VIOLENCE

The Enduring Problem

Alex Alvarez
Ronet Bachman

Violence

Fourth Edition

To Raymond Paternoster, the Emperor of Wyoming

We are richer for having known you,
We are poorer for having lost you.

Ronet Bachman & Alex Alvarez

Sara Miller McCune founded SAGE Publishing in 1965 to support the dissemination of usable knowledge and educate a global community. SAGE publishes more than 1000 journals and over 600 new books each year, spanning a wide range of subject areas. Our growing selection of library products includes archives, data, case studies and video. SAGE remains majority owned by our founder and after her lifetime will become owned by a charitable trust that secures the company's continued independence.

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi | Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

Violence

The Enduring Problem

Fourth Edition

Alex Alvarez
Northern Arizona University

Ronet D. Bachman
University of Delaware

SAGE

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
18 Cross Street #10-10/11/12
China Square Central
Singapore 048423

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Alvarez, Alex, author. | Bachman, Ronet, author.

Title: Violence : the enduring problem / Alexander C. Alvarez, Ronet D. Bachman.

Description: Fourth Edition. | Thousand Oaks : SAGE Publishing, 2020. | Revised edition of the authors' Violence, [2017] |

Identifiers: LCCN 2019046879 | ISBN 9781544355658 (paperback) | ISBN 9781544355665 (epub) | ISBN 9781544355672 (epub) | ISBN 9781544355689 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Violence—United States. | Violent crimes—United States. | Violence. | Aggressiveness. | Genocide.

Classification: LCC HN90.V5 A58 2020 | DDC 303.60973—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019046879

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Acquisitions Editor: Jessica Miller
Content Development Editor: Laura Kearns
Editorial Assistant: Rebecca Lee
Marketing Manager: Jillian Ragusa
Production Editor: Karen Wiley
Copy Editor: Erin Livingston
Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.
Proofreader: Alison Syring
Indexer: Maria Sosnowski
Cover Designer: Candice Harman

19 20 21 22 23 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Brief Contents

Detailed Contents

Toward Violence Prevention 351

Preface

The fourth edition of *Violence: The Enduring Problem* continues the process of refining our attempt to write a broad interdisciplinary book that analyzes the patterns and correlates of interpersonal and collective violence using the most contemporary research, theories, and cases. We believe that we have succeeded in creating a book that should help you make better sense of the nature and dynamics of a variety of different, yet connected, forms of violence. Relying on a wide range of contemporary and historical sources, we explore a number of different types of individual and collective violence that includes homicide, assault, rape, violence between intimate partners and other family members, robberies, genocide, riots, lynching, and terrorism. In this edition, we have created a new chapter on hate crime (Chapter 8), a topic we believe required a deeper and more detailed review. We have also added a new chapter devoted to multicide (Chapter 4), which covers serial, mass, and spree murders. And finally, we have added new examples and case studies, updated all statistics, and provided new discussions on current topical issues, including the #MeToo movement and epigenetics. Many discussions from the previous editions—such as those on riots, guns, and gun control—have also been enhanced to better reflect the complexities and new developments in those areas. Throughout the book, we have also worked to more consistently highlight the connections and overlap between different forms of violence, a central theme of this book. Consequently, we believe that this edition represents a significant step forward in presenting a more complete and contemporary analysis and discussion of violence than is generally found elsewhere.

We were compelled to write this book primarily because violence remains one of the most pressing issues facing our nation and our world. Every day, we are confronted with new examples of the violence that individuals and groups inflict on their fellow human beings. These events instill a sense of fear and distrust in us that undermines our belief in each other and in our communities. In fact, the fear of violence consistently ranks as one of the most important issues facing American society, according to many public opinion polls. Unfortunately, the social and political debates on violence are all too often based on polemics, misinformation, emotion, and stereotypes. It is our hope that this book provides more of an empirically based and rational counterpoint to the discourse on violence.

This book differs from many of the other books on violence in a number of important regards. Our approach is interdisciplinary, whereas many other texts tend to approach the issue from the viewpoint of a specific discipline. We firmly believe that studying violence from the perspective of only one discipline will result in an incomplete understanding of the phenomenon. Human behavior is rarely explained satisfactorily through reference to the set of explanations offered by any one academic discipline such as criminology, psychology, or sociology. Instead, the answers to how and why humans behave as they do must rely on multiple explanations from a range of perspectives. We recognize that behavior is influenced biologically,

psychologically, socially, historically, and politically, and this interdisciplinary vision has been our approach in this text.

Violence: The Enduring Problem is also unique in that one of the primary themes of this book is that all violence is connected. While violence is often seen as consisting of discrete acts that are independent and separate from each other, the guiding premise of this book is that all violence is connected by a web of actions and behaviors, ideas, perceptions, and justifications that are explored throughout the different chapters. While the individual dynamics of specific violent behaviors may vary somewhat, there are a number of threads that tie all violence together. By focusing on both interpersonal and group forms of violence, we hope we have been able to illustrate a number of these themes and linkages. This brings up another important point: Our book does not solely focus on individual acts of violence but instead incorporates chapters on both individual and collective forms of violent behavior. Because most books on violence tend to focus on either one or the other, a distinctive contribution of this book is that we provide the reader with information and discussions about both categories of violence.

To assist the reader, we have scattered various tables, charts, photos, and other visual aids throughout the chapters to help make sense of the information being presented. Additionally, we have provided a number of "In Focus" boxes that let the reader explore a number of issues in greater detail than the main narratives of the chapters allow. Each chapter also ends with a listing of key terms and ideas as well as discussion exercises that can guide you in further exploring some of the points raised in the chapters. Throughout the individual chapters, we have also systematized our discussion of social policy initiatives into "What Are We Doing About It?" sections to make it easier for the reader to identify those discussions in each chapter. We hope you find these pedagogical tools interesting and helpful.

This book does not provide all the answers to the age-old problem of violence, and we are not so naïve as to believe that this volume will change the world. We do, however, hope that it contributes to a better understanding of how and why we as human beings so often engage in destructive and harmful behavior. If this better understanding contributes in some small way to making our world a little safer through greater self-awareness, more restraint, and more rational and empirically grounded policies and actions, then our purpose will have been achieved.

Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by thanking my coauthor and long-standing friend, Ronet Bachman. Not only is she an excellent scholar and teacher, but more importantly, she is a wonderful human being. I feel very lucky to have her as my dear friend. To my wife and partner, Donna, I wish to extend my deep and eternal gratitude. I honestly believe that she has helped me to become a better person. She is an inspiration and a joy. Last, I wish to acknowledge the importance of my children to my work. Ingrid, Joseph, and Astrid, you inspire me to help make this world a bit better, and you challenge me to be truer to my beliefs and ideals.

—Alex Alvarez

Of course, I first want to thank my extraordinary coauthor and dear friend, Alex. He is a consummate scholar who brings humanism to all of his projects, including this book. His devotion to eradicating hate in the world is truly an inspiration.

My other kindred spirits have also been responsible for keeping me sane when I attempt to juggle far too many balls: Peggy Plass, Dianne Carmody, Barbara Wauchope, Gerri King, Michelle Meloy, and Lori Williams. You are the greatest friends in the world! I also have great colleagues who I am honored to claim as friends and who provide both personal counsel and sage professional advice. Of course, nothing would be meaningful without the love and support of my family. To my father, Ronald Bachman, for his critical eye in all matters of life. To my son, John, who brings me joy and love far beyond my wildest dreams. And finally, I want to remember my husband, Raymond Paternoster (1952–2017), who continues to be my island in the storm, my searchlight in the fog, and every other cliché you can think of. Nothing I do would have been possible without his support or meaningful without his love in my life. He is no longer on this planet but he is always with me.

—Ronet Bachman

Last but not least, this book could not have been written without a great deal of personal and professional support, for which we are both profoundly grateful. We wish to specifically thank our editor, Jessica Miller, for guiding our book through the process; Erin Livingston, our copy editor, for her thoroughness in helping us clean up our writing; Karen Wiley, for her help in the production process; and all of the other talented folks at SAGE for their help. We also want to acknowledge the work of our graduate students, Maddie Stenger and Ida Oesteraas, for their invaluable assistance helping us get this latest edition ready. We also want to thank the reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions. Their time and effort has helped make this a better book. Thank you.

Reviewers for the first edition include the following:

Derral Cheatwood, *University of Texas, San Antonio*

John Collins, *Montclair State University*

Randall Collins, *University of Pennsylvania*

John E. Conklin, *Tufts University*

Erin Conley, *University of Illinois, Chicago*

Sue Cote, *California State University, Sacramento*

Rhonda Dobbs, *University of Texas, Arlington*

Michelle Emerson, *Kennesaw State University*

Carol Gregory, *Kent State University*

Cheryl Holmes, *Indiana University, Bloomington*

Christos Kyrou, *American University*

Ellen C. Lemley, *Arkansas State University*

Cheng-Hsien Lin, *Texas A&M University, Kingsville*

Daniel Lockwood, *Savannah State University*

Kenneth Mentor, *The University of North Carolina at Pembroke*

Mark Schuering, *Quincy University*

Courtney Waid, *Florida A&M University*

Reviewers for the second edition include the following:

Minna Cirino, *Shenandoah University*

Sue Escobar, *California State University, Sacramento*

Erin Heil, *Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville*

Drew Humphries, *Rutgers University, Camden*

Christopher Mullins, *Southern Illinois University, Carbondale*

Tracy Tolbert, *California State University, Long Beach*

Courtney Waid-Lindberg, *North Dakota State University*

Reviewers for the third edition include the following:

Joseph Appiahene-Gyamfi, *University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley*

James A. Densley, *Metropolitan State University*

Terri L. Earnest, *University of Texas, San Antonio*

Angelina Inesia-Forde, *Walden University*

Z. Dennis Kalam, *Miami Dade College*

Jayne Mooney, *John Jay College of Criminal Justice*

Tamara A. Mouras, *American Public University System*

Luis F. Nuño, *California State University at Los Angeles*

Rafael Rojas Jr., *Southern New Hampshire University*

Tracey Woodard, *University of North Florida*

Reviewers for the fourth edition include:

James Beeks, *University of Phoenix*

Kristine Levan, *University of Idaho*

Lynette Martin, *Ohio State University*

Gary Maynard, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

Monica Merrill, *Youngstown State University*

Christopher W. Mullins, *Southern Illinois University*

Rochelle Rowley, *Emporia State University*

Carolyn Slotten, *Miami University*

Egbert Zavala, *University of Texas at El Paso*

Digital Resources

study.sagepub.com/alvarez4e

Student Study Site

The open-access Student Study Site includes the following:

- Mobile-friendly flashcards strengthen understanding of key terms and concepts
- Video and web resources include relevant links that appeal to students with different learning styles.

Instructor Resource Site

Password-protected Instructor Resources include the following:

- A Microsoft® Word® test bank, is available containing multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay questions for each chapter. The test bank provides you with a diverse range of pre-written options as well as the opportunity for editing any question and/or inserting your own personalized questions to effectively assess students' progress and understanding.
- Editable, chapter-specific Microsoft® PowerPoint® slides offer you complete flexibility in easily creating a multimedia presentation for your course. Highlight essential content and features.
- Video and web resources include relevant links that appeal to students with different learning styles.

