Collective Violence as Social Control

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Collective violence is often social control: self-help by a group. It typically defines and responds to conduct as deviant. When unilateral and nongovernmental, it appears in four major forms—lynching, rioting, vigilantism, and terrorism—each distinguished by its system of liability (individual or collective) and degree of organization (higher or lower). Following Donald Black's paradigm of pure sociology, the central assumption is that collective violence varies with its location and direction in social space—the conflict structure. I offer ten propositions that predict and explain the likelihood and severity of collective violence in general and the four forms of collective violence in particular. Conflict structures with a high degree of relational distance, cultural distance, functional independence, and inequality between the adversaries are associated with collective violence in general. Each of the four forms depends on the degree of social polarization between the parties as well as the continuity of the deviant behavior to which the violence responds.

KEY WORDS: collective violence; social control; conflict structure; social polarization; continuity of deviant behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Collective violence is personal injury by a group. Most is social control: a process by which people define or respond to behavior as deviant.

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3For present purposes, a group is five or more people acting in concert. (compare, e.g., Olzak, 1992:55-57, 76; Tilly, 1978:93-95, 174-176). Included are both overt and covert violence as well as that which is threatened, attempted, or merely painful without physical damage of a lasting nature (Olzak, 1992:56-57).

Although the focus is on physical harm to the person, collective aggression against property,
Deviant behavior is not merely conduct an outside observer might regard as odd, abnormal, or illegal, but any action—however seemingly trivial, inoffensive, or innocent—that is subject to social control. Collective violence, then, is commonly a moralistic response to deviant behavior. And, aptly enough, it is sometimes described as "popular justice."

THE GHOST OF GUSTAVE LE BON

Since the 1960s, a conception of collective violence as deviant behavior rather than social control has increasingly been rejected as ideological. A well-known example of the earlier view is Gustave LeBon’s (1895/1960) characterization of violent crowds as irrational, fickle, and destructive riffraff and scoundrels (see Rudé, 1964:3-10, 252-257; Rule, 1988:91-95). Collective violence was also treated as a form of mass hysteria and the dictatorial domination of a group mind (Blumer, 1946; Chaplin, 1959; Foster, 1991; LeBon, 1895/1960). In contrast, collective violence is now commonly regarded as a form of protest, a quest for justice, and the purposive expression of "real grievances over underlying social, economic, and political issues" (Gurr, 1989:13; see also Rule, 1988:170-172, 287-290; compare Marx, 1972). One analysis of European crowd violence, for example, asserts that "justice...lies at the heart of violent conflict" (Tilly et al., 1975:85). Another claims that riots by American blacks in the 1960s "can only be understood as a manifestation of the grievances of the black ghetto" (Fogelson, 1970:142-143; see also Feagin and Hahn, 1973). Similar generalizations appear in a voluminous literature on a wide variety of protest-oriented actions, from 17th- and 18th-century food and tax riots to labor disorders and collective resistance to colonialism (e.g., Bercé, 1990; Edgerton, 1989; Marx, 1970; Rudé, 1964; Tilly et al., 1975).

Yet the ghost of Gustave LeBon still stalks the field. While most social scientists have abandoned conceptions of violent workers, peasants, and minorities as pathological riffraff in need of discipline and punishment, some continue to characterize collective violence of some kinds by some people not only as deviant behavior but also as undesirable and blameworthy—irrational, pathological, or criminal. Some seemingly deserve sympathy while others do not. The violence of some is more rational and comprehensible than

which often occurs in rioting and terrorism, will occasionally be mentioned as part of collective incidents.

