



## City Research Online

### City, University of London Institutional Repository

---

**Citation:** Walby, S. (2013). Violence and society: introduction to an emerging field of sociology. *Current Sociology*, 61(2), pp. 95-111. doi: 10.1177/0011392112456478

This is the published version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

---

**Permanent repository link:** <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/21789/>

**Link to published version:** <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392112456478>

**Copyright:** City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

**Reuse:** Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.



Article

# Violence and society: Introduction to an emerging field of sociology

Current Sociology  
61(2) 95–111

© The Author(s) 2012

Reprints and permission: sagepub.

co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0011392112456478

csi.sagepub.com

**Sylvia Walby**

Lancaster University, UK

## Abstract

The analysis of violence is an important part of sociology. While it has sometimes been pushed to the margins of sociology, nevertheless, violence emerges repeatedly in the analysis of both everyday life and momentous social change; interpersonal relations and crime; governance and resistance; relations between states, north and south; and multiple varieties of modernity. New ways of making violence visible unsettle old notions of the nature and direction of violence; challenging assumptions that the disadvantaged are more violent than the powerful; and that modernity is increasingly less violent. The new research on violence against women and minorities and in the global South makes a powerful case for the inclusion of violence as a core issue in sociology. This article introduces the articles in this monograph issue of *Current Sociology*, situating them in a new paradigm of ‘violence and society’. The articles identify the specificities of violence, its non-reducibility to state, culture and biology, while outlining the interconnections within this emerging field.

## Keywords

Governance, interpersonal violence, social theory, sociology, violence, war

## Introduction

Violence matters. It wrecks and shortens lives, causes pain and suffering, and is often part of rapid social change. The field of violence encompasses war, terrorism, securitization, ethnic ‘cleansing’, domestic violence, violent crime and hate crime. It has increasingly become a matter for public debate and intervention by states and other actors.

---

### Corresponding author:

Sylvia Walby, Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YT, UK.

Email: S.Walby@Lancaster.ac.uk

Violence is becoming visibly important for sociology as a discipline, yet has often been dispersed and fragmented into specialist areas of analysis. Sociologists have contributed much to the intellectual understanding of violence as social processes and institutions; there are a multiplicity of sociological theories and perspectives under discussion and subject to vigorous critical debate, at global and national levels. While violence was a theme addressed by classical sociological theorists such as Marx and Engels (1967) and Weber (1968), it became less central after the Second World War (Malesevic, 2010). However, it did not disappear, but rather became fragmented, located in subfields often considered specialist, rather than core to 'theory'. Ontologically, and disciplinarily, this means that violence has been seen in two major forms: interpersonal violent crime and inter-state war. The first, violent crime and deviance, is often analysed within the field of criminology, which is relatively separate from sociology. The second, the use of warfare by the state, is sometimes seen as more appropriately analysed by international relations, political science and the new security studies (Buzan and Hansen, 2004; Buzan et al., 1998; Collins, 2010) than by sociology, though there are important exceptions (Giddens, 1985; Mann, 1986; Shaw, 2000, 2005). In the area of governance, overt violence has often been assumed to be in decline (Foucault, 1991, 1997). However, there have always been those who have analysed violence as central to societal developments and not reducible to other social processes (see Garland [2001] and Wacquant [2009] on crime and Mann [1986] and Shaw [2000, 2005] on war). There is a re-emergence of violence as more central to sociology, partly as a consequence of the greater inclusion of views from the South, from women and minorities, and partly because of the increased visibility and practice of violence in everyday life, governance and inter-state relations. Research on interpersonal violence in relation to inequalities of gender, ethnicity, religion and sexuality, as new forms of violence are documented and theorized (Abraham, 2002; Ertürk and Purkayastha, 2012; Fregoso and Bejarano, 2010; Iganski, 2008), and the inclusion of more perspectives from the global South, concerning experiences of postcolonialism, war and conflict zones (Caforio and Kümmel, 2005; Connell, 2007; Fanon, 1990) has raised questions about core issues of sociology.

The increased visibility of violence in sociology challenges core understandings about the social changes of modernity. The uncovering of new forms of violence contests several of the theses that suggest that violence declines with modernity, including those of Elias on the civilizing process; of Foucault on the shift in governance from state brutality to discipline to securitization; and of Weber on the monopolization of legitimate violence by a modern state. The rethinking of the relationship between violence and modernity in response to these challenges includes that of pluralizing the concept of modernity, so as to recognize its multiple and varied forms.

The definition and conceptualization of violence is contested in these debates. Violence has often been seen as reducible to or contained within other categories, especially as an instrument of other forms of power. In such an approach, violence is included within categories and concepts variously related to power, the state, politics, culture or symbols. Alternatively violence has been analysed as a distinctive phenomenon, as a non-reducible form of power, a form of practice, a set of social institutions, with its own rhythm, dynamics and practices. The debate on these ontological issues as to the nature

of the object under analysis shapes the structuring of the field and its location within academic disciplines.

The challenges of addressing violence in sociology are presented and answered in innovative ways in this monograph issue of *Current Sociology*. The articles make more forms of violence visible in the areas of interpersonal violence and crime; governance and resistance; and 'new' and old wars. As a consequence they challenge conventional ways of treating violence within sociology. The articles present new perspectives on the relationship of violence to modernity in its multiple varieties. They identify the distinctiveness of violence: that violence is irreducible to biology, to politics, the state, the economy, symbols or culture; while yet demonstrating the interactions with each of these. The articles show the important and varied interconnections between violence in the interpersonal sphere, in governance and resistance and in warfare. They show the way towards the construction of an integrated field of violence in sociology that goes beyond its separation into fragments at the edges of the discipline.

