civilian populations are often *politically* implicated in violence. An additional key reason for distinguishing them from combatants is that they contain the “arch-civilians”, young children and the mentally incapable, whose innocence in both senses is unquestionable. It is not possible to attack politically “guilty” adult civilians without harming these wholly innocent groups who depend on them.

One of the reasons for insisting on the continuing centrality of the war paradigm is that the ways we make sociological sense of all forms of political violence consistently employs the civilian-combatant distinction. War is combatant-combatant conflict, in which civilians are not, fundamentally, participants (even if they take part in secondary ways). Revolution is, classically, a form of social movement, and social movements are in principle civilian in character; but revolution becomes war when it develops from a civilian-state political conflict to an armed conflict between revolutionary organisations and states. Terrorism is a method of armed conflict characterised by its targeting of civilians in order to produce political effects. Genocide is a type of conflict characterised by the projection of power by an armed organisation against a civilian population: although genocide has been often defined as an attack on a particular social group (in the UN Convention, ethnic, national, racial, religious; scholars often add social classes and political groups), what all these groups have in common is that they can be regarded as fundamentally civilian, and this is the most coherent basis on which to define the group character of genocide’s targets. (This civilian character of the victims was implicit in Raphael Lemkin’s original

definition of genocide [1944], but “civilian” has become the “missing concept” of genocide studies.)

##### 5. Using the Conceptual Framework to Analyse Violence

I suggest, therefore, that we need to use the conceptual framework offered by the understanding of war, derived initially from strategic theory but developed in a fundamentally sociological framework, to analyse political violence in general. This approach cuts across, to some extent, the actual tendency of empirical study in the field. This is because in the two decades since the end of the Cold War, scholars have recognised a shift from inter-state to civil (or mixed) armed conflict (Kaldor 1999; Duffield 2001) – a belated acknowledgement, since even during the Cold War most armed conflicts were not between states. With this academic shift there has often been a tendency to accentuate the novelty of contemporary forms of armed conflict. Within strategic studies this has taken the form of the aforementioned emphasis on “asymmetrical wars”, together with the changing forms of military technology (“the revolution in military affairs”) and organisation (“network-centric warfare”, etc.) (see Freedman 2006 for an overview). Within more sociologically oriented literature, attention has focused on the more radical concept of “new wars”, which argues that wars like those in former Yugoslavia and Africa are “post-Clausewitzian” conflicts of state fragmentation, fought by non-traditional armed forces, centred on identity politics, utilising global diaspora support networks, characterised by ethnic expulsions and avoiding battle (Kaldor 1999). Both these literatures stress the role of contemporary social changes – technological and organisational change, the uneven effects of globalisation – in producing changes in warfare. (They thus suggest that linkages between warfare and other forms of social power, from which we started above, are central to transformations of violence.)

Clearly the concepts discussed above (war, revolution, terrorism, genocide) have the function of ideal types, in Weber’s sense, which enable us to analyse concrete historical situations. Because they are ideal types of modern political violence in general, they should not be understood as standing for a particular historical phase or experience of armed conflict. In this sense, the argument that contemporary violence is “post-Clausewitzian” seems misplaced

partly because it identifies Clausewitz’s model of war with a particular set of contingent factors (statism, mass armies, etc.) which characterised the period in which he was writing, rather than with the core logic of war which he identified. And in so far as “new wars” theory argues that the core logic has itself been displaced, this is not entirely accurate: battle as the realisation of war, for example, which Mary Kaldor (1999) argued was replaced by “ethnic cleansing” in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reappeared in the confrontations of the Croatian and Bosnian armies with Serbian forces which shifted the balance of power in ways which conditioned the Dayton settlement of 1996. And of course, Clausewitz understood that battle was not necessarily a frequent occurrence, especially in “small wars”.

Likewise, the “new wars” argument treats “ethnic cleansing” as novel. Although mass expulsion was certainly new to late-twentieth-century Europe, it was commonplace in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century, and widely practiced elsewhere in the world. What was novel was partly the terminology: while the expulsions themselves could be well understood in terms of genocide (at least in the broader definitions offered by Lemkin and the United Nations, even if not in the narrower meaning which equated it with total mass murder), there were often political reasons for avoiding this conclusion. The events in Bosnia and elsewhere involved specific combinations of war and genocide: executing and consolidating (or preventing) genocidal expulsions in order to create ethnically homogenous states was the goal of the wars between the various new states and statelets that emerged from the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Moreover specific combinations of war and genocide were combined, as Kaldor showed, with new constellations of state and non-state political actors, a new political economy of war (parasitic rather than productivist) and connections with organised crime. What this example illustrates is that in order to understand violence, we need both typologies of violence and historical theories of all the forms of power and their interconnections. Even if contemporary political violence does not negate classical concepts of war and genocide, it clearly needs to be grasped with an understanding of the intersections of military with all the other forms

of power. Although contemporary violent conflicts are still in important senses political – even the most blatantly self-enriching warlords usually dress up their goals in political terms and fight in the name of nationalistic parties – they clearly have intimate relations with new forms of economic, ideological and familial power. In this sense, a theory of violence must address two fundamental agendas: firstly, the types of violence and the particular sorts of social relations these involve (especially between combatants and civilians); and secondly, the intersections of military power (organised violence in general) with the other fundamental sources of power.

#### **6. Historical Transformations of the Relationships between War and Society**

As I suggested above, these agendas need to be addressed in a historical framework. If Marxists were right about one thing, it was the necessity of historically specific concepts and theories (Korsch 1963). The most fruitful macro-sociology of the last quarter-century has been the historical sociology of power and the state (e.g. Giddens 1985; Mann 1986, 1993), with many implications for the study of violence, even if it often has dealt more with the *role* of violence (i.e. the power context) than the *nature* of violence (the character of war, genocide, etc.).

In my own work (Shaw 1988, 1991, 2005), I have attempted to address this weakness by suggesting a historical theory of the transformation in the relationships of military power (violence) and other forms of social power. To summarise, I argue that during the later nineteenth century the growth in the infrastructure of industrial capitalism (including the “industrialisation of warfare” and the creation of disciplined industrial workforces which could be harnessed both for military production and in mass armies), the expansion of structural power in imperial nation-states, and the growth of ideological power (especially with the emergence of mass media) led to the emergence of a new “mode of warfare”. By this I mean a new macro-framework of organised violence together with a new set of relationships with other forms of power. The mode of “industrialised total war”, which was increasingly realised in the two world wars, saw a novel set of power relationships, as the requirements of military power increasingly (and especially in periods of

war) dominated the economic, ideological and political life of advanced societies. This mode of war was generally associated with economic statism and with increasing state mobilisation of political and ideological life, in some cases totalitarian. It dominated throughout what Eric Hobsbawm called “the short twentieth century” or “the age of extremes” (1995).

During the Cold War, however, the mode of industrialised total war was already mutating. The changed international system, the outcome of the Second World War, produced a different conflict. As reliance on nuclear weapons grew, the total-mobilising side of the military system declined (mass armies became less important and conscription began to be abolished), even if the total-destructive side was accentuated. With the end of the Cold War, Western (mainly US) war preparations changed, leading to a “new Western way of war”, just as “new wars” developed in the non-Western world. Western governments now aimed chiefly to fight very limited, “quick-fix” wars, within the tight time and geographical constraints of the multi-faceted *surveillance* imposed by domestic electoral politics, global media, the global financial system, international law, the UN and non-governmental organisations. Indeed all armed actors increasingly faced this new surveillance context: if regimes in countries like Iraq or Serbia were to fight the West, they had to compete with the West in the “media war” for international public opinion; likewise Western outliers like Israel, and the Palestinian armed movements who opposed it, had to take account of this context. For movements planning terrorist attacks, like al-Qaida, global media surveillance constituted an opportunity as well as a constraint: a Hollywood spectacular like 9/11 offered an unparalleled opportunity for a militarily weak organisation to produce a devastating political impact.

In general, then, I conclude that industrialised total war has given way to what I call the *global surveillance mode of warfare*, as the framework for armed violence of all kinds. This involves not only mutations in the forms of warfare – “new wars”, “new Western warfare”, “new global terrorism” – but also transformations in the relationships between organised violence and social power generally. Whereas in the mode of industrialised total war, war tended to dominate and

shape politics, economics and culture, in the mode of global surveillance war, warfare is greatly more constrained by other forms of power: wars have to be fought with an eye to their short- as well as long-term electoral, media, financial, international, legal and other effects. These constraints are internalised, and dictate the timing and parameters of war: as I write, the Israeli government is ending a three-week campaign of destruction in Gaza (carried out with an eye to Israeli elections in February 2009) just 48 hours before the inauguration of President Barack Obama. This theoretical framework of the late-twentieth-/early-twenty-first century transition in the organisation of violence is offered as a framework for analysis. Within it, much remains to be done to grasp the complexity and variation in the forms of violence, their relationships with other types of power, and the direction of further historical change.

## References

- Arendt, Hannah. 1970. *On Violence*. Allen Lane.
- Chalk, F. and K. Jonassohn (1990) *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Clausewitz, Carl von. [1832] 1976. *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press. *Vom Kriege* originally published in German in 1832.
- Dahrendorf, Ralf. 1959. *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Duffield, Mark. 2001. *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*. London: Zed.
- Freedman, Laurence. 2006. *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*. Adelphi Paper 379. London: International Institute for Strategic Studies.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1985. *The Nation-State and Violence*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1995. *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1989*. London: Abacus.
- Kaldor, Mary. 1982. *The Baroque Arsenal*. London: Deutsch.
- . 1999. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Korsch, Karl. 1963. *Karl Marx*. London: Russell.
- Lemkin, Raphael. 1944. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

## 7. Conclusion

The historical approach proposed in this article has resolved the demands of a general theory of violence in a particular direction. The most obvious next advance would be to further articulate the connections between “political” and other forms of social violence in the modern period. The assumption of this paper is that historically specific theory is the area in which the most meaningful generalisations can be made. If this is correct, the task of a *general*, i.e. transhistorical, theory would be to address the nature of the macro-historical conditions of change in the role of violence in human society.

- MacNeill, William H. 1982. *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since AD 1000*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mann, Michael. 1986. *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mann, Michael. 1993. *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shaw, Martin. 1988. *Dialectics of War*. London: Pluto.
- . 1991. *Post-Military Society*. Cambridge: Polity.
- . 2000. *Theory of the Global State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2005. *The New Western Way of War: Risk-Transfer War and Its Crisis in Iraq*. Cambridge: Polity.
- . 2007. *What is Genocide?* Cambridge: Polity.
- Tilly, Charles. 1985. War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime. In *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trotsky, Leon. [1932] 1965. *History of the Russian Revolution*. London: Gollancz.
- van Crefeld, Martin. 1991. *The Transformation of War*. New York: Free Press.
- Weber, Max. [1922] 1964. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. Glencoe: Free Press. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* originally published in German in 1922 as volume 3 of *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*.

---

Martin Shaw

m.shaw@sussex.ac.uk

# Understanding the Other's "Understanding" of Violence: Legitimacy, Recognition, and the Challenge of Dealing with the Past in Divided Societies

Marcel M. Baumann, Institute of Political Science and Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, University of Freiburg, Germany

## Vol. 3 (1) 2009

**Editorial** (p. 3)

**Focus:**  
**General Theory of Violence**  
Guest Editors:  
Manuel Eisner and  
Susanne Karstedt

**Introduction: Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?**

Susanne Karstedt / Manuel Eisner (pp. 4 – 8)

**Micro and Macro Theories of Violence** Randall Collins (pp. 9 – 22)

**Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime** Richard B. Felson (pp. 23 – 39)

**The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues**

Manuel Eisner (pp. 40 – 59)

**Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?**

Charles Tittle (pp. 60 – 74)

**Violence as Situational Action** Per-Olof H. Wikström / Kyle Treiber (pp. 75 – 96)

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence** Martin Shaw (pp. 97 – 106)

**Open Section**

► **Understanding the Other's 'Understanding' of Violence** Marcel M. Baumann (pp. 107 – 123)

**Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics**

Renate Möller / Uwe Sander / Arne Schäfer / Dirk Villányi / Matthias D. Witte (pp. 124 – 142)

# Understanding the Other's "Understanding" of Violence: Legitimacy, Recognition, and the Challenge of Dealing with the Past in Divided Societies

Marcel M. Baumann, Institute of Political Science and Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, University of Freiburg, Germany

Post-conflict societies which have achieved a cessation of violence and embarked on a political conflict transformation process cannot in the long-term avoid a process of dealing with the past. Case studies of South Africa and Northern Ireland confirm this normative claim, showing that within the post-war society as a whole a social consensus on how to "understand" and "recognize" the use of violence that occurred during the conflict is necessary: understanding the other's "understanding" of violence. A mutual understanding must be reached that both sides fought a campaign that was just and legitimate from their own perspective. The morality of the "other's violence" has to be recognized.

## 1. Introduction

IF WE DON'T LIVE TOGETHER, WE'LL DIE TOGETHER. (BOBBY PHILPOTT, MARCH 7, 2000)<sup>1</sup>

Bobby Philpott was one of the leading members of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), which is the largest Loyalist paramilitary group in Northern Ireland. He was directly involved in the peace process as part of the UDA delegation that met British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland during her controversial visit to the Maze prison in 1998, when Mowlam talked with UDA prisoners to avert a crisis in the peace process. Philpott's statement leads to the central question of this essay: How can divided post-conflict societies constructively deal with the past in order to rebuild their social fabric in such a way that the conflicting ethnopolitical communities (the former enemies) are able to live together in peace? In order to answer that question this paper will elaborate on the following thesis: for fragile post-war societies one necessary prerequisite for dealing with the

violent past is for the society as a whole to seek an empathic understanding and recognition of politically motivated violence. The term "recognition" refers to the philosophical concept of Axel Honneth who claimed that "the struggle for recognition" should be at the center of "social conflicts" (see below).

The methodological approach of discourse analysis of violence will be used in order to bring out the core argument. The term "discourse" is used in this paper not as a mere synonym for "debate" or "discussion," but to designate a more advanced form of communication including the totality of communicative acts (speech acts) that can be analyzed according to their common structures, practices, rules, resources, and meanings (Keller 2004, 64). The discourse analysis of violence will focus on the strategies used by armed groups—like the Irish Republican Army (IRA)—to justify or legitimize their acts of violence. Violent acts are seen within an interpretative "discourse process"

The idea for this article came from a paper entitled "Understanding the other's 'understanding' of violence: Legitimacy, recognition and the 'violent' challenge of dealing with the past in post-conflict societies" given by the author at the 49th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association

("Bridging Multiple Divides"), San Francisco, March 26–29, 2008. This was a presentation in the March 27th panel on "Reassessing the past in divided societies: Human rights, memory and reconciliation policies in cross-regional perspectives."

<sup>1</sup> Bobby Philpott, in an interview for the three-part documentary "Loyalists" produced by high-profile British journalist Peter Taylor and shown on BBC Two on March 7, 2000.

taking place within the affected community. This process aims to legitimize acts of violence in the perception of the community so that violence becomes self-affirmative and independent. The *meaning* of violence will be the central focus of analyzing the discourse on the "morality of violence" (Hamber 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2003). The morality of violence is expressed through a process of rationalization of violent acts, a process that is instrumentalized as a deliberative strategy by the non-state armed groups.

This article will make the case for a quite contentious normative argument: Having achieved a cessation of violence and embarked on a political conflict transformation process it becomes absolutely vital to reach a social consensus within the post-war society on how to recognize and understand the use of violence during the conflict in moral and ethical terms. It is a rather uneasy and uncomfortable challenge, both for the victims *and* the perpetrators of violence, but a debate that cannot be evaded. The prerequisite for the divided communities being part of the same post-conflict society is to achieve a *common*, not a *divided* understanding of the violent past in order to move forward: understanding the other's "understanding" of violence means to reach a mutual understanding that both sides fought a campaign which from their own perspective was just and legitimate. The morality of the "other's violence" has to be recognized.