CHAPTER

1

Defining Violence

> Violence and disorder constitute the primal problem of American history, the dark reverse of the coin of freedom and abundance.
>
> —David T. Courtwright[1]

> Every society is adept at looking past its own forms of violence, and reserving its outrage for the violence of others.
>
> —Inga Clendinnen[2]

* Late in November 1864, a large force of cavalry militia led by Colonel John Chivington left Denver, Colorado, and early on the morning of November 29, ended up on the banks of Sand Creek, where a large party of American Indians, mostly Cheyenne, were camped. The Indians were flying a flag of truce in the belief that they were under the protection of the Colorado authorities.[3] With no warning or call for surrender, Chivington's soldiers attacked and killed around 130 American Indians, many of them women and children. No prisoners were taken, and many of the victims were mutilated after death. Explaining his practice of killing everybody, including children, Chivington reportedly asserted that "his policy was to kill and scalp all little and big; that nits made lice."[4]

* In 2010, 29 workers were killed in the Upper Big Branch Mine located in West Virginia. The explosion occurred because of improper ventilation in the mine that allowed combustible gases to accumulate. In 2015, Donald Blankenship, the chief

executive of Massey Energy, which owned the mine at the time of the explosion, was tried by the federal government for conspiring to violate health and safety laws. Based on memos and audiotaped conversations, federal prosecutors presented a case that portrayed Mr. Blankenship as more concerned with profits than safety standards. One piece of evidence revealed Mr. Blankenship's opinions of safety regulators: He said, "You've got to have someone who actually understands that this game is about money," insinuating that regulators must be willing to be paid off. In another comment, he revealed his lack of caring for the miners' risk of black lung disease caused by breathing in coal dust in mines when he stated, "Black lung is not an issue in this industry that is worth the effort they put into it." The autopsies of the miners killed in the explosion revealed that 71% suffered from black lung, compared to an industry standard of only 3.2%.[5]

* In February 2008, Barbara Sheehan shot her husband, Raymond Sheehan, 11 times with two guns. Barbara claimed in trial that it was in self-defense after Raymond had threatened her with a loaded semiautomatic pistol. Their children testified that Barbara had suffered years of abuse. Barbara claimed that Raymond, who was a former police sergeant, told her he would kill her and be able to cover it up because of his investigation skills. After a heated argument, Barbara described how she was trying to flee their home with a gun when Raymond tried to stop her with his gun. She then fired five times. After he fell to the ground and dropped his gun, shouting, "I'm going to kill you," she picked up his pistol and fired six more times.[6]

* In 2014, a woman went to a New Orleans bar with Darren Sharper, a former National Football League (NFL) player, and had a drink he provided. She told police she didn't remember what happened thereafter but woke up the next morning being sexually assaulted by him. Women in several different states reported to police similar incidents that occurred while they were with Mr. Sharper. On June 15, 2015, Mr. Sharper pleaded guilty to three separate rape charges, including two counts of forcible rape by drugging.[7]

* On April 16, 2007, Cho Seung-Hui killed 32 students, faculty, and staff and left about 30 others injured on the campus of Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. Cho was armed with two legally purchased semiautomatic handguns and a vest full of ammunition. As the police were closing in on the scene, he killed himself. This shooting rampage was the deadliest in U.S. history. Cho was described as a loner who was bullied in high school and never spoke to anyone, not even in classes when he was called upon to do so. In a college English course, his writings were so violent and disturbing that they prompted a professor to contact the campus police and university counseling services. He sent an anger-filled video to NBC News explaining his actions and blaming others for the perceived wrongs that drove him to the mass killing.[8]

Are these incidents of violence related? Was the Sand Creek massacre of American Indians over 150 years ago related to the mass shooting that occurred at Virginia Tech? Were the rapes perpetrated by the former NFL star in any way connected to the mining-related deaths in West Virginia? While these incidents are separated by time, space, circumstance, number of participants, and lethality, they are all in fact linked and part of the same continuum of violent behavior. We often tend to see **violence** as consisting of discrete acts that are separate from each other, as if each violent incident occurred in a vacuum. But that is not the case. All violence is connected by a web of actions and behaviors, ideas, perceptions, and justifications. While the individual and situational dynamics of violent behavior may vary somewhat, they all share a number of essential characteristics that bind them together into what we can call the **unity of human aggression**.[9]

Connecting Violence

One of the primary themes of this book is that all of the forms of violence that we discuss in the various chapters share a number of essential characteristics. We find, for example, that violence—regardless of the form it takes—is usually perpetrated for the same kinds of reasons. Whether it's the bully in the schoolyard, a corporation, or a dictator engaged in genocide, perpetrators rely on similar arguments to justify their violence. By massacring a community of American Indians, the militia led by Colonel John Chivington saw themselves as defenders of white settlers on the frontier. For them, Native American resistance to the encroachment of the colonizers was seen as a threat to European and Christian civilization.[10] They saw their violence as being justified and provoked, not as unfounded **aggression**. From this perspective, the American Indians, including the women and children, had brought about their own destruction by their opposition to colonization. One witness to the Sand Creek massacre remembered Colonel Chivington speaking to his men just before going into action and saying, "Boys, I shall not tell you what you are to kill, but remember our slaughtered women and children."[11] Clearly, he defined the subsequent violence as defensive and justified and sought to evoke similar sentiments among his men. Cho Seung-Hui also saw his violence as justified. He had been bullied in high school and remained an angry loner in college. In the video he left behind, he stated, "You had a hundred billion chances and ways to have avoided today, but you decided to spill my blood. You forced me into a corner and gave me only one option. The decision was yours."[12] This kind of violence is referred to as a form of **righteous slaughter** by sociologist Jack Katz, who points out that perpetrators of violence often undergo a process in which perceived humiliation is transformed into rage that can culminate in violence.[13] Frequently, they perceive their violence as being in defense of some important value or principle. In none of the examples described at the beginning of the chapter were the victims defined as innocent. Rather, they were perceived as having brought the violence upon themselves; in the eyes of the offenders, the violence they inflicted was entirely appropriate and justified. Such perceptions create a potent rationale for harming others.

We also find that violence commonly overlaps, even in very different contexts. Think about your own behavior. You generally act in similar ways in different circumstances. If you are kind to people in your own family, for example, you are generally going to be kind to strangers. Similarly, violence in one sphere of life often affects violence in another sphere. Research tells us that individuals who are violent in one setting are more likely to be violent in others and, in fact, the single best predictor for violent behavior is a history of previous violence. Of course, this does not mean that an individual who engages in violence is destined for a life of violence; it simply means that those who engage in violence are more likely to do so in the future and across different contexts compared to those without a violent history. This shouldn't come as a surprise. People who engage in violence have already overcome internal normative boundaries against aggression and are more or less experienced in its perpetration. Essentially, their threshold for using violence has been lowered, which means that once someone starts using violence, it becomes easier to continue using it, even in different situations. The video revealing the brutal punch Ray Rice gave his then–fiancée, Janay, left little to the imagination. Football is certainly a sport where fans have come to expect ruthless hits on the field, and players often engage in some chest pounding after they have taken down an opponent. The video of Mr. Rice knocking his fiancée out with one punch in the Atlantic City elevator indicated to the world that his violent hits transcended the football field to his personal life.

Statistics indicate that Mr. Rice is not alone. In one 20-month period through 2014, an investigation by *Sports Illustrated* found that 33 NFL players had been arrested for charges involving intimate partner violence (IPV), battery, assault, and murder.[14] As the case of Kansas City Chiefs star running back Kareem Hunt reveals, this issue is still a problem for the NFL. Hunt was caught on video in November 2018 assaulting and kicking a woman in a Cleveland hotel.[15] Another example of people engaging in violence in multiple spheres of their lives is illustrated by the Pentagon's acknowledgment of the serious problem the military has been having with IPV among members of its armed forces. In fact, while estimates from national surveys indicate that IPV has decreased in the United States, calls for help from victims of IPV associated with the military have increased dramatically.[16] One possible cause for this ongoing problem in the military, according to various experts, may relate to the continuing stress and impact of repeated deployment to combat areas. The violence some soldiers experience in war zones, in other words, may travel home with them and impact their relationships in their private lives. This reality led the Department of Veterans Affairs to conclude that the increased numbers of soldiers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are also at an increased risk of becoming violent.

The Spillover Effect

Violence overlaps in other ways as well. Some suggest that the more a society legitimates violence in certain situations (e.g., war, capital punishment, and justifiable homicide), the more illegitimate violence (e.g., robbery and murder) there

will be. This is sometimes referred to as **spillover theory**, which suggests that the values and justifications for violence in socially approved settings "spill over" into other settings and result in illegitimate forms of violence. Crimes of violence among returning veterans is a significant problem for many countries including the United States, Great Britain, Australia, and Canada.[17] One former U.S. marine and journalist made sense of it this way: "Violence changes people in mysterious ways, and when the normal human prohibitions against murder and cruelty are lifted on a wide scale, it unleashes violent impulses that are not easily controlled."[18] Another example of this spillover concerns the death penalty. Some have argued that instead of decreasing rates of murder, capital punishment may actually serve to increase it. They point to the fact that the states that sentence the greatest number of people to death also tend to have the highest rates of homicide. One proponent of this argument—termed the **brutalization hypothesis**—is criminologist William Bowers, who argued, "The lesson of the execution, then, may be to devalue life by the example of human sacrifice. Executions demonstrate that it is correct and appropriate to kill those who have gravely offended us."[19] His brutalization argument suggests that the death penalty desensitizes society to killing and devalues human life and therefore increases tolerance toward lethal behavior, which in turn results in increases in the criminal homicide rate.

iStock.com/gurunXOOX

PHOTO 1.1
Military hand-to-hand combat training. What is the interaction between legitimate violence and illegitimate violence?

War—another example of legitimate violence—has also been found to increase rates of illegitimate violence, not only by soldiers returning from the battlefield and engaging in domestic violence but in the larger society as well. Some scholars have argued that a nation's involvement in war tends to legitimate the use of lethal force to resolve conflict within that nation's population.[20] When a nation or state goes to war, diplomacy is replaced by violence, which is perceived as rational and justified—at least by the leaders of that nation. It isn't unreasonable, then, for citizens of that society also to be more likely to choose force when confronted with conflict.[21] One of the largest studies to examine the effects of war on postwar homicide across nations was conducted by Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner, who compared national homicide rates for men and women before and after small and large wars, including the two world wars. They also controlled for a number of factors in their comparison, including the number of combat deaths in war, whether the nations were victorious or defeated, and whether the nation's postwar economies were improved or worsened. Archer and Gartner found that most combatant nations experienced substantial postwar increases in their rates of homicide and concluded that wars did appear to legitimate violence.[22] Put another way, "It is organized violence on top which creates individual violence on the bottom."[23]

iStock.com/erierika

PHOTO 1.2
Child imitating spanking on his teddy bear. How does this exemplify the spillover effect?

A final example of the spillover thesis concerns something with which many of us are familiar—being spanked as a child. While most who experience this type of punishment grow up relatively unscathed, research suggests that children who are spanked are more likely to be aggressive as adults compared with children who were not spanked. Based on this and other research, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) updated its guidelines on discipline in December of 2018. These new guidelines suggested that pediatricians should discourage the use of spanking because

> spanking models aggressive behavior as a solution to conflict and has been associated with increased aggression in preschool and school children . . . the more children are spanked, the more anger they report as adults, the more likely they are to spank their own children, the more likely they are to approve of hitting a spouse, and the more marital conflict they experience as adults.[24]

We will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5.