## **Violence and modernity**

The marginalization of violence within core debates in postwar sociology is linked to development of the thesis that violence declines with modernity (Elias, 1994; Foucault, 1991, 1997; Pinker, 2011; Weber, 1968). The thesis proposes that, in modernity, violence has been reduced and that the forms that remain lie on the edges of society in the deviance and criminality of the disadvantaged or in the infrequent battles of militaries engaged in inter-state war. The thesis has variously linked economic prosperity with the reduction of poverty and social inequality (Moser and Shrader, 1999; Van Wilsem, 2004), the monopolization of violence in the state (Tilly, 1990), increasing democratization and the internalization of social controls over emotions and expressions of violence (Eisner, 2001). This thesis of the decline of violence with modernity is challenged by new research on interpersonal violence, governance and the new wars, especially that concerning gender-based violence against women, violence against minorities, violence in the South and the 'new' wars. The thesis is also challenged by critiques of the concept of modernity, in particular of the assumption that there is a single form of modernity with a linear trajectory.

In the thesis linking violence and modernity, modernity reduces violence, but some violence remains at the margins of society in crime and in war. In this approach, it is the disadvantaged, on the social margins, suffering from poverty and inequality that are the main users of violence; this is deviant behaviour that is criminalized. In the Durkheimian approach (Durkheim, 1952), the focus is on anomie, egoism, social disorganization, poverty and social disintegration. In Durkheim's empirical work, suicide varies between countries and over time according to the level of anomie. In Merton's work (Merton, 1968), crime, including violent crime, is seen to be the consequence of social and economic inequality, as those who are unable to achieve access to goods and services through legitimate means turn to illegitimate ones.

The Elias (1994) thesis is that the civilizing effects of modernity occur through the increase in self-control, including control over the expression of violent urges, in a complex interlinking of changes in various social institutions and in personality types. Some

studies of homicide have appeared to show a reduction over time, especially over several centuries of European history (Eisner, 2001; Gurr, 1981). This decline has been associated with modernity, through the impact of economic growth, since richer countries have lower rates of homicide than poorer ones (Fajnzylber et al., 1998).

Weber (1968) classically defined a modern state as an institution that had a monopoly over legitimate violence in a given territory. This monopoly was the outcome of a long historical process during which violence became increasingly concentrated in states. This process linked the capacity of the state to go to war with the development of the capacity of the state to raise taxes, since the development of large-scale military technology gave an advantage to those entities that were able to raise the large sums of money necessary for this. During this process there was a simultaneous reduction in small militias and warlords outside the state. A long tradition of historical sociology has studied these processes, with a focus on Europe over several hundred years (Arrighi, 1994; McNeill, 1963; Mann, 1986; Tilly, 1990). There is a related thesis that claims that increasing democratization reduces the propensity of states to go to war with each other; indeed that democracies do not go to war with each other. Starting from Kant's speculations about the conditions necessary for 'perpetual peace', a literature developed that found evidence in support of this thesis, though with multiple caveats, including that democratic states would defend themselves, and that this only applied to 'mature' democracies when the 'stage' of state formation was complete (Rummel, 1997; Walt, 1999; Weart, 1998).

Foucault's (1991, 1997) account of the changing form of governance with modernity and democracy proposes a movement away from overt use of violence by the state towards discipline and then the securitization of the population. Foucault's example of brute power is the public spectacle of an execution of a convicted criminal; while discipline is illustrated by the example of prisons. Rose (1999) develops Foucault's account of the internalization of governance in the securitization of the whole population into one of the rise of the neoliberal entrepreneurial self. These three forms of governance are usually seen as constituting a sequence over time, developing with modernity and democratization, as normalization replaces force as the mechanism securing social cohesion and social order; although the three forms can also be seen as coexisting (Merry, 2001). As the overt power of the sovereign state over the population through violence declines, the cohesion of the social order is maintained through these processes of internalization of norms.

These theses about the relationship between modernity and violence have been challenged by the new scholarship on violence. This work has named, described, documented, conceptualized, analysed and theorized violence in the areas of interpersonal violence, war and governance. This research has made additional forms of violence visible, especially the violence of the powerful to the disadvantaged, foregrounding the experiences of the less powerful and the South.

The new research on interpersonal violence challenges the notion that most violence is carried out by the disadvantaged. It has found forms of violence that had previously been unseen, buried, disguised and otherwise denied, which are directed from the more powerful to the less powerful. Gender-based violence against women has been named, documented and analysed. This has made visible intimate partner violence (Counts et al.,

1992; Crenshaw, 1991; Gill, 2004; Hearn, 1998; Kannabiran and Kannabiran, 2002; Vyas and Watts, 2009), rape and sexual assault (Ariffin, 1997; Brown and Walklate, 2012; Kelly, 1989), sexual harassment (Zippel, 2006), forced marriage (Ouattara et al., 2010), 'honour' crimes (Welchman and Hossain, 2005), trafficking (Turner and Kelly, 2009), femicide (Fregoso and Bejarano, 2010) and other forms of gender-based violence (Heise, 1998; Krug et al., 2002; UN Secretary-General, 2006). There is violence from those in majority groups against those in minoritized groups identified by ethnicity, religion, sexuality and age (Iganksi, 2008). New forms of research methods to facilitate disclosure and measure have developed (Walby and Allen, 2004; Walby and Myhill, 2001). Innovative methods have developed to research the micro level of violence, to access interactions that have usually been outside the view of traditional sociological research (see Collins, this issue). The nature and implications of forms of interpersonal violence from men to women and their implications for children are addressed by the articles by Hearn (this issue) and by Eriksson (this issue).