4 For other works that treat violence as social control, see Baumgartner (1984); Black (1983); Weisburd (1989).

5 In the 1960s, the interpretation of violence shifted decisively from the political right to the left. In this "moral redefinition of the subject matter," one bias replaced another (Rule, 1988:182-184, 288-290).
that of others. In particular, while collective violence “from the bottom up” by socially subordinate groups tends to be portrayed as reasonable and possibly even worthy of sympathetic understanding, that “from the top down” by dominant or majority groups against minorities, the poor, or members of labor movements, is not. Indeed, violence by social superiors is portrayed in a manner reminiscent of LeBon’s irrational mobs. In one analysis, for example, anti-Semitic attacks in Germany are called “purposeless mob violence” (Tilly et al., 1975:235). In another, attacks by whites against blacks in America are said to be less “understandable” than assaults by blacks on whites during the 1960s ghetto riots (Fogelson, 1970:154–157). And southern lynchings of blacks by whites are attributed to “a mental condition, a disorder of the mind in which internal problems are projected upon external persons” (Williamson, 1984:151–152). Whereas a number of social scientists and historians acknowledge if not applaud the goals, grievances, or motives they attribute to those who use violence against social superiors, those who use violence against social inferiors are frequently regarded as illegitimate and deserving of punishment. The subject thus appears to be distorted by ideological elements not explicitly acknowledged by the investigators (Berk, 1972; Foster, 1991:464–467; Graham, 1989; Marx, 1972:49, 464–467; Rule 1988:183, 280).

Collective violence directed at social inferiors and marginals is commonly not even regarded as sociologically meaningful in itself, but rather is characterized as a symptom of something else. It is not the punishment of deviant behavior, as its participants claim. Instead, it is, for example, an indirect byproduct of macrostructural disruptions or strains such as urbanization, unemployment, or competition—conditions that are said to frustrate or otherwise predispose individuals to aggressive behavior (Beck et al., 1989; Beck and Tölnay, 1990; Blalock, 1967; Bonacich, 1972; Henry and Short, 1954:51–60; Hovland and Sears, 1940; Bonacich, 1972; Ożak, 1989, 1990, 1992; Tölnay and Beck, 1995). Given an “excuse” (such as a crime or dispute, the importance of which is usually trivialized as a “precipitating” incident), a “mob” vents its anger not at the real source of its misery (such as declining economic conditions or increased competition), but at the most vulnerable targets in its immediate environment. One study, for example, describes

6At issue here is the conception of collective violence found in these studies and not the validity or importance of findings showing that rates of violence vary with macrostructural conditions of an economic, social, or political nature (see, e.g., Beck and Tölnay, 1990; Henry and Short, 1954; Ożak, 1992; Tölnay and Beck, 1995). These statistical relationships are not inconsistent with the present analysis. Their validity and importance are independent of the imagery of collective violence invoked, interpretations of the meaning of the violence, or motives attributed to violent actors that appear in the works cited.

7To conceptualize violence as social control is not to say that phenomena such as lynchings and riots are a simple function of crime or other offenses. While deviant behavior must be alleged if there is to be social control, the offense itself, be it a minor infraction or an act
lyching as "a form of murder" unrelated to social control: "The events precipitating lynchings are only excuses for the conflict which ultimately would have occurred on virtually any pretext" (Henry and Short, 1954:51; see also Turner, 1964:393; compare Senechal de la Roche, 1997). Another describes it as a process of "black victimization" (Beck and Tolnay, 1990:530, 533, 537). In short, collective violence is not always what collectively violent people say it is. Sometimes it is the deviant behavior of miserable and misguided people who take out their frustrations either on innocent victims or on alleged offenders who would otherwise have been left alone or at least handled more leniently. It is a form of scapegoating (e.g., Downey and Hyser, 1990; Hodes, 1993; Inverarity, 1976; Raper, 1933; Williamson, 1984:140-222).

A PURE SOCIOLOGY OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Although the ideological origins of an explanation do not necessarily undermine its validity (see Dahrendorf, 1968), a general theory of collective violence requires that we be as consistent as possible in applying concepts and as encompassing as possible in our formulations. All behaviorally similar actions should ideally be treated alike, regardless of how the actors, their targets, or their goals might ideologically attract or repel an observer. The present discussion therefore self-consciously departs from conceptual and explanatory practices that do not treat collective violence as a single subject matter. Guided by Donald Black's paradigm of pure sociology, it seeks to contribute to a general theory of collective violence as social control (see, e.g., Black, 1976, 1979, 1995). 8

Pure sociology predicts and explains variation in human behavior with its location and direction in social space (Black, 1976, 1995). A multidimensional social space is defined by the social characteristics of everyone engaged in an instance of human conduct.9 In its vertical dimension (measured

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8For examples of studies that apply or extend Black's paradigm to other types of social control beyond violence, see Baumgartner (1984), Cooney (1994), Horwitz (1982, 1990), Merrill (1992, 1995), Mullis (1995), Radelet (1989), Regoli et al. (1984), and Tucker (1985). It should be noted that the paradigm is applicable not only to law and other social control but to variation in any and all forms of social life, from science, medicine, and religion to art, politics, and sport (Black 1979, 1995).