We also know that certain qualities or characteristics of violence seem to transcend time and place. We find, for example, that age and gender patterns are very consistent across different societies and in different eras. Young men tend to be responsible for most forms of violence, regardless of the time period or the country.[25] Similarities also exist in terms of the motivations and justifications used by those who engage in violence, as we have discussed earlier in this chapter. We hope this discussion helps illustrate our belief that all violence is connected. Violence, in its many forms, is fundamentally linked through various shared qualities that we have briefly reviewed here. Of course, this does not mean that all forms of violence are identical. Collective violence, for example, is not simply interpersonal violence with a large number of perpetrators and/or victims. The social and collective elements of group violence differentiate it from interpersonal violence in a number of ways. Yet both types still share a number of other important commonalities. In many ways, therefore, it can be said that acts of violence are simultaneously unique and comparable.

So far, we have looked at several examples of violence, but we have not yet defined exactly what we mean by the term *violence.* In the next section, you will see that coming up with a concrete definition of violence is not always such an easy task.

Defining Violence

Defining violence is a trickier job than you might expect, given our apparent familiarity with the concept. *Violence* is one of those words that everyone knows but few have grappled with in any detail. Despite this familiarity, we are usually fairly vague about

its meaning, and our perceptions can vary tremendously depending upon any number of factors. While at first glance, the concept seems clear enough, the more closely we examine violence, the more elusive it becomes. So before proceeding, we need to discuss some of the complexities and issues raised by attempts to define violence.

The first thing we need to understand is that violence encompasses many different kinds of behaviors in many different kinds of situations. Recognizing all of them as being categorically part of the same phenomenon can be difficult, especially if the violence is not always evident in the act. Pulling the trigger of a gun, for example, or pressing a button that launches a missile may not be violent actions in and of themselves, but the consequences of these actions unquestionably *are* violent. Do we perceive and define them the same way as hitting a person or stabbing someone—acts in which the violence involves human contact and the consequences are therefore closer and more immediate? How about instilling so much terror and instability into people's lives that they flee their homes with their children to an unknown land or refugee camp where food and safe drinking water aren't available on a regular basis, but loss and insecurity are guaranteed? What if the fear and terror instilled into someone's life was perpetrated by someone pledged to "love and cherish until death do you part"?

So, which of these acts do we consider to be violence? All of them? Or only some of them? These aren't easy questions to answer. Furthermore, we must also recognize that different people perceive and understand violence in different ways, each based on his or her individual history and context of life. Many people only use the term in reference to physical acts of aggression and harm, while others include emotional or psychological acts as well. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) includes both psychological aggression and deprivation/neglect in their definition of interpersonal violence. Deprivation and neglect aren't necessarily things that you might think are violent, but according to the WHO, the outcome of these things make them violent. The WHO's typology of interpersonal violence is displayed in Figure 1.1.

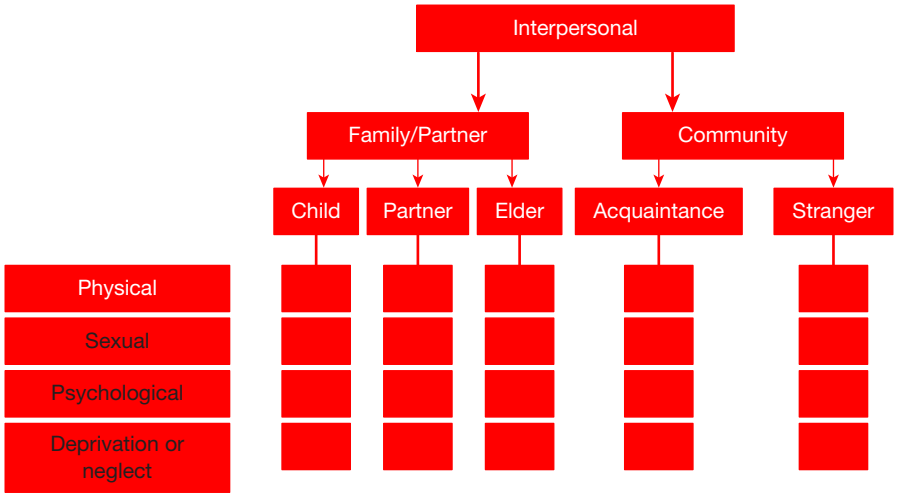
For some, *violence* refers solely to human-perpetrated acts, while others include destructive natural forces, such as tornadoes, storms, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Accidental acts of harm are also not always defined as violence. If someone was intentionally hit by another person, most of us would clearly see this as an act of violence. Yet, if the same injury occurred unintentionally—say, as the result of a collision on a basketball court or a soccer field—many of us would not define it as violence.

The perceived legitimacy of aggressive acts also affects whether they are defined as *violence*. Some individuals only use the word to refer to illegal or illegitimate acts of aggression. Other words are often used to describe aggressive acts that are socially approved. As an illustration, take two incidents that are behaviorally similar:

1. Scenario 1. During an attempted robbery, an offender shoots the store clerk because he perceives the clerk to be reaching down under the counter for a gun; the store clerk dies.
2. Scenario 2. After pulling over a driver for speeding, a police officer shoots the driver whom he perceives to be reaching into his coat for a gun; the driver dies.

The behavior in both scenarios is similar, yet the label given to one would almost certainly be very different from the other. The first would undoubtedly be labeled

FIGURE 1.1 The World Health Organization's Typology of Interpersonal Violence



Source: "Definition and Typology of Violence," World Health Organization, Typology of Interpersonal Violence Figure, 2016.

as an act of felony murder, which, in some states, is the most likely kind of case to receive the death penalty. The second would most likely be ruled as a legitimate use of deadly force with no criminal label whatsoever attached. While the physical behavior is the same, the legal and social acceptability are very different, and this influences which words we use to describe each act. This kind of variation in perception often occurs when the violence is perpetrated by officials such as law enforcement officers, although even here, the perceptions of the legitimacy of the violence can change from place to place or over time.

If we look at the recent spates of civil unrest in many American communities after police officers killed unarmed African American men, we can easily see that definitions of violence, especially legitimate violence, are not static and uniform. The deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; Eric Garner in New York City; and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland—and the ensuing protests and public demonstrations, often organized by the Black Lives Matter movement—have shifted perceptions concerning police use of force and created pressure for more accountability. Between 2010 and 2014, for example, the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division began investigations into the excessive use of force in 20 police departments across the United States; this is twice as many police departments as were investigated between 2004 and 2009. Moreover, these investigations have uncovered an increase in the number of police departments found guilty of using excessive and deadly force in violation of citizen's Constitutional rights.[26] To date, very few police officers have been found guilty in state courts of first-degree murder when someone has died while being pursued or under police custody.

This, too, may be changing, however. An analysis by *The Washington Post* found that the number of police officers indicted on felony charges tripled during 2015—a

clear indication that prosecutors have become more willing to indict and prosecute officers. Juries may also become more willing to convict officers in cases where the evidence indicates that the use of force was not justified, as in the case of New York City police officer Peter Liang, who was found guilty of manslaughter in February of 2016 after fatally shooting Akai Gurley, an unarmed black man, in the stairwell of a housing project. Officer Liang testified that he accidently fired at Mr. Gurley and his girlfriend after being startled when they entered the stairwell from above. After deliberating, the jury convicted this officer because they believed that he had acted recklessly. On January 19, 2019, Jason Van Dyke, a former Chicago police officer, was sentenced to six years and nine months for the 2014 shooting of Laquan McDonald. Van Dyke was convicted of second-degree murder in October 2018 after claiming that McDonald had lunged at him with a knife, but dashcam video revealed that he had shot McDonald 16 times as McDonald was walking away from the officer.[27] Cases such as these (or the indictment on a murder charge of the Dallas police officer who fatally shot her unarmed neighbor after entering his apartment) certainly seem to suggest a greater willingness on the part of prosecutors to hold police officers more accountable for misconduct.

This discussion should also underscore the fact that the term *violence* is loaded and usually evokes powerful emotions. These emotional reactions make defining violence even harder, because there are numerous acts that many of us do not perceive as violent, since they may be perceived as acceptable and may even be encouraged. Commenting on this issue, the legal scholar Lawrence Friedman writes, "In part, violence is a matter of definition, or at least of perspective. . . . Every society defines a sphere of legitimate private violence."[28] In other words, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of any particular act lies not in any intrinsic quality of the act itself but rather in how we define it. As we noted at the beginning of the chapter, evidence indicates that many perpetrators of violence see themselves as being justified in their actions and typically define their acts as a legitimate response to some behavioral or ethical breach on the part of their victim. In this sense, the offenders perceive their behavior as a justified form of social control. Violent people often feel they are acting legitimately and morally to protect something they value or to give an appropriate penalty to someone who has wronged them. Regardless of the context, violent offenders tend to provide justifications for their offenses, whether it is a violent act in the home or an act of mass killing in the community.

The Context of Violence

We hope that the discussion above has helped you understand that, depending upon who is doing what to whom and for what reasons, we either accept or condemn similar behaviors. Our understanding is, therefore, highly situational and contingent. This means that context is extremely important in helping shape our understanding of and reaction to violent acts and actors. The context of violence is shaped in large part by several factors, including the following:

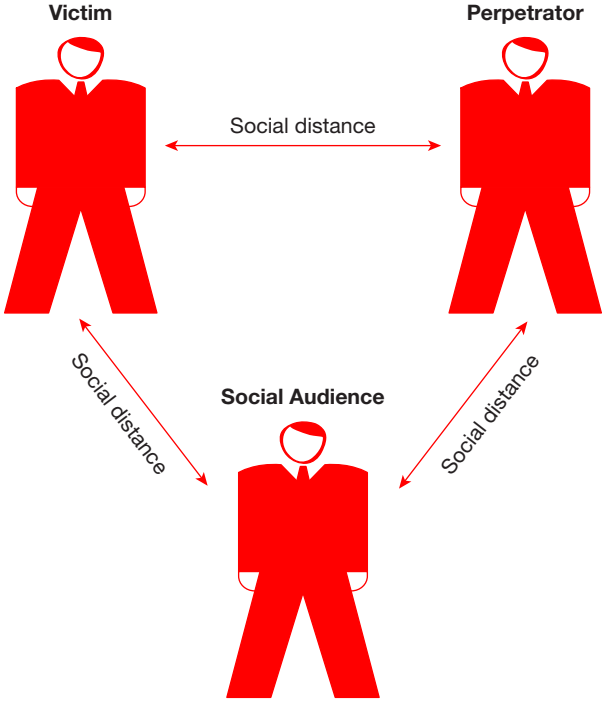
- the victim
- the offender

- the specific nature of the violence
- the location of the violence
- the rationale for the violence[29]

Let's start with the victim. If the victim is someone with whom we can identify and relate to or is someone we personally know, we are more likely to condemn the violence. Many factors, including gender, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and nationality, play a part in this assessment. If the victims are like us, we are more likely to sympathize with them and see the situation through their eyes. On the other hand, the greater the social distance between us and the victim, the less likely it is that we will empathize with them. This judgment, however, does not occur independently of the perpetrator. If we know and can identify more easily with the perpetrator than with the victim, we will be more willing to find ways to rationalize and accept the violence. Figure 1.2 illustrates these relationships. Essentially, it is easier for us to justify, condone, and accept behavior from people who are like us, and it is easier for us to condemn and judge those who are different from us.