The viability of that approach becomes obvious if we consider the basic need of a divided post-war society. Put simply, the communities will have to live together in future and cannot risk being divided over the past. The basic human needs of the individuals living in them can be identified using the terminology and concepts of Rosenberg (2003a, 2003b, 2004), J. W. Burton (1987, 1990, 1995), Burton and Dukes (1990), and Ropers (1995a, 1995b), who focus on the "needs" of the conflicting parties as a starting point for conflict transformation processes. According to Norbert Ropers, a distinction has to be drawn between conflicts of interest and conflicts of identity in the analysis of any ethno-political conflict (1995a). While conflicts of interests can in theory be worked out by adjusting the diverging interests through more or less "mutual" accommodations, conflicts of identity cannot be resolved by accommodation—it is almost "all-or-nothing." For example, the demand for politi-

cal and cultural acceptance by a particular ethnic identity is simply non-negotiable (Ropers 1995b, 2006). However, an effective conflict transformation strategy can be arrived at when interests are separated from attitudes and opinions on the one hand and from needs on the other hand. Opinions are always associated with politically articulated goals, for example the demand for secession of territory. They are basic mindsets and viewpoints, which must be distinguished from interests which suggest that certain "motives" were the causes of or reasons for ethno-political conflict. A transformation of the conflict cannot take place if the conflict is understood as a "tragic expression of unsatisfied needs" (Rosenberg 2004, 27). The same basic assumption is made by Kelman, who perceives conflict as a process driven by collective needs and fears (1997, 195). These needs are primarily of an individual and human nature; however they are articulated and demanded through groups which represent certain interests (*ibid.*). The concept focusing on the "needs" of the conflicting parties leads to the acceptance of an *inclusive* definition of "victim": there can be no hierarchy of victims; no one can claim sole ownership of "victimhood" for himself. Rather, everyone who died as a direct or indirect consequence of the conflict should be qualified and treated as a "legitimate" victim. On that basis societies can move forward towards resolving the conflicting "moralities of violence" and the contentious "memories" of a divided violent past.

Naturally there are important limits to this line of reasoning, e.g. there are limits to the demand for understanding and recognition. The following arguments are more or less explicitly linked to post-war societies where former enemies have to live together. Of course these normative implications cannot be transferred to all cases where violence happened on a massive, organized scale, for example in the case of genocide. It is very important to make the point that the political nature of violence in *divided* societies, where former enemies have to live together after war, is an essential requirement for the "understanding approach" to violence which is the core of this article. This line of reasoning is based on the notion of "divided societies" that perceives post-war societies as being divided by conflicting "identities." These divisions already existed before the war and continue to shape the post-war society, for example as

“majority/minority” situations. This means that although any post-war society by its very nature could be regarded as “divided”—and we should keep in mind that “ethnicity” rarely exists in a pure form, rather it is usually combined with factors such as religion, race, or class in mutually reinforcing ways—it is important to understand that the conflict-generating cleavages are based on identities that are derived from certain ethnic or cultural aspects of “belonging.” In particular, cases like Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Nigeria, and the Philippines are examples for this understanding of divided societies.

It is precisely the relevance for *divided* societies which allows the central argument of this article to move beyond the purely normative basis of the argument which favors an approach of “understanding” of violence. While achieving an understanding of the other’s “understanding” of violence might indeed be difficult in the short-term, since it can and does open wounds and may even put the post-war society at risk of a return to violence, in the longer term every post-war society has to find a way to deal with the past. This can even be seen in European countries like Spain, where the conflict-generating cleavages are not based on ethnicity or race. In the Spanish case an informal “pact of forgetting” (*pacto de olvido*) was established after the civil war. Although this pact was quite “successful” for seventy years, its recent breakdown demonstrates the need for a process of dealing with the past in Spain. This process had been “frozen” for seventy years, but the demand never went away: the strategy of forgetting could not last forever. According to the well-known British historian Antony Beevor, in effect “two Spains” developed. His new book on the Spanish civil war makes a strong case for a process of dealing with the past (Beevor 2008). In an interview he emphasized: “The Pact of Forgetting has to be broken. All Spanish citizens—citizens of one of the most modern and most optimistically minded peoples in the European Union—have to learn to understand how this tragedy could have happened” (*Die Zeit*, July 17, 2006).

A lot has been written on “dealing with,” “managing,” “coping with,” or “overcoming” the past (“delete as appropriate”), and following the South African experience (see below) quite a number of “truth commissions” have

been set up around the world. Priscilla Hayner compared fifteen truth commissions established world-wide before 1994 (Hayner 1994, 1995, 2000). In the South African context, however (serving as the prime example), it is highly disputed whether the “truth commission” remedy actually led to forgiveness and reconciliation. Take this statement from Sonny Venkathratnam, a former prisoner on Robben Island whose middle ear was removed with a spoon and genitals cut off: “I will never forgive my torturers. Because for twenty-four hours a day it reminds me that I’ve been tortured. So, I am not asking for revenge, but don’t ask me for forgiveness” (Venkathratnam 2003).

Although there were completely different voices too, Venkathratnam’s statement illustrates the core of the dilemma confronted by applied science: What right does “peace science” (Baumann 2008a) have to claim or postulate that the affected societies or communities should forgive or become reconciled? What moral and ethical justifications allow us to tell a suffering community that it has to recognize the other side’s suffering and to reach a social consensus? There is no universal remedy in dealing with the past; indeed there are ethical constraints and dilemmas which should be recognized by peace science, for the “easy” recommendation of “truth commission,” as it is commonly applied to post-war societies, can have serious and counter-productive effects.

Therefore, the approach taken in this paper is to take a critical look at the South African case with the aim of trying to learn from its successes and failures. Instead of opening some magic, universal peace-building toolbox, we might identify some basic common features. The case of South Africa has been chosen because it is internationally hailed as a “role model” for truth and reconciliation. In addition to the fact that the South African truth and reconciliation process led to a series of similar “experiments” around the world, it can be argued that with respect to the disputed issue of the “moralities of violence,” “recognition” of the political nature of violence in South African was the main rationale of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Therefore, it appears appropriate to compare South Africa with Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland can be seen as a case where a political peace settlement has been reached

but the process of dealing with the past has not started yet. And because of that the (short-term) political achievements of the Northern Irish peace process might prove irrelevant in the long term if the divided communities find no way to overcome their hostility and learn to live together.

## 2. Voluntary Apartheid in Northern Ireland: Peace-Building through "Chosen Amnesia"?

WE ARE NOW IN A NEW ERA IN NORTHERN IRELAND. IT'S LONG PAST TIME THAT PEOPLE DECIDED THEY SHOULD MOVE ON AND LEAVE THE PAST BEHIND. (EDWIN POOTS, BELFAST TELEGRAPH, AUGUST 9, 2007)

This statement was made by Edwin Poots from the British-Loyalist Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) when he was confronted with the necessity of dealing with the past in Northern Ireland. Poots became Minister of Culture, Arts, and Leisure in the new Northern Ireland executive which was formed in May 2007. For the first time in the history of Northern Ireland the government included the two former enemies: the DUP, the most radical Unionist party (which strongly supports ties with Great Britain), and Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA. Although both parties were part of the first administration until its suspension in October 2002, the DUP had never spoken directly with Sinn Fein representatives and had consistently refused to engage with them in any form. All cabinet meetings of the first administration were boycotted by the DUP ministers. The *new* power-sharing government became possible after the St. Andrews Agreement signed by the British and Irish governments in October 2006, which built on the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

The debate over a truth and reconciliation commission for Northern Ireland actually began quite a long time before the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Given the historical fact that 1,800 of the almost 4,000 killings since 1969 have not been solved yet, the community's desire for disclosure has a particular relevance (detailed victim statistics can be found in Smyth and Fay 2000). Norman Porter distinguishes two sides which have dominated the Northern Irish "reconciliation debate"—the "cynics" and the "enthusiasts" (Porter 2003, 13ff.). He considers himself one

of the enthusiasts and argues for an empathetic embrace of reconciliation, although it might be difficult and dangerous (21). At the same time, Porter severely criticises the official churches and religious leaders for their very limited engagement in reconciliation: "It is a curious thing that many who boast the purest Christian motives are among those most threatened by the possibility of political reconciliation in the North" (Porter 2003, 27).

The main Protestant churches, for example, proclaimed that they would reject a Northern Ireland truth commission based on the South African model (*The Newsletter*, May 2, 2004). Porter's critique is absolutely plausible, since in Northern Ireland there is simply not enough strength in the political leadership to be able to support or lead a social reconciliation process or any institutional process of that kind. At the national level, the necessary degree of political leadership does not exist. This is the main difference to the political leadership in South Africa (M. Burton 1999), as witnessed on several occasions: the "Saville Inquiry" into the events of Bloody Sunday is a quite obvious example showing a lack of political leadership for a process of dealing with the past (see section 4.2.). Martin McGuinness, who was Sinn Fein's chief negotiator during the peace process and a leading member of the IRA in the 1970s, was the only person with a Republican background to give evidence at the inquiry, where he cited a "Republican code of honor" that prevented him from giving evidence against fellow Republicans. But the British security forces were also more than reluctant to come forward: the British government has not yet had the courage to start an official, independent truth process or even give its consent to an *internal* body dealing with the issue in a completely independent way.

The British government regularly consulted South African politicians and policy-makers. At the end of May 2004, for example, the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Paul Murphy, visited South Africa to find out what lessons could be learned about dealing with a history of violence and human rights abuses (BBC News, June 1, 2004, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/3767455.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/3767455.stm)). Among others, Murphy met with Charles Villa-Vicencio, who was the National Research Director of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Villa-

Vicencio led Murphy to the crucial conclusion that the TRC is "not exportable": "Ultimately it came out of the womb of this place. They [in Northern Ireland] probably need to find some way, but I am certainly not suggesting it should be a TRC" (*Belfast Telegraph*, June 2, 2004).

This conclusion could at the same time be characterized as the lowest common denominator in the context of the Northern Irish "reconciliation discourse": the belief that the past needs to be dealt with is shared by all political parties and groups, but at the same time all also agree that the South African TRC cannot simply be adopted in the form of a "Northern Ireland TRC." The TRC was part of the democratization process and a political compromise. This opportunity has already been lost in the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement, because the section of the Good Friday Agreement addressing the question of victims is very abstract and was left wide open for interpretation.<sup>2</sup> The agreement established a Victims Commission and the position of a Victims Commissioner, to which Kenneth Bloomfield was appointed. Bloomfield published a report (*We Will Remember Them*) in which the idea of a Northern Ireland truth commission was mentioned in very distanced, sensitive, and even shy language: "The possibility of benefiting from some form of Truth and Reconciliation Commission at some stage should not be overlooked" (Bloomfield 1998, paragraph 5.37).

At the same time he also emphasized one fundamental restriction on a "Northern Irish truth commission": "Unhappily, "truth" can be used as a weapon as well as a shield. If such a device were to have a place in Northern Ireland, it could only be in the context of a wide ranging political accord" (38).

In today's Northern Ireland, in Bloomfield's words, "truth" would most likely be a weapon. The overwhelming consensus in this discussion is that Northern Irish society is not ready to bear the complete and utter truth of the violent past: "Post the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland it is clear that a broad level of consensus on the need to un-

cover the past is not forthcoming. It would probably also be a mistake to use the structure of the South African model of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a starting point for dealing with the past" (Hamber 1999a).

The main reason for this consensus, as this paper argues, can be traced back to the existence of two conflicting memories of that past that are linked with two contradicting moralities of violence: a Protestant and a Catholic "version." The communal divisions defined by these "two versions" are still manifest in Northern Ireland's post-conflict society. This is especially the case in those areas that were worst affected by the violence during the "Troubles," namely the working-class areas. It was indeed a "working-class war" that had taken place in Northern Ireland.

The post-conflict society can be characterized as a situation consisting of and based on a chosen "voluntary apartheid" (Baumann 2008b). "Voluntary apartheid" as a theory includes all relevant endogenous factors governing the post-war society's communal divisions. The underlying assumption of the theory posits that a lasting and secure "peace" can only be achieved by the absence of voluntary apartheid; since as long as these negative, endogenous structures are left over as virulent factors, the danger of society's return to violence is eminent. Thus, the peace process remains fragile. In contrast to violently enforced apartheid, the concept of "voluntary apartheid" characterizes a deliberately chosen ethno-political strategy used by post-war communities to uphold community division and separateness. "Voluntary apartheid" can also be seen as a critical indicator of society's willingness and ability to enter peaceful conflict transformation. As an alternative terminology the traditional sociological theory of "social closure" could be adopted—in the sense of "ethnopolitical closure." Social closure can be traced back to Max Weber: the process leading to "closure" is the result of the strategy pursued by each community to maximize their own privileges, advantages, and communal success at the expense of the "other" communities within the same society (Weber 1922, 52).

<sup>2</sup> The complete text of the Good Friday Agreement can be found at:

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/agreement.htm>.

The ethno-political strategy of total separation uses several tools or categories: *sectarianism*, a skeptical *common sense*, a strong focus on territoriality, a highly explosive potential of symbols and symbolism, and manifest collective traumata (Baumann 2008b). To understand the category of sectarianism in the context of post-conflict societies we can go back to the sociologist Georg Simmel, a fellow of Max Weber, who used the concept of "socialization through conflict" (Simmel 1958). This comes close to what John Paul Lederach called the process of "Lebanonization" of society: "Cohesion and identity in contemporary conflict tend to form within increasingly narrower lines than those that encompass national citizenship. In situations of armed conflict, people seek security by identifying with something close to their experience and over which they have some control. In today's settings that unity of identity may be a clan, ethnicity, religion, or geographic/ regional affiliation, or a mix of these" (Lederach 1997, 12f.).

The final result is a post-war society in which any form of social interaction is determined by the "system" of sectarianism: "Sectarianism is about what goes on in people's hearts and minds, and it is about the kind of institutions and structures created in society. It is about people's attitudes to one another, about what they do and say and the things they leave undone or unsaid. Moreover, 'sectarian' is usually a negative judgement that people make about someone else's behaviour and rarely a label that they apply to themselves, their own sectarianism always being the hardest to see (Liechty and Clegg 2001, 102).

One of the most remarkable features of Northern Irish society is that even several centuries before the outbreak of violent conflict in 1968, society as whole was sharply divided along religious lines. Though Protestants and Catholics lived *next to* each other without violence, they did not live together *with* each other—and they had nothing to say to each other. This was the finding of Rosemary Harris's ethnographic study conducted shortly after the Second World War: Catholics and Protestants had created two separate worlds, there was no social integration, even in mixed areas (Harris 1972, 146).

This situation was characterized by Frank Wright as "communal deterrence," in which "serious communication" is not possible (Wright 1987, 1990, 1996). If there was any contact between Catholics and Protestants at all, if they passed each other on the streets for example, the division and "ethnopolitical separateness" was overplayed by what Harris called "over-friendliness": they chatted about the weather, the high prices in the stores, etc. But the coping mechanism of "over-friendliness" prevented any serious dialogue on substantial matters: "People in Ulster are, as a rule, cheerful, courteous, and helpful to one another. The deep political divisions of which I write, and on which the international media focuses so much attention, are avoided in daily conversations. It is considered to be rude to bring up issues of religious affiliations or anything that would reflect these divisions. One never asks a person if he or she is Catholic or Protestant, for instance; it is simply not done" (Santino 2001, 61).