9The shape of a multidimensional social space as the source of variation transcends more familiar units of analysis. It may apply to phenomena involving only one or a few individuals, or to those involving an organization, neighborhood, community, region, or entire society. As Black (1995:853) states, "Social space is neither small nor large, neither a microcosm nor a macrocosm, neither a person nor a society. Its size is variable. Its boundaries are variable. Its duration is variable."
by social status, including wealth), for example, an action has a higher elevation when the parties involved are all of higher status, and a lower elevation when they are of lower status. When the parties are unequal in status, they are vertically distant. An action also may have an upward direction (toward a higher status), downward direction (toward a lower status), or a lateral direction (toward an equal). The horizontal dimension of social space includes, for example, relational distance (the degree of intimacy between people), and the symbolic dimension includes cultural distance (such as a difference in language or religion; Black, 1976:37–59). An action between strangers of different ethnicities thus involves a greater degree of both relational and cultural distance than an action between intimates of the same ethnicity. In this sense, every human action has a social structure.

The form and quantity of social control that occurs, whether law, self-help, avoidance, mediation, or nothing at all, depends upon the social location and direction of the conflict: the relative positions of all parties (the offender, aggrieved, and any third parties), such as whether they are equal or unequal, intimates or strangers, and culturally similar or different (Black, 1976, 1984, 1990, 1993, 1995). When social control through collective violence is treated as a dependent variable, the central question becomes: What conflict structures predict and explain this phenomenon?

Collective violence is often an extreme form of self-help, a species of social control that entails the handling of a grievance by unilateral aggression (Black, 1990:43–44). Self-help is not always violent, but also includes lesser forms of aggression such as an audience booing a speaker or a group of children ridiculing a playmate (Clayman, 1993). All manner of insults, taunts, criticisms, and protests, as well as vandalism, arson, and other damage to property may be instances of collective self-help. Though it is likely

By contrast, macrostructural studies of collective violence use entire communities, regions, or nations as their units of analysis and seek to explain variation in rates of violence with characteristics of those units such as their level of economic prosperity or degree of political or economic competition (e.g., Beck and Tolnay, 1990; Henry and Short, 1954; Olzak, 1989, 1990, 1992; Tilly et al., 1975; Tolnay and Beck, 1995).

A smaller unit of analysis—the crowd—is used in many pre-1960s studies of collective violence. These seek to explain how and when a crowd becomes violent with reference to the presence or communication of various stimuli or interactions between crowd members (e.g., Blumer, 1946; Granovetter, 1978; LeBon, 1895/1960; Turner, 1954; see also Rule, 1988:43–49, 91–108, 116–117, 241–245, 288–290).

I refer here to conflicts over right and wrong rather than conflicts of interest, such as competition for power or economic resources (compare Olzak, 1992; Tilly, 1978).

The concept of the social structure of a conflict (or conflict structure) first appears in Black (1984:20–26).

Excluded is collective aggression that is not social control, such as collective predation (e.g., raiding, looting, or robbery by a group) or recreation (e.g., destruction of property after a sports victory or during festivals and holidays). On normative aggression, see Curwin and Porter (1979), Gilje (1987:18–23, 246–260), and Marx (1972).
that the formulations introduced in the following pages have broader applications, I limit my focus to four forms of unilateral violence: lynching, rioting, vigilantism, and terrorism. Excluded are not only nonviolent forms of self-help but also bilateral and reciprocal forms such as brawling, blood feuds, and warfare, along with governmental violence of all kinds. Responses to collective violence, by the state or others, are excluded as well.

The formulations presented below order collective violence without regard to the motivational and other psychological factors often emphasized by students of the subject (e.g., Grimshaw, 1972; Gurr, 1970, 1989). In this sense, the approach is purely sociological: How people perceive, interpret, intend, or experience collective violence is beyond its scope. It does not assume or deny that social conditions frustrate or otherwise predispose people to aggression, for example, or that people learn the violence they inflict, that violence is goal directed, socially constructive or destructive, or that the participants rationally weigh or calculate its costs and rewards (compare, e.g., Brown, 1969; Gurr, 1970; Smelser, 1963; Tilly, 1978; see also Graham, 1989; Rule, 1988). Neither does it address ritualistic aspects of collective violence or assume or deny that it serves a larger function, such as the clarification of moral boundaries in a community or society (compare, e.g., Downey and Hyser, 1990; Inverarity, 1976). Rather, the analysis proceeds from an entirely different theoretical perspective that yields highly general and yet readily testable propositions about the likelihood and severity of collective violence in specific cases of conflict.