In the same vein, the type of violence affects how we perceive and define specific acts. Minor acts of violence are generally easier to accept than more severe forms. It

FIGURE 1.2 Social Distance



is much easier to dismiss or minimize a push or a slap than a punch or a kick. The perceived heinousness of the act of violence is also influenced by the brutality involved and the number of victims. Acts of violence involving gratuitous cruelty or torture are much less likely to be deemed acceptable than other acts of violence. Location has also been an important variable. Historically, if violence was perpetrated in the home, it was generally conceded to be much more acceptable than if it was carried out in a public place or work setting. What happened behind closed doors was once considered to be private and no one's business. This was especially true if the victim was a wife or child and the perpetrator was the husband or father. In public, however, violence was more easily condemned. And finally, the justification expressed for the violence is also important, since it helps the social audience understand the rationale for the aggressive behavior. If we agree and/or understand the motivation, then it becomes easier to accept and even commend specific acts of violence.

It is important to recognize that our individual perceptions and definitions of violence revolve around a number of variables that help shape our understanding of the act. Because our perceptions of an act are affected by each of these contextual differences, it is even more difficult to define violence. In fact, one segment of a society may define an act as violence, while another segment may deem it justifiable self-defense. Sometimes we condemn and punish those who inflict violence, and sometimes we celebrate and reward those who perpetrate it. We read or hear about a shooting somewhere, and we are appalled. The events at Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook Elementary School, Las Vegas, Thousand Oaks, and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, for example, have seared themselves into our collective awareness as horrible tragedies. However, when women and children are killed by a military drone and deemed collateral casualties, many do not even consider these cases worthy of censure or investigation. When police officers shoot and kill someone they perceive as dangerous (such as when London police officers shot and killed a young Brazilian man they suspected of being a suicide bomber after the bombings there in July 2005), many rationalize the killing as an understandable act in a time of terror. Yet when drug dealers kill each other in pursuit of illegal profits, we almost universally revile it.

In sum, we judge acts of violence selectively. Some call forth our interest and compassion and demand an emotional response, while others barely stir any interest. Some receive our approval, while others earn our condemnation. We can see this differentiation at work in one study looking at attitudes toward different types of violence. Leslie Kennedy and David Forde examined the attitudes of a sample of Canadians to determine levels of support for the same act of violence in different situations. Their findings are summarized in Table 1.1 and reveal that the same violent behavior receives widely disparate levels of support and approval, depending upon the situation in which it occurred. These results are consistent with earlier research in the United States.[30]

By now, you should agree that defining violence is a difficult task, in large part because our understanding of its nature is so subjective and varied. We think it is helpful at this point to go over some definitions that have been proposed by those who study violence. Table 1.2 provides a list of some of the more popular definitions. We also include definitions of *aggression,* since the two terms are often used interchangeably—even within the scholarly community. We should note,

TABLE 1.1 Attitudes Toward Violent Situations

Situation in Which One Man (Assailant) Punches an Adult Stranger	Percentage of Respondents Who Approve of the Violence
If the adult stranger was in a protest march showing opposition to the assailant's views	9
If the adult stranger was drunk and bumped into the assailant and his wife on the street	8
If the adult stranger had hit the assailant's child after the child accidentally damaged the stranger's car	26
If the adult stranger was beating up a woman and the assailant saw it	56
If the adult stranger had broken into the assailant's house	47
Situation in Which a Police Officer Strikes an Adult Male Citizen	**Percentage of Respondents Who Approve of the Violence**
If the male citizen had used vulgar and obscene language against the officer	12
If the male citizen was being questioned as a suspect in a murder case	8
If the male citizen was attempting to escape from custody	67
If the male citizen was attacking the police officer with his fists	88

Source: Adapted from Leslie W. Kennedy and David R. Forde, *When Push Comes to Shove: A Routine Conflict Approach to Violence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

however, that some researchers make distinctions between violence and aggression. For example, Bartol and Bartol contend that all violence is aggressive, but not all aggression is violent.[31] For them, violence refers only to aggressive physical behavior, while aggression can also refer to behavior that is psychologically harmful. Moreover, aggression is more often used in connection with a person's psychological affect, demeanor, and mindset, while violence is more specifically intended to encompass the harmful physical behavior itself. In many ways, aggression may precede and accompany violence. For the purposes of this book, however, the terms violence and aggression are so similar in their everyday usage that we will not make this type of distinction.

In reviewing Table 1.2, we find a range of definitions that differ and overlap in some important ways. First, all these definitions agree that violence and aggression are harmful. Where they differ, however, is in conceptualizing what kinds of harm qualify as violence. Some of the definitions include inflicting psychological or

TABLE 1.2 Definitions of Violence

Author	Definition of Violence
Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary	"Exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse . . . intense, turbulent, or furious and often destructive action or force"[1]
The National Panel on the Understanding and Control of Violent Behavior	"Behaviors by individuals that intentionally threaten, attempt, or inflict physical harm on others"[2]
Newman	"A series of events, the course of which or the outcomes of which, cause injury or damage to persons or property"[3]
Iadicola and Shupe	"Violence is any action or structural arrangement that results in physical or nonphysical harm to one or more persons"[4]
Weiner, Zahn, and Sagi	"The threat, attempt, or use of physical force by one or more persons that results in physical or nonphysical harm to one or more persons"[5]
Bartol and Bartol	"Destructive physical aggression intentionally directed at harming other persons or things"[6]
Bartol and Bartol	"Behavior perpetrated or attempted with the intention of harming another individual physically or psychologically (as opposed to socially) or to destroy an object"[7]
Berkowitz	"Any form of behavior that is intended to injure someone physically or psychologically"[8]

Notes:

1. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam and Company).
2. Albert J. Reiss and Jeffrey A. Roth, eds., *Understanding and Preventing Violence* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1993), 2.
3. Graeme Newman, "Popular Culture and Violence: Decoding the Violence of Popular Movies," in *Popular Culture, Crime, and Justice*, eds. Frankie Bailey and Donna Hale (Belmont, CA: West/Wadsworth, 1998), 40–56.
4. Peter Iadicola and Anson Shupe, *Violence, Inequality, and Human Freedom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 23.
5. Neil Alan Weiner, Margaret A. Zahn, and Rita J. Sagi, *Violence: Patterns, Causes, Public Policy* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), xiii.
6. Curt R. Bartol and Anne M. Bartol, *Criminal Behavior: A Psychosocial Approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 241.
7. Curt R. Bartol and Anne M. Bartol, *Criminal Behavior: A Psychosocial Approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 241.
8. Leonard Berkowitz, *Aggression: Its Causes, Consequences, and Control* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 3.

emotional harm, while others do not. But the bottom line is that, whether perpetrated for noble reasons or for petty and selfish ones, violence is about injuring, damaging, destroying, and killing. It is invariably destructive. This is not to say that violence cannot be perpetrated for constructive reasons but rather that the act of violence is *always* destructive. It is therefore important to differentiate between the intent or purpose of the act and the act itself. The behavior and the intent of the behavior are separate. The purpose of the violence may be positive or negative or perhaps even a mixture of both, but the violence itself always remains the same: injurious and damaging. Second, these definitions help us understand that violence

can take a number of forms. The most common difference is between physical and emotional or psychological violence, although not everyone agrees that nonphysical forms of aggression (e.g., verbal) can be considered violence.

There are many other ways that violence can be classified and categorized. One distinction that is sometimes drawn is between expressive and instrumental acts of violence. **Instrumental violence** refers to those acts in which violence is a means to an end. An assault during an armed robbery, for example, would fit into this category. The violence is committed to help accomplish the robbery, but it is not an end in itself. **Expressive violence**, on the other hand, concerns those acts in which the motivations are expressive of some emotional state, such as anger or jealousy. In these cases, the violence serves to fulfill some internal or intrinsic desire. As the name implies, the violence is "expressing" something—typically rage or anger.

Another way of categorizing violence is provided by Peter Iadicola and Anson Shupe, who suggest that there are three main interconnected types of violence, which they label *interpersonal*, *institutional*, and *structural*. **Interpersonal violence** consists of the assaults, rapes, robberies, and murders that often come to mind when thinking about violence. These are acts committed by one or more offenders against one or more victims. **Institutional violence**, on the other hand, concerns the violent behaviors that are perpetrated in organizational settings. For example, Iadicola and Shupe consider family violence a form of institutional violence because it happens within the context of the family. Also included are corporate and workplace violence, military violence, religious violence, and state-perpetrated violence, all of which occur within the context of established social institutions. **Structural violence** is all about discriminatory social arrangements that can also be construed as violence. Including structural arrangements in their definition allows Iadicola and Shupe to examine societal inequalities as violence in light of the negative effects that certain living conditions may have on a group. For example, they write, "Violence may be action that denies a minority group's access to education, health care, housing, an adequate diet, and other necessities of survival and human development."[32] While our book does not address structural violence per se, we do underscore the inequalities related to both the collective and individual violence that we examine. In addition, both interpersonal and institutional types of behavior will be examined in this book.

At this point in your reading, you must be expecting us to tell you which definition we subscribe to in this book. Rather than disappoint you, we can suggest that the definition that most closely aligns with our approach in this book is the one presented by Iadicola and Shupe, who define *violence* as follows: "Violence is any action or structural arrangement that results in physical or nonphysical harm to one or more persons." That being said, we also want to acknowledge that most of the definitions presented in Table 1.2 would serve our purposes equally well. While there are many ways to define *violence*, most of the attempts discussed above share a number of qualities, and the types of violence we have chosen to discuss in this book fall within these broad conceptualizations. Therefore, settling on a single definition to guide our discussion is not as crucial as it might otherwise be. In addition to defining violence, another important issue that must be addressed relates to how we measure violence; as you might imagine, attempting to measure the extent of violence in U.S. society is also a complex issue.

Measuring Violence

Imagine being asked to measure how many stalking victims there are at your university or in your town. Accurately measuring the number of people affected by a type of violence is extremely important. We can't prevent particular kinds of victimization unless we know whom it is most likely to affect. In addition, resources and strategies directed at preventing victimization and helping victims are also based on these estimates. Bad information about the characteristics of victimizations sometimes results in poor choices being made by policy makers, politicians, activists, and other concerned citizens. The problem is that, depending on who is gathering the data and what methods they employ to get that information, the results can vary widely. The purpose of this section is to introduce you to the different ways we typically measure violent victimization. At times, our discussion may seem a bit technical, but we want to underscore how important measurement is. Before we begin, we want to note that we will be discussing detailed measurement issues related to specific types of violence (e.g., murder, intimate partner assault, rape) in more detail. The discussion here is designed to give you a general sense of the common ways in which information on violence is gathered and some of the important and relevant concerns attached to them. So how do we know how many people experience violence in the United States? When most students are asked about how statistics on victimization are gathered, they tend to think first and foremost about police reports. You will soon see, however, that relying on police reports of crime is somewhat problematic.

Reports to Law Enforcement Officials

The most widely used source of statistical information about violent crime in the United States is the **Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR)**, compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The UCR has collected information about criminal incidents of violence reported to the police since 1930; the reports are based on the voluntary participation of state, county, and city law enforcement agencies across the United States. For the crime of homicide, information about both the victim and the offender (e.g., the gender and race of both, the relationship between the victim and offender, the weapon used) is obtained in a separate reporting program called the **Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR)**. Unfortunately, such detailed information is not collected for other crimes in the UCR. To remedy this problem, the FBI implemented a change in its collection of crime information to include more characteristics of the incident; appropriately, this is called the **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**. NIBRS data are more specific than UCR data and include many more offenses that local agencies have to report information on. It includes detailed information on crime incidents, including the characteristics of the victim (such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, and resident status). In all, the NIBRS categorizes each incident and arrest in one of 22 basic crime categories that span 46 separate offenses; this translates to a total of 53 data elements about the victim, property, and offender. As you can imagine, it takes a great deal of time and money to fill out this paperwork at the local police

department level, and because of this, only about half of all states currently use the NIBRS format for collecting information about reported crimes.