As a strategy for avoidance of dialogue, over-friendliness is still a common feature in today's Northern Irish society. In 2001—almost four years after the Good Friday Agreement and seven years after the ceasefires—Peter Shirlow carried out an ethnographic study of Protestant and Catholic interaction in North Belfast. His quite remarkable results gained a lot of attention, since his main finding was that the features of "sectarianism" had not decreased during the peace process (Shirlow 2003). This finding was verified in a later study he did together with Brendan Murtagh (Shirlow and Murtagh 2006).

The most problematic feature of voluntary apartheid, and the one which is most resistant to change, however, is connected to the divided past and the existence in both communities of collective traumas based on conflicting collective memories. According to Maurice Halbwachs the memory of the individual is to a large degree determined by a *collective* foundation. In any society there are as many collective memories as existing (ethnopolitical) communities (Halbwachs 1966, 1967, 2002). Halbwachs emphasizes the enormous importance of the community as the primary context of communication and symbolic manifestation of memories of the past. Thus, the act of remembering becomes a social practice. Halbwachs emphasizes that

memory has to be seen as *social* memory of the group or community: "The group must have a memory of itself that recounts a sense of origin and distinctiveness. A social memory becomes a central facet of the ideological armoury of the group, helping to legitimise and rationalise difference by rooting it in the far-distant past and thus placing weight on the primordial and essential nature of the antagonists or otherness" (Halbwachs 1992, 6).

Because of the collective conditioning of memory, the simple act of remembering is not reduced to the individual's own experience, but rather goes far beyond and encompasses the memories and experiences of people from his or her own community: stories and experiences that have been communicated. Thus, remembering is an active as well as culturally-sensitive process since the collective memory has to be re-built and re-formulated on an ongoing basis: "Social memories are not recollections of times past but part of the present understandings of the past, people use images of the past as a justification for the present relationship and not 'images from the past'" (Jarman 1997, 4ff.).

Collective memories as "images from the past" *for the present* have to be monitored, checked, and evaluated by the community on a regular basis in order to fit present (political and/or strategic) purposes. As a consequence it is quite a common practice (*memory practice*) to delete specific historical events from the collective memory, while other events are mystified or "de-contextualized," i.e. removed from their concrete historical context (Jarman 1997, 7).

This collective orientation towards remembering opens up opportunities for instrumentalization of past events with the aim of establishing and enforcing communal division through divided memories. This makes them the crucial and most dangerous feature of voluntary apartheid: divided memories of the violent events of the past leading to conflicting moralities of violence. As a result violent "macro-events" can be either upgraded or downgraded arbitrarily—to serve to the needs of the community, i.e. the community's collective memory. Vamik Volkan's concept of "chosen traumas" helps us to illustrate this point in more detail: "I use the term chosen trauma to describe the collective memory of a calamity that once befell a group's ances-

tors. It is, of course, more than a simple recollection; it is a shared mental representation of the event, which includes realistic information, fantasized expectations, intense feelings, and defenses against unacceptable thoughts" (Volkan 1997, 48).

Instead of "downgrading" the violent "macro-event" as a "chosen trauma," it can alternatively be upgraded to become a "chosen glory" for the community's collective memory (Volkan 1997, 81). The prime example for the instrumentalization of "historical" violent events is the annual commemoration of Bloody Sunday (January 30, 1972), when fourteen Catholic civilians were killed by British paratroopers (see below). The fourteen people killed represent human loss and life-long tragedies for the families; there are many annual commemorative events, for example the Bloody Sunday march in Londonderry. But what is important to recognize is that the Catholic rationalization of the violent event, predominantly articulated by the IRA, perceives it as a "chosen glory" and not as a "chosen trauma." This became all too obvious in the year 2000 when Martin McGuinness was the keynote speaker at the annual Bloody Sunday Memorial Lecture. Referring to the fourteen dead civilians, he said: "They are not victims. They are heroes" (I was in the audience during the speech). McGuinness used a clever semantic and symbolic trick of communication: while acknowledging the loss of the grieving families he also conveyed that for the IRA Bloody Sunday was by no means a "chosen trauma." Before Bloody Sunday, the IRA was almost defeated, with only a handful of weapons left and no significant support within the Catholic community. That changed dramatically in the aftermath of the killings, with a massive increase in support and volunteers: "This afternoon 27 people were shot in this city. 13 of them lay dead. They were innocent, we were there. This is our Sharpeville. A moment of truth and a moment of shame. And I just want to say this to the British government: You know what you have just done, don't you? You have destroyed the civil rights movement and you have given the IRA its biggest victory it will ever have. All over this city tonight, young man, boys will be joining the IRA."

In the famous movie "Bloody Sunday" (2002) by Paul Greengrass, this statement was attributed to Ivan Cooper,

who was one of the leaders of the (nonviolent) human rights movement in Northern Ireland and also a member of the British House of Commons.<sup>3</sup> In retrospect, Bloody Sunday destroyed the last chances of any peaceful settlement at that time. As a commemorative event, Bloody Sunday shows how active memory practice can rebuild and consolidate the voluntary apartheid at the communal level. However, "Bloody Sunday" is not remembered collectively by both communities. Rather, the Protestant collective memory chooses its own events to commemorate "its own victims," like "Bloody Friday" (see below).

It can be concluded that the instrumentalization of the divided past proves to be the key tool to uphold ethnopolitical separateness and division. It is far too early for the Northern Irish situation to be qualified as a "zone of stable peace" (Boulding 1978).

Coming back to the political arena, it becomes very clear that the recently elected politicians are all too eager to ignore or leave the past behind (see the quote from Poots at the beginning). Their macro-political strategy is one of "chosen amnesia" (the term was coined by Buckley-Zistel [2006]), because they want to move forward with political consolidation of the process while ignoring the evident structures of voluntary apartheid. As Buckley-Zistel found out, a similar strategy was employed in Rwanda: "remembering to forget" became the rationale of both communities. However, while this strategy might achieve some short-term rewards, it bears considerable long-term risk of a return to inter-ethnic violence because the structures that created the conditions for the outbreak of violence in the first place are not changed (Buckley-Zistel 2006).

### 3. Truth-Seeking Exercises and the Morality of Violence

#### 3.1. The South African Model: "Truth" in Exchange for Conditional Amnesty

During the past twenty-five years, truth commissions as a tool for political and social stabilization of post-conflict societies have received increasing attention worldwide

(Hayner 2000, 34). International interest in the idea of truth commissions grew even more in the 1990s in the wake of the South African and Chilean developments: "The increased interest in truth commissions is, in part, a reflection of the limited success in judicial approaches to accountability, and the obvious need for other measures to recognise past wrongs and confront, punish or reform those persons and institutions that were responsible for violations" (Hayner 2000).

From the outset "Chile" and "Nuremberg," were instrumental in the South African policy debate on the specific format and design of the TRC, because each represents an "extreme" type of "dealing with the past": "If post-war Germany represents one extreme of the justice policies pursued in transitional societies, namely prosecution, then Chile represents the other, namely, blanket amnesty for those who committed gross violations of human rights" (Simpson 2002, 221).

It soon became very clear that "prosecuting everybody" was simply unworkable while trying to take over the apartheid state machine, whereas a "blanket amnesty" would be unacceptable to a black populace that had only just fought for and won the concessions that had resulted in negotiations (Bell 2003; Villa-Vicencio 2000a, 2000b, 2003a). As a consequence, the South African policy-makers decided to go down the road Desmond Tutu called the "third way" between "Chile" and "Nuremberg." The TRC was officially commissioned to uncover "the truth" about apartheid's human rights violations and to publicize its findings. The TRC was made up of seventeen commissioners, selected from all political parties and groupings. After two years they presented their final report (for further description of the structure see Coetzee 2003 and Cherry, Daniel, and Fullard 2003).

The third way realized in the amnesty process gave the TRC far-reaching "semi-legal" authority and was the crucial

<sup>3</sup> Ivan Cooper himself gave his blessing to the movie: "I've seen the film six times now," says Mr Cooper, now 58. "And my first thoughts were that it was an emotional experience. I'm able to say with

confidence that it was made with great integrity.' (...) 'Before Bloody Sunday, I believe there were no more than 30 to 40 IRA volunteers in Derry. They had a very small base, small amounts of

hardware and, most importantly, very little support.'" BBC News, January 30, 2002, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/1791090.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/1791090.stm).

factor for which the TRC gained the most international recognition. The South African version of amnesty was *the* central innovative feature of the TRC:

"Our amnesty process has been quite unique in the world. We have conditional amnesty. We would not have had all of these revelations if we had just gone for a blanket amnesty and families would still have been deprived of the knowledge." <sup>4</sup>

Amnesty was only granted in exchange for "truth": "Applicants had to make a "full disclosure" of their human rights violations in order to qualify for amnesty. In most instances applicants would appear before the Amnesty Committee, and these hearings would be open to the public" (Boraine 2003, 165).

The bottom line was that the South African "invention" of amnesty was a limited version (Boraine 2003) termed "qualified amnesty" (Villa-Vicencio 2003b). Granting amnesty was conditional upon the applicant (i.e. the perpetrator of violence) publicly stating the "truth" (Hayner 2000, 37). Within this hybrid "truth-seeking exercise" amnesty was inextricably linked with truth and reconciliation: "At the heart of this hybrid approach was the reliance on a notion of "truth recovery" as a restorative alternative to punitive justice—through full disclosure by perpetrators (and their supposed shaming) in exchange for amnesty, as well as through voluntary testimony about apartheid's gross human rights violations given by victims (and their supposed healing)" (Simpson 2002, 221).

The question of the "morality of violence" became relevant in the context of the amnesty decision because in this hybrid version, amnesty was also conditional upon the political "quality" of the violent act committed by the amnesty applicant: in order to qualify for amnesty the act of violence had to be "justified" as a *politically motivated* act of violence.

### 3.2. "Discriminatory Truth-seeking" in Northern Ireland

However, achieving the desired social consensus on the morality of violence is an uphill struggle. According to Brandon Hamber the challenge for post-conflict societies is to be willing to adopt a totally different moral starting point for the analysis or assessment of acts of violence in order to move forward: "Violence during times of political conflict is by definition a political action fraught with the hidden hands of political agendas and posturing. It is for this very reason that consensual strategies for dealing with the past should be sought. It is only through taking control of the apparatus of memory and history that societies coming out of violence can begin to engage with and develop constructive collective memories of the conflict" (Hamber 1999b).

The tension between morality, ethical considerations, and violence (or "performative acts" of "meaningful" violence) can be analyzed by critically questioning the communication, justification, and legitimization strategies of violence. Acts of violence are embedded in an *interpretative* discourse that takes place *within* the communities whose perceptions are the central focal point; the communities' perceptions are addressed, they become the target of the discursive process. Through this process, violence becomes more and more self-driven and independent (Apter 1997, 10). Using the language of anthropologists, this argument is based on the assumption that politically motivated violence is presented as an intentional, calculated "performative act" (Aijmer 2000, 1) and, therefore, must be assessed according to its "performative quality." The same analytical backdrop is used by anthropologists like Anton Blok (2000) or Allen Feldman (1991, 1998) and by sociologists like David Apter (1997). The important factor is to consider the meaning and significance of the violent act instead of claiming a priori illegality, senselessness or irrationality: "Violence without an audience will still leave people dead, but is socially meaningless. Violent acts are efficient because of their staging of power and legitimacy, probably even more so than due to their actual physical results" (Schröder and Schmidt 2001, 5f.).

<sup>4</sup> Glenda Wildschut, in *Long Night's Journey Into Day*, documentary film, 2000, transcript at: <http://www.newsreel.org/transcripts/longnight.htm>.

Seen within this framework violence by the IRA and others was directed against the "institutions" of the British crown and according to their "discourse processes" violent acts were *not* directed against the community, i.e. not against individual members of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland. This point was reinforced in July 2002, when the IRA made a public apology to the "innocent victims," namely to "non-combatants" killed during acts of "legitimate" violence: "While it was not our intention to injure or kill non-combatants, the reality is that on this and on a number of other occasions, that was the consequence of our actions. . . . We offer our sincere apologies and condolences to their families" (*An Phoblacht*, July 18, 2002).<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the basic analytical assumption of this paper is that violence is a means of communication, disseminating (symbolic) meaning which is open for interpretation: "Rather than defining violence a priori as senseless and irrational, we should consider it as a changing form of interaction and communication, as a historically developed cultural form of *meaningful action*" (Blok 2000, 24).

However, these discursive legitimization strategies cannot be left unchallenged, because "recognition" and "understanding" are not a one-way street. The challenge to the legitimization discourse is that during war there will always be *civilian* fatalities and combatants who decide to participate in a war, i.e. choosing violence or armed conflict, thereby accepting the loss of innocent civilian lives. Thus when demanding that victims and surviving families understand the violent acts of armed groups as having been carried out for politically motivated reasons, the armed groups must in return also recognize how difficult it is for victims and surviving families to comprehend the rationalization of violence that distinguishes between "legitimate targets" and "civilians."

The police is a prime example illustrating this point. Members of Northern Ireland's then overwhelmingly Protestant police force were seen as "legitimate targets" because they were the manifest institutions of British "foreign rule" in

Ireland. But the moral challenge to such legitimization strategies is this: a police officer was not only a "military" servant of the state, but also "off duty" a private citizen, a family man, a father, and a civilian. And he even might not even have supported the government he was serving under. So for a large part of his life he was indeed a "non-combatant." Only through the eyes of the IRA can he be seen as a legitimate target.

On the other hand we can also take the conflicting moralities of violence one step further and ask critical questions from a completely contrary point of view: are there reasons or "rationalizations" that could persuade survivors whose relatives fell victim to violent acts "perpetrated" by the IRA and others that the armed groups and their families can be recognized as victims, too? Or in other words, is it feasible or justified to classify armed combatants not only as "terrorists" or "perpetrators," but also as "victims"?

To understand this point we need to take a look at the biographies of the individuals involved in violence and the circumstances and living conditions of their families. Not only did they serve very long prison sentences, but their families were destroyed, "innocent" lives were ruined. In addition, many family members who had no IRA connection were murdered. "Civilian" family members of the armed groups were drawn into the civil war and many of them were killed. One example out of many is Tommy McKearney, a former IRA member who served seventeen years in prison. All three of his brothers were murdered, none them members of the IRA, and Tommy himself almost died during the famous IRA hunger strike of 1980. Tommy and his family can thus be qualified as "victims" of the Northern Ireland conflict. When asked in an interview, "Was it all worth it?" he replied: "I am by no means a philosopher, but I can only answer this question philosophically. I played all the cards which were dealt to me. I have no problem with my past. Sure, it caused a lot of pain for me and my family" (*Tageszeitung*, July 30, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Complete text: BBC News, July 16, 2002, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/2132113.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/2132113.stm).

The difficult debate on the linkage and relationships between violence, legitimization, and morality ultimately leads to the conclusion that every attempt to compare or quantify individual or communal suffering is doomed to fail: "The whole process becomes unfortunate if you start to compare suffering" (Villa-Vicencio 2003b).

In the reality of post-conflict societies, communities keep being torn apart with each side claiming to be the "real" and "legitimate" victims, thereby belittling the other side's suffering. The social-psychological feature of voluntary apartheid (see above) reinforces the difference between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" ("real" and "unreal") victims as the predominant societal viewpoint: the members of one's own community who lost their lives through violence are regarded as victims whereas the members of the "other" group are not accepted as such.

How do we get societies to a point where they are ready to understand and even accept the other side's suffering and start to abandon cognitive hierarchies of victimhood? The political dimension of the reconciliation process is especially significant in this case. If the exclusive definitions of victims prevailing in society are not overcome, the success of the political conflict transformation process will also be constrained for a long time. Thus, the political consolidation of the Northern Irish peace process might soon prove to be temporary if the divided past resulting in a divided society is left unresolved (voluntary apartheid).

