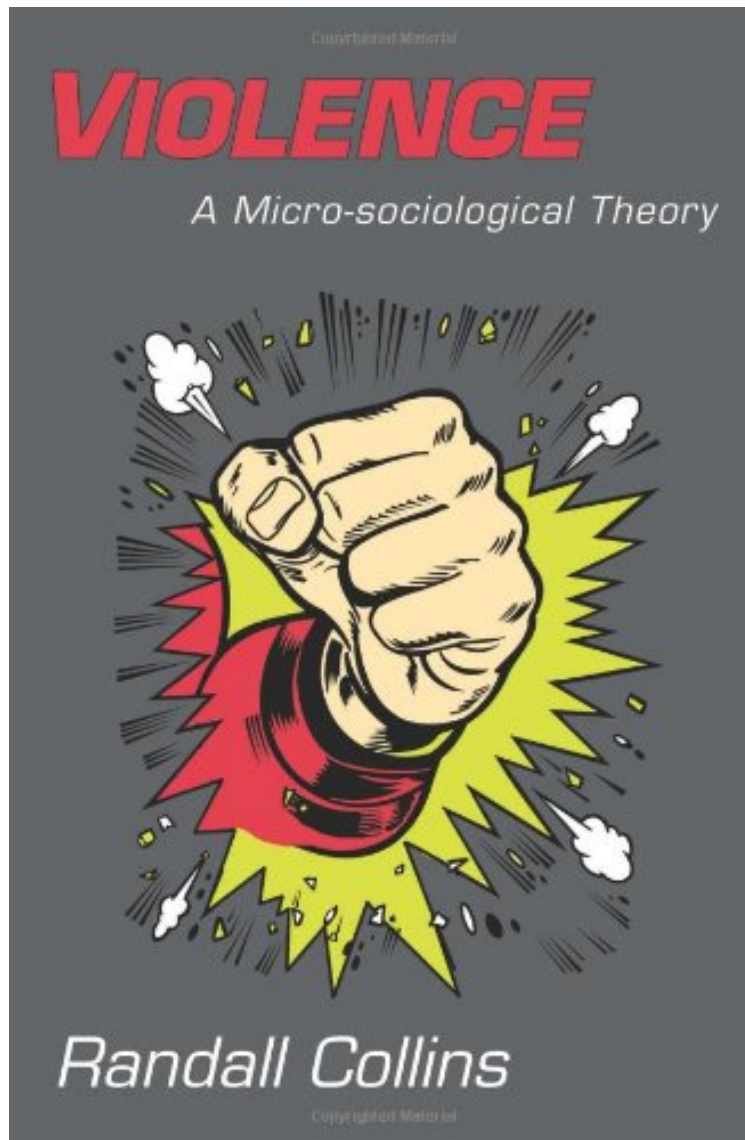


(Read now) Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory

Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory

Randall Collins

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Randall Collins : Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Making sense of so muchBy NoumenonI'd been waiting for a "sequel" to Dave Grossman's On Killing to see if it held up, and this is it. Collins makes sense of why soldiers so infrequently fired their weapons in World War II by showing that violence is difficult in any situation where the opponents are evenly matched. It takes a safe environment like a limited schoolyard fight or a massive mismatch like a

driveby shooting for violence to be easy. You also come away with a different view of human nature after reading the book. You begin to think that what separates humans from animals might not be language or tools after all, but our capacity for emotional mirroring. Collins' book makes the world look kinder and gentler even when he's discussing the ugliest violence, because he shows how unnatural it is for us and how the situation has to be just right for it to occur. After being raised in American culture with its love for violence from Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to SWAT teams, it's really interesting to find out that it's all based on macho and bluster. Reading this book is like someone raised in Sparta going to modern-day Sweden and finding out the world isn't innately violent after all.

22 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Unification of violence By Allan Mazur Collins offers a comprehensive explanation of face-to-face (i.e., micro-social) violence in all situations, including spousal abuse, warfare, riots, murder, and sporting events. In 500 pages of analysis, he draws on video and photographic images, personal and ethnographic accounts, classic literature, history and personal observation, to find common patterns among the diverse situations in which humans physically injure other humans. Collins's primary assertion is that people rarely act violently, that virtually everyone is reluctant to damage another person. The reason is that violent confrontation is fraught with tension and fear, which act as a protective emotional barrier against inflicting harm or being harmed. Collins regards this confrontational tension/fear as hardwired into the human brain. When violence does occur, tension and fear usually ensure that attacks are brief and incompetent. Terrified riflemen on a battlefield are unlikely to hit a target, if they shoot at all; clashing gang members are more bluff and bluster than lethal attackers. This picture completely contradicts the portrayal in action movies, where violence is perpetrated easily and efficiently, often over extended periods, usually free of anxiety. Given the emotional barrier to violence, Collins asks, how does violence occur at all? He answers that the perpetrator must follow one of a few "pathways" that lead around the barrier of confrontational tension and into a "tunnel of violence." One such pathway, according to Collins, is to attack a weak victim. Audience encouragement is another pathway to violence, rather like the mob in the Coliseum urging on its favored gladiators, or bystanders shouting encouragement to students in a fistfight, or fans at a college football game. "Forward panic," a third path, is Collins's most intriguing contribution. These pathways lead into a "tunnel of violence" through which the perpetrator is entrained into actions that he would normally not commit. This is an erudite yet highly readable synthesis of enormously diverse kinds of violence, but most grabbing are the individual analyses of each category of violence. The pages turn very quickly.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. What violence is really like By Customer I am still only about half way through. The book is full of insights about violence that I always knew but somehow couldn't articulate or put together in a structured way. I work in the area of domestic violence, so I was able to talk with violent men about the difference between Hollywood violence and how violence really happens and they confirmed what is in the book. I am looking forward to the insights of the other half of the book.