Similarly, in England and Wales, they measure crimes that have been reported to the police in a program called Police-Recorded Crime (PRC). These police-reported data that rely on reported victimizations only in the United Kingdom and the United States are problematic. Why? If victimizations are not reported to police, they are never counted, and based on comparisons with national survey data, it is estimated that only about 40% to 50% of crimes become known to police. This is true in the United Kingdom as well as in the United States.[33] This is particularly problematic for certain types of violence (such as rape) and violence that occurs between intimates (such as spouses and boyfriends/girlfriends). We know that a large percentage of these victimizations are never reported to police.

In sum, there is a great deal of evidence that documents the large gap between the true extent of victimization and offending and the amount of crime known to police. The major sources of this gap, according to Clayton Mosher, Terance Miethe, and Dretha Phillips, are the following: the inability of police to observe all criminal activity, the reluctance of crime victims and witnesses to report crime to the police, and variation in the recording of "known" crime incidents because of police discretion.[34]

Victimization Surveys

Because of the weaknesses that police reports have in accurately measuring the true magnitude of violence, surveys of the population are often used as the social science tool of choice. Surveys collect information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions.[35] You hear about survey results almost daily from news programs but have probably never thought much about them unless you have had a research methods course. In 1968, Congress established the **Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA)**, which formed a statistical division that fielded several surveys to measure national rates of crime victimization. These surveys confirmed the suspicion that the amount of crime being committed in the United States was much higher than the amount reported by the UCR. Based on these early surveys, Congress realized that a national survey was needed to more validly monitor victimization and provide information that the UCR did not, including risk of victimization across subgroups of the population (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age), information about changes in victimization over time, and information on the contexts of victimization, including the relationship of victims and offenders and the costs of victimization, among other things.[36] Consequently, the **National Crime Survey (NCS)** was launched in 1972 and remained largely unchanged until 1986. However, in 1980, the LEAA was replaced by the **Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)**, which is still responsible for conducting and analyzing a number of sources of data related to crime and victimization. In 1986, the BJS initiated a major redesign of the NCS to improve it in several ways, including the extent to which it captured crimes such as IPV that occurred between husbands/wives and boyfriends/girlfriends along with rape and sexual assault victimizations. To highlight the difference between UCR estimates of crime, the name of the survey was also changed to the **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**. It retains this name, although there have been

other minor revisions in recent years; it can now provide estimates of victimization at the state level.[37] The NCVS remains the only ongoing self-report survey in which interviewed persons are asked about the number and characteristics of victimizations they have experienced during the previous year, regardless of whether they reported these victimizations to the police. Throughout this text, we will discuss the ways in which the NCVS measures specific types of victimization as they relate to the different forms of violence reviewed in subsequent chapters. For now, we simply want to highlight the methodological techniques used by the NCVS and how they improve our estimates of victimization compared to police reports.

The first issue to highlight relates to the NCVS sample. A **sample** is a subset of elements (people, cities, countries, etc.) from a larger **population** that contains all of the important elements in which we are interested. Clearly, if you want to estimate the risk of victimization for the entire population of U.S. residents, you have to make sure your sample represents that population. For example, you could not simply measure people living in one city and assume that their experiences with victimization would necessarily be the same as those of people who live in different cities across the United States. What if the one city you sampled was unusually safe or uncommonly dangerous? That would certainly throw off your results. To avoid such a problem, the NCVS uses **random selection** to draw a sample of U.S. households to be interviewed. Households can be different housing units or group quarters, such as dormitories or rooming houses. All persons aged 12 or older living in selected households are eligible to participate in the interview. Once a household is selected as part of the sample, it stays in the sample for a three-year period, and people in the household are interviewed twice a year about any victimizations they may have experienced during the previous six months. Random selection of the sample from the general population ensures that there is no bias in selecting the sample and that every U.S. household has an equal chance of being selected. This allows the information obtained from the survey to be generalized to the population. For example, in 2018, the NCVS found that about 43% of the respondents who told interviewers they were assaulted actually reported their victimizations to the police. Because these results are based on a random sample of the U.S. population, we can assume that, on average, about 43% of all assault victimizations in the United States were reported to police.

We also want to comment on how estimates of victimization are counted. For personal crimes, the NCVS makes a distinction between *incidents* and *victimizations*. The number of **victimizations** reflect how many victimization acts were experienced by survey respondents, while the number of **incidents** reflects the number of acts committed against respondents and others present during such incidents, as reported by survey respondents. For personal crimes, the number of victimizations is equal to the number of victims present during an incident. The number of victimizations may be greater than the number of incidents because more than one person may be victimized during any given incident. Imagine that a family of four are robbed on the way to the movies, and the thief takes everyone's valuables, including the teenagers' watches. There would be one robbery incident and four victims. This may seem like a minor detail, but these points matter when making comparisons across surveys regarding "how much victimization" there really is. In their publications, the BJS generally reports **victimization rates**, that is the number of people

12 years of age and older who experience a particular type of victimization divided by the total number of people 12 years of age and older in the population per 1,000 people, which can be expressed as follows:

$$Victimization\ Rate = \frac{Number\ of\ Victims\ aged\ 12\ and\ older}{Total\ Population\ aged\ 12\ and\ older} \times 1{,}000$$

The second issue we want to highlight is how survey questions ask respondents about incidents of violence they may have experienced. Imagine you wanted to determine the risk of being assaulted on your campus. To determine this risk, you conducted a random survey of students who go to your school. How would you ask them whether they had ever been assaulted? Imagine you asked them this question:

In the past 12 months, have you been assaulted on campus?	Yes____	No____

Can you think of any problems with this question? Some people may not actually know what an assault is; others may have actually experienced an assault but may not have labeled it as such. This issue is even more complex when you are trying to measure other types of violence, including rape and IPV. The screening questions used by the NCVS from the general crimes of violence are displayed in Table 1.3. Notice that these questions rely on very behavior-specific wording instead of asking about victimizations using crime jargon, such as "Have you ever been robbed?" This is important. A great deal of research has demonstrated that asking questions using behavior-based wording instead of legal definitions uncovers a significantly greater number of victimizations, particularly when victims may not self-identify as crime victims. As you might imagine, asking people about their experiences in this way uncovers many more victimizations than only those reported to police.

But even this tactic isn't completely effective at uncovering and measuring victimization. In fact, some researchers and policy makers contend that the NCVS, despite the behavior-specific wording on the questionnaire, still does not measure some types of victimizations adequately. In particular, research indicates that rape and sexual assaults as well as other victimizations perpetrated by intimate partners such as spouses and boyfriends/girlfriends can be more validly measured using still more behavior-specific question wording and cues for more specific types of offenders.[38] Because Congress mandated that the government more validly determine the magnitude of these victimizations, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed the **National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)**, the goal of which was to provide national estimates of both lifetime and past 12-month prevalence rates of IPV and sexual violence by all offenders. **Lifetime prevalence** refers to the proportion of people in a given population who have ever experienced a particular form of victimization. In contrast, **12-month prevalence rates** provide information about the proportion of people in a given population who have experienced a particular victimization in the 12 months prior to taking the survey. Similar to the NCVS, the estimates obtained by the NISVS are assumed to

TABLE 1.3 Screening Questions Used by the NCVS to Uncover Violent Victimizations

Since [end date for six-month reference period], were you attacked or threatened or *did you have something stolen from you*

at home, including the porch or yard;

at or near a friend's, relative's, or neighbor's home;

at work or school;

in places such as a storage shed or laundry room, a shopping mall, a restaurant, a bank, or an airport;

while riding in any vehicle;

on the street or in a parking lot;

at such places as a party, theater, gym, picnic area, bowling lanes, or while fishing or hunting; or

did anyone attempt to attack or attempt to steal anything belonging to you from any of these places.

Other than any incidents already mentioned, has anyone attacked or threatened you in any of these ways:

with any weapon (for instance, a gun or knife);

with anything like a baseball bat, frying pan, scissors, or stick;

by something thrown, such as a rock or bottle;

any grabbing, punching, or choking;

any rape, attempted rape, or other type of sexual attack;

any face-to-face threats; or

any attack or threat or use of force by anyone at all? Please mention it even if you are not certain it was a crime.

Incidents involving forced or unwanted sexual acts are often difficult to talk about. Have you been forced or coerced to engage in unwanted sexual activity by

someone you didn't know before?

a casual acquaintance?

someone you know well?

If respondents reply *yes* to one of these questions, they are asked in the subsequent incident report, *"Do you mean forced or coerced sexual intercourse?"* To be classified as rape victims, respondents must reply in the affirmative. All other sexual attacks are classified as other sexual assaults.

Source: "NCVS-1 Basic Screen Questionnaire," National Crime Victimization Survey, 2014, http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/ncvs1_2014.pdf

be representative of the U.S. population as a whole because it collects data using a random digit dialing (RDD) telephone survey of the noninstitutionalized English- or Spanish-speaking U.S. population. However, unlike the NCVS, in which respondents aged 12 and older are interviewed, the NISVS restricted its sample to those aged 18 or older in 2010. The questions used by the NISVS to ask about IPV and sexual violence are provided in Table 1.4, and as you can see, they are more graphically specific than those of the NCVS. Not surprisingly to researchers, the NISVS

TABLE 1.4 Screening Questions Used to Measure Interpersonal Violence for the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)

Preamble: Sometimes sex happens when a person is unable to consent to it or stop it from happening because the person was drunk, high, drugged, or passed out from alcohol, drugs, or medications. This can include times when persons voluntarily consumed alcohol or drugs or when they were given drugs or alcohol without their knowledge or consent.
When you were drunk, high, drugged, or passed out and unable to consent, how many people ever ** had vaginal sex with you? By vaginal sex, we mean that [if female: a man or boy put his penis in your vagina] [if male: a woman or girl made you put your penis in her vagina]* ** [if male] made you perform anal sex, meaning that they made you put your penis into their anus?* ** made you receive anal sex, meaning they put their penis into your anus?* ** made you perform oral sex, meaning that they put their penis in your mouth or made you penetrate their vagina or anus with your mouth?* ** made you receive oral sex, meaning that they put their mouth on your [if male: penis] [if female: vagina] or anus?*
How many people have ever used physical force or threats to physically harm you to ** make you have vaginal sex?* ** make you [if male] perform anal sex?* ** make you receive anal sex?* ** make you perform oral sex?* ** make you receive oral sex?* ** put their fingers or an object in your [if female: vagina or] anus?*
How many people have ever used physical force or threats of physical harm to ** [if male] try to make you have vaginal sex with them, but sex did not happen?* ** try to have [if female: vaginal] oral or anal sex with you, but sex did not happen?*
How many people have you had vaginal, oral, or anal sex with after they pressured you by ** doing things like telling you lies, making promises about the future they knew were untrue, threatening to end your relationship, or threatening to spread rumors about you?* ** wearing you down by repeatedly asking for sex, or showing they were unhappy?* ** using their authority over you (for example, your boss or your teacher)?*
How many of your romantic or sexual partners have ever ** slapped you?* ** pushed or shoved you?* ** hit you with a fist or something hard?* ** kicked you?* ** slammed you against something?* ** tried to hurt you by choking or suffocating you?* ** beaten you?* ** burned you on purpose?* ** used a knife or gun on you?*

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

estimated that there were many more victims of IPV and sexual violence than were indicated by the data obtained by the NCVS. We will talk more about these estimates in Chapters 5 and 6.

