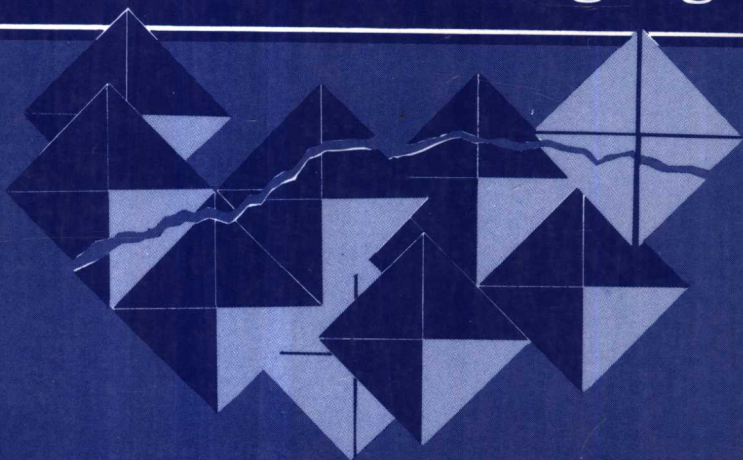


PATHWAYS TO CRIMINAL VIOLENCE

Edited by

Neil Alan Weiner
and Marvin E. Wolfgang



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Kyriakos S. Markides

511
I 281
243

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Edited by
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Contents

Acknowledgments	6
Introduction	7
1. Drugs and Violent Crime <i>Paul J. Goldstein</i>	16
2. Alcohol and Interpersonal Violence: Less Than Meets the Eye <i>James J. Collins</i>	49
3. Sexual Criminal Violence <i>Duncan Chappell</i>	68
4. Mental Disorder and Violent Crime <i>Robert J. Menzies and Christopher D. Webster</i>	109
5. The Intergenerational Transmission of Violence <i>Cathy Spatz Widom</i>	137
6. The Experiences of Violent and Serious Victimization <i>Gary D. Gottfredson</i>	202
About the Contributors	235

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Introduction

In 1982, the volume *Criminal Violence* was published as part of the ongoing research program of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Criminal Violence, established as one of five multiyear Research Agreements Programs (RAPS) launched in the nation by the National Institute of Justice. In the Introduction of that volume, we emphasized that one of the chief concerns of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Criminal Violence was "to integrate the state of our knowledge about criminal violence as a way to provide an informed departure point for future research in the area. Realizing this objective involves selecting for comprehensive review important substantive areas and major perspectives that incorporate an interdisciplinary orientation into theoretical formulations."

That objective remains as compelling today as it was then. Our continuing work at the Violence Center has persuaded us that we have only scratched the surface of significant and widely useful topics on criminal violence and related matters. This conclusion has been reinforced by substantial feedback from our colleagues both about the utility of *Criminal Violence* in research, academic, and public policy settings and about other topics whose coverage would also be beneficial in these same diverse settings.

Since the historic, comprehensive report on violence presented to the American people in 1969 by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (hereinafter, the Violence Commission), there have been few parallel efforts, even on more modest scales, to examine anew and systematize the burgeoning and often fragmented literature in the many areas covered by the Violence Commission and others that have developed since the dissolution of the commission. This impoverishment, especially when considering the gravity of the legally fractious behaviors of concern—ranging from lethal confrontations to less aggravated but nonetheless serious assaults—has also motivated the preparation of this and a companion volume.

The two volumes evolved from our collaborative exchanges: As editors we initially proposed a single volume as a continuation of our earlier publication, *Criminal Violence*. The size of the manuscripts we requested exceeded our expectations; and the substance of these presentations merited their inclusion in full. We and the publisher agreed that the selections could be meaningfully divided between those that were empirically descriptive of violence and those that were more etiologically oriented.

The result was to offer two separate volumes. Hence, *Violent Crime, Violent Criminals* is offered as an updated set of essays of the current research on the measurement and correlates of criminal violence. Measuring violent behavior, race, gender, street gang violence, and violent criminal careers are part of this ensemble.

But, in the process of assembling significant research on violence, we recognized another theme, namely, causative claims that gave explanatory meaning to the empirical descriptions: drugs, alcohol, sexual violence, mental disorder, violence breeding violence, and the effects of criminal violence on victims. The dichotomy between descriptions of violent crime and criminals, on the one hand, and the paths that led to such behavior and to such offenders, on the other, became clearer and more compelling as a principle by which to partition the cogent literature. *Pathways to Criminal Violence* became the theme for the roots to *Violent Crime, Violent Criminals*. Each volume has its own intellectual integrity; each contributes to the other.