#### 4. Speech Acts Not Speaking for Themselves

##### 4.1. Innocence of a "Guilty Victim" or Guilt of an "Innocent Victim"

Brandon Hamber made it clear that Northern Irish society must engage in the challenge of resolving the divided past by analyzing and engaging with the "moralities of violence," although it is questionable whether a consensus can ever be reached (Hamber 1999a). The perceptions and rationalizations of violence on both sides face each other quite irreconcilably. One symbolic example illustrating the lack of understanding and recognition for the Republican discourse on violence in the broader Protestant community occurred when a new mural was formally inaugurated in

January 2004. The mural portrays five major IRA bomb attacks that struck the Protestant community of the Shankill Road area in West Belfast (in one, the Shankill Road bombing of October 23, 1993, nine Protestants and one of the IRA men carrying the bomb lost their lives in the attack on Frizzel's fish shop). The mural includes two straightforward messages from the Protestant community for the IRA and the British government: "No Military Targets, No Economic Targets, No Legitimate Targets" and "Where are our inquiries? Where is our truth? Where is our justice?"



Protestant Mural on the Shankill Road, © CAIN (cain.ulst.ac.uk).

Two declarations by the IRA can be seen as responses to the Protestant claim, epitomized by the mural, that their victims are "forgotten" and not recognized in the same way as Catholic victims. First, the public apology of July 16, 2002 (quoted above), which was hailed as a "historic" step internationally. Yet, as that apology was made only with respect to "non-combatants," it implies that the IRA's military targets—institutions and symbols of the British state—were *legitimate* and therefore required no apology. The second "historic" IRA statement, issued on July 28, 2005, followed the same ideological pattern. The organization announced the end of its armed campaign, but at the same time stated that the armed struggle had been legitimate: "We are very mindful of the sacrifices of our patriotic dead, those who went to jail, volunteers, their families and the wider republican base. We reiterate our view that the armed struggle was entirely legitimate. We are conscious that many people suffered in the conflict. There is a compelling imperative on all sides to build a just and lasting peace."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Irish Republican Army (IRA) Statement on the Ending of the Armed Cam-

paign, July 28, 2005, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/organ/ira/ira280705.htm>.

The reactions of the victims reflect the ambiguity and contradictions of the qualified IRA apology, which was not received positively by the Protestant community: "While apologies such as this are easy to formulate, where is their declaration that the war is over, that they were not justified in their use of violence and will never resort to it again—or do they continue to believe that they were justified and wish to hold the option of returning to murder to further their ends if the ballot box ceases to deliver."<sup>7</sup>

FAIR is an advocacy and lobby group acting for IRA victims and their families. Aileen Quinton, who lost her mother in the Enniskillen bombing, reacted to the IRA's declaration of July 28, 2005, in a similarly negative way: "Why should I be grateful to the IRA for stopping doing what they'd no right to do in the first place? You shouldn't get brownie points for not murdering people" (*Sunday Tribune*, July 31, 2005).

There have been some more positive reactions on the other hand. Alan McBride, who lost his wife in the Shankill Road bombing, said: "You have to recognise the fact that the IRA have not gone this far before. I do welcome it from that perspective. But I would urge caution. Words are not enough and this needs to be backed up by action. Having said that, it could be the start. If they are true to their words this could breathe some much needed air back into the peace process, which has been sadly lacking of late" (*Guardian*, July 29, 2005).

But by and large the prevailing conditions of Northern Ireland's post-conflict society are those of voluntary apartheid, where there is a strong perception of "one-sided victimhood" and a moral competition for primary "victim status": "A political culture that is based on competing claims to victimhood is likely to support and legitimise violence, and unlikely to foster an atmosphere of political responsibility and maturity" (Smyth 1999).

From the perspective of the victims and surviving relatives, the following critical questions arise with respect to the vio-

lence discourse of the non-state actors in war: Is it possible to distinguish at all between civilians and non-civilians, between *civilian* victims and *military* victims? It is a difficult task to explain to the family of a murdered RUC policeman that their dead father was not a civilian. But in return, the state forces, the police and the army, must also ask themselves the critical question: How do you explain to a mother of a twelve-year-old child killed by a police plastic bullet, that the police was *not* a part of the "occupation force," *not* a "legitimate target"?

The search for answers to these difficult questions can be facilitated by focusing on the "needs" of the conflicting parties as a starting point for a conflict transformation process (see section 1.). The various concepts focusing on the "needs" of the conflicting parties (Burton 1987, 1990, 1995; Burton and Dukes 1990; Kelman 1990, 1997a, 1997b; Kelman and Cohen 1976; Rosenberg 2003a, 2003b, 2004.) lead us to conclude that all victims of the civil war in Northern Ireland have the same *need*, namely recognition of their suffering. For this reason, all victims of violence must be given equal status in the sense of an "inclusive definition of the victims." However, if everybody becomes a victim the value of the category becomes questionable: indeed, the category of "victimhood" becomes almost irrelevant. So it makes more sense to talk about "lost lives" instead of applying the contentious concept of "victims" versus "perpetrators."

#### 4.2. Moralities of Violence: Lives Lost Are Lives Lost?

Northern Ireland is still far away from a consensus on how to assess the victims of the ethno-political conflict; *inclusive* and *exclusive* definitions and perceptions of "victimhood" collide, while the exclusive definition is clearly predominant at societal level.

The political attitude of Sinn Fein pretends to be based on an inclusive definition of the victims. Eoin O'Broin, a party spokesman, describes a memorial plaque in front of the Wave Trauma Center in North Belfast, which lists all the people who lost their lives in the conflict in this area since 1969: "Often the IRA volunteer's name or the British

<sup>7</sup> Families Acting for their Innocent Relatives (FAIR), press release, July 16, 2002.

soldier's name who is on the list was responsible for somebody else's life whose name is also on the list. . . . If we are going to have a real process of reconciliation, a real process of truth, at some level we have to acknowledge, whatever our political judgements: Lives lost were lives lost! And all of those people's grief has to have some sort of equality" (O'Broin 2002).

Although it is official Sinn Fein policy to approve a truth and reconciliation commission, the party recognizes that society is not yet ready to think in inclusive victim categories (O'Broin 2002). Nor should we forget that Sinn Fein is totally opposed to any form of amnesty for the "state forces," i.e. the police and the British Army. In their eyes the British "crown forces" were *not* legitimate actors of violence.

If the dilemma of conflicting moralities of violence is to be resolved and a social consensus of inclusive "understanding" of victimhood achieved, the difficult question of amnesty must be addressed. There are very clear signals coming from all armed groups that they would be ready to contribute to clearing up the 1,800 deaths still unresolved—depending on whether or not amnesty would be given in exchange for this act of clarification. Michael Stone, a former combatant of the Protestant Ulster Defence Association (UDA), made the connection with South Africa in an interview with Tim Sebastian on BBC Hardtalk (June 11, 2003), emphasizing that he would be ready to make his knowledge public if he were guaranteed amnesty.

The central problem for the implementation of any version of a "Northern Ireland TRC" is connected to what was called the danger of "discriminatory truth-seeking" (Moltmann 2002, 43f.). The danger of "discriminatory truth-seeking" is linked to the question of amnesty. The Protestant mural cited earlier is a vehement example of "discriminatory truth-seeking": "Where are our inquiries? Where is our truth? Where is our justice?"

Bernhard Moltmann made the very strong accusation of "discriminatory truth-seeking" against the Bloody Sunday

Inquiry (also called the Saville Inquiry), which was set up by Tony Blair in January 1998 to find out the "truth" about the events of January 30, 1972, when fourteen Catholic civilians were shot dead by British paratroopers.<sup>8</sup> Presided over by Judge Lord Saville of Newdigate, the inquiry has heard almost one thousand witnesses over the years, but has still not published a final report. Throughout the life-time of the inquiry serious criticism has been directed against it, for example because of the total costs of about £150 million (Guardian, March 29, 2004). But the central point of criticism was that the victims of Bloody Sunday came exclusively from the Catholic community. There are increasing demands for IRA attacks resulting in the loss of hundreds of Protestant lives to be investigated with the same attention and the same financial investment as the events of Bloody Sunday. Those making that case usually refer to the Enniskillen bombing, and to "Bloody Friday" in Belfast, when the IRA exploded twenty-six bombs on July 21, 1971. If the request for an inclusive definition of victims is taken seriously, then the needs of the Protestant victims and their families cannot be ignored.

##### **5. Conclusion: Understanding, Recognition and (Critical) "Self-Analysis"**

THE ONLY THING I CAN IMAGINE THAT IS MORE PAINFUL THAN SELF-ANALYSIS IS CHILD-BIRTH. WHY IS IT THAT WE HATE PEOPLE WE DON'T KNOW? HOW IS IT THAT WE CAN LIVE WITH GHOSTS AND MYTHS AND SHIBBOLETHS WHILST HAVING NO CREDIBILITY WHATSOEVER OR FOUNDATION TO OUR TOUCHSTONES OF WHAT PASSES FOR POLITICAL POLICY OR POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY? AND OF COURSE: IS THAT A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AT ALL? (ERVINE 2001)

David Ervine was a member of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), a Protestant paramilitary group and chief enemy of the IRA. He served almost ten years in prison before becoming the leader of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and an outspoken supporter of the peace process. Northern Irish society as a whole still has extensive "self-analysis" to cope with, because if there is any consensus at all in Northern Ireland, it is the negative or skeptical "common sense" that Northern Ireland is not ready for the truth of the

<sup>8</sup> Website: <http://www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org.uk>.

violent past. A positive sign might be the overarching consensus within Northern Irish society that the past cannot be left "untouched" and that it has to be dealt with, but there is no plausible agreement on how to do this (Hamber 1999a).

What is important, however, is that post-war societies like Northern Ireland can never be transformed into Aldous Huxley's "Island" or a pre-modern "Ladakh." Post-war societies will never be free of conflict, since new conflicts will arise in the future. The right "peace prescription" can only cure a society of its divided past, heal its memories, and reassert a society's capacity to establish common institutions for peaceful conflict management. In order to reach this capacity the sociological concept of "recognition" is a helpful tool. In his ground-breaking study, the German philosopher Axel Honneth argued that "the struggle for recognition" is, and should be, at the center of social conflicts (Honneth 1996, see the comments in the introduction). Putting the "journey" towards mutual "recognition" by society as a whole at the center of the conflict puts the concept at the center of the transformation of the conflict, too. The debate that followed Honneth's publication is quite illustrative. Honneth's philosophical considerations were strongly challenged by Nancy Fraser, who criticized that within the philosophical debate there was too much emphasis on "recognition" while the important questions surrounding the idea of "redistribution" were marginalized (Honneth and Fraser 2003). Leaving aside the Honneth-Fraser debate, *mutual* recognition comes into play as a "soft factor" within the realm of conflict transformation and acquires an enormous potential for post-conflict societies since it can lead to a weakening of voluntary apartheid. The main focus must be on mutual recognition of victimhood while acknowledging the suffering and loss on both sides.

One impressive example of recognition occurred in May 2007, when Sir Mike Jackson, who was an officer in the Parachute Regiment in Londonderry at the time of Bloody Sunday, said: "I have no doubt that innocent people were shot."<sup>9</sup> Jackson had previously consistently refused to give evidence to the Bloody Sunday Inquiry.

Another example is the proposals of the Consultative Group on the Past, an independent group established in 2007 to seek views across the community on the best way to deal with the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland. The group, co-chaired by Lord Robin Eames, the former archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, and Denis Bradley, a prominent public figure and former vice-chairman of the Police Board, published its final report on 28 January 2009. Most controversially it included the proposal that a payment of 12,000 pounds should be made to all who lost relatives as a result of the troubles: civilians *and* members of the non-state groups (Consultative Group on the Past 2009). The Consultative Group characterized this payment as "recognition payment" aimed at recognizing that everybody who died as consequence of the Troubles was a legitimate victim. Unsurprisingly, a storm of anger followed. For example, Lord Morrow from the DUP argued that "mothers' tears are not the same": "The question has been asked, 'Are the tears of the mother of a paramilitary killer any different from the tears of the mother of a victim who had no involvement whatsoever in violence?' I happen to think there is a difference, in particular, when that mother declares her support for the murderous activities her offspring was engaged in" (*The Newsletter*, February 3, 2009).

Even before publication, the Consultative Group made a similarly controversial proposal which was excluded from the final report: On January 8, 2008, it proposed that the British government should formally declare and "recognize" that it had fought a "war" against the IRA. Throughout the "Troubles" successive governments and the security forces claimed they were dealing with "criminal activity" and a "breakdown of law and order" in Northern Ireland. Declaring that a "war" had been fought would give some moral and ethical legitimacy to the "fallen comrades" of the IRA, who would then be considered as "victims of war"—on an equal basis with police officers and soldiers.

Willie Frazer responded very angrily to the proposal: "If there was a war it justifies the murder of our loved ones. It was not a war, it was a terrorist campaign" (BBC News,

<sup>9</sup> BBC News, May 29, 2007, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/northern\\_ireland/6699729.stm..](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/6699729.stm..)

January 8, 2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/7176271.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/7176271.stm)). However, Jude Whyte, whose mother was killed by a UVF bomb, was quoted as saying that it was important to move forward: "What Denis Bradley and Robin Eames are doing is asking people together to cross the rubicon and forgive, not to forget, but to hand the next generation something better" (ibid.).