In the popular misconception fostered by blockbuster action movies and best-selling thrillers--not to mention conventional explanations by social scientists--violence is easy under certain conditions, like poverty, racial or ideological hatreds, or family pathologies. Randall Collins challenges this view in *Violence*, arguing that violent confrontation goes against human physiological hardwiring. It is the exception, not the rule--regardless of the underlying conditions or motivations. Collins gives a comprehensive explanation of violence and its dynamics, drawing upon video footage, cutting-edge forensics, and ethnography to examine violent situations up close as they actually happen--and his conclusions will surprise you. Violence comes neither easily nor automatically. Antagonists are by nature tense and fearful, and their confrontational anxieties put up a powerful emotional barrier against violence. Collins guides readers into the very real and disturbing worlds of human discord--from domestic abuse and schoolyard bullying to muggings, violent sports, and armed conflicts. He reveals how the fog of war pervades all violent encounters, limiting people mostly to bluster and bluff, and making violence, when it does occur, largely incompetent, often injuring someone other than its intended target. Collins shows how violence can be triggered only when pathways around this emotional barrier are presented. He explains why violence typically comes in the form of atrocities against the weak, ritualized exhibitions before audiences, or clandestine acts of terrorism and murder--and why a small number of individuals are competent at violence. Violence overturns standard views about the root causes of violence and offers solutions for confronting it in the future.

Winner of the 2011 Distinguished Scholarly Publication Award, American Sociological Association "Collins's *Violence* is a sourcebook for the oft-ignored and usually unseen obvious: We humans are bad at violence, even if civilization makes us a bit better at it."--David D. Laitin, *Science* "Violence is a rare academic work, with both a convincing reappraisal of its scholarly terrain, and enough accessibility and useful advice to attract laymen. The writing is clear and direct--sometimes with a welcome touch of the colloquial--and well illustrated with photographs and charts."--Graeme Wood, *New York Sun* "Offering a wealth of observations...Randall Collins's overall theory is neat: violence is not easy, hence relatively rare. It is a compelling argument."--Jane Kilby, *Times Higher Education* "Insofar as his analysis has sought to highlight its micro-situational aspects, he must be applauded. In the future, only interdisciplinary research will be able to approach this topic with the same vigor, and coherence as Collins

has provided us in this book."--Paul Armstrong, *Canadian Journal of Sociology*"The book is a superb commentary on how the emotional energy created by the situation of forward panic produces violence. . . . Collin's exhaustive treatment of the forward panic is a major contribution to the literature and the term is certain to become a standard part of our vocabulary on violence."--John M. Hagedorn, *Anthropos*"Professor Collins has initiated a much needed discussion of violence, unencumbered by myth and make-believe. . . . After reading this excellent and highly readable volume, there are few myths left remain standing!"--P. A. J. Waddington, *Policing*"[T]he book is a notable attempt to develop a general sociological theory of interpersonal violence, and anyone interested in violence and peace can learn a great deal from it."--Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, *Journal of Peace Research*"[A] deeply learned, thoughtful, and erudite book. . . . [T]he complexity of thought and the clarity of exposition of this first volume leave the reader both fulfilled and eager. Like the greatest of classical sociological thinkers, Collins is both pointillist and abstract expressionist, synthesizing micro and macro, and always asserting the power of the social."--Michael Kimmel, *American Journal of Sociology*"Violence overturns standard views about the root causes of violence and offers solutions for confronting it in the future."--World Book Industry From the Back Cover"Covering infinitely recurrent strips of social action running from blustering confrontation to intimate physical attack, *Violence* is peppered with breakthrough insights, demonstrating the power of systematic theory and even concluding with that rarest of sociological contributions, a short list of eminently practical suggestions. The concept of 'forward panic' alone makes the book indispensable. This book is a milestone contribution to criminology, to micro-sociology, to the sociology of emotions, and to a field that knows no academic boundaries: the history of efforts to control violence. Randy Collins has developed a framework that should guide a generation of research."--Jack Katz, University of California, Los Angeles"I have no doubt that this book will be hailed as one of the most important works on violence ever written. After reading it, it is difficult any longer to imagine that all that is needed for violence to occur is a motive to engage in violence. Collins argues persuasively that the situation must also be right if violence is actually to occur."--Donald Black, author of *The Social Structure of Right and Wrong*"A masterful study of the microdynamics of violence. This book will undoubtedly provoke excitement and controversy among a wide group of readers, including educated nonspecialists as well as academics, journalists, law-enforcement professionals, and policymakers. Truly an original book."--Eiko Ikegami, author of *The Taming of the Samurai*About the AuthorRandall Collins is the Dorothy Swaine Thomas Professor of Sociology and a member of the Department of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania. His books include *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton) and *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*.