The forms of organized violence that have been made newly visible are so different from the classic understanding of war that the term 'new' wars has been developed (Kaldor, 2006; Shaw, 2005). Although there is a question as to whether 'new wars' are really so new (Münkler, 2005), it is clear that contemporary warfare is different in significant ways from the 'world' wars of 1914–1918 and 1939–1945. War is no longer concentrated in battles between armies in conflicts between states, but includes guerrilla tactics, terrorism and genocide. The new wars are asymmetrical rather than symmetrical, in the sense that one side usually has much greater military strength than the other; and that while one side possesses sophisticated and expensive weapons, the other does not. Alternative techniques are used to attempt to neutralize such power asymmetry. Battles are no longer the centrepiece of war; new wars are more often dispersed and decentralized, with low levels of intensity of military engagement but over a longer number of years. The distinction between soldiers and civilians or between combatants and non-combatants is eroded; indeed civilians can become the main targets since they are the most vulnerable. Some of these practices pre-date the wars conventionally considered 'old' wars, including those of subjecting the civilian population to death and destruction (Münkler, 2005). Guerrilla warfare was used in Vietnam against the US, and avoided major battles that the Vietcong would be likely to lose. Terrorism is deliberately aimed at the civilian population, to weaken the political resolve to continue a course of action. Systematic gender-based violence against women, such as rape, is used as a weapon of war (Jacobs et al., 2000). Genocide is often conducted by bodies of armed men against civilians (Shaw, 2007). Indeed the original definition of genocide included the extermination of the way of life, not only of life itself (Shaw, 2007). Analysis of the holocaust is used by Bauman (1989) to argue that modernity is compatible with massive violence, not least through processes of distancing. Nandy (1988) is similarly sceptical that science and modernity reduce violence. Doná (this issue) discusses the implications of evidence about genocide, while Hanafi (this issue) analyses an example of the extermination of the way of life, proposing its conceptualization as 'spacio-cide'. The significance of resources drawn from global flows of people, remittances and illegal goods further complicates the economic sinews of war. The practices associated with 'traditional' conceptions of 'modern' state-making are reframed or dislocated by regional and global media,

hegemony and military alliances. The new wars are as often linked to disintegrating states as they are with state-making. However, it is important not to lose sight of the significance of old forms of military power that coexist with this, such as those of the US and the members of the NATO alliance in their new and old forms (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2006; Harris, 2002, 2005; Mann, 1986).

The thesis that governance has become less coercive with modernity is challenged by new research on the governance of interpersonal violence by states. There are at least two types of example: the increased criminalization of interpersonal violence and the increased coerciveness of the criminal justice system. First, under pressure from the deepening of democracy and the inclusion of a wider range of social groups into formal political processes, states have responded by moving towards criminalizing these forms of interpersonal violence (Brown and Walklate, 2012; Bunch, 1995; Hoyle and Sanders, 2000; Krizsan and Popa, 2010; Walby, 2009). This is a process in which there is an increase in coercive state power, not a decrease. Second, approaches to criminal justice have seen a turn away from an orientation towards welfare and its replacement by one that is more coercive (Garland, 2001). There has been an increased use of coercive forms of criminal justice, such as imprisonment (Wacquant, 2009). Third, newly restructured states have not reduced the amount of violence used in their practices of governance.

This evidence on the extent and nature of violence challenges the traditional theses linking violence and modernity in sociological theory.

There is a significant amount of interpersonal violence from the more powerful against the less powerful, which challenges the treatment of interpersonal violence as primarily crimes of the disadvantaged or the result of social disorganization. This violence is part consequence and part cause of social inequality; it is constitutive of structured social inequality. The analysis of such inequality requires the development of sociological concepts beyond those of deviance, crime and criminology; beyond Durkheim and Merton.

The extent of the violence and the reluctance of the state effectively to criminalize this violence from dominant to disadvantaged groups challenge the Weberian assumption that contemporary states have a monopoly over legitimate violence in their territories. To the contrary, states have shared authority over the use of violence with patriarchs and racists among others. This brings into question whether these states are best thought of as 'modern'.

The evidence of the extent and nature of the forms of organized violence, sometimes grouped together as 'new wars', from genocide to the use of rape as a weapon of war, challenges the notion that states have a monopoly on warfare. Further it challenges the notion of a gradual process linking state-making and warfare. Today, war is as least as likely to be a part of state disintegration as it is part of state formation. The papers by Doná, by Hanafi and by Grinberg (this issue) take forward these debates in relation to genocide and to state formation and disintegration. The new wars demand new ways of thinking about peace, as discussed by Trimikliniotis (this issue).

Foucault's account of changes in the position of violence in governance is challenged when the policing and governance of interpersonal violence is made visible. Although democratization appears to reduce the overt use of brute physical violence by the state against its citizens in relation to political dispute and governance (della Porta, 2006;

Tilly, 2003), its implications for the policing of interpersonal violence are more challenging for his thesis. In earlier times, violent transgressions against women and minoritized groups from men and the powerful were not usually met with a brutal state response on behalf of those groups against the offender, but ignored; instead women and minorities were expected to look after their own security, the best they could. As democracy has deepened, there has been a movement towards state intervention against such violent offenders (Lewis et al., 2001). A great wave of feminist actions against men's violence has brought this violence into view and generated a multiplicity of reforms, including its criminalization (Bunch, 1995; Ertürk and Purkayastha, 2012; Zippel, 2006). Some of this violence has been recently and partly criminalized as a result of the deepening of democracy and the pressure of the victimized and survivors of the violence on the state (Weldon, 2002). Thus from the point of view of women and minorities the temporal shift in the form of governance related to violence has been in the reverse order postulated by Foucault. On gender-based violence against women, the transition has been from self-securitization towards discipline and to visible even brutal state intervention (Walby, 2009). Changes in 'modernity' are experienced very differently by women and the disprivileged than by the powerful.