## 6. References

- Aijmer, Göran. 2000. The Idiom of Violence in Imagery and Discourse. In *Meanings of Violence: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, ed. Göran Aijmer and Jon Abbink, 1–21. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Apter, David. 1997. Political Violence in Analytical Perspective. In *The Legitimization of Violence*, ed. David Apter, 1–32. New York: New York University Press.
- Baumann, Marcel M. 2008a. The Trouble with the Peace Science's "Trouble-Makers." *Peace Review* 20 (4) (October 2008): 455–61.
- . 2008b. *Zwischenwelten: Weder Krieg, noch Frieden: Über den konstruktiven Umgang mit Gewaltphänomenen im Prozess der Konflikttransformation*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Bell, Terry. 2003. *Unfinished Business: South Africa, Apartheid and Truth*. London and New York: Verso.
- Beevor, Antony. 2008. *Der Spanische Bürgerkrieg*. Munich: Goldmann.
- Blok, Anton. 2000. The Enigma of Senseless Violence. In *Meanings of Violence: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, ed. Göran Aijmer and Jon Abbink, 23–38. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Bloomfield, Kenneth. 1998. *We Will Remember Them*. Report of the Northern Ireland Victims Commissioner. Belfast.
- Boraine, Alexander. 2003. South Africa's Amnesty Revisited. In *The Provocations of Amnesty: Memory, Justice and Impunity*, ed. Charles Villavicencio and Erik Doxtader, 165–80. Cape Town: Africa World Press.
- Boulding, Kenneth E. 1978. *Stable Peace*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Buckley-Zistel, Susanne. 2006. Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda. *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 76 (2): 131–50.
- Burton, Mary. 1999. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Looking Back, Moving Forward. In *Past Imperfect: Dealing with the Past in Northern Ireland and Countries in Transition*, ed. Brandon Hamber, 13–24. London/Derry, Northern Ireland: INCORE/University of Ulster. <http://www.brandonhamber.com/pastimperfect.htm>.
- Burton, John W. 1987. *Resolving Deep-Rooted Conflicts: A Handbook*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- . ed. 1990. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- . 1995. Conflict Prevention as a Political System. In *Beyond Confrontation. Learning Conflict Resolution in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. John A Vasquez, Sanford Jaffe, James Turner Johnson, and Linda Stamato, 115–30. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Burton, John W., and Frank Dukes, eds. 1990. *Conflict: Practices in Management, Settlement and Resolution*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cherry, John, John Daniel, and Madeleine Fullard. 2002. Researching the "Truth": A View from Inside the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In *Commissioning the Past. Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, ed. Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson, 17–36. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- Coetzee, Martin. 2003. An Overview of the TRC Amnesty Process. In *The Provocations of Amnesty: Memory, Justice and Impunity*, ed. Charles Villavicencio and Erik Doxtader, 181–94. Cape Town: Africa World Press.
- Consultative Group on the Past (CGP). 2009. Text of Report Launch Address by Denis Bradley and Robin Eames of the Consultative Group on the Past, 28 January. Belfast: CGP.
- Ervine, David. 2001. Interview by Marcel M. Baumann. June 27.
- Feldman, Allen. 1991. *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1998. Retaliate and Punish: Political Violence as Form and Memory in Northern Ireland. *Éire: Interdisciplinary Journal of Irish Studies* 32–33 (1997–1998): 195–235.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. 1966. *Das Gedächtnis und seine sozialen Bedingungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1967. *Das Kollektive Gedächtnis*. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke.
- . 1992. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hamber, Brandon. 1999a. The Past Imperfect. Exploring Northern Ireland, South Africa and Guatemala. In *Past Imperfect: Dealing with the Past in Northern Ireland and Countries in Transition*, ed. Brandon Hamber, 1–12. Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland: INCORE/University of Ulster. <http://www.brandonhamber.com/pastimperfect.htm>.
- . 1999b. Remembering to Forget. Issues to Consider when Establishing Structures for Dealing with the Past, In *Past Imperfect: Dealing with the Past in Northern Ireland and Countries in Transition*, ed. Brandon Hamber, 56–78. Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland: INCORE/University of Ulster. <http://www.brandonhamber.com/pastimperfect.htm>.
- . 1999c. Conclusion: A Truth Commission for Northern Ireland? In *Past Imperfect: Dealing with the Past in Northern Ireland and Countries in Transition*, ed. Brandon Hamber, 78–79. Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland: INCORE/University of Ulster. <http://www.brandonhamber.com/pastimperfect.htm>.
- . 2003. Are Lessons Transferable? The Importance of Research for Policy on Transitional Justice Mechanisms. Paper presented at the Empirical Research Methodologies of Transitional Justice Mechanisms Conference, Stellenbosch, South Africa. <http://www.brandonhamber.com/publications/pap-are%20lessons%20transferable.doc>.
- Harris, Rosemary. 1972. *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster: A study of Neighbours and "Strangers" in a Border Community*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hayner, Priscilla B. 1994. Fifteen Truth Commissions—1974 to 1994: A Comparative Study. *Human Rights Quarterly* 16 (4): 597–655.
- . 1995. Fifteen Truth Commissions—1974 to 1994: A Comparative Study. In *Transitional Justice: How Emerging Democracies Reckon With Former Regimes*, ed. Neil J. Krutz, vol. 1, 101–104. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.

- . 2000. Same Species, Different Animal: How South Africa Compares to Truth Commissions Worldwide. In *Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd, 32–41. Cape Town: Zed Books.
- Honneth, Axel. 1996. *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Honneth, Axel, and Nancy Fraser. 2003. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso.
- Jarman, Neil. 1997. *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland*. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Keller, Reiner. 2004. *Diskursforschung: eine Einführung für SozialwissenschaftlerInnen*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Kelman, Herbert C. 1990. Interactive Problem-Solving: A Social-psychological Approach to Conflict Resolution. In *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution*, ed. John W. Burton and Frank Dukes, 199–215. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 1997a. Inoffizielle Diplomatie – Ihr Beitrag zur Lösung internationaler Konflikte. In *Frieden machen*, ed. Dieter Senghaas, 243–67. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- . 1997b. Socio-Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict. In *Peacemaking in International Conflict. Methods & Techniques*, ed. I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, 191–237. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Kelman, Herbert C., and Peter Cohen. 1976. The Problem-solving Workshop. A Social-psychological Contribution to the Resolution of International Conflicts. *Journal of Peace Research* 13 (2): 79–90.
- Lederach, John Paul. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Liechty, Joseph, and Cecelia Clegg. 2001. *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. Dublin: Columba.
- Moltmann, Bernhard. 2002. „Es kann der Frömmste nicht im Frieden bleiben“: Nordirland und sein kalter Frieden, HSFK Report 8. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung.
- O’Broin, Eoin. 2002. Interview by Marcel M. Baumann. November 6.
- Porter, Norman. 2003. *The Elusive Quest: Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Blackstaff.
- Ropers, Norbert. 1995a. *Friedliche Einmischung: Strukturen, Prozesse und Strategien zur konstruktiven Bearbeitung ethno-politischer Konflikte*, Berghof Report 1. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.
- . 1995b. Die friedliche Bearbeitung ethno-politischer Konflikte. In *Friedliche Konfliktbearbeitung in der Staaten- und Gesellschaftswelt*, ed. Norbert Ropers and Tobias Debiel, 197–232. Bonn: Diez.
- Rosenberg, Marshall B. 2003a. *Gewaltfreie Kommunikation: Eine Sprache des Lebens*. Paderborn: Junfermann.
- . 2003b. Getting Past the Pain between Us: Healing and Reconciliation without Compromise. Encinitas, CA: Puddle Dancer.
- . 2004. *Konflikte lösen durch Gewaltfreie Kommunikation: Ein Gespräch mit Gabriele Seils*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.
- Santino, Jack. 2001. *Signs of War and Peace: Social Conflict and the Use of Public Symbols in Northern Ireland*. New York and Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schröder, Ingo W., and Bettina E. Schmidt. 2001. Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices. In *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*, ed. Ingo W. Schröder and Bettina E. Schmidt, 1–24. London and New York: Routledge.
- Shirlow, Peter. 2003. “Who Fears to Speak”: Fear, Mobility, and Ethno-sectarianism in the Two “Ardoynes.” *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 3 (1): 76–91.
- Shirlow, Peter, and Brendan Murtagh. 2006. *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City*. London, Dublin, and Ann Arbor: Pluto.
- Simmel, Georg. 1958. *Soziologie: Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
- Simpson, Graeme. 2002. “Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories”: A Brief Evaluation of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, ed. Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson, 220–51. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- Smyth, Marie. 1999. Remembering in Northern Ireland. Victims, Perpetrators and Hierarchies of Pain and Responsibility. In *Past Imperfect: Dealing with the Past in Northern Ireland and Countries in Transition*, ed. Brandon Hamber, 31–49. Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland: INCORE/University of Ulster. <http://www.brandonhamber.com/pastimperfect.htm>.
- Smyth, Marie, and Marie-Therese Fay, eds. 2000. *Personal Accounts from Northern Ireland’s Troubles. Public Conflict, Private Loss*. London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press.
- Venkathratnam, Sonny. 2003. Interview by Marcel M. Baumann. June 5.
- Villa-Vicencio, Charles. 2000a. Restorative Justice: Dealing with the Past Differently. In *Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd, 68–76. Cape Town: Zed Books.
- . 2000b. Getting On with Life: A Move towards Reconciliation. In *Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd, 199–209. Cape Town: Zed Books.
- . 2003a. Restorative Justice: Ambiguities and Limitations of a Theory. In *The Provocations of Amnesty: Memory, Justice and Impunity*, ed. Charles Villa-Vicencio and Erik Doxtader, 30–50. Cape Town: Africa World Press.
- . 2003b. Interview by Marcel M. Baumann. June 17.
- Volkan, Vamik. 1997. *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. New York: Basic Books.
- Weber, Max. [1922] 2006. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. Paderborn: Zweitausendeins.
- . 1991. *Schriften zur Wissenschaftslehre*. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Widgery, Lord. 1972. *Report of the Tribunal Appointed to Inquire into the Events on Sunday, 30 January 1972, which Led to Loss of Life in Connection with the Procession in Londonderry on that Day*. London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office.
- Wright, Frank. 1987. *Northern Ireland: A Comparative Analysis*. New York: Barnes & Noble.
- . 1990. Communal Deterrence and the Threat of Violence in the North of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century. In *Political Violence: Ireland in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. John Darby, Nicholas Dodge, and A. C. Hepburn, 11–28. Belfast and Ottawa: Appletree.
- . 1996. *Two Lands on One Soil: Ulster Politics before Home Rule*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

---

**Marcel M. Baumann**

marcel.baumann@politik.uni-freiburg.de

# Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics: A Statistical Typology of the Motives for Protest at the 2007 G8 Summit

Renate Möller, Faculty of Education, University of Bielefeld, Germany

Uwe Sander, Faculty of Education, University of Bielefeld, Germany

Arne Schäfer, Faculty of Education, University of Bielefeld, Germany

Dirk Villányi, Institute of Sociology, Helmut Schmidt University, Hamburg, Germany

Matthias D. Witte, Faculty of Education, University of Bielefeld, Germany

## Vol. 3 (1) 2009

### Editorial (p. 3)

#### Focus:

#### General Theory of Violence

Guest Editors:

Manuel Eisner and  
Susanne Karstedt

#### Introduction: Is a General Theory of Violence Possible?

Susanne Karstedt / Manuel Eisner (pp. 4 – 8)

#### Micro and Macro Theories of Violence

Randall Collins (pp. 9 – 22)

#### Violence, Crime, and Violent Crime

Richard B. Felson (pp. 23 – 39)

#### The Uses of Violence: An Examination of Some Cross-Cutting Issues

Manuel Eisner (pp. 40 – 59)

#### Is a General Theory of Socially Disapproved Violence Possible (or Necessary)?

Charles Tittle (pp. 60 – 74)

#### Violence as Situational Action

Per-Olof H. Wikström / Kyle Treiber (pp. 75 – 96)

#### Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for Organised Violence

Martin Shaw (pp. 97 – 106)

#### Open Section

#### Understanding the Other's 'Understanding' of Violence

Marcel M. Baumann (pp. 107 – 123)

#### ► Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics

Renate Möller / Uwe Sander / Arne Schäfer / Dirk Villányi / Matthias D. Witte (pp. 124 – 142)

# Motive Structures and Violence among Young Globalization Critics: A Statistical Typology of the Motives for Protest at the 2007 G8 Summit

Renate Möller, Faculty of Education, University of Bielefeld, Germany

Uwe Sander, Faculty of Education, University of Bielefeld, Germany

Arne Schäfer, Faculty of Education, University of Bielefeld, Germany

Dirk Villányi, Institute of Sociology, Helmut Schmidt University, Hamburg, Germany

Matthias D. Witte, Faculty of Education, University of Bielefeld, Germany

The results of a questionnaire survey of 3,578 young protesters aged 15 to 24 were used to create a typology of the motive structures of the young globalization critics who participated in protests against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm in June 2007. Eight groups with different motive structures identified using cluster analysis reveal the spectrum of motives of the young demonstrators, ranging from social and political idealism to hedonistic fun-seeking and nationalist motives. Despite the diversity of motives, two cross-cluster motives can be identified: the results clearly show that the majority of respondents were motivated by political idealism and rejected violence. Two overlapping minorities were found: one where political idealism was largely lacking, and another where violence was a prominent motive.

## 1. Introduction

The growing dynamism of globalization has brought forth a new social movement protesting against what it sees as the negative repercussions of the process. In recent years the critics of globalization have attracted much public attention worldwide through headline-hitting demonstrations and violent clashes with the police. One rallying point of this global protest movement is the annual G8 summit meeting, which is held in a different country every year. In 2007 the venue was the German seaside resort of Heiligendamm. This major political event attracted tens of thousands of protesters, many of them young. Although the media portray the globalization critics as a large and uniform social movement, the publicity and statements of the groups involved show very clearly that their motives are by no means uniform but highly varied and in some cases even contradict one another. The ways the motives of the young globalization critics may be grouped together to form motive structures have not previously been subjected to sociological analysis and systemization. What moved young

people in 2007 to participate in the protests at Heiligendamm? What different motive structures can be identified among young activists? And is there a connection between the motive structures of the globalization critics and the forms of protest they practice, and if so, to what extent?

In order to find answers to these questions the Center for Child and Youth Research at Bielefeld University conducted a questionnaire-based survey during the G8 summit at Heiligendamm to record statistically the motives of young globalization critics. In this contribution we present a typology of the motive structures of the young demonstrators generated by cluster analysis.

## 2. Existing Research

The global justice movement (also known as the anti-globalization movement) has been addressed in many social science publications, especially in the field of political science (e.g. Cohen and Rai 2000; Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald 2000; Klein, Koopmanns, and Geiling 2001; Leggewie 2003,

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the student interviewers who conducted the survey, especially the teams working in the "Black Bloc" who

succeeded in persuading members of that group to complete the questionnaire (often wearing gloves).

della Porta, and Tarrow 2005; Bemerburg and Niederbacher 2007; Schäfer and Witte 2007; della Porta 2007; Fillieule and Blanchard 2008; Moghadam 2008; Rucht and Teune 2008; Wennerhag 2008). There has been comparatively broad study of the annual meetings of the World Social Forum established by globalization critics as a counterweight to the meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Davos World Economic Forum (WEF), and the annual world economic summits of the heads of state of the G8 states (e.g. Hammond 2003, Fisher and Ponniah 2003, Schönleitner 2003, Patomäki and Teivainen 2004, IBASE 2005, 2006, Reitan 2007, Herkenrath 2008). For example, Herkenrath's study sought to "investigate the political attitudes of participants at the WSF using multivariate methods and uncover possible connections with socioeconomic and sociostructural background factors" (2008, 1). His findings speak "for a theoretical model of activist behavior that builds on fragmented social identities and malleable interests and on a capacity for empathy, tolerance, and intercultural learning. Not least, it becomes clear that neither activists from the global north nor those from the global south travel to the WSF in order to defend their preconceived opinions and rigidly entrenched interests there" (19). The objective of the World Social Forum itself is to promote coordination and exchange of ideas among globalization-critical groups and individuals, rather than to stage demonstrations and protest events aimed directly against a G8 summit, as in Genoa or Heiligendamm.

The most prominent of the few empirical studies of globalization critics actually participating in demonstrations against a global economic summit is the Italian study of the protests at the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001 (Andretta et al. 2003), which found that there was a hard core of organized globalization critics, but also a "much larger contingent of 'disorganized' but 'affiliated' activists" (203). The authors characterize the global justice movement as a transnational collective actor (36), but it is actually a strikingly heterogeneous social group. The political origins of the actors, their demands, their protest forms and their radicalism vary, but they are united by a "common sense" understanding of the

negative impact of neoliberal globalization on democracy, ecological sustainability, and social justice. "The movement's master frame identifies neoliberal globalization as the enemy and demands a more equitable distribution of rights and resources as well as participatory democracy (at the local, national, and global level). This frame makes it possible for any actor to join the protests and feel themselves part of the movement, without losing their own specific identity" (Andretta et al. 2003, 110f.). The master frame of the movement integrates it internally and allows it to appear as a collective actor to outside observers. The question of what different motives lead the (mostly) young activists to participate in the protests is not explicitly addressed by this study, so there is a research desideratum here.

The quantitative study by Olivier Fillieule and Phillip Blanchard (2008) characterizes the political motives of the investigated globalization critics who participated in 2003 in the European Social Forum in Paris and the No-G8 demonstrations in Evian as follows: "In accordance with the 'altermondialiste' label most of them agree on, their ideological world is centered on worldly issues and their attacks target international institutions and phenomena. North-South inequalities, fight against capitalism, against multinational firms and against war come first among the political issues that drove them to come to the events" (12). This study did not, however, examine non-political motives.

The three-year DEMOS research project funded by the European Commission (Democracy and the Mobilization of Society in Europe) also touches on the question of motives.<sup>1</sup> This international project addresses not the motive structures of globalization critics, but rather the forms of participatory democracy that emerge "from below" in the organizational structures and deliberative processes of social movements.