Measuring Offending Behavior

All of the victimization surveys described above obtain information about the characteristics of offenders based on the extent to which victims remember and can accurately report these characteristics. For offenders who were strangers, victims are asked to provide basic demographics, including gender, race/ethnicity, and approximate age group of offenders (e.g., under 18, 18–25, 26 or older), but that is the only information that can be obtained. Relying on police reports to estimate who is most likely to be violent is riddled with the same problems as using these data to estimate who is most likely to be victimized. Are offenders who are arrested for violent offending actually representative of all offenders? The quick answer is no. Not surprisingly, early self-report surveys of offending behavior in the 1940s revealed that a relatively large number of committed offenses were undetected by the police. Although police report data from that era indicated offenders were more likely to be minorities from low socioeconomic backgrounds, self-report data revealed that a great number of offenses were being reported by people from relatively privileged backgrounds. As you might guess, these offenses rarely came to the attention of the police, and when they did, they rarely resulted in an arrest.[39] Based on these early studies, researchers interested in the types of people who engage in violent behavior also began to rely on survey methodology instead of police reports. That trend continues to this day.

One source of offending data comes from the **National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY)** sponsored by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This survey is ongoing, with the most recent data being collected on a cohort of men and women who were born in the years 1980–1984. The most recent year this cohort was interviewed was in 2012, which makes the oldest individual in the cohort 32 and the youngest 28. Each cohort to the NLSY consists of over 5,000 original people. The data are panel data that track the same people every year, which is an important quality of this survey that allows researchers to chart changes over time in behavior (see Table 1.5). For example, we can see if the same group of individuals are assaulting people over an entire time period or if different groups of individuals change their assaultive behavior over time.

At this point, you may be thinking to yourself, "Why would someone actually admit to attacking or otherwise victimizing someone?" This issue is what researchers refer to as **validity**, which is the extent to which we are actually measuring what we think we are measuring. For example, a question measuring stress would be valid only if it can differentiate between those who have high stress compared to those with low stress. How accurate is this self-reported offending information? Studies that have investigated this issue using several different types of samples have shown that they are remarkably valid.[40] A recent study of juvenile offenders, for example, examined whether males and females of different races/ethnicities differentially recalled incidents of self-reported offending compared to official records and concluded that "the SRO [self-reported offending] measure produces a reasonably good indicator of illegal activities."[41]

TABLE 1.5 Questions About Offending Behavior from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY)

Introduction: Now we would like to ask you about some different activities you may or may not have been involved in.
Have you ever purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you?
Have you ever stolen something from a store or something that did not belong to you worth less than 50 dollars?
Have you ever stolen something from a store, person, or house or something that did not belong to you worth 50 dollars or more, including stealing a car?
Have you ever committed other property crimes such as fencing, receiving, possessing, or selling stolen property or cheated someone by selling him or her something that was worthless or worth much less than what you said it was?
Have you ever attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting her or him or have you had a situation end up in a serious fight or assault of some kind?

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: Response options were (a) once a month, (b) once every 2 to 3 weeks, (c) once a week, (d) 2 to 3 times a week, (e) once a day, and (f) 2 to 3 times a day.

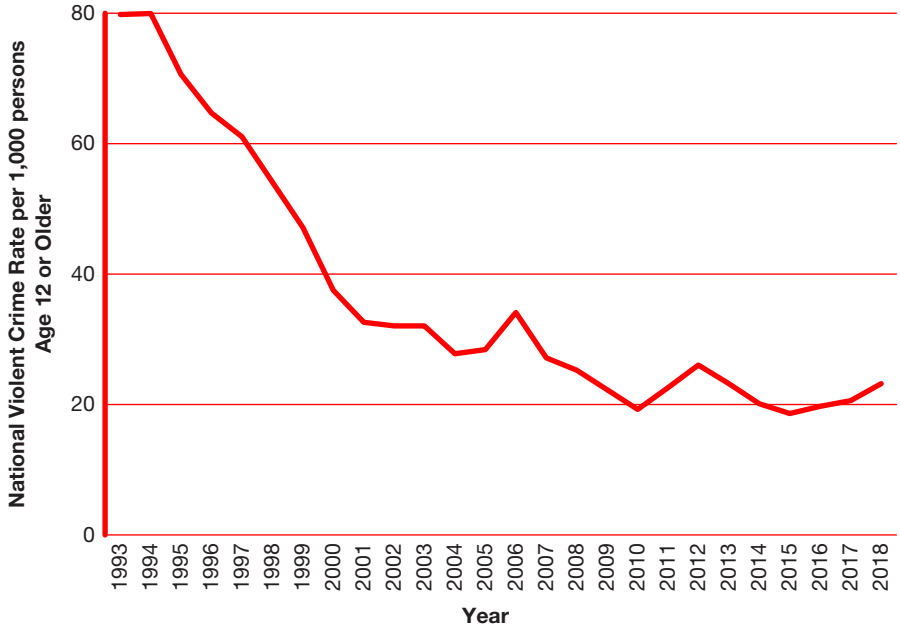
We hope this brief description of how we measure victimization has given you a better sense of how information on violence is gathered along with each method's corresponding strengths and weaknesses. Keep in mind that we will be talking about measurement issues regarding particular types of victimization more extensively throughout the book.

Violence and U.S. Society

When we turn on the evening news, read the local newspaper, or get online, we can't get away from the fact that violence, in its many forms, is a common companion in our lives. We live in a violent world. Whether we acknowledge it or not, the problem of violence pervades our lives and often shapes and defines who we are as individuals, communities, and nations. This is as true for the United States as it is for any other place around the world. We experience it in our homes, at work, and in public places. In fact, many of us experience violence directly as victims. In 2018 alone, according to the NCVS, more than 3.3 million Americans over the age of 12 were victims of violent crimes. When you consider that these types of victimizations occur many times every single day and that the effects of this victimization often last years—if not a lifetime—you begin to realize the impact that violence has on our society.

Figure 1.3 illustrates the rates of total nonfatal violence, which includes rape and sexual assaults, robbery, aggravated assaults, and simple assaults from 1993 through 2018. As you can see, violence peaked in the early 1990s and has generally been declining

FIGURE 1.3 **Violent Crime Rates, 1993–2017, per 1,000 Persons Age 12 or Older**



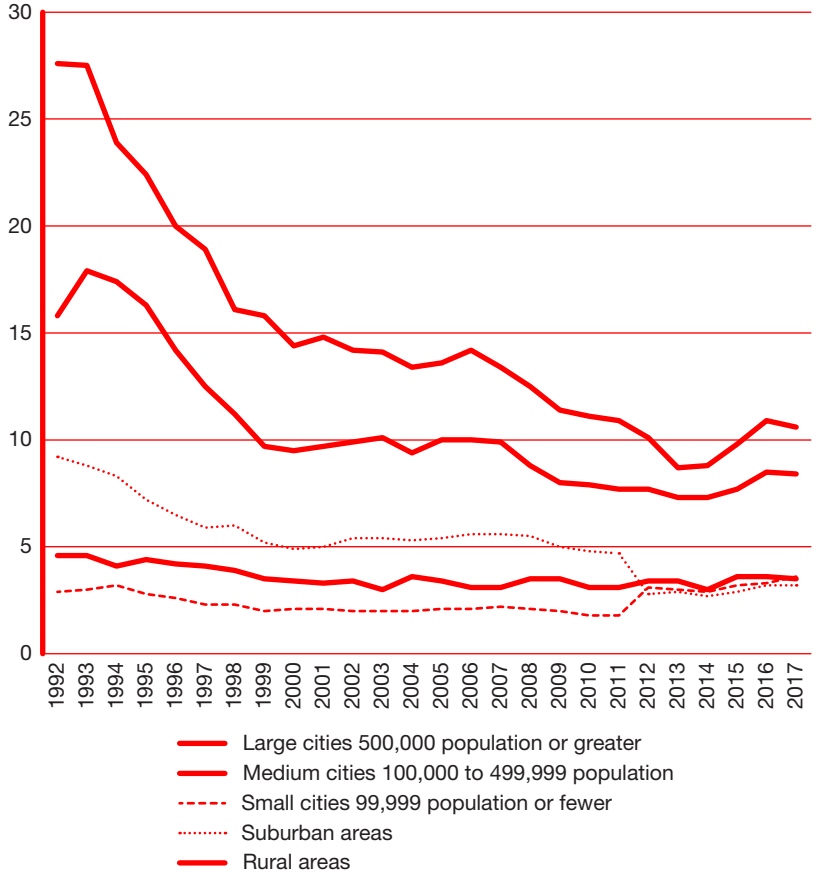
Source: Adapted from Rachel E. Morgan and Barbara A. Oudekerk, *Criminal Victimization,* 2018, NCJ 252472 (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statics, U.S. Department of Justice, September 2019)

Note: Estimates for 2006 should not be compared to other years. See *Criminal Victimization, 2007*, NCJ 224390 (BJS website, December 2008) for information on changes to the 2006 National Crime Victimization Survey.

since that time. However, when homicide rates are examined (Figure 1.4), we learn that the decline in lethal violence was not consistent across geographical locations in the United States. The decline has been much more significant in cities, especially large and medium-sized cities. However, as you can see from Figure 1.4, rates of murder have remained relatively constant for both suburban and rural locations. Therefore, when we talk about violent crime in America, we have to realize that there are differences across the American context. As we will note again and again throughout this text, context matters! Are people living in the United States at a greater risk of violent victimization than those in other nations? Figure 1.5 reveals that, although the United States generally has very high rates of murder, countries that are in the midst of large-scale violence and police corruption because of the illegal drug trade have higher rates of murder. However, U.S. murder rates are about three times higher than those of all other Western industrialized countries such as Sweden, Germany, and Australia.

Rates of actual victimization are only the tip of the iceberg regarding our experiences with violence. In addition to direct victimization, we also often experience violence vicariously. We thrill to see violence in sports and enjoy violent video and computer games. We flock to movies that are saturated with graphic acts of explicit

FIGURE 1.4 **Homicide Rates per 100,000 Persons in the United States by Geographical Context, 1992–2017**

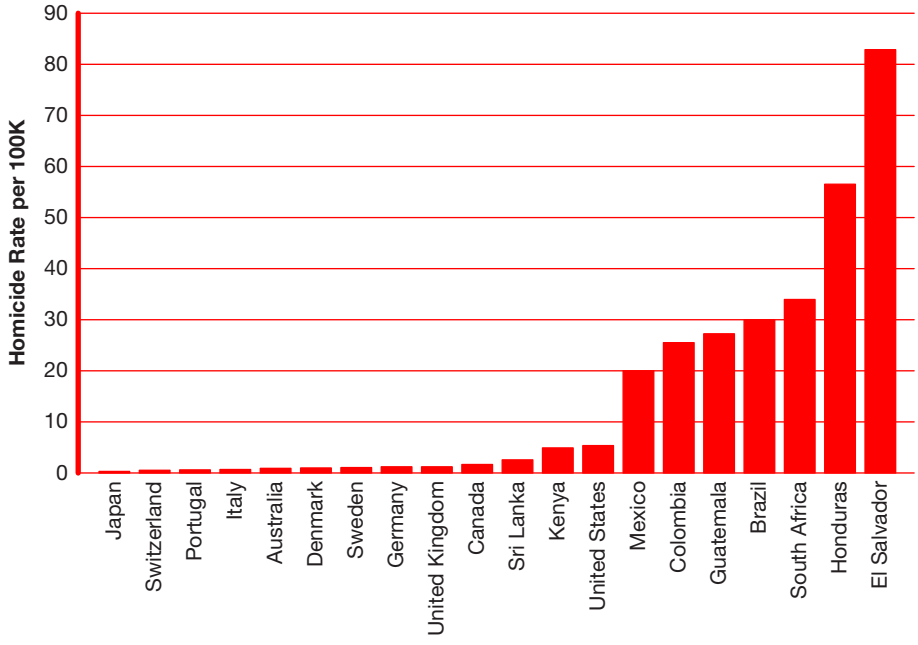


Source: "Crime in the United States," Federal Bureau of Investigation.

and realistic violence. In fact, the average child will view 200,000 acts of violence and 16,000 murders by the time she or he is 18 years old.[42] Our airwaves are full of violent images, and research suggests that this trend is becoming more prevalent. In fact, there is evidence that media violence has become more plentiful, graphic, sexual, and sadistic. Can we watch these images and not be affected by them? The evidence strongly suggests that we can't.[43]

We also worry about violence constantly and change our behavior in response to perceived threats of violence. We avoid certain parts of town, add security features to our homes, and vote for "get tough" laws in order to protect ourselves from violent offenders. Throughout the 21st century, Americans have been fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, and news reports have been full of stories about fallen soldiers, car

FIGURE 1.5 Murder Rates per 100,000 by Country, 2016



Source: Adapted from "Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 people)," The World Bank, 2016.