The impetus to review, assess, and press beyond the research and theoretical accomplishments of the last two decades is not unique to the study of criminal violence. Criminology more generally appears to be experiencing theoretical and research *angst*—manifesting as a disquiet over the pace and overall payoff in these two enterprises. There is a growing sense that the intensity of, and the insights yielded by, theory-building and research have diminished and require fresh thinking to ignite new productive activity. This volume is intended in part as a vehicle for reviewing prior advancements and accumulations in criminal violence research and theory in order to stimulate renewed dialogue about how we might most beneficially continue or redirect our research, theoretical, and policy efforts. We expect that one important byproduct of this reflective process will involve reconciling and interweaving often disparate conceptual and research strands. As a consequence of this close scrutiny, perhaps the least supported of these strands will be

diminished and those that are most solidly established will be elevated and pursued more vigorously.

To stimulate insightful work in the study of criminal violence, we need to know critically the state of the art in key topical areas. These areas include, among others, the social settings in which criminal violence occurs and the many personal and interpersonal pathways by which these settings are entered and violent behaviors are initiated. To explore these important concerns, street gang violence, offender race and gender characteristics, substance abuse, sexual behavior, mental illness, and intergenerational dynamics are examined in both this volume and the companion volume, *Violent Crime, Violent Criminals*, that has been recently published. Methodological issues and proposals for the systematic investigation of criminal violence over life spans are also explored in chapters on measuring violent behavior and on individual violent criminal careers, respectively. The impact of violence on victims is reviewed in a selection focusing on the relationship between victims and the criminal justice system, and the manifold consequences that interpersonal violence has for those who are so victimized.

The range of methodological and substantive topics constituting this volume provides wide coverages from many theoretical and research perspectives of the interior and exterior topography of criminal violence and of related prevention and control strategies and their implementation. We do not presume, however, to have covered the full sweep and compass of pertinent material. The exploration of further territory must await future volumes. With these volumes and those that are planned, we can construct more clearly and definitively an integral latticework of up-to-date knowledge and, based on that structure, identify those analytical gaps that remain to be filled.

For these many reasons, then, the present volume has been assembled. Colleagues who have worked at the forefront in their respective areas of criminal violence research have graciously and enthusiastically agreed to share their comprehensive knowledge.

The first chapter, "Drugs and Violent Crime," by Paul A. Goldstein, extensively reviews what is currently known about the causal and correlative relationship between drugs and violent crime, sets that knowledge within a systematic conceptual framework, and presents recommendations for future research to further elucidate what is known in this area. Goldstein begins by defining the elusive concept of "drugs," stressing that the pharmacological aspects of drugs are only one feature

of the drugs-violence connection: Also central are the costs of drugs, how they are obtained, how they are ingested, and the social contexts of both drug use and drug distribution. From this departure point the author lays out the kinds of violent phenomena that will be examined in relation to drugs, the longstanding limited quantity and quality of data in this area and the reasons for this deficiency, and evidence from diverse studies of limited size and scope that there is a strong relationship between drugs and violence.

Goldstein lays out a "tripartite" framework for understanding the relationship between drugs and violence: (1) psychopharmacological components, (2) economical compulsivity aspects, and (3) systemic elements. The first approach acknowledges the neurophysiological components of violence and how drugs can influence violence through biological modalities. The second approach acknowledges the fact that some drug users engage in economically oriented violent crime, for example, robbery, in order to support costly drug use. Violence is not a direct effect of the biological consequences of drug use but of the economic goal of acquiring money or valuables to make drug purchases. The third approach acknowledges that violence is an integral component of the organizational structures and market strategies of illicit drug distribution and use. (These components include both "macrosystem" and "microsystem" features: The former features consist of territorial disagreements, punitive responses to infractions committed by members of the distribution system, and attempts to eliminate informants. The latter features consist of interpersonal confrontations resulting from violations of social rituals and norms surrounding drug use and paraphernalia.) Goldstein considers in detail research findings pertaining to each of these areas as well as the limitations of this research. He also examines the differences in the drugs-violence nexus with respect to men and women, cautioning that research on women in this area is especially sparse. Recommendations are presented about translating the "tripartite" approach into more robust and targeted public policies, about the need for the expanded collection of information about drugs and violent crime, particularly at the national level, and about productive strategies for gathering this information.