One important German-language contribution is an explorative ethnographic study led by Ronald Hitzler that describes the globalization-critical scene in Germany "from within." On the motive structures of the activists, it found

<sup>1</sup> <http://demos.iue.it>.

“that globalization-critical actors get involved not solely out of socially critical idealism, but always also act out of egoistic or egocentric motives, which can be seen in the importance attached to the experiential fun-seeking aspect” (Bemerburg and Niederbacher 2007, 239). This finding already provides clues to the diversity of the motive structures of the globalization critics.

The high proportion of adolescents and young adults at the protests is a characteristic feature of the global justice movement. Already at the demonstrations in Seattle against the World Trade Organization in 1999 “the low average age of the demonstrators, in particular, was a conspicuous new element that led observers to speak of a new political generation” (Andretta et al. 2003, 24f.). The protesters interviewed by Fillieule and Blanchard (2008) are also characterized by their low average age: “They are much younger: 40% to 60% of them are less than 30 years (two to four times more than the population) and only 1% to 5% more than 64 (4 to 12 times less than population)” (Fillieule and Blanchard 2008, 11). So it appears—notwithstanding a wealth of empirical data showing the political interest of the younger generation declining over the past decades (Schneekloth 2006)—that it is above all young people who get involved in the globalization-critical groupings. Yet little is known about the motives on which their participation in globalization-critical demonstrations is based.

### 3. Data Collection in the Field

#### 3.1. The General Situation: The G8 Summit in Heiligendamm

The thirty-third G8 summit was held in June 2007 in Heiligendamm on Germany’s Baltic coast, under the motto of “Growth and Responsibility.” From May 31 to June 8, 2007, globalization critics held countless planned and spontaneous protests in and around Heiligendamm and the nearby city of Rostock. These included marches, rallies, human chains, sit-down blockades, discussion meetings and tribunals, commemorations, vigils, religious services, concerts, and workshops, as well as smaller actions at other locations in the region. The number of people who participated over the whole week of protests is difficult to estimate, and the figures given by the organizers and the police for individual events often diverge widely. For example, while the organizers of the big demonstration on June 2 spoke of eighty

thousand participants, the police estimated the number to be no more than thirty thousand (Rucht and Teune 2008).

#### 3.2. Study Design

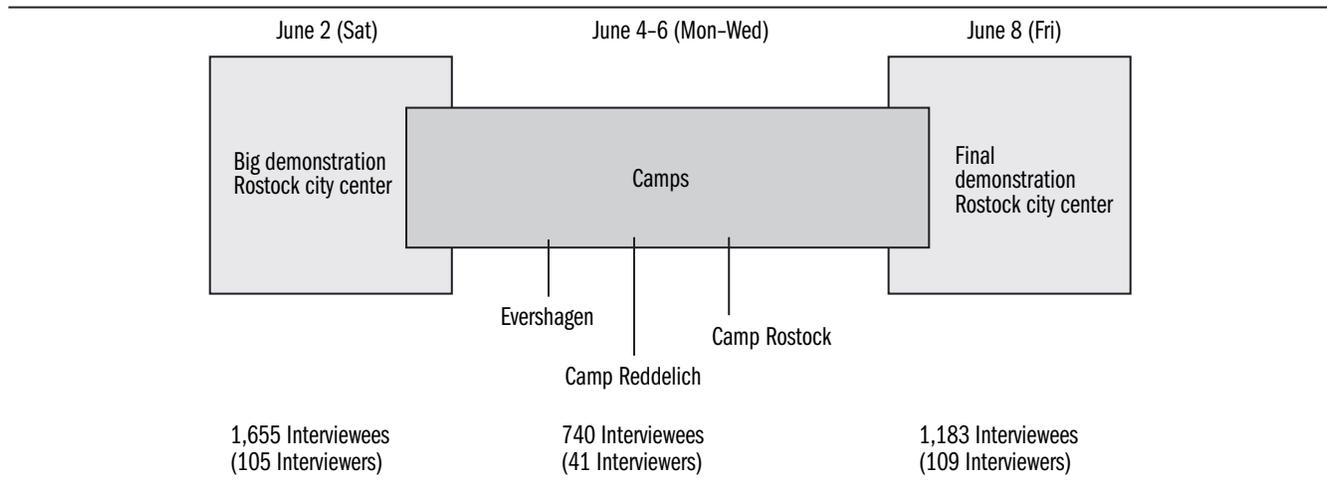
The objective of the present study was to collect quantitative data on the motive structures of the participants in the protests in Rostock and Heiligendamm at the time of the G8 summit. To achieve this—and especially in order to capture the *diversity of motives* of the participants—we chose to conduct surveys at the opening and closing events, because this was where the broadest spectrum of different protest groups was to be expected. Surveys were also conducted in the camps, where we expected to find the most active “summit-stormers” during their breaks between activities.

The international demonstration under the slogan “Another world is possible!” on Saturday June 2, 2007, in Rostock can be regarded as the real starting point of the organized week of protests in and around Heiligendamm. This event was selected as the first occasion for data collection. That day 105 interviewers collected data from 1,655 young protest participants. The interviews were conducted at the various meeting points *immediately before* the events started, because it seemed unlikely that questionnaires could be successfully distributed, completed, and returned *during* the marches. A second major survey was conducted in Rostock Stadthafen on June 8, when the concluding protest event was held. Here 1,183 participants were interviewed by 109 interviewers, and here, too, the survey was conducted at the meeting points in order to avoid the foreseeable problems of collecting data during the marches.

During the days in-between surveys were conducted in the camps at Rostock and Reddelich and at the convergence center in Rostock-Evershagen. The camp at Reddelich, about five kilometers from Heiligendamm, accommodated up to five thousand activists, while the camp in Rostock housed up to six thousand. On June 4, 5, and 6 our forty-one interviewers conducted 740 interviews, specifically at times when there were *no* major protest events planned.

Altogether 3,578 interviews were conducted on five days by 255 interviewers organized in twenty-four teams. Repeat interviews were systematically avoided.

Figure 1: Survey concept



### 3.3. The Problems of Collecting Data at Protest Events

The survey was conducted by 255 students from Rostock University, who were trained for the task in an accompanying seminar and conducted the work in teams led by more experienced students. The teams and their leaders found themselves facing two main problems: Firstly, the data had to be collected in the context of the protest event, i.e. during a demonstration. Because a moving mass of people—the protest march—is ill-suited for carrying out written surveys, the team decided to conduct the interviews at the official meeting points immediately before the actual demonstration began. This approach offered the following advantages: (1.) The demonstrators were not yet in motion physically, so it was technically possible to complete a questionnaire. (2.) The demonstrators were, however, already mentally “in motion.” The assembly phase is always associated with a certain degree of boredom (and sometimes also tension), a mental state in which people are more likely to be willing to complete a questionnaire.

The second problem was making a random selection of participants, taking into account the diversity and size of the different protesting groups. It being impossible to implement a precise sampling strategy under the conditions of a demonstration that is about to begin, the interviewers were instructed at least to try to achieve this goal. In this respect, too, the meeting points were appropriate places to conduct the survey. The different groups gather not at random, but

in blocks that are identifiable by their manner, clothing, and/or use of particular symbols and banners, making it possible to at least roughly estimate their size. On the basis of these estimates we were able to decide how many people the teams were to interview within each block. Following an ad hoc procedure, the teams were told to ask every *n*th person in the block to which they were assigned, whereby *n* was selected such as to achieve the planned number of interviews. This prevented the questionnaire from being completed by, say, couples or by all the members of a group of friends.

Because we used such a large number of interviewers, we actually came quite close to collecting a random sample. The survey situation made it impossible to systematically record refusals, but the interviewers reported the proportion was less than 1 percent. We believe that this unusually high level of acceptance of the survey has its roots in the use of periods of “enforced idleness” while waiting for the protest to begin, and would not have been possible to achieve in a march “on the move.” Critically, it must be noted that the method we chose recorded people who moved from one group to another only inadequately and individuals who joined the march after it began not at all.

### 3.4. Survey Instrument

To survey the young protesters about their motives for joining the protests in Rostock and the surrounding area,

the project team developed a battery of forty-three items. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with different statements addressing motives for protesting on a four-response scale ranging from “do not agree at all” to “agree completely.” The young protesters were also asked to state their position on different forms of protest ranging from non-violent actions to violence against persons and property: whether they rejected them, believed they made sense, or participated in them themselves.

Sociodemographic data was also collected, in particular concerning educational qualifications and employment status. Because the survey was to be conducted in the scope of a protest event the questionnaire had to be short and easy to use; i.e. the questions had to fit onto a single sheet of A4 paper. This made it imperative to focus on the essentials.

#### 4. Typology of the Motive Structures of Young Globalization Critics

In the following we describe a typology of the motive structures of young globalization critics generated using principal component analysis. We began by putting the forty-three items into discrete groups on the basis of their correlations. This analysis produced an eight-component model that explains 55 percent of the variance. The eight principal components or motive aspects cover a broad spectrum ranging from political and social idealism to hedonistic fun-seeking and nationalist motives.<sup>2</sup>

##### 1. *Acting together against global social problems (13.6 percent)*<sup>3</sup>

The first principal component brings together variables relating both to substantive political grounds for a protest—such as human rights violations, poverty, and repression—and to forms of protest, namely raising one’s voice together with others. This component points to the wish to work for a better world, including political idealism as a motive.

##### 2. *Using violence against state power and out of general frustration (11.8 percent)*

Principal component 2 filters out the motive of deviant violent activity: the conviction that “only with violence can

you achieve anything,” as well as the desire to escape from everyday cares and “let off steam.”

##### 3. *Demonstrating as a fun experience (8.1 percent)*

Principal component 3 collects motive aspects connected with fun-seeking and enthusiasm for a big party-style event (as opposed to political commitment).

##### 4. *Curiosity aroused by information from media and school (5.0 percent)*

These young protesters have heard about the G8 summit and the problems of globalization at school or through the media, and are attempting to gain a first-hand impression and more information by taking part in the protests themselves.

##### 5. *External motivation by friends (4.7 percent)*

This component connects items that assign friends an active role, where respondents themselves were more passive: in other words, they were brought along by friends.

##### 6. *Demonstrating as an expression of collective resistance (4.6 percent)*

The central feature of this motive aspect is the wish “to be part of a movement.”

##### 7. *Nationalist and protectionist motives (3.9 percent)*

Principal component 7 underlines how the “national” can be seen as the opposite of the “global.” Here we find fear of Americanization and “loss of national identity,” and even fear of immigrants taking jobs away as the motive for participating in the protests.

##### 8. *External influence (3.3 percent)*

This last principal component brings together items that indicate that the young protesters took part in the protests not on their own account but in response to the expectations of others.

On the basis of the principal component analysis indices were calculated for each of the eight motive aspects. The index indicates the average agreement with the items whose loading on the corresponding principal component is greater than 0.35.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The factor loadings of the individual items are listed in Table A1 in the appendix.

<sup>3</sup> Proportion of total variance explained by the component.

<sup>4</sup> The values range between 1 (do not agree at all) and 4 (agree completely). We speak of agreement when the index value is greater than or equal to 3 and rejection of the corresponding motive aspect when the value is less than or equal to 2.

Using cluster analysis the surveyed respondents were put into eight groups or clusters such that individuals within a group differed very little in their motive structures whereas those from different groups differed as much as possible.<sup>5</sup> The clusters represent an empirically verified typology of motive structures, although of course it must be remembered that these are aggregates and the designations of the clusters should be regarded as ideal types.

Each of the eight clusters is characterized by a specific mix of the eight motive aspects, although, as it turns out, the patterns of agreement and rejection for two motive aspects remained constant across most of the clusters. For one thing, the overwhelming majority of the young protesters agree with the motive aspect of political idealism: “Acting together against global social problems.” For another, a large majority of the respondents reject the aspect “Using violence against state power and out of general frustration.” On the basis of these two aspects the clusters can be grouped as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Cluster groupings**

		Political idealism	
		Agree	Disagree
Violence	Agree	Politically idealistic, violence-motivated Cluster 6 (383 respondents, 11 %)	Politically disinterested, violence-motivated Cluster 8 (294 respondents, 8 %)
	Disagree	Politically idealistic, non-violent Cluster 1-5 (2,751 respondents, 77 %)	Politically disinterested, non-violent Cluster 7 (144 respondents, 4 %)

In the following we will describe the agreement rates for the individual motive aspects in the eight clusters and report the attitudes of cluster members toward different protest forms with a view to discovering whether a connection can

be identified between cluster membership and the preferred form of protest. Other important dimensions, such as gender composition and sociodemographic background are outlined briefly after the cluster descriptions.

#### 4.1. Non-Violent Political Idealists

##### 4.1.1. Motive Structure of Cluster 1:

###### Politically Idealistic and Movement-orientated

Cluster 1 is the largest, with 619 respondents representing 17 percent of the sample. Of the young protesters collected in this cluster, 98 percent said that their motive was to protest against human rights violations, poverty, and corporate power. However, given the high overall level of agreement with this motive aspect in the sample as a whole (87 percent), this is not specifically a feature of Cluster 1. What particularly characterizes the motivation of the young protesters in Cluster 1 is collective struggle as part of a movement. The cluster mean for this aspect differs significantly from all the other clusters. For 83 percent of the young protesters in this cluster participation in collective resistance is important. The relatively high level of involvement in political groups also reflects this collectivist orientation. Three quarters of the respondents said that they belonged to a political group; 72 percent are actively involved.

External motivation through media reporting or discussions at school play little role in Cluster 1; the same goes for the fun-seeking aspect, which was named by only 12 percent of the respondents in this cluster as a reason to participate in the protests. The motive aspect indicating external influence is rejected much less strongly in Cluster 1 than in the other clusters.

Cluster 1 is one of the non-violent clusters. While 93 percent here decisively rejected the motive “Using violence against state power and out of general frustration,” the proportion in the sample as a whole was 79 percent. Rejection of nationalist and protectionist motives by respondents in this cluster was also disproportionately high.

<sup>5</sup> First of all the single-linkage hierarchical clustering method was used to identify outliers, which were excluded from further analysis. The optimal number of clusters was determined using Ward's

algorithm and the scree test. In subsequent cluster-center analysis the clusters were further optimized by using an exchange algorithm to rearrange the clustered individuals until it was no longer pos-

sible to further reduce the distance between the respective personal data and the cluster centroid.

Actual participation in protest actions corresponded with the spectrum of motives: The young protesters from Cluster 1 demonstrate a disproportionately high degree of active participation in all non-violent protest forms, such as demonstrations, public discussions, street theatre, protest concerts, and handing out leaflets, although their involvement in blockades, other civil disobedience, and spraying protest graffiti was also disproportionately high. The proportion

from Cluster 1 actively involved in violent actions corresponds to the overall average. Conspicuous in this cluster is the large number of young protesters who express approval of violent forms of protest even though they do not participate in them themselves: for example dismantling fences and barriers, throwing paint-bombs, defense against police attacks, and even the destruction of corporate property.

*Sociodemographic coordinates of Cluster 1*

**Table 2: Attitudes to violent protest actions comparing Cluster 1 with all the non-violent clusters (1–5 and 7)**

	Clusters 1–5 and 7			Cluster1		
	Rejection	Agreement	Participation	Rejection	Agreement	Participation
Dismantling barriers	44.3%	37.0%	12.5%	30.7%	47.0%	15.8%
Attacks on the police	80.1%	9.7%	5.2%	70.1%	16.3%	6.5%
Defense against police attacks	34.3%	42.9%	18.2%	24.4%	50.2%	21.0%
Throwing paint bombs	49.0%	36.1%	10.3%	33.4%	47.0%	14.7%
Throwing stones, bottles	86.4%	6.7%	2.9%	78.0%	11.0%	4.2%
Destruction of corporate property	62.1%	25.7%	7.5%	44.3%	38.8%	9.9%

In comparison to the overall sample, Cluster 1 has a slight overrepresentation of males and the proportion of over-nineteens is a little higher. Cluster 1 has the highest proportion of highly qualified school-leavers among the respondents and the highest proportion of graduates among their parents.