Note: Most recent data available upon publication.

bombings, torture of prisoners, and beheadings of hostages. In short, both domestically and internationally, violence is part and parcel of U.S. life. In fact, Iadicola and Shupe assert that violence is the "overarching problem of our age" and suggest that every social problem is influenced by the problem of violence.[44] James Gilligan, a medical doctor who directed the Center for the Study of Violence at Harvard Medical School, put it this way:

> The more I learn about other people's lives, the more I realize that I have yet to hear the history of any family in which there has not been at least one family member who has been overtaken by fatal or life threatening violence, as the perpetrator or the victim—whether the violence takes the form of suicide or homicide, death in combat, death from a drunken or reckless driver, or any other of the many nonnatural forms of death.[45]

So, it's safe to say that violence is not foreign to us but rather is something with which we rub shoulders constantly. We know violence through our own lived experiences and the experiences of our family, friends, and neighbors as well as through the media images we view and the games we play.

At a deeper level, this means that our identities as citizens, parents, children, spouses, lovers, friends, teammates, and colleagues are often shaped by violence, at least in part. Who we are as individuals and as human beings is shaped by the culture within which we live. How we define ourselves, the ways in which we relate to others, and our notions of what we stand for and what we believe in are all determined in large part by the influences and experiences of our lives. As sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann suggest, "Identity is a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society."[46] In short, our life experiences shape who we are. Therefore, if violence is a part of our reality, then it plays a role in molding us as human beings and influences how we understand the world around us. To acknowledge this is to understand that violence is part of who we are and central to knowing ourselves and the lives we lead.

Because of this prevalence and its impact on our lives, some have suggested that Americans have created and embraced a culture of violence. *Culture* is a nebulous concept that includes values, beliefs, traditions, rituals, and rules for behavior. Culture also dictates what is expected, what is valued, and what is prohibited.[47] Essentially, then, this argument contends that our history and experiences have resulted in a system of values and beliefs that, to a greater extent than in some other cultures, condones, tolerates, and even expects a violent response to various and specific situations.[48] Other scholars have further developed this theme by arguing that instead of a culture of violence in the United States, there are **subcultures of violence** specific to particular regions or groups. First articulated by criminologists Wolfgang and Ferracuti, this viewpoint suggests that members of some groups are more likely to rely on violence. As they suggest,

> Quick resort to physical combat as a measure of daring, courage, or defense of status appears to be a cultural expectation. . . . When such a cultural response is elicited from an individual engaged in social interplay with others who harbor the same response mechanism, physical assaults, altercations, and violent domestic quarrels that result in homicide are likely to be relatively common.[49]

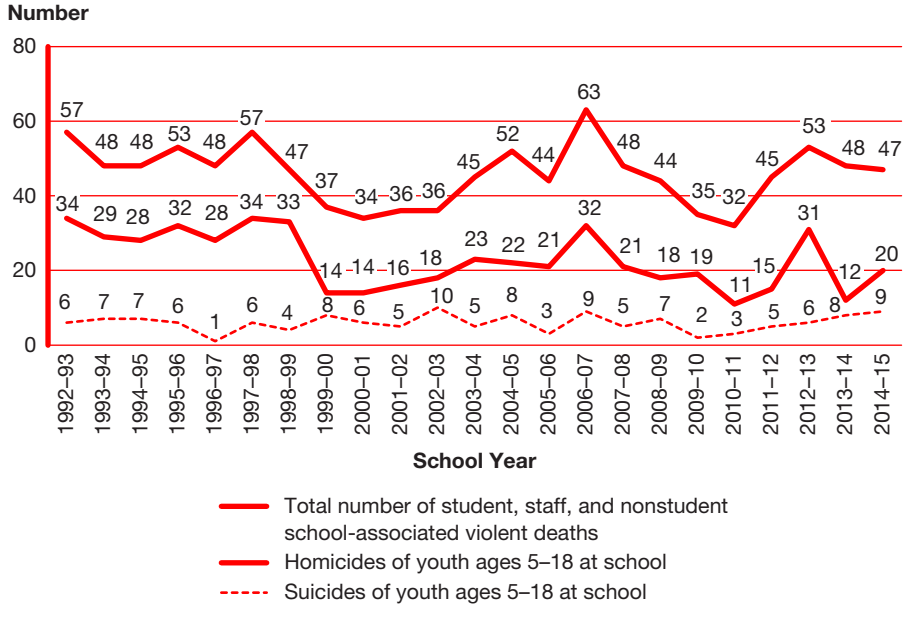
This type of culture has also sometimes been characterized as being a **culture of honor**, since violence has been found to be an acceptable response to incidents when one has been disrespected or dishonored in some way. The American South historically has had much higher rates of violence than other regions of the country, and many have suggested that it is a consequence of Southern notions of honor that demand a violent response to certain provocations. Southern culture, in other words, is more violence prone than other regional cultures.

Violence, then, is something that appears to be embedded in our values and attitudes, which is why some have suggested that violence is "as American as apple pie."[50] Yet, for something that is so much a part of our lives, we remain remarkably ill-informed about what violence really is, how and why it is perpetrated, and what its consequences truly are. Much of what we think we know owes as much to myth and stereotype as it does to fact. This shouldn't be a big surprise, since so much of what we think we know is based on what we see on popular television shows and in movies. In fact, up to 95% of Americans cite the mass media as their main source of information

on crime and violence.[51] Unfortunately, these images have been shown to be misleading, incomplete, and erroneous. For example, on October 12, 1998, a 22-year-old gang member named Omar Sevilla, also known as "Sugar Bear," was shot to death as he walked to a drug and alcohol treatment center. On the same day, a German tourist named Horst Fietze was shot and killed while walking with his wife only a few blocks away from the site of the Sugar Bear murder.[52] While Sevilla's death went almost completely unnoticed in the press, Fietze's killing received a great deal of media attention.

Such selective reporting is not unusual. One study of newspapers reporting on murder found that it was the atypical homicide that was reported on most frequently, while the routine type of killing was sometimes not even considered worthy of any coverage.[53] More specifically, around 5% of homicides received the vast majority of all media attention. What kinds of killings constituted this 5%? Assassinations, mass murders, gangland killings, and particularly gruesome and sensationalistic murders received all the press coverage. Yet these types of murders are far and away the least common types of criminal homicide. Average readers who form their perceptions of reality from the news media only, however, may think these represent the most typical and most common forms of violence.

FIGURE 1.6 **Number of Student, Staff, and Nonstudent School-Associated Violent Deaths and the Number of Homicides and Suicides of Youth Aged 5–18 at School, School Years 1992–1993 to 2014–2015**



Source: Lauren Musu-Gillette, Anlan Zhang, Ke Wang, Jizhi Zhang, Jana Kemp, Melissa Diliberti, and Barbara A. Oudekerk. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2017*, NCES 2018-036/NCJ 251413 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, March 2018), Figure 1.1.

Note: Most recent data available upon publication.

The same is true for other forms of violent crime as well. For example, do you think that murder in schools has been increasing? There have been a few cases of horrendous mass shootings that have taken place in schools, including the killings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. These cases should garner a great deal of media attention because they are tragic stains on our American conscience. However, have kids in American schools become more or less safe in the last several years? Figure 1.6 displays violent death data from the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education. As can be seen from this figure, the number of violent deaths that occurs annually in schools has remained essentially unchanged since 1992. To be sure, violent death does occur in U.S. schools, but our perceptions of risk are sometimes not in line with the empirical data.

Conclusions

As you have seen, how we define and measure violence has changed over time, and in some cases, the same behavior may be deemed appropriate or criminal, depending on the context. In the following chapters, we analyze the patterns and correlates of both interpersonal and collective violence using the most contemporary research, theories, and case studies. In addition, we provide an overview of the strategies that have been developed to prevent the specific types of violence we examine. As you will see, while each type of violence is somewhat different, all violence is connected by a web of actions, ideas, perceptions, and justification.

Go to https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr and find information about the NIBRS. What advances does the new NIBRS reporting system have compared with the older UCR program? Will the system address problems of underreporting in general? Will it still be necessary to have other measures of victimization, such as the NCVS? Why or why not?

Spend a few hours during the day either reading news articles online or watching videos online. Monitor how the selected networks cover incidents of violence, both locally and nationally. In your opinion, do you think it has captured the reality of violence in your area or in the nation? What types of violence are most likely to be portrayed? What types of victims and offenders are most likely to be represented? As you answer these questions, ask yourself why that might be.

Without looking back at the definitions of violence presented in this chapter, come up with your own definition of interpersonal violence. What elements must a definition have to be useful? Now try your hand at defining *genocide*. What elements do you believe are necessary to label a case of mass killing as genocide? Now list the ways in which you would measure two types of violence. Be specific. If you are going to use a survey, what types of questions would you ask respondents?

CHAPTER

2

Why Do We Do It?

The origins of conflict have little to do with reason; they are rooted in the very nature of our species and the universe which we inhabit.

—Anthony Stevens[1]

Violence too is largely a problem of self-control. . . . The ubiquity of homicidal fantasies shows that we are not immune to the temptations of violence, but have learned to resist them.

—Steven Pinker[2]

All the focus on the small number of people with mental illness who are violent serves to make us feel safer by displacing and limiting the threat of violence to a small, well-defined group. But the sad and frightening truth is that the vast majority of homicides are carried out by outwardly normal people in the grip of all too ordinary human aggression to whom we provide nearly unfettered access to deadly force.