James J. Collins, in "Alcohol and Interpersonal Violence: Less Than Meets the Eye," critically examines the evidence in support of the finding of a relationship between alcohol use and interpersonal violence. Collins argues that although there exists substantial and longstanding research evidence that alcohol and interpersonal violence are associated,

this research fails to establish conclusively the direct, unmediated impact of alcohol on that violence. That so much drinking of alcoholic beverages occurs daily in the United States and in other countries that does not result in violence underscores the more complex mechanisms—mediated by personality, social context, and culture—by which alcohol influences violent exchanges.

To illuminate the possible direct and indirect causal links between alcohol and violence, Collins reviews some major themes of theoretical formulations in this area, ranging from the morally infused “disinhibition” framework to the more contemporary, catholic perspective, which takes into account multiple causal factors and channels. This discussion is followed by a summary of major research on the connection between alcohol and violent crime, domestic violence, and victimization, and the relationship between drinking and levels of community violence. Research findings indicate an impressive overall association in each of these areas. However, despite these results, there is a growing consensus that the net explanatory power of alcohol—by itself—is not substantial and that the causal pathways are so complex that progress in their disentanglement will be slow, as it has been in the past. Collins concludes by presenting recommendations about the directions that future research might take to open up the current analytical logjam.

In “Sexual Criminal Violence,” Duncan Chappell reviews the historical forces that have shaped current thinking and responses to sexual violence, specifically, its criminal varieties. Chappell also examines the expanding contemporary research on this topic in both the United States and other nations, mainly the common-law jurisdictions, and the similarly expanding focus by governmental agencies in this research arena. Setting the historical and research stage for the discussion, Chappell then focuses in detail and depth on four major and perennially controversial issues that are still undergoing heated debate: (1) continuities and, over the last two decades, discontinuities in the legal and social definitions of sexual violence, (2) the inadequacy of statistics on the prevalence of these acts and proposals to remedy this deficiency, (3) the identification of causal influences of criminal sexual violence and the political aspects of this research process, and (4) the formulation of multipronged prevention strategies (e.g., changing beliefs and practices; imposing obstacles to the completion of an initiated attack; reducing victim trauma resulting from completed sexual assaults; enhancing the apprehension and processing of offenders,

including the more effective utilization of punishment, treatment, and incapacitation modalities). The nature of the interrelationships among these four aspects of sexual criminal violence is raised and examined; for example, how definitional inconsistencies concerning the behavioral domain of sexual criminal violence have had a profound impact on the descriptive, causal, and prevention foci of researchers. Consistent with other chapters in the volume, Chappell concludes that research and policy deficiencies and disagreements are widespread in the area. These issues will need to be addressed systematically in order to improve our knowledge of the origins and courses of sexual criminal violence and thereby to formulate new prevention strategies. These issues will also need to be addressed if we are to disentangle the political aspects of sexual criminal violence from its scientifically established characteristics.

"Mental Disorder and Violent Crime," by Robert J. Menzies and Christopher D. Webster reviews the relationship between the aforementioned two constructs as they reflect current paradigms in criminological theory and practice and as they embody the ideologies and norms that guide the professional activities of judicial and clinical authorities. The authors critically examine in depth the social, political, and professional contexts in which definitions and attributions of mental disorder and criminal violence are created and applied, and how the construct of "dangerousness" centrally mediates, both conceptually and in applied contexts, the relationship between these two phenomena. This analytic orientation merits intense investigation because of what it can reveal about belief systems, legal responses, and medical thought surrounding mental illness, violent crime, and their intersection. (The authors illustrate this research orientation with a study they conducted on a forensic population.)

As Menzies and Webster point out, much of the research on mental disorder and violent crime is flawed by well-documented methodological deficiencies. Despite the flaws, on balance, this research has found little evidence of a correlation, much less a causal relationship in either direction, between the two phenomena. Apparent recent increases in violence among the mentally ill are, in fact, the consequence of higher concentrations of young persons, psychopaths, and individuals with histories of criminal and violent conduct inside psychiatric hospitals. That criminal violence is committed on some occasions by the mentally disordered is acknowledged by the authors. However, by the same token, the authors argue strongly that the relationship between mental disorder and criminal violence can be productively illuminated by

analyses of patterns and structures of medical (mental health) and legal (criminal justice) institutions. Contemporary trends toward decarceration, increasing participation of mental health officials in courts and prisons, confinement of individuals in both mental health and criminal justice facilities, and selective media reporting of violence by ostensibly mentally ill individuals have likely resulted in the apparent increases in serious violence that has its roots in mental pathology. Menzies and Webster examine the widely perceived close connection between violence and mental illness from the point of view of the collision of the mental health and criminal justice systems—that is, from the point of view of the “psychiatrization” of criminal behaviors and the “criminalization” of mental disorders.