One way forward in the debates on the concept of 'modernity' has been to reject the notion of a single form and to replace this by multiple forms and varieties of modernity, some of which are linked through global processes. The development of ways of addressing multiple modernities (Bhambra, 2007; Eisenstadt, 2002), varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice, 2001) and varieties of modernity (Walby, 2009) has addressed some of these concerns, including that of ethnocentricity. In particular, the analysis of neoliberalism as a variant of (capitalist) modernity develops the analysis of the links between this specific form of modernity with more coercive forms of governance (Garland, 2001; Harvey, 2005). Neoliberal forms of modernity (Wacquant, 2009; Walby, 2009) may be linked to higher rates of violence through the link to greater inequality (Fajnzylber et al., 1998; Panda and Agarwal, 2005; Ray, 2011). Neoliberal varieties of modernity appear to be linked to higher rates of violence, in interpersonal practices such as homicide, governance such as coercive forms of criminal justice system, and the increase in organized yet non-state forms of violence or 'new' wars. Doná (this issue) addresses these discussions by developing the notion of interconnected modernities to analyse the implications of the historical legacies of interconnected modernities for genocide.

## **Developing the ontology of violence**

The sociological analysis of violence requires the development of an appropriate ontology of violence; defining the concept and elucidating the nature of the relationship between violence and other social forces. This concerns the relationship of violence with the biological aspects of bodies, with other forms of power, politics, the state, the economy and culture.

One of the issues in the definition of violence is whether it necessarily includes physicality in either the action or its effect. Galtung (1969, 1996), one of the founders of peace studies, extends the concept of violence so that any social system of social inequality that leads to unnecessary death is considered violent, even if this does not involve the

deployment of physical force. Similarly, the concept of human in/security includes a wide range of factors that can lead to unnecessary death (Roberts, 2008). A wide definition is also to be found in much of the literature on gender-based violence, for example, in the concept of 'coercive control' (Stark, 2007) and the work on trafficking (Kelly, 2003). The cultural turn in sociology is implicated in a tendency to interpret violence through symbols and culture, rather than through its physicality. In his concept of symbolic violence, Bourdieu (1991) treats the domination of the powerful in governance as violence and simultaneously as symbols and culture. Baudrillard's (1995) theorization of the increasing significance of the symbolic in contemporary society takes this further, so that war is understood as spectacle and the most important popular engagement with it seen as through the media; with the Gulf War treated as if it were predominantly a media event. Such theorizing takes the analysis of violence away from its physicality and bodily engagement towards the cultural.

By contrast with Bourdieu, Fanon (1990) offers an account of the place of violence in governance from the position of the colonized and those who resist colonialism. In this account, violence is ever present in the experience of the governance of society. Violence is a tool of power used by the colonizers; it is an ever present part of their repertoire of power, ready to surface at any moment to enforce their superior position. It can emerge suddenly, at arbitrary and unexpected moments; while lurking constantly in the background. Fanon suggests that the colonized need to deploy violence in order to resist colonization. This is not only to address power that is visible, structural and systemic, but to address the power that has entered the psychology of the oppressed, bending their actions to reluctant conformity to the will of the oppressor. Violence by the colonized is needed to cleanse the soul of the oppressed of their oppression. Von Holdt (this issue) considers that Bourdieu inappropriately neglects the physical aspects of violence, which are more pressing in the everyday lives of those living under colonialism, and asks whether Fanon is a better theorist of these experiences. However, he questions whether violence does 'cleanse the soul' as Fanon suggests. Rather, the use of violence by the oppressed corrodes and corrupts, continuing forms of domination rather than eradicating them. Von Holdt in this issue offers a powerful and sophisticated challenge to the writings of Fanon on violence, showing that it is hard to stop violence once it has started, even when it has been important in struggles for liberation.

Critical engagement with the theoretical move away from physicality towards symbols in the treatment of violence is offered by Collins (this issue) and by Von Holdt (this issue). Collins addresses the physical, emotional and bodily aspects of violence, while never succumbing to biological reductionism. With the emergence of sociology as a separate discipline, the treatment of violence has been as a social fact, shaped by social institutions. In some cases this led to such a clear demarcation between the bodies and the social that it became hard to analyse the connections between the two, even in the field of violence. However, it is possible to analyse the complex interconnections between the social and the biology of bodies and emotions without biological reductionism (as shown by the sophisticated treatment of this topic by Collins in this issue). Collins includes physical force as a necessary component of the definition of violence in order to identify its specificity. A definition of violence

that includes a necessary physical component would be: 'violence is the use of physical force to produce physical hurt and harm'.