FOUR VARIETIES OF COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

Semantic confusion surrounds the terms lynching, rioting, vigilantism, and terrorism, but these forms of collective violence can readily be defined and distinguished along two dimensions: their breadth of liability and degree of organization. Liability is a condition of accountability for a grievance, such as the accountability of a burglar for his crime or a motorist for an accident (see, e.g., Black, 1987:566, 573–576; Koch, 1984). Liability

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13 Reciprocal collective violence has a different social structure from unilateral forms of the phenomenon. See the section on inequality below.

14 It is possible that propositions similar to those introduced here could be used to predict and explain the occurrence and severity of police and military violence against civilians (Black, 1990, 1995:127–157).

15 The severity or quantity of violence is less, for example, when a threat consists of mere words than when accompanied by the brandishing of weapons; a beating is less violence than a killing, and killings themselves vary in their severity from a quick dispatch, say with gunfire, to prolonged and lethal torture, and, among killings, to those followed by mutilation of the corpse as well.
to collective violence may be collective (when a group or members of a group or social category are held accountable for the conduct of an individual) or individual (when only a wrongdoer is held accountable) (Koch, 1984; Moore, 1972:86–95; see also Black, 1983:38). Collective violence may also be relatively organized, even formally so, or relatively unorganized. In this section I classify lynching as an unorganized form of collective violence with individual liability, rioting as an unorganized form with collective liability, vigilantism as an organized form with individual liability, and terrorism as an organized form with collective liability (see Fig. 1).

Lynching and vigilantism may be defined partly by their logic of individual liability: Only the alleged wrongdoer is accountable, while uninvolved members of the wrongdoer’s group or social category are not subject to punishment or other social control. Like a modern court, lynchers punish only the alleged offender, then disband. And though they may kill or injure many different individuals over a period of time, vigilantes judge each offender individually, however brief or superficial the process may be.

In contrast to lynching and vigilantism, rioting and terrorism may be defined partly by the presence of a logic of collective liability by which a group or members of an offender’s group or social category are held accountable for the offender’s conduct. Those held collectively liable might include, for example, a race, religion, ethnic group, nationality, political party, labor organization, family, clan, or tribe. Literally any member of a social category, including women, children, and the elderly, may be vulnerable to attack by rioters or terrorists.

The form of collective violence may further be defined by its degree of organization—the capacity for sustained collective action. Lynching and rioting are distinguished by their relatively low level of organization and vigilantism and terrorism by their high level of organization. Lynching and rioting are temporary as well as informal. Even though collective violence that qualifies as a riot occasionally lasts more than a day and what qualifies as lynching may last as much as a week or more, greater degrees of organization would ultimately change the classification of a riot to terrorism or a lynching to vigilantism. Informal organization also implies relatively open and fluid membership: Participation may be possible for nearly everyone in a given community. Even law enforcement officials may join in the violence. In the frequent ethnic riots of South Asia in recent times, for example, the “participation during riots of police, army, or other security forces... as vigorous participants favoring the cause of one side or another is a fact of life recorded in country after country” (Banerjee, 1990:55–57; see also Greenberg, 1976:19–26, 50–54; Grimshaw, 1963:271–289; Marx, 1970; Tambiah, 1990:743, 747–748). And in the American South of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, whole communities of whites—men, women,
children, and police—might attend and celebrate the lynching of an alleged black offender (see, e.g., Brundage, 1993:36-45, 64-65; Raper, 1933; Wyatt-Brown, 1982:458). Finally, though rioting and lynching may include some degree of planning and organization, the behavior defined in this analysis as rioting and lynching is considerably more situational, spontaneous, and decentralized than vigilantism or terrorism.15