	Male	20 and older	Abitur (university entrance qualification)	Father graduate	Mother graduate
Cluster 1	59.5%	71.8%	57.6%	58.2%	54.6%
Overall	57.5%	68.5%	50.6%	53.2%	48.3%

**4.1.2. Motive Structure of Cluster 2: Politically Idealistic Individualists**

With 536 respondents, Cluster 2 comprises 15 percent of the overall sample. As in Cluster 1 almost all the young protesters here said that they were participating in the events to protest against human rights violations, poverty, and corporate power. What distinguishes these young protesters from all other clusters is their pronounced individualism. Collective protest is not a motive for them; they are neither interested in forms of collective resistance nor do they feel

part of a movement. Ninety percent of them explicitly reject the idea of external motivation through friends. Almost none of them said that they were in Rostock because their friends or political group expected it of them or because it was “in.” Respondents assigned to Cluster 2 cited fun-seeking as their motive for participation significantly less often than the young protesters in the other clusters, and the proportion reporting violent motives for their protest was 0 percent. With respect to their approval of and participation in the different forms of protest no notable differences were found to the distribution in the overall sample.

*Sociodemographic coordinates of Cluster 2:*

The proportion of males in Cluster 2 is above average. It is also the “oldest” cluster, highly qualified school-leavers are disproportionately represented, and their parents’ level of education is above average.

	Male	20 and older	Abitur (university entrance qualification)	Father graduate	Mother graduate
Cluster 2	61.2%	76.0%	57.1%	56.9%	52.2%
Overall	57.5%	68.5%	50.6%	53.2%	48.3%

#### 4.1.3. Motive Structure of Cluster 3: Politically Idealistic, Seeking Fun, Information, and New Experiences

Cluster 3 comprises 556 respondents, representing 16 percent of the sample. These respondents are also politically idealistic, but they differ from the protesters in clusters 1 and 2 in that they explicitly cite the “fun and new experience” aspect of the demonstrations and big events as a motive for their participation. There is also above-average agreement with the motive aspect “Curiosity aroused by external information sources.”

Some of the young protesters in Cluster 3 became aware of the G8 summit and the protests through media reporting, and they did not want to miss the opportunity to experience the events first-hand. Alongside the idealistic aspect, we find a complex of characteristic motives here: to “have a party,” gather information, and enjoy the feeling of belonging to a movement. The latter is indicated by the fact that 76 percent of the young protesters in this cluster said they were

in Rostock because they wanted to express their resistance together with others. However, the number of respondents who are active in political groups is below average in this cluster.

The dimension of “external influence” was categorically rejected. Almost all the young protesters said that their participation was not dependent on others and that they were not following a trend. Cluster 3 is one of the non-violent clusters. The motive aspect “Using violence against state power and out of general frustration” has 0 percent agreement. The rejection of nationalist and protectionist motives is also disproportionately high. The proportion of young protesters in this cluster who take part in non-violent actions is average, while a disproportionately high number reject violent forms of protest such as damage to private and corporate property, attacks on the police, defense against police attack, and dismantling barriers.

**Table 3: Attitudes to violent protest actions comparing Cluster 3 with all the non-violent clusters (1-5 and 7)**

	Clusters 1 – 5 and 7			Cluster3		
	Rejection	Agreement	Participation	Rejection	Agreement	Participation
Dismantling barriers	44.3%	37.0%	12.5%	53.1%	32.7%	9.5%
Attacks on the police	80.1%	9.7%	5.2%	87.6%	5.4%	3.8%
Defense against police attacks	34.3%	42.9%	18.2%	43.3%	38.3%	14.2%
Damage to private property	88.7%	3.3%	2.7%	92.6%	2.0%	2.0%
Destruction of corporate property	62.1%	25.7%	7.5%	70.3%	20.3%	5.4%

#### *Sociodemographic coordinates of Cluster 3:*

The proportion of males in Cluster 3 is comparatively small, while it also contains an above-average proportion of highly qualified school-leavers. In terms of age structure and parents' education the cluster is average.

	Male	20 and older	Abitur (university entrance qualification)	Father graduate	Mother graduate
Cluster 3	54.2%	67.4%	56.8%	54.1%	49.6%
Overall	57.5%	68.5%	50.6%	53.2%	48.3%

#### 4.1.4. Motive Structure of Cluster 4:

##### **Politically Idealistic and Peer-orientated**

This cluster brings together respondents who, as well as being politically idealistic and movement-orientated, were heavily influenced by friends to join the protests. Cluster 4 contains 539 respondents, representing 15 percent of the sample. The motive of political idealism achieves 96 percent agreement here, and for the young protesters in this cluster the feeling of being part of a movement and demonstrating together with others also plays a major role. But the influence of friends is decisive. It is because of them and their powers of persuasion that this group traveled to the protests. While this motive aspect is rejected by 65 percent of the overall sample, in Cluster 4 motivation through friends

is irrelevant for only 31 percent of the respondents. In other words, many respondents in this cluster came to the protests because their friends motivated them to. The motive “Using violence against state power and out of general frustration” is rejected by 95 percent of the protesters in Cluster 4, whose participation in demonstrations and signature-gathering was slightly above average. An above-average proportion supported public discussions, leafleting, street theater, and protest concerts, but they did not participate actively in these protest forms. All violent protest actions were rejected disproportionately often.

*Sociodemographic coordinates of Cluster 4:*

Cluster 4 is the only female-dominated cluster, and has a slightly above-average proportion of under-twenties. The proportion of school students is disproportionately high and this cluster has the highest proportion of university students. The educational background of their parents is average for the sample.

	Male	20 and older	School	University	Father graduate	Mother graduate
Cluster 4	44.6%	65.5%	29.2%	49.9%	55.8%	45.9%
Overall	57.5%	68.5%	24.9%	42.8%	53.2%	48.3%

**4.1.5. Motive Structure of Cluster 5:**

**Politically Idealistic with Nationalist Tendencies**

Cluster 5 brings together 501 respondents, representing 14 percent of the sample. They are politically idealistic and traveled to Rostock without the intention of participating in violent protests. The specific feature of Cluster 5 is the above average frequency of agreement with nationalist motives (29 percent). However, one should not jump to the conclusion that agreement with this motive aspect represents an expression of extreme right-wing ideology among these young protesters. These young protesters are afraid of Americanization and loss of national identity and express the fear that immigrants could take away jobs. While on average 45 percent of all respondents explicitly rejected this motive aspect, the corresponding figure within Cluster 5 is just 3 percent.

The proportion of these respondents who said they were also interested in the entertainment program, wanted to make new social contacts, and hoped to gather experience is above average at 24 percent. “Being part of a movement” and “demonstrating together” were also important motives here.

These young protesters participated slightly less than average in all non-violent protest forms but supported them slightly more than average. A disproportionately high number of respondents in this cluster rejected violent protest.

*Sociodemographic coordinates of Cluster 5:*

Cluster 5 is the only cluster with a balanced gender composition, while the age composition is the same as the average for the overall sample. In this cluster we find the highest proportion of individuals who left school with a qualification for non-university higher education, while the proportion of school-leavers with university entrance qualification is slightly below average. Of all the clusters, Cluster 5 exhibits the highest proportion of young people already in employment. Examination of the educational background of their parents reveals a below average proportion of graduates. The most commonly named parental educational qualification is an apprenticeship.

	Fachabitur (qualification for non-university higher education)	Abitur (university entrance qualification)	Employed	Father skilled worker	Mother skilled worker	Father graduate	Mother graduate
Cluster 5	13.6%	42.2%	11.6%	34.2%	45.7%	48.8%	40.9%
Overall	9.8%	50.6%	7.7%	28.7%	39.7%	53.2%	48.3%

**4.2. Politically Idealistic, Potentially Violent**

**4.2.1. Motive Structures of Cluster 6: Politically Idealistic and Militant**

Cluster 6 brings together 383 respondents, representing 11 percent of the sample. These young protesters, too, belong to the group motivated by political idealism but differ from the members of clusters 1 to 5 in that almost 20 percent of them explicitly agree with violence-orientated motives. The

aspect of violence is the decisive criterion demarcating them from the other politically idealistic clusters.

The respondents in Cluster 6 exhibit an explosive mix of motives: They are politically idealistic with above-average agreement with the violence motive aspect. These young protesters know their enemy, and violence plays a major role in the choice of means. This highly politicized cluster appears most closely to correspond to the so-called autonomists, who are part of the radical left-wing and militant wing of the globalization-critical movement (and whose Black Bloc enjoys a great deal of media attention). Their active involvement in political groups is slightly above average.

However, 26 percent of these young protesters were also motivated by the fun-seeking and experiential character of the demonstrations and big events, which is a disproportionately high share. Below average agreement was found in this cluster with the motive “Curiosity aroused by external information sources.” This could be an indicator that these young protesters were already informed and “in the know.” Although the protest behavior of this cluster is violence-orientated, violence is not their only medium of protest. Their participation in non-violent protest actions corresponds to the average for the sample. But they demonstrate by far the greatest agreement rates for violent actions. This can be interpreted as an expression of the view that without the use of violence nothing can be achieved and one will not even get noticed.

**Table 4: Comparison of participation in violent actions between the politically idealistic, violence-approving Cluster 6 and the politically idealistic but non-violent clusters 1–5**

	Cluster 1-5	Cluster 6
Damage to private property	2.7%	15.1%
Dismantling barriers	12.5%	32.4%
Attacks on the police	5.2%	29.5%
Defense against police attack	18.2%	42.8%
Throwing paint bombs	10.3%	27.9%
Throwing stones, bottles	2.9%	23.8%
Destruction of corporate property	7.5%	25.3%
Protest graffiti	14.8%	26.4%

#### *Sociodemographic coordinates of Cluster 6:*

With a ratio of nearly 3:1, Cluster 6 has the highest proportion of males, and with 45 percent under-twenties it is also the youngest cluster, which directly explains the disproportionate number of school students. The proportion of highly qualified school-leavers is lowest in Cluster 6, as is the proportion of university students. The proportion of young protesters who describe themselves as unemployed is more than twice the figure for the other clusters. In this cluster the proportion of graduates among their parents is below average. The most commonly named educational qualification of parents is an apprenticeship.

	Male	20 and older	Abitur (university entrance qualification)	In university-level tertiary education	Unemployed	Father skilled worker	Father graduate
Cluster 6	72.9%	54.7%	31.8%	28.5%	12.4%	34.7%	43.8%
Overall	57.2%	68.5%	50.6%	42.8%	5.7%	28.7%	53.2%

### 4.3. Violent but Non-Political

#### 4.3.1. Motive Structure of Cluster 8: Fun-seeking Rioters

Cluster 8 comprises 294 respondents, or 8 percent of the sample. Only 42 percent of these young protesters agree with the motive aspect of political idealism, meaning that the majority were indifferent to the goals of the protests in which they were participating and did not define themselves as part of a movement collectively seeking to realize political goals and ideals of a better world; neither were they individualists, however. Rather they were disproportionately often motivated by friends and traveled together with them to the protests. What interests the respondents in this cluster about Rostock and the big events is the prospect of party and entertainment. Their experiential orientation is stronger than in any other cluster. Alongside the fun aspect a desire to riot is a key factor, although it would not appear to be politically motivated. Thirteen percent of the respondents from Cluster 8 explicitly agree with the violence-orientated motive aspect and only 18 percent explicitly reject it. The motive “Curiosity aroused by external information sources” found a similarly high level of agreement, above the average for the sample as a whole. The young protesters

had heard through the media that “something was going on” in Rostock, and wanted to be part of it. This corresponds with the above average frequency (20 percent) of respondents reporting that they were in Rostock because others expected this and because it was “in.” Like Cluster 6, Cluster 8 includes a disproportionately large number of respondents who support and take part in violent activities. But while the respondents from Cluster 6 also took part in non-violent protest actions, participation from Cluster 8 in such events was disproportionately small. This finding is no surprise, given that the majority of these young participants were not interested in the political dimension of the protests against globalization and the G8. The importance of experiential fun-seeking and motivation through friends and external information sources suggests that the members of Cluster 8 can be understood as media-networked “riot tourists” without genuine political interests. This clearly distinguishes them from the militant autonomists of Cluster 6 who are also violent, but highly political too. A weak feeling of group belonging and a comparatively low level of active involvement in political groups also matches this picture.

**Table 5: Comparison of participation in violent actions between the politically disinterested, violence-approving Cluster 8 and the politically idealistic, violence-approving Cluster 6**

	Cluster 8	Cluster 6
Damage to private property	13.3%	15.1%
Dismantling barriers	17.7%	32.4%
Attacks on the police	13.9%	29.5%
Defense against police attack	24.8%	42.8%
Throwing paint bombs	17.7%	27.9%
Throwing stones, bottles	12.2%	23.8%
Destruction of corporate property	13.9%	25.3%
Protest graffiti	20.1%	26.4%

#### *Sociodemographic coordinates of Cluster 8:*

Cluster 8 has a slight overrepresentation of males. The educational background of the respondents is below average: both the proportion of highly qualified school-leavers and the proportion of students are below the levels for the overall sample. The proportion unemployed is relatively very high, while the educational background of their parents is slightly below average.

	Male	20 and older	Abitur (university entrance qualification)	In university-level tertiary education	Unemployed	Father graduate	Mother graduate
Cluster 8	61.2%	70.4%	39.4%	33.2%	11.0%	47.1%	43.9%
Overall	57.2%	68.5%	50.6%	42.8%	5.7%	53.2%	48.3%

#### **4.4. Non-Political and Non-Violent**

##### **4.4.1. Motive Structure of Cluster 7: Not Protest-orientated**

With 144 respondents Cluster 7 is the smallest, comprising 4 percent of the overall sample. It differs significantly from all other clusters in all motive aspects. Agreement is below average for all motive dimensions. Thus only 3.5 percent say they are motivated by political idealism, which is a striking contrast to the overall average of 87 percent.

**Table 6: Attitude to the individual motive aspects**

Motive aspects	Reject motive aspect			Agree with motive aspect		
	Politically motivated Cluster 1-6	Unpolitical, violent Cluster 8	Cluster 7	Politically motivated Cluster 1-6	Unpolitical, violent Cluster 8	Cluster 7
Acting together against global social problems	0.0%	0.0%	42.4%	95.6%	41.8%	3.5%
Violence against state power and frustration	84.5%	18.0%	87.5%	2.4%	12.9%	0.0%
Fun-seeking	30.5%	5.4%	45.1%	15.0%	28.6%	10.4%
Curiosity aroused by external information sources	52.8%	6.5%	79.2%	11.0%	22.8%	1.4%
Motivation through friends	69.4%	13.3%	80.6%	3.5%	20.7%	1.4%
Part of a movement	6.0%	2.7%	52.8%	64.6%	34.7%	12.5%
Nationalist motives	45.3%	14.3%	88.9%	6.3%	18.0%	0.0%
External influence	92.4%	13.6%	98.6%	0.8%	20.1%	0.0%

If we examine Table 6, it is conspicuous that the respondents from Cluster 7 slip through the net of motives defined by the questionnaire. Only the aspects of fun-seeking and collective resistance achieve agreement levels exceeding 10 percent, and these are considerably lower than the comparable figures for other clusters. Thus 42 percent of the respondents from Cluster 7 say that they do not want to take action against social problems, 45 percent are not there to get to know new people and gather new experiences, 79 percent are not interested in information, and 53 percent do not see themselves as part of a movement. So one can say that many of the respondents collected in Cluster 7 were in principle not interested in the protest events against the G8 summit. The next obvious question is: “Why were they in Rostock at all?” One interpretation would be that these are people who got mixed up in the protests by accident or were observing the protesters “as outsiders.”