There are various positions on the relationship of violence to other forms of power, such as politics and the state; whether it is effectively reduced to being a tool of power, or whether it is conceptualized as a distinctive form of power in its own right, with its own distinctive forms, rhythms and institutions (Tilly, 2003). For example in the work of Marx violence is often treated as a tool of power; while, by contrast, in Gramsci (1971) the understanding of the utilization of either consent or coercion in a strategy to gain or challenge hegemony implies that each has significant effects in its own right. Mann (1986, 2003) has demonstrated that it is important to keep the concept of military power separate from that of the state. In parallel, it is useful to make a distinction between politics and violence (Arendt, 1970), as Grinberg (this issue) demonstrates. It is important to develop a conceptual repertoire that does not reduce violence to other forms of power, but rather enables the analysis of the relationship between them. Both consent and coercion are present in governance and resistance to it in complex and varied ways that defy simple accounts of transitions in modernity, as Gramsci (1971) has argued. There are complex struggles over the content of the meanings that shape social actions, over the hegemonic meanings produced in civil society. These meanings matter, since power in the modern era is only partly won through coercion. The more stable forms of domination in class-divided society require the consent of the oppressed. It is possible for hegemonic meanings to be successfully contested so that consent to the established order can dwindle. Coercion is used both by the state to re-establish the conventional order and by other groups to challenge it. Gramsci makes a distinction between strategies of manoeuvre, where sudden decisive changes are possible, and of position, where there are periods of argumentation and attrition. This is a more flexible account of the significance of violence for governance and resistance, with the strengths and weaknesses that stem from such contingencies having such a significant place in the analysis. It offers a set of conceptual tools for thinking about the relations between violence and consent, power and authority.

There is a complex relationship between violence and economic power; again a relationship where it is important neither to reduce one form of power to the other, nor to ignore their interconnections (Panda and Agarwal, 2005). The changing balance of economic power is relevant to considerations of future wars (Arrighi, 1994; Bornschier and Chase-Dunn, 1999) but, as Mann (2003) has shown, economic and military power do not map onto each other in simple ways. The intricacy of the relations between violence and the economy is demonstrated in the analyses of the new wars (Münkler, 2005), and further developed in the articles (including Doná) in this issue. While Kaldor (2006) sees new wars as identity based, this is disputed by Shaw (2005), who emphasizes the significance of economic issues. This is investigated by Doná in this issue, in her questioning whether ethnicity was the sole basis for the Rwanda genocide. 'New wars' are more likely to take the form of self-sustaining activities than those conducted by states and financed out of taxation. The military entrepreneurs support their activities by drawing economic resources from the environment that they dominate and also from connections to globally dispersed diaspora and global trades in illegal goods (opium, blood diamonds). In some ways wars fought by states are more self-limiting, in that they are

dependent on taxation, than those that acquire their own resources from war itself (Münkler, 2005). Violence is not a simple tool of economic power, even though an economic dimension can often be present in the structuring of the social relations in which violence is deployed (as shown by Hearn, by Von Holdt and by Doná in this issue).

When violence has been treated as if it were reducible to other forms of power it has often disappeared from or been marginalized in social theory. It is important to identify its specificity, while also analysing its connections to other social institutions. Violence is not reducible to politics or the state; indeed violence can be an alternative to the use of politics to address conflicts (as shown by Grinberg, this issue). Violence is best treated as a distinctive practice that is not reducible to other forms of power or practice.

## **Violence as an interconnected field of sociology**

There are sufficient connections between the different forms of violence – interpersonal level, governance and resistance and new forms of warfare – that they are best analysed as a single field or domain.

Interpersonal violence has often been analysed as violent crime. This form of violence is then understood to be on the margins of society, deviance, and addressed by society primarily through the lens of crime. It is seen as a variable social phenomenon produced by particular arrangements of social institutions, which differ between time and place. The separation of interpersonal violence into a field of crime, suitable for a specialist field of criminology, is challenged by the significance of this violence as part of structured social inequality, and therefore its role in governance and resistance to this; further violence in conflict and post-conflict zones, from genocide to rape, are interpersonal as well as forms of ‘new war’. Such analyses of interpersonal violence move beyond conventional analysis of ‘crime’ into the governance of structured social inequality.

The development of a sociology of governance as a field in which violence is marginal, for example in work influenced by Foucault, is challenged by the making visible of violence against women and minorities and the political projects that make this central to their activities. Further while violence is hard to start (Collins, this issue) it is also hard to stop, so has a legacy and path dependency that is hard to stop or remove. Practices of violence that were once part of resistance or a struggle against power linger into new regimes and are part of the oppression of the weakest (as Von Holdt shows so well).

The ‘new wars’ contain a repertoire of forms of violence that are interpersonal and inter-group rather than inter-state, so cannot be separated as a field of war studies confined to the actions of states. The use of genocide and rape as instruments of war are examples of the blurring of boundaries between state and non-state actors in the field of organized violence (Jacobs et al., 2000). The securitization that is the frequent response to terrorism involves civilian as well as military personnel, non-state and state practices (Gregory, 2004).

The development of expertise in peace processes further demonstrates the interconnected nature of different forms of violence. The development of expert knowledge including that of sociologists (Brewer, 2010) has led to the development of a multifaceted field of peace studies, with innovation in the concept of peace (Galtung, 1969, 1996); the nature of cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2006; Held, 2010); the deconstruction of

essentialism and the significance of gender (Cockburn, 1998, 2000); and analysis of the ethic and practice of reconciliation (Sitas, 2011). It is to this field that Trimikliniotis (this issue) makes an important contribution to the analysis of peace processes.

The interconnections between diverse forms of violence challenge the traditional divisions between interpersonal and inter-state violence. The distinction between processes that are internal to the state and external to it breaks down in these analyses and circumstances, if indeed it was ever useful. The practice and analysis of 'new wars' criss-cross all attempts at such a boundary. The security response to terrorism changes the relations between a state and its citizens. The local, national, transnational and global processes at macro and micro levels are interconnected. Changes in the level of violence in a society are interconnected. Interpersonal violence, violence in governance and resistance to it, and violence in war create practices and legacies that affect the overall level of violence in a society. Violence as a field is connected to the fields of economy, state and civil society, but not reducible to them. The strength of a sociological treatment of violence is in the analysis of the ways that these many social institutions are interconnected. The analysis of violence only as crime, or only in relation to states deprives the analysis of important connections. The development of violence as a field of enquiry within contemporary sociology engages with these interconnections between forms of violence.