Unlike lynchers and rioters, vigilantes are sufficiently organized to handle multiple cases over a period of time, and terrorists to launch a series of attacks. Some groups are formally organized, with centralized decision making, officers, and limited access to membership, while others may organize only for a matter of weeks or even days before they disband. The degree of organization in vigilante and terrorist groups is itself variable, however. In the early American West, for example, the San Francisco Vigilance Committee of 1856 had an executive committee, titled officers, a membership list, clear chain of command, a written constitution, press releases, and elaborate tribunals. They remained active for over three months, whereas ranchers or farmers who organized to eliminate livestock thieves typically operated for a week or two (Senkewicz, 1985:170; see also Bancroft, 1887; Brown, 1975:127-128, 134-143; Johnson, 1981:578-579). Terrorist groups such as the pro-Palestinian terrorists of the Middle East or the Irish Republican Army of Northern Ireland during the 20th century may endure for years, while others may conduct only a few attacks before disbanding.

Figure 1 classifies the four forms of collective violence accordingly:

15The tendency of previous scholars to focus on organization alone in their attempts to distinguish vigilantism from lynching has resulted in significant controversy and confusion. As David A. Johnson noted in discussing Richard Maxwell Brown’s attempts to define vigilantism, “The distinction between ‘organized’ vigilance committees and ‘ephemeral’ lynch parties . . . is difficult if not impossible to make in most empirical cases. Many self-styled vigilance committees were unorganized and ephemeral and alleged lynch parties were often quite highly organized” (Johnson, 1981:560). Johnson thus chooses to treat vigilance committees, popular tribunals, people’s courts, and lynchings as one category, and uses the terms synonymously. Further, Brown’s category of “instant vigilantism” (those cases where violent groups lacked officers, trials, etc., and whose members organized and acted swiftly in “‘one-shot’ vigilante actions”) certainly includes many instances of lynchings according to the definition used here (see Brown, 1975:103; McGrath, 1984).

Here vigilantes are defined as those who deal with more than one instance of deviant behavior over time. Lynchers, even if they term themselves a “vigilance committee” or “regulators,” are not vigilantes if their object is to punish a single offense. Thus, “spontaneous vigilantism,” which has been roughly defined as the active intervention of a group of bystanders who, upon witnessing a crime, pursue, capture, and mete out punishment to the wrongdoer on the spot, is, by our definition, lynching: It involves individual liability and informal organization. The bystanders do not organize to reduce deviant behavior in the neighborhood at large (Shottland, 1976:30-32).
THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

Collective violence sometimes arises where law is lacking, weak, or openly partisan, a pattern consistent with existing theory suggesting that where law is weak or absent, other means of social control tend to arise (Black, 1976:6-7, 105-111). Yet collective violence also occurs where legal agencies are well established and may even compete with law, a phenomenon seen when suspects are forcibly abducted from police or jails and punished by private citizens. We therefore need to explain why collective violence rather than some other form of social control (including law) occurs in response to a grievance. Black identifies five general responses to deviant behavior: self-help, avoidance, negotiation, settlement through a third party, and toleration (1990:43-69). Each has a distinctive social structure comprised of the social characteristics of all of the parties associated with a conflict—offenders, complainants, partisans, and anyone else with knowledge of it.\textsuperscript{16} What conflict structure, then, is conducive to collective violence in general? And what conflict structures are conducive to each of the four forms—lynching, rioting, vigilantism, and terrorism? First consider collective violence in general.

\textsuperscript{16}For the five major forms of social control available in conflicts and the structural characteristics conducive to each, see Black (1990). See also Horwitz (1990).
As a generic phenomenon, unilateral collective violence arises with specifiable combinations of the following variables: (1) relational distance, (2) cultural distance, (3) functional independence, and (4) inequality.¹⁷ Each variable differs in degree from one conflict to the next, and the probability and severity of collective violence varies accordingly. In particular, where relational and cultural distance, functional independence, and inequality are greatest, I predict the greatest likelihood and severity of collective violence.