—Richard A. Friedman, MD[3]

In the early morning hours of Sunday, June 12, 2016, Omar Mir Seddique Mateen, a 29-year-old American citizen who worked as a security guard at a golf club, entered a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, and opened fire. Armed with a variety of firearms, including an assault-style rifle and a Glock handgun, Mateen perpetrated one of the worst mass shootings in American history. It was "Latin Flavor" night at Pulse, the club targeted by Mateen, and the place was crowded with over 300 patrons.[4] Mateen arrived just before 2:00 in the morning and began shooting into the mass of people, setting off a panic as the partygoers attempted to flee the gunfire. An off-duty police officer working at the club reacted quickly and returned fire but was forced to retreat and radio for help. Two nearby SWAT (special weapons and tactics) officers responded and, after an exchange of gunfire, forced Mr. Mateen to take refuge in a bathroom, where he killed a number of patrons who had been hiding from him and took others hostage. It was during the subsequent three-hour standoff that he called 911 and claimed allegiance to the Islamic State and also mentioned the Boston Marathon bombers as being his homies. He also reportedly texted his wife, asking if she had seen the news. Finally, a police SWAT team drove an armored truck through a back wall, threw some flashbang grenades to stun and disorient Mr. Mateen, and then shot and killed him after he opened fire on them.[5]

Although Mateen claimed allegiance to the Islamic State during the hostage standoff, there is no direct evidence linking him to this terrorist group at the time of this writing. There is plenty of evidence, however, that he frequently made racial, ethnic, and homophobic slurs—so much so that in 2013, he was fired from a position as a security officer at a county courthouse in Fort Pierce, Florida, for making "inflammatory" comments against certain groups. In fact, because of these comments and other issues, the sheriff reported him to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Omar Mateen was placed on a terrorism watch list. Ultimately, he was removed from the watch list because the FBI investigation revealed that he had not committed any crimes.

So why did he do it? Was he truly inspired by the Islamic State and the Boston Marathon Bombers, or was it more personal? It appears that he had no official ties to the Islamic State, although he may have been inspired by the extremist propaganda he found on the Internet.[6] We also know that Mateen had a history of violent behavior that had nothing to do with the Islamic State. His ex-wife told investigators that he repeatedly abused her as well. Other evidence suggests that Mateen was himself gay or at least conflicted about his own sexuality and had frequented the Pulse nightclub in the past. The reality, however, is that we may never know all of the reasons why Omar Mateen walked into that nightclub in the early hours of a Sunday morning and murdered 49 people and wounded another 53 before being killed by law enforcement.

When we hear about a mass shooting or see a brutal beating on the news or scores of people being confronted by gunfire from their own government, the first question

usually asked is, “How could someone do that?” It is difficult to understand how and why individuals can do such horrible things. How can a man assault his wife over and over again, leaving her bruised and battered, both physically and mentally? How can a mother drown her children? What possesses a young man to take a gun to school and kill as many students and teachers as he can? How can some governments massacre thousands or even millions of its own citizens?

There is no single answer to these questions. Someone who engages in violence usually does so for many reasons, and even when there is a specific trigger, the behavior is also influenced by a number of other factors, including biology, psychology, history, childhood trauma and socialization, structural factors, and culture. For example, someone who is insulted in a bar and starts a fight is responding primarily to that slur, but his rejoinder is also dictated by his mood and temperament, the amount of alcohol he has had, his previous life experiences, how bystanders respond, and a host of other factors. We need to understand that behavior is typically the result of numerous elements that interact and influence our actions in many complex ways. This makes violent behavior difficult to predict. Given the same situation, different people will react in different ways, and the same individuals may not act the same way twice in similar situations. A night of partying at a bar may end in a violent brawl for some, while others always seem to end up at Denny’s for a different kind of grand slam. Many people live their entire lives without engaging in violent behavior, even though they are exposed to the same stresses, experiences, and influences that result in violence for others. Not every argument ends in a fight, not all marriages involve battering, not all nations go to war, and most crowds don’t erupt into riots.

Evolution and history have conspired with biology to give humans the ability to engage in violent behavior, yet that potential is dramatically shaped by temperament and personality as well as by the cultural, social, and political environments within which people find themselves. In order to understand violence, therefore, we must look at a number of influences that interact and affect human behavior in a multitude of ways and can vary tremendously from individual to individual and from situation to situation. This reality is compounded by the fact that although different kinds of violence are related, no single theory alone can explain all violence. Because of this, we must look at a variety of theories, each of which can help us understand a portion of the puzzle that is human violence. These theories can be categorized into several broad categories that include ethological or biological/neurochemical theories, psychological theories, and sociological theories. However, these categories are not mutually exclusive; many theories overlap into more than one grouping. Many psychological perspectives, for example, also include sociological components and vice versa. Keep this in mind as you read the chapter.

Ethological and Biological Explanations of Violence

A starting point to the problem of explaining the causes of human violence can be made with evolution and how it has impacted our propensity for violence. While much about our origins is unknown or disputed, what we do know is that we have evolved to inhabit a world in which violent behavior has often proved necessary for survival. Of course, the lives of other animals that inhabit our planet are also characterized by a great deal of violence. We can see this when we examine the types of aggression in which animals routinely engage, as illustrated by Table 2.1.

Looking at the listed motivations for aggressive behavior exhibited by animals in Table 2.1, it is easy to relate most of these to human aggression and violence. **Intermale aggression**, for example, is something that we can easily recognize among young men who sometimes struggle and compete for status by being the toughest and strongest. **Territorial aggression**, on the other hand, concerns animals that fight to control a piece of land they have marked or defined as their own. Is this so different from what people often do? Think about street gangs that use violence to protect their turf or some of the territorial wars and border conflicts between nations. Over the course of their history together, India and Pakistan have been fighting an on-again/off-again limited conflict because each nation disputes part of its shared border in the high Himalayas. The irony is that the mountainous terrain is so elevated, isolated, and remote that it is virtually uninhabitable, and more soldiers have died from altitude sickness, avalanches, and falling into glacier crevasses than from enemy action. Territorial aggression, even within the human species, is not always completely rational or useful.

One specific type of violence that was once believed to separate human beings from other animals is murder, since it was assumed that we were the only animals that killed within our own species.[7] While many animals kill, it usually involves

TABLE 2.1 Typology of Animal Aggression

Predatory aggression is intended to kill and eat prey.
Male-on-male aggression is played out between males of the same species and has supremacy as its goal.
Fear-based aggression is violence in response to a perceived threat where there is no escape.
Maternal aggression revolves around females protecting their young.
Irritable aggression derives from pain, frustration, or some sort of deprivation.
Sex-based aggression is sometimes perpetrated by males who use violence or the threat of it for mating purposes.
Instrumental aggression refers to aggression generated by experimentation on animals.
Territorial aggression concerns the defense of land that animals or groups have defined as their own.

Source: Adapted from K. E. Moyer, *The Psychobiology of Aggression* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1976).

animals outside of their species—the most common example is the predator/prey scenario in which certain animal species hunt and kill other animals for food. Certainly, animals sometimes kill others of their kind, but this was considered a rarity. When males of the same species fight for dominance or reproductive rights, the violence typically ends when one or the other submits. A lethal outcome is not usually the norm. However, more contemporary research reveals that many species do violently attack each other, and the outcomes are often deadly.[8] We can certainly see this if we examine our closest relatives: apes, which include chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and orangutans.

Genetically, humans are closest to chimpanzees. Research has shown that humans and chimps share between 96% and 99% of the same DNA makeup, which means that, genetically, humans are more closely related to chimpanzees than chimps are to gorillas.[9] Chimpanzee violence reveals much about the evolutionary roots of human violence. The image many people have of peaceful chimpanzees was largely shaped by the pioneering work of Jane Goodall, who spent many years studying and writing about the chimpanzees of Tanzania.[10] Except in extremely unusual circumstances, we now know that chimpanzees, far from being peaceful, routinely engage in murder, assassination, rape, raiding, and even what can be considered war.[11] Researchers have documented various instances in which groups of chimpanzees have attacked and killed males from rival groups. In fact, recent research reveals that chimpanzees are around 30 times more likely to kill a member of a different group than they are to kill a member of their own.[12] Sometimes it is an opportunistic attack on members of competitor groups that encroach on their range, while other times, they have been observed stalking, ambushing, and killing chimpanzees in raids that take place on rival territory. Chimpanzees are territorial and, like many animals, defend their land vigorously from intruders and trespassers. In many ways, as we noted above, this mirrors the behavior of nations and gangs—both of which engage in the same kinds of territorial defense. Chimpanzees also engage in raids intended to kill all of the rival males of another group and incorporate the surviving females into their own community.[13] One primatologist recently documented a chimpanzee troop in a national park in Uganda that, over the course of a decade, steadily murdered off all the male members of a neighboring troop, forcibly took the remaining female members of that group, and expanded into the territory of the now-destroyed group.[14] Can we characterize this as warfare or perhaps even genocide? As you will see, many of the characteristics certainly appear to be the same.

Similarly, male-on-female chimpanzee violence appears to be very similar to human male-on-female violence. In fact, Wrangham and Peterson suggest that it may best be described as *battering* since, as they have observed,

> chimpanzee battering and human battering are similar in three respects. First, they are both cases of predominantly male against female violence. Second, they are both instances of relationship violence; male chimpanzees batter females who are members of their community, ordinarily known to them for many years, often in contexts with nothing material, such as food or support for an ally, at stake. Third, like human battering, the battering of a female chimpanzee may take place during or be triggered by a number of superficial contexts, but the underlying issue looks to be domination or control.[15]

An important point to note is that chimpanzee violence generally and battering in particular are largely perpetrated by males. Female chimpanzees tend to be much less aggressive and violent than male chimps. Again, we see the same pattern when we examine human violence. One of the most consistent patterns of human violence is that it is largely perpetrated by young males. Around the world and in most situations, most violent victims and offenders are men.

Often, this violence revolves around issues of **status** and **dominance**. Male chimpanzees compete for status against other males within the same group, and much of their daily behavior revolves around this rivalry. It's interesting to note that once a male has achieved dominance, his tendency to rely on violence falls dramatically. Much of the violence, in other words, is intended to help him gain higher rank and to preserve that position. A lower-ranked male who doesn't act submissively to a higher-ranked male, for example, risks a violent reprisal from the higher-ranked male.[16] How different is this from a young man who assaults someone over some perceived slight or act of disrespect? As you will see in Chapter 3, many murders occur because an individual feels disrespected or insulted by what someone else has said or done.[17] Wrangham and Peterson specifically suggest that pride is at the root of the quest for status and prestige. It's hard to dispute this when we acknowledge that perceived insults, challenges to status, and demonstrations of a lack of respect are all important precursors to violent behavior for both chimpanzees and human beings. In many ways, perhaps we have not traveled that far from our ancestral origins. Without overdoing these comparisons, we can certainly suggest that human and chimpanzee violence share many of the same origins and characteristics. This is important to recognize, since it illustrates that violence—or at least the capacity for violence—is part of our evolutionary heritage and is a quality we still share with our closest animal relatives. In short, the potential for violence resides within all of us. This *ethological argument*, as it is known, is summed up by Jeffrey Goldstein, who writes, "Our animal ancestors were instinctively violent beings, and since we have evolved from them, we too must be the bearers of destructive impulses in our genetic makeup."[18]

To suggest that we are predisposed to violence because of our evolutionary heritage does not mean that we are doomed to violence. Not all people engage in violence, even though everybody is potentially capable of it. Many factors affect how and why individuals engage in aggressive behavior, including individual temperament, gender, emotion, biological predisposition and/or trauma, the presence or absence of weapons, alcohol, drugs, and the cultural, political, and situational contexts that people experience. It is therefore a mistake to classify people as either violent or peaceful. Humans are both. Some individuals engage in more frequent violence and/or more severe forms than others, but the bottom line is that everyone is capable of it. That being said, we can next look at some of the specific ways in which biology and chemistry have been linked with violent behavior.

It should be noted that explaining violence in biological terms has historically been fraught with controversy. This is largely because early research on biology and crime was based on faulty science that suggested that the causes of crime lay with defective individuals. From this perspective, social and environmental factors were largely irrelevant. Early scientific studies focused on body types, skull shapes, bad