Cathy Spatz Widom critically reviews, in “The Intergenerational Transmission of Violence,” the hypothesis that violence breeds violence. Beliefs pervasive in professional and popular lore that violence breeds violence find weak substantiation in the research literature. That literature—situated mainly in the fields of psychology, sociology, psychiatry, social work, and nursing—often fails to pass scientific muster because it manifests multiple flaws, resulting in suspect and contradictory findings. These flaws cast doubt on what might appear to be some credible evidence of transgenerational violence. Methodological impairments identified by Widom include insufficient specificity in the definitions of predictor and outcome variables, lack of appropriate comparison and control groups, low base rates, the questionable accuracy of much data, poor sampling techniques and small samples, and the use of correlational rather than causal designs. Widom reviewed an extensive number of studies based on official, observational, and survey designs that have focused on: child abuse breeding child abuse; violent or homicidal offenders in clinical settings; child abuse and neglect and delinquency, violent behavior, and aggressive behavior in young children; patients undergoing clinical evaluation; child abuse, withdrawal, and self-destructive behavior; observations of parental violence; and viewing of television violence.

The deficiencies of the relevant research literature notwithstanding, Widom nevertheless considers the possible pathways by which the intergenerational transmission of violence might indeed take place, including the immediate consequences of violence with respect to social performance and behavior; the resultant changes in family environment that may predispose the individual to violent behavior; bodily alterations induced by the violence that result in later violent activity; and changed

behavioral patterns. Future research based on sound design strategies will be required to assess the validity of these hypotheses and to facilitate the search for personal and social factors that protect individuals from potential processes of intergenerational transmission.

In the final chapter, "The Experiences of Violent and Serious Victimization," Gary D. Gottfredson reviews the profound impact of the victim's movement on the consequences of being a victim of violent and otherwise serious crime, examines how the analytical perspectives and practical objectives of this movement contrast, sometimes pointedly, with those of criminologists and criminal justice practitioners, summarizes current knowledge about the experiences and sequelae of victimization, and suggests some directions for policy research.

Focusing on crimes that are usually considered invasive of the self (including, for example, homicide, rape, robbery, and burglary of an unoccupied residence), Gottfredson begins the chapter by exploring three themes of the victim's rights movement: (1) that difficulties some victims experience have been ignored by researchers, practitioners, and the public; (2) that these difficulties are exacerbated by other citizens and, importantly, by the criminal justice system, which often views the victim as peripheral rather than central to the criminal justice process; and (3) that safeguards and arrangements that protect or serve the alleged or convicted offender outweigh the safeguards and arrangements that protect or serve the victim. Gottfredson points out that although criminology has concentrated on offenders as its analytical domain, victims of serious crimes have nonetheless been the focus of some diverse research on, among other things, the differential risks of single and multiple victimization, the spatial distribution of victimization, types of victim responses to their victimizations, the official and nonofficial detection of victimization, patterns of victim and offender interaction, and the policy implications of this knowledge. However significant these criminological insights might be, the underlying dominant focus in criminology has nevertheless been on the contribution of the victim to victimization rather than on the consequences to the victim. The victim's movement, expectedly, has taken a very different approach, emphasizing the victim's injured position (e.g., physical, psychological, economical debilitation or loss) and the need for better treatment by the criminal justice and health care systems. Gottfredson examines various aspects of victim harm and recovery experiences with respect to mugging, rape, and burglary. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the substantial challenges posed by victim phenomena to

criminology and associated disciplines, including the need for further research on the causes and correlates of victimization, and the development and evaluation of alternative criminal justice and allied treatment programs and modalities.

—Neil Alan Weiner
—Marvin E. Wolfgang

Drugs and Violent Crime

PAUL J. GOLDSTEIN

The nature and scope of the relationship between drugs and violent crime is presently a matter of great concern in America. The existing literature sheds some light on the subject but mainly points to the need for further research. This chapter reviews some of what we think we know about the etiological role played by drugs in the occurrence of violence, places that knowledge within a conceptual framework, and focuses attention on those areas that require additional inquiry.

DEFINING "DRUGS" AND "VIOLENCE"

"Drugs" and "violence" are rather vague concepts. Both are general terms that include a wide range of disparate phenomena. For this reason, it is customary for experts in both fields to begin any presentation by defining their terms.

With regard to drugs, a wide variety of substances will be examined, substances that have different, and sometimes opposite, psychopharmacological effects. For example, some are central nervous system

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