Relational Distance

Relational distance, or intimacy, is “the degree to which [people] participate in one another’s lives,” measurable by such variables as the number of ties between people, the frequency and duration of contact between them, and the age and nature of their relationship (Black, 1976:40–48). The greater the relational distance between the parties to a conflict, the greater is the likelihood and severity of collective violence: Collective violence varies directly with relational distance.¹⁸

Groups handle unknown offenders more harshly than those with whom they are acquainted. Regularized contact in a workplace, organization, or neighborhood increases intimacy and makes collective violence less likely (Gluckman, 1956:19–24; Lewis, 1990:98; Senechal de la Roche, 1990:141–151; Weisburd, 1989:124–126). Moreover, such intimacy moderates the severity of collective violence when it does occur. Food riots swept Japan in 1918, for example, and their severity varied directly with the degree of relational distance between the parties involved. Whereas cities with “an absence of face-to-face relationships between rioters and the targets of their attacks” experienced extensive looting, property damage, and violent clashes with the police, in rural areas and villages where the parties had closer ties, rioters were said to be “almost mannerly” (Lewis, 1990:98).

Similarly, in the Miami riot of 1980 and the Los Angeles riot of 1992, businesses owned by outsiders were more likely to suffer total destruction than those owned by people with more ties to the neighborhoods that experienced the violence (Porter and Dunn, 1984:131; Tierney, 1994:151–152). Likewise, in the postbellum American South, lynching of a white or a black was more likely to occur and more likely to be lethal when the alleged

¹⁷The variables described here are drawn from Black’s theoretical work, particularly his analysis of self-help—discipline, rebellion, and vengeance (1990:43–49).
¹⁸For each proposition it is assumed that all else—the other variables specified here and the type of offense—is held constant.
offender was a stranger to the community (Brundage, 1993:81–82, 90–91; Senecal de la Roche, 1997).

Changes in communities that increase relational distance between groups and individual also increase the probability of collective violence. In the American South in the late 19th century, for instance, contact between blacks and whites gradually lessened over time. Intimate ties associated with slavery diminished as former masters and slaves died off and as blacks and whites increasingly lived and worked in different settings: “A new generation of blacks and whites faced each other across an ever-widening chasm. The ‘best’ whites and blacks seldom had contact with one another, as both races increasingly withdrew into their own neighborhoods and churches” (Ayers, 1984:182, 236–238, 241; see also McMillen, 1989:6, 11, 23–24). As the degree of relational distance between blacks and whites grew, the rate of lynching increased. By contrast, in Brazil, where blacks and whites have long intermingled and intermarried, interracial collective violence has been virtually nonexistent (see, e.g., Degler, 1971:95–96, 254–255).

Population movements such as in-migration and desegregation multiply the number of strangers in a community. Conflict between people separated by considerable relational distance therefore becomes more likely, and this in turn increases the likelihood of collective violence. It follows, for example, that the rate of lynching in the American South should have been higher in areas with higher rates of in-migration by blacks. And it was (Ayers, 1992:156–157, 496–497; Brundage, 1993:143–149; McMillen, 1989:259–261; Senecal de la Roche, 1997). One historian thus notes that lynchings “tended to flourish where whites were surrounded with what they called ‘strange niggers,’ blacks with no white to vouch for them, blacks with no reputation in the neighborhood, blacks without even other blacks to aid them” (Ayers, 1992:157; see also Brundage, 1993:81–84, 90–91). A heavy in-migration of blacks also led to a brief but dramatic increase in the rate of interracial rioting in northern American cities during and immediately after World War I (e.g., Rudwick, 1964; Tuttle, 1970). Because the desegregation of a city or neighborhood similarly increases the number of strangers, American cities with greater desegregation of racial or ethnic groups should have had higher rates of collective violence as well. And they did (Olzak et al., 1993; see also Olzak and Shanahan, 1994).