#### *Sociodemographic coordinates of Cluster 7:*

Cluster 7 too is characterized by a disproportionately high proportion of males. The proportion of over-nineteens is relatively high, the proportion of school students is relative-

ly low, and the proportion of university students disproportionately high. The educational background of their parents is also above average.

	Male	20 and older	School	In university-level tertiary education	Father graduate	Mother graduate
Cluster 7	65.3%	73.7%	19.9%	50.0%	57.9%	52.1%
Overall	57.2%	68.5%	24.9%	42.8%	53.2%	48.3%

#### **5. Connections between Cluster Membership and Protest Forms**

As already suggested in the description of the clusters, we find a connection between cluster membership and attitudes to individual protest forms. The questionnaire recorded attitudes toward seventeen different forms of political protest, and a statistically significant correlation was found for all forms.<sup>6</sup> The higher the violence potential of the protest form, the stronger the correlation between protest form and motive structure (see Table 7).

<sup>6</sup>  $\alpha < 0.001$

**Table 7: Strength of the correlation between cluster membership and attitude toward individual protest forms**

Protest form	Cramer V
Non-violent protest forms	
Gathering signatures	.144
Street theater and protest concerts	.150
Handing out and posting leaflets	.173
Participation in marches and demonstrations	.179
Public discussions	.190
Violent protest forms	
Spraying protest graffiti	.209
Violence in defense against police attacks	.213
Blockading streets and access roads	.214
Violent protest forms involving attacks	
Damage to private property of local residents	.210
Dismantling barriers erected to protect summit participants	.219
Throwing paint bombs	.245
Bomb threats	.259
Destruction of corporate property (e.g. banks, McDonalds)	.281
Attacks on the police	.320
Throwing stones, bottles, etc.	.327

Non-violent protest forms find the greatest agreement among the young protesters, with more than 90 percent. But there are two motive clusters—7 and 8—where agreement is strikingly low. While the deviation in Cluster 7 can be explained in terms of strong disinterest in political protest, the obvious explanation for Cluster 8 would be that non-violent protests are unattractive for its members. Only a small number of the interviewed protesters participated in violent protest forms. The frequency of violence was above average in clusters 6 and 8. Among the respondents who “merely” supported violent forms (without participating in them themselves) we find members of clusters 6 and 8 over-represented.

The results for Cluster 1 are astonishing. Although the young protesters from Cluster 1 categorically reject violence as a motive, and refrain from participating in violent forms of protest, their sympathy for violent protest forms is above average. One explanation for this discrepancy can be seen

in the strong movement orientation of the young protesters from Cluster 1. They grant all members of the movement the right to express their protest in the form they choose themselves, which leads them to accept violent forms of protest by members of the movement who believe these forms to be right.

Violent protest forms involving attacks are rejected especially strongly in clusters 3 and 4. This could be grounded in the above-average proportion of women in these two clusters.

Two results of the comparison appear to us to be especially noteworthy. First, it turns out that rejection of violence as a motive for participating in the protest actions does not in every case mean rejection of violence as a protest form or refusal to participate in violent actions. Put another way, there are young protesters who came without the explicit aim of exercising violence but if, for example, clashes occurred would have participated in them or said they were justified. Secondly, in the two clusters where the violence motive plays a role—clusters 6 and 8—we find considerably higher levels of agreement for participation in and approval of violent protest actions. The levels of agreement in Cluster 6 (i.e. among the young protesters who came to Rostock for politically idealistic motives) are significantly higher still than in Cluster 8 (young protesters for whom violence is an end in itself).

## 6. Conclusions

In the overall sample we identified eight groups of participants, each with their own specific motive structure. Those wishing to be politically active against social grievances and growing global inequality found themselves side by side with groups motivated by a hedonistic desire for new experiences and fun as part of a group.

Despite the differences between the individual groups, we were able to identify two cross-cluster motive aspects shared by young protesters from several clusters: strong political idealism and rejection of violence. Thus 87 percent of the surveyed protesters agree with the motive “Acting together against global social problems,” which can be understood as the movement’s master frame (these respondents are

distributed among clusters 1 to 6). The protest participants want above all to join together with others to articulate their dissatisfaction with the political and economic shape of neoliberal globalization and the associated negative consequences for individuals and society. But that does not mean that all the young protesters see themselves as part of a homogeneous movement. Although the overwhelming majority are interested in the goals of the protests, we identified two clusters where political idealism was less marked. In clusters 7 and 8, which together represent just 12 percent of the sample, political idealism is a subordinate motive or de facto plays no role.

We found cross-cluster rejection of “Using violence against state power and out of general frustration,” with 0 percent agreement in clusters 1 to 5 and 7. Here clusters 6 and 8—with agreement at 20 percent and 13 percent respectively—stand out from a broad consensus of non-violent protest. Our data supports the findings of Andretta, della Porta, and Mosca’s study of the 2001 protests in Genoa (2003, 123ff.), that a widespread rejection of violence as a means of protest predominates within the global justice movement. In Cluster 6 we found a mix of politically idealistic and violence-orientated motives. This group shares the master frame of the movement and openly supports violence as a means to achieve its political demands. Cluster 8 is quite a different matter. Here the majority of respondents regard violence as an end in itself, a source of entertainment. Their actions are largely violence-centered and are *not* based on

any political (i.e. globalization-critical) stance. Seen from a sociological perspective, a large part of Cluster 8 cannot be assigned to the global justice movement, because it rejects its master frame or is not interested in it.

Alongside the cross-cluster aspects of political idealism and rejection of violence, we found a checkered spectrum of motives in the individual clusters. Only for Cluster 2, which comprises 15 percent of the sample, was political idealism the sole motive; in all the other clusters we identified a mix of motives. The spectrum ranges from social idealism to hedonistic fun-seeking and protectionist motives. Apparently, rebelling against the problems of the world is not automatically incompatible with the wish to have fun too. However, the plurality of protest motives also encompasses nationalist aspects. As many as 30 percent of the young protesters from Cluster 5 see globalization as threatening their national identity and economic opportunities; this can be interpreted as a defensive attitude toward the opening and loss of borders in the course of the globalization process.

The bandwidth of motives for participation in the protests against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm spans conflicting aspects of individualism and collectivism, idealism and hedonism, pacifism and militancy, internationalism and nationalism. This synthesis of apparently contradictory motives reflects the individualization and pluralization of the protests of the global justice movement and its young supporters.

## References

- Andretta, Massimiliano, Donatella della Porta, Lorenzo Mosca, and Herbert Reiter. 2003. *No Global—New Global: Identität und Strategien der Antiglobalisierungsbewegung*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- Bernerburg, Ivonne, and Arne Niederbacher, eds. 2007. *Die Globalisierung und ihre Kritik(er): Zum Stand der aktuellen Globalisierungsdebatte*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Cohen, Robin, and Shrin Rai, eds. 2000. *Global Social Movements*. London: Athlone Press.
- della Porta, Donna, ed. 2007. *The Global Justice Movement: Cross-National and Transnational Perspectives*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- della Porta, Donna, and Sidney Tarrow, eds. 2005. *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Fillieule, Olivier, and Phillipe Blanchard. 2008. Individual SURveys in RAllies (INSURA): A New Tool for Exploring Transnational Activism? [http://www.people.unil.ch/olivier.fillieule/Site/Book\\_sections\\_files/INSURA-copiePDF2.pdf](http://www.people.unil.ch/olivier.fillieule/Site/Book_sections_files/INSURA-copiePDF2.pdf).
- Fisher, William F., and Thomas Ponniah, eds. 2003. *Another World is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalization at the World Social Forum*. London: Zed Books.
- Guidry, John A., Michael D. Kennedy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds. 2000. *Globalization and Social Movements: Culture, Power and the Transnational Public Sphere*. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press.
- Hammond, John L. 2003. Another World is Possible: Report from Porto Alegre. *Latin American Perspectives* 30:3–11.
- Herkenrath, Mark. 2008. Nord-Süd-Differenzen in der globalisierungskritischen Bewegung? Ergebnisse einer Umfrage an den Weltsozialforen 2005 und 2007. <http://www.suz.uzh.ch/herkenrath/publikationen/workingpapers/Herkenrath2008.pdf>.
- IBASE (Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses). 2005. An X-Ray of Participation in the 2005 Forum: Elements of Debate. [http://www.ibase.br/userimages/relatorio\\_fsm2005\\_INGLES2.pdf](http://www.ibase.br/userimages/relatorio_fsm2005_INGLES2.pdf).
- IBASE (Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses). 2006. World Social Forum. An X-Ray of Participation in the Policentric Forum 2006. <http://www.ibase.br/userimages/InglParte1.pdf>.
- Klein, Ansgar, Ruud Koopmanns, and Heiko Geiling, eds. 2001. *Globalisierung – Partizipation – Protest*. Opladen: Leske und Budrich.
- Leggewie, Claus. 2003. *Die Globalisierung und ihre Gegner*. Munich: Beck.
- Moghadam, Valentine M. 2008. *Globalization and Social Movements: Islamism, Feminism and the Global Justice Movement*. Lowman & Littlefield.
- Patomäki, Heikki, and Teivo Teivainen. 2004. The World Social Forum: An Open Space or a Movement of Movements? *Theory, Culture and Society*, 2004, no. 6:145–54.
- Reitan, Ruth. 2007. *Global Activism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Rucht, Dieter, and Simon Teune, eds. 2008. *Nur Clowns und Chaoten? Die G8-Protteste in Heiligendamm im Spiegel der Massenmedien*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus.
- Schäfer, Arne, and Matthias D. Witte. 2007. Globaler Jugendprotest. In *Globale Jugend und Jugendkulturen: Aufwachsen im Zeitalter der Globalisierung*, ed. D. Villányi, M. D. Witte, and U. Sander, 213–231. Weinheim et al.: Juventa.
- Schneekloth, Ulrich. 2006. Die „großen Themen“: Demografischer Wandel, Europäische Union und Globalisierung. In *Jugend 2006: Eine pragmatische Generation unter Druck*, ed. Shell Deutschland Holding. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
- Schönleitner, Günter. 2003. World Social Forum: Making Another World Possible? In *Globalizing Civic Engagement: Civil Society and Transnational Action*, ed. J. Clark, 127–49. London: Earthscan.
- Wennerhag, Magnus. 2008. *Global rörelse: Den globala rättviserörelsen och modernitetens omvandlingar*. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Atlas.

## Appendix

Table A1: Eight-factor solution with factor loadings and items

Component/Factor	Items: I am here ...
Acting together against global social problems (13.6%)	0.80 because I want to draw attention to human rights violations
	0.78 to show solidarity with the poor and oppressed
	0.78 to draw attention to the situation in the third world
	0.76 because I oppose the concentration of power in the hands of the big corporations
	0.73 to protest for the rights of minorities
	0.73 to demonstrate against poverty and repression
	0.63 because I want to do something against the lack of perspective
	0.61 because I want to express my opinion together with others
	0.54 because you can only achieve anything together with others
	0.48 because I can express resistance here
Using violence against state power and out of general frustration (11.8%)	0.41 because I can discuss with other people here
	0.80 because I want a riot
	0.79 because you can only achieve anything through violence
	0.78 because I can work off my aggression here
	0.78 because I want to fight with the police
	0.76 because you can only do anything about globalization with violence
	0.67 to do as much harm to the system as possible
	0.62 because I can get rid of my everyday cares and frustration here
	0.59 to let off steam properly for once
	0.45 because an event like this relieves the boredom
Demonstrating as a fun experience (8.1%)	0.74 to party
	0.73 to get to know new people
	0.68 because there is plenty going on here
	0.61 to gain new experiences
	0.57 to experience something new
	0.55 because I want to be part of such a big thing
	0.48 because great musicians are performing
0.44 because demonstrating is fun	
Curiosity aroused by information from media and school (5.0%)	0.70 because I heard about the G8 summit in the media
	0.66 because we discussed globalization at school
	0.47 to find out about the machinations of the G8

---

External motivation by friends (4.7%)	0.76 because my friends brought me along
	0.63 because my friends told me it is important to demonstrate against the G8 summit
	0.50 because all my friends are here too
Demonstrating as an expression of collective resistance (4.6%)	0.65 because it is a great feeling to be part of a movement
	0.64 because it is a good feeling to be fighting together
Nationalist and protectionist motives (3.9%)	0.72 because globalization takes away our national identity
	0.59 because I am against globalization
	0.50 to demonstrate against America
	0.43 because you have to speak up against the destruction of jobs
	0.43 because immigrants are taking away our jobs
External influence (3.3%)	0.68 because I am a member of a globalization-critical group
	0.42 because my friends expect me to take part in the protest
	0.40 because being here is "in"

---

**Table A2: Agreement/disagreement with motive aspects by cluster**

	Cluster1	Cluster2	Cluster3	Cluster4	Cluster5	Cluster6	Cluster7	Cluster8	All
Number of respondents	619	536	556	539	501	383	144	294	3572
Proportion of sample	17.3%	15.0%	15.6%	15.1%	14.0%	10.7%	4.0%	8.2%	100.0%
Acting together against global social problems									
Agree	98.2%	94.8%	96.4%	96.1%	93.4%	93.2%	3.5%	41.8%	87.4%
Disagree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.4%	0.0%	1.7%
Using violence against state power and out of general frustration									
Agree	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	19.6%	0.0%	12.9%	3.2%
Disagree	92.9%	95.5%	94.1%	95.2%	90.6%	17.2%	87.5%	18.0%	79.2%
Demonstrating as a fun experience									
Agree	11.5%	1.1%	20.9%	10.8%	24.0%	26.1%	10.4%	28.6%	15.9%
Disagree	30.4%	69.4%	18.9%	24.5%	17.6%	18.3%	45.1%	5.4%	29.0%
Curiosity aroused by information from media and school									
Agree	1.1%	2.2%	33.5%	11.5%	13.2%	3.4%	1.4%	22.8%	11.6%
Disagree	73.8%	77.8%	14.7%	44.5%	39.9%	67.6%	79.2%	6.5%	50.0%
External motivation by friends									
Agree	1.8%	0.0%	0.4%	12.6%	3.8%	2.6%	1.4%	20.7%	4.8%
Disagree	74.2%	89.6%	79.7%	31.0%	69.7%	72.3%	80.6%	13.3%	65.2%
Demonstrating as an expression of collective resistance									
Agree	83.4%	6.5%	76.4%	71.6%	68.7%	83.3%	12.5%	34.7%	60.1%
Disagree	0.0%	28.5%	2.0%	1.3%	3.4%	0.0%	52.8%	2.7%	7.6%
Nationalist and protectionist motives									
Agree	0.3%	0.9%	1.4%	1.9%	29.3%	7.0%	0.0%	18.0%	7.1%
Disagree	58.3%	64.0%	62.1%	43.0%	3.2%	31.9%	88.9%	14.3%	44.5%
External influence									
Agree	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.2%	1.0%	0.0%	20.1%	2.3%
Disagree	79.5%	97.4%	97.3%	93.5%	95.4%	93.7%	98.6%	13.6%	86.2%

**Renate Möller**

renate.moeller@uni-bielefeld.de

**Arne Schäfer**

arne.schaefer@uni-bielefeld.de

**Matthias D. Witte**

matthias.witte@uni-bielefeld.de

**Uwe Sander**

uwe.sander@uni-bielefeld.de

**Dirk Villányi**

villanyi@hsu-hh.de