The interconnections between different forms of violence can be developed in various ways. Purkayastha (2009) uses the notion of a continuum of violence, reaching from more public spheres, such as those of the international, national and community arenas, to more private spheres. The articles in this monograph issue could be located at different points along this continuum, since they range from macro to micro levels.

Violence can be integrated more centrally into the discipline of sociology, as the articles in this issue show. It benefits from being treated as an integrated field within sociology. However, there are dynamic and competitive processes in the definition of the field of 'violence and society' that shape how a sociological framing might develop and settle. Violence is analysed in adjacent social science disciplines that overlap in some ways with sociology. These include criminology, peace studies, security studies, political science, war studies, international relations, gender studies, gender violence (an emerging specialism and field of its own, with its own journals) and social policy. As well as having an academic base, these fragments have relations with civil society, funders, practitioners, policy-makers and the state; all of which play some, though varying, part in shaping the field (Burawoy, 2005).

There is an emerging field of 'sociology of violence', seen not least in several recent, very important attempts to write more general theories of violence and society (Collins, 2008; Malesevic, 2010; Ray, 2011; Shaw, 2000; Wiewiorka, 2009). These emerging theoretical frameworks for the analysis of violence and society reconsider and develop the sociological heritage on violence. The substantive enquiries they use to develop their theories of violence and society typically start from either the field of war or that of interpersonal violence and move towards the incorporation of the other field, consequently tending to produce an asymmetry between the two in their proposed hybridized field. A more symmetrical incorporation of these two fields would produce a more fully rounded sociological field of violence and society.

The analysis of violence is important for sociology. Recent advances in the field have made violence more visible; demonstrated its distinctiveness and non-reducibility to other social forces; disrupted and revised but not abandoned the 'traditional' sociological trope of 'modernity'; and offered the prospects of the development of an interconnected field of violence in sociology.

## **The articles**

The articles in this monograph issue are a selection of the papers presented during the plenary stream on violence at the International Sociological Association conference in Gothenburg in 2010. They demonstrated the interconnected nature of the field of violence emerging in global sociology.

Von Holdt compares the work and implications of Fanon and Bourdieu for the analysis of violence in post-apartheid South Africa. While Bourdieu is found to be silent on violence in colonial Algeria, though writing of symbolic violence in the global North, Fanon, writing on the liberating potential of violence for anti-colonial movements, is found to underestimate its corrosive consequences in the post-conflict period. Violence is hard to leave behind and is an obstacle to post-apartheid attempts to create just social relations.

Collins offers a subtle and sophisticated account of the micro-aspects of the sociological analysis of violence and their intersection with biological bodies. While Von Holdt finds that violence is hard to stop, Collins finds that violence is hard to start. He develops the micro-sociological basis of an ontology and theory of violence.

Hearn addresses interpersonal violence against women, which he argues has long been neglected in mainstream sociology, despite major work by feminist sociologists and kindred researchers, and its significance in everyday practice and for sociological theory. He shows the significance of domestic violence, not only public violence, for sociology.

Eriksson investigates the changing response of the state to violence in the instance of the exposure of children to intimate partner violence. She unpicks the intricacies of the intersection of age and gender and shows their implications for hierarchies even in the activities of democratic states.

Doná examines violence in a postcolonial context, where there are multiple modernities, which are not separate, but interconnected. She investigates the significance of colonial legacies in the generation of genocide in Rwanda and resists the simplicities of reducing violence in such contexts to ethnicity.

Hanafi develops the concept of spacio-cide in order to capture the specificities of violence in the Palestinian context, which involve the taking of land, not only violence against the person. Hanafi distinguishes between and shows the connections among processes of colonization, separation and the state of exception.

Grinberg demonstrates the importance of making a distinction between the concepts of politics and violence and examines the implications of the use of one or another in the context of conflicts over nation and state. He shows the importance of international context in shaping the process.

Trimikliniotis interrogate the concept of reconciliation in order to consider its implications for the development of peace processes. He shows the significance of developing a sociological rather than religious tradition associated with the concept.

While these articles make significant empirical contributions to analyses of gender, ethnicity and ethno-national fields, it is their collective theoretical contribution to building an integrated field of violence that is most important. The articles demonstrate the breadth and strength of the field, going beyond its fragmentation into specialist subfields. This journal issue marks the emergence of this important field into mainstream sociology.

## Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

## References

- Abraham M (2002) *Speaking the Unspeakable: Marital Violence Among South Asian Immigrants in the United States*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Arendt H (1970) *On Violence*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Ariffin R (ed.) (1997) *Shame, Secrecy and Silence: Study of Rape in Penang*. Penang, Malaysia: Women's Crisis Centre.
- Arrighi G (1994) *The Long Twentieth Century*. London: Verso.
- Baudrillard J (1995) *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Sydney: Power Publications.
- Bauman Z (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Beck U (2006) *The Cosmopolitan Visions*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bhambra G (2007) *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bornschier V and Chase-Dunn C (eds) (1999) *The Future of Global Conflict*. London: Sage.
- Bourdieu P (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brewer J (2010) *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brown JM and Walklate SL (eds) (2012) *Handbook on Sexual Violence*. London: Routledge.
- Bunch C (1995) Transforming human rights from a feminist perspective. In: Peters J and Wolper A (eds) *Women's Rights, Human Rights*. London: Routledge.
- Burawoy M (2005) For public sociology. *American Sociological Review* 70(1): 4–28.
- Buzan B and Hansen L (2009) *The Evolution of International Security Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buzan B, Wæver O and de Wilde J (1998) *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Caforio G and Kümmel G (eds) (2005) *Military Missions and their Implications Reconsidered: The Aftermath of September 11th*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Cockburn C (1998) *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*. London: Zed Press.
- Cockburn C (2000) The anti-essentialist choice: Nationalism and feminism in the interaction between two women's projects. *Nations and Nationalism* 6(4): 611–629.
- Collins A (2010) *Contemporary Security Studies*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Collins R (2008) *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Connell R (2007) *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Counts DA, Brown JK and Campbell JC (eds) (1992) *Sanctions and Sanctuary: Cultural Perspectives on the Beating of Wives*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Crenshaw KW (1991) Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241–1299.
- Della Porta D (2006) *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Durkheim E (1952) *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Eisenstadt SN (ed.) (2002) *Multiple Modernities*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Eisner M (2001) Modernization, self-control and lethal violence: The long-term dynamics of European homicide rates in theoretical perspective. *British Journal of Criminology* 41(4): 618–638.
- Elias N (1994) *The Civilizing Process*. Oxford: Blackwell. (Originally published in 1939 as *The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilisation*.)
- Ertürk Y and Purkayastha B (2012) Linking research, policy and action: A look at the work of the special rapporteur on violence against women. *Current Sociology* 60(1): 142–160.
- Fajnzylber P, Lederman D and Loayza N (1998) *Determinants of Crime Rates in Latin America and the World*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Fanon F (1990 [1967]) *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault M (1991) Governmentality. In: Burchell G, Gordon C and Miller P (eds) *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp. 87–105.
- Foucault M (1997) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin.
- Fregoso R-L and Bejarano C (eds) (2010) *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Galtung J (1969) Violence, peace and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research* 16(3): 167–191.
- Galtung J (1996) *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. London: Sage/Oslo: PRIO (International Peace Research Institute).
- Garland D (2001) *The Culture of Control*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Giddens A (1985) *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gill A (2004) Voicing the silent fear: South Asian women's experiences of domestic violence. *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 43(5): 465–483.
- Gramsci A (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Gregory D (2004) *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gurr TR (1981) Historical trends in violent crime: A critical review of the evidence. *Crime and Justice. An Annual Review of Research* 3: 295–350.
- Hall PA and Soskice D (eds) (2001) *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hardt M and Negri A (2000) *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hardt M and Negri A (2006) *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. London: Penguin Books.
- Harris J (2002) The US military in the era of globalisation. *Race and Class* 44(2): 1–22.
- Harris J (2005) The military-industrial complex in transnational class theory. In: Appelbaum R and Robinson WI (eds) *Critical Globalization Studies*. New York: Routledge.
- Harvey D (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hearn J (1998) *The Violences of Men*. London: Sage.

- Heise L (1998) Violence against women: An integrated ecological framework. *Violence Against Women* 4(3): 262–290.
- Held D (2010) *Cosmopolitanism*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hoyle C and Sanders A (2000) Police response to domestic violence. *British Journal of Criminology* 40(1): 14–36.
- Iganski P (2008) *'Hate Crime' and the City*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Jacobs S, Jacobson R and Marchbank J (eds) (2000) *States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance*. London: Zed Books.
- Kaldor M (2006) *New and Old Wars*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity.
- Kannabiran K and Kannabiran V (eds) (2002) *De-eroticizing Assault: Essays on Modesty, Honour and Power*. Calcutta: Bhatkal and Sen.
- Kelly L (1989) *Surviving Sexual Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kelly L (2003) The wrong debate: Reflections on why force is not the key issue with respect to trafficking in women for sexual exploitation. *Feminist Review* 73(1): 139–144.
- Krizsan A and Popa R (2010) Europeanization in making anti-domestic violence policies in central and eastern Europe. *Social Politics* 17(3): 379–406.
- Krug EG, Dahlberg LL and Mercy JA et al. (2002) *World Report on Violence and Health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Lewis R, Dobash RE, Dobash R and Cavanagh K (2001) Law's progressive potential: The value of engagement with the law for domestic violence. *Social and Legal Studies* 10(1): 105–130.
- McNeill W (1963) *The Rise of the West*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Malesevic S (2010) *The Sociology of War and Peace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mann M (1986) *The Sources of Social Power. Volume 1. A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mann M (2003) *Incoherent Empire*. London: Verso.
- Marx K and Engels F (1967) *The Communist Manifesto*. London: Penguin.
- Merry SE (2001) Spatial governmentality and the new urban social order: Controlling gender violence through law. *American Anthropologist* 103(1): 16–29.
- Merton RK (1968) *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press.
- Moser C and Shrader E (1999) *A Conceptual Framework for Violence Reduction*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Münkler H (2005) *The New Wars*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Ouattara M, Sen P and Thomson M (2010) Forced marriage, forced sex: The perils of childhood for girls. *Gender and Development* 6(3): 27–33.
- Nandy A (ed.) (1988) *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*. Tokyo: United Nations University.
- Panda P and Agarwal B (2005) Marital violence, human development and women's property status in India. *World Development* 33(5): 823–850.
- Pinker S (2011) *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and its Causes*. London: Allen Lane.
- Purkayastha B (2009) Many views on peace. In: Caforio G (ed.) *Advances in Military Sociology: Essays in Honor of Charles C. Moskos*. Bingley: Emerald.
- Ray L (2011) *Violence and Society*. London: Sage.
- Roberts D (2008) *Human Insecurity: Global Structures of Violence*. London: Zed Books.
- Rose N (1999) *Powers of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rummel RJ (1997) *Power Kills: Democracy as a Method of Nonviolence*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Shaw M (2000) *Theory of the Global State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shaw M (2005) *The New Western Way of War*. Cambridge: Polity.