19For variation in the rate of lynching in the South, see, for example, Tolnay and Beck (1995: Chap. 2).
20While the average county in the South between 1880 and 1910 saw its black population increase by 48%, counties in the Gulf Coast subregion stretching from Florida to Texas saw black population increases ranging from approximately 70–130%. It was this Gulf Coast subregion that had the highest lynching rate over this period. The one exception was Louisiana, which received a far smaller share of black migrants and had a correspondingly low rate of lynching (Ayers, 1992:156).
Riots virtually always begin with a conflict between relationally distant parties, and those who are strangers and outsiders to the aggrieved group are usually the most vulnerable to attack. In Sri Lanka in 1983, for instance, Sinhalese rioters tended to be strangers to their Tamil victims, while Sinhalese neighbors of Tamils—those relationally closer—either remained neutral or offered protection to potential targets of their fellow Sinhalese (Kanathipillai, 1990:321–344). Likewise, when 18th-century American cities experienced occasional collective attacks on houses of prostitution (usually after a customer was robbed or killed), most of the participants came from distant neighborhoods: “When New Yorkers rioted against bawdyhouses,” one historian notes, “it was anything but a local affair” (Gilje, 1987:90). The frequent involvement of sailors in 17th- and 18th-century English and American urban riots is similarly understandable in part with their relational distance from their targets: “Seamen were not usually natives of the city where the riot developed. They were outsiders” (Rediker, 1987:249). In the Springfield, Illinois, race riot of 1908 (precipitated by the alleged rape of a white townswoman by a black stranger), the vast majority of white rioters worked in all-white occupations, lived in all-white neighborhoods, and were otherwise relationally distant from blacks. Those who worked with or lived near blacks generally stayed at home during the violence (Senechal de la Roche, 1990:141–151). A similar pattern prevailed in the Detroit race riot of 1943 (Capeci and Wilkerson, 1991:105–107, 109; Lee and Humphrey, 1943:17, 28, 130–133, 140).

Those who live in intensely intimate settings such as hunter-gatherer bands or tribal villages rarely engaged in collective violence against their fellows (see, e.g., Gluckman, 1965; Roberts, 1979). Strangers in large numbers occur relatively late in human history, and so does collective violence. It arises historically with the growth of towns and cities where people encounter others across greater distances in relational space. It arises with increasing geographic mobility, as migration and improving transportation circulate strangers within and across nations. It arises with segregation, which reduces or seversties between co-resident populations. It arises with in migration and desegregation, which suddenly infuse strangers into communities and neighborhoods. Strangers may come in peace as migrants or refugees or with colonial regimes or as slaves purchased in distant lands. Regardless of their mission, however, they bring more collective violence.

**Cultural Distance**

Cultural distance is measurable by differences between individuals and groups in the expressive aspects of their social life, such as language, dress, religion, and art. As these differences increase, so do the probability and
severity of all forms of collective violence, whether lynching, rioting, vigilantism, or terrorism: Collective violence varies directly with cultural distance.

In tribal societies where people share a single pattern of culture, collective violence is rare or absent. Cities with ethnic and religious enclaves have more. In South Asia, with its great religious and ethnic diversity, for instance, conflicts over such matters as straying livestock, the playing of religious music in public, clepements, and traffic mishaps may explode into rioting when the parties are culturally distant (see, e.g., Banerjee, 1990; Hussain, 1990; Kannangara, 1984; Roberts, 1990; Roy, 1994). An extreme case was the interethnic rioting in India that followed the 1984 assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, a Hindu, by two of her Sikh guards. Hindus in New Delhi responded with several days of mass violence against Sikhs, looting, burning, and killing over 3000, including women and children (Tambiah, 1990:744–748). Yet Sikhs, Hindus, or Muslims among themselves virtually never use such violence against their fellows. In the 19th-century American and Canadian West, whites sometimes used collective violence against the Chinese (see, e.g., Chen, 1980:47, 89–94, 137–141; Quinn, 1967:82–89; Torrance, 1986:30–31). Typically the targets were temporary immigrants, soon to return to China, but permanent immigrants were culturally removed by traditional customs, cuisine, religion, and dress as well, and they too were vulnerable.