- Shaw M (2007) *What is Genocide?* Cambridge: Polity.
- Sitas A (2011) Beyond the Mandela decade: The ethic of reconciliation? *Current Sociology* 59(5): 571–589.
- Stark E (2007) *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tilly C (1990) *Coercion, Capital and European States*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Tilly (2003) *The Politics of Collective Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turner J and Kelly L (2009) Trade secrets: Intersections between diasporas and crime groups in the constitution of the human trafficking chain. *British Journal of Criminology* 49(2): 184–201.
- UN Secretary-General (2006) *In-depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women. Report to the General Assembly of the United Nations*. New York: UN. Available at: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/SGstudyvaw.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/SGstudyvaw.htm) (accessed 20 January 2011).
- Van Wilsem J (2004) Crime victimization in cross-national perspective. *European Journal of Criminology* 1(1): 89–109.
- Vyas S and Watts C (2009) How does economic empowerment affect women's risk of intimate partner violence in low and middle income countries? A systematic review of published evidence. *Journal of International Development* 21(5): 577–602.
- Wacquant L (2009) *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Walby S (2009) *Globalization and Inequalities: Complexity and Contested Modernities*. London: Sage.
- Walby S and Allen J (2004) *Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*. HORS 276. London: Home Office.
- Walby S and Myhill A (2001) New survey methodologies in researching violence against women. *British Journal of Criminology* 41(3): 502–522.
- Walt S (1999) Never say never: Wishful thinking on democracy and war. *Foreign Affairs* 78(1): 146–151.
- Weart S (1998) *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Weber M (1968) *Economy and Society*, ed. Roth G and Wittich C. New York: Bedminster Press.
- Welchman L and Hossain S (eds) (2005) *'Honour': Crimes, Paradigms and Violence Against Women*. London: Zed Books.
- Weldon SL (2002) *Protest, Policy and the Problem of Violence Against Women: A Cross-National Comparison*. Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press.
- Wieviorka M (2009) *Violence: A New Approach*. London: Sage.
- Zippel K (2006) *The Politics of Sexual Harassment: A Comparative Study of the United States, the European Union, and Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### Author biography

Sylvia Walby is Distinguished Professor of Sociology and UNESCO Chair in Gender Research, Lancaster University, UK. She has previously held positions at UCLA, LSE, University of Bristol and University of Leeds. She was President of Research Committee 02 Economy and Society, International Sociological Association, 2006–2010; and founding President, European Sociological Association, 1995–1997. She was awarded an OBE for services to equal opportunities and diversity and made an Academician of the UK Academy of Social Sciences in 2008. She has advised both NGO (Women's Aid, Refuge, EVAW) and governmental bodies (UK Home Office, Equality and Human Rights Commission, European Union Presidencies, UNESCO, UNDAW and UNECE) on gender-based violence against women. Publications include: *Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, with Jonathan Allen (Home Office, 2004); *The*

*Cost of Domestic Violence* (DTI Women and Equality Unit, 2004); *Globalization and Inequalities: Complexity and Contested Modernities* (Sage, 2009) and *The Future of Feminism* (Polity, 2011).

## Résumé

L'analyse de la violence est une partie importante de la sociologie. Alors qu'elle est parfois été repoussée aux marges de la sociologie, la violence réapparaît néanmoins régulièrement dans l'analyse de la vie quotidienne et des changements sociaux importants, des relations interpersonnelles et des crimes, de la gouvernance et des résistances, des relations entre états, entre le nord et le sud et des nombreuses facettes de la modernité. De nouvelles façons d'exposer la violence perturbent de vieilles notions sur la nature et la direction de la violence et remettent en question les hypothèses selon lesquelles les classes défavorisées sont plus violentes que les classes puissantes et que la modernité est de moins en moins violente. De nouvelles études sur la violence contre les femmes et les minorités et dans le Sud sont des arguments de poids pour une révision de la sociologie afin qu'elle inclue la violence comme un point clé. Cet article présente les papiers sur ce point particulier, les situe dans un nouveau paradigme de 'violence et société'. Les papiers identifient les spécificités de la violence, son caractère indissoluble dans l'état, la culture et la biologie tout en surlignant les interconnexions au sein de ce domaine émergent.

## Mots-clés

Violence, violence interpersonnelle, gouvernance, guerre, sociologie, théorie sociale

## Resumen

El análisis de la violencia es una parte importante de la sociología. Aunque a veces relegada a los márgenes de la sociología, la violencia emerge repetidamente en el análisis tanto de la vida diaria, como de los cambios sociales transcendentales, las relaciones interpersonales y el crimen, la gobernanza y la resistencia, las relaciones entre estados, el norte y el sur y las múltiples variedades de modernidad. Las nuevas formas de dar visibilidad a la violencia alteran las viejas nociones de la naturaleza y la dirección de la violencia, desafiando la premisa de que las personas desfavorecidas son más violentas que las personas acomodadas y de que la modernidad es cada vez menos violenta. Este nuevo trabajo de investigación acerca de la violencia contra las mujeres y las minorías en el sur global, presenta un caso contundente para la revisión de la sociología con la intención de que se incluya la violencia como un asunto clave. Este artículo introduce el estudio de la edición especial, situándolo en un nuevo paradigma de 'violencia y sociedad'. El estudio identifica las particularidades de la violencia que son inapelables al estado, la cultura y la biología, a la vez que se plantean las interconexiones dentro de este campo emergente.

## Palabras clave

Violencia, violencia interpersonal, gobernanza, guerra, sociología, teoría social