Grievances against pariah groups (culturally distant, nonindigenous minority groups) are often handled with special severity. What might seem to an outside observer trivial offenses or unfounded rumor might prompt extreme amounts of bloodletting. A public display of alien culture by itself, such as a minority religious or funeral procession, may trigger rioting. Religious holidays and processions, for example, have long been associated with rioting in South Asia between Hindus, Muslims, and those of other faiths (e.g., Roberts, 1990). Similarly, in the late 1960s, a Chinese political celebration in Malaysia sparked anti-Chinese riots that left hundreds dead and many homes and businesses looted and burned (Von der Mehden, 1976:223–226). In late 19th- and early 20th-century Russia, a rumor of wrongdoing by a Jew was sometimes sufficient to precipitate a case of anti-Jewish rioting by gentiles known as a “pogrom” (Greenberg, 1976:50–54; Weinberg, 1993:15–20, 164–187). Pogrom-style violence, however, was not employed against fellow Christians. In 16th-century France, a period of religious ferment, public religious events by Catholics and Protestants often prompted collective attacks (Davis, 1975:170–173). And in New York City in the early 1800s, Irish Catholic religious holidays witnessed collective attacks by Protestants who sometimes paraded with effigies mocking Catholic saints. To reduce rioting, the city ultimately passed an ordinance to ban all effigy processions (Gilje, 1987:128–135). In contrast, grievances among those of the same faith were virtually never handled with collective violence.
When people are both relationally and culturally distant, the potential for extreme violence is all the greater. In Nigeria, for example, a seemingly trivial incident led to a lynching when a member of an ethnic minority accidentally brushed against another bus passenger and was angrily accused of inflicting a curse to render him sexually impotent. The rest of the passengers then beat the culturally distant stranger to death (Mazrui, 1976:213). In Uganda, culturally and relationally distant automobile drivers involved in auto accidents may be beaten or killed on the spot by angry local citizens (Mazrui, 1976:208-211). Among fellow tribesmen, however, lethal lynching is rare (see, e.g., Edgerton, 1972). In the late 19th-century American South, a high degree of both cultural and relational distance was present in some of the relatively rare cases of white-on-white lynching. In Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, and elsewhere, for instance, Mormon missionaries—alien not just because of their beliefs but because of their largely northern background and manners—sometimes met with beatings, whippings, and killings. Itinerant ministers of the South's two dominant faiths, Baptist and Methodist, by contrast, virtually never risked lynching (Ayers, 1984:255-256; Sessions, 1976:212-225). In the late 20th century, American cities with rising levels of ethnic and religious diversity experienced more collective violence than more culturally homogeneous settings. Korean businesses were targeted for destruction by rioting blacks and Hispanics in Los Angeles in 1992, for example (Freer, 1994; Tierney, 1994). And the accidental killing of a black child by an Orthodox Jewish motorist in Brooklyn in 1991 prompted several days of attacks against Jewish citizens by blacks, while arrests and killings by culturally distant police in the 1980s and 1990s sparked rioting by both blacks and Hispanics in cities such as Miami and Washington, DC (Levin and McDevitt, 1993:137-148, 235-237; Porter and Dunn, 1984). Grievances against shopkeepers, errant motorists, and police of the same culture, however, rarely result in collective violence.

When collective violence does occur between parties who are culturally close, it tends to be less severe. Thus, in 18th-century France and England, food riots against culturally similar millers, bakers, and other vendors who allegedly hoarded scarce food and raised prices during shortages were relatively mild, were normally limited to the seizure and distribution of food or its sale at a “fair” price, and only rarely resulted in beatings or killings (Bercé, 1990:170-179; Rudé, 1964:19-45). In 1918, a wave of food riots in culturally homogeneous Japan was similarly restrained (Lewis, 1990). Riots in American cities also rarely resulted in severe injuries or killings until their cultural homogeneity declined with the appearance of new ethnic and religious groups in the early nineteenth century (see, e.g., Gilje, 1987).

Vigilantism tends to be less severe between culturally close parties as well. When worker vigilantism during labor conflicts in 18th- and 19th-cen-
tury England and America was aimed at culturally similar targets, for example, it was relatively mild. Weavers, shoemakers, hosiers, and other craftsmen verbally harassed and threatened strikebreaking workers and occasionally destroyed their working materials, but when the strikebreakers were of an ethnic group different from the vigilantes, beatings were more common (Gilje, 1987:175-176, 198-199; Laurie, 1980:125-126, 157-158; Thompson, 1975:270-273). In the American West, alleged offenses by Chinese or Hispanics against whites were more likely to result in collective violence and entail more severe violence than cases that crossed less cultural distance, between white settlers. Thus, from the 1840s to the 1900s, “non-whites, primarily Hispanics, composed a dramatically disproportionate percentage of those who experienced the wrath of the ‘people,’ [and] the victims of crimes for which lynch courts sought retribution were overwhelmingly white” (Johnson, 1981:570-575). Vigilantes also dealt out harsher punishments—typically severe beatings, mutilation, and execution—to culturally alien offenders. In early California, for instance, “mining camp punishments fell with special severity on Mexicans, Chileans, and Chinese” (Caughey, 1957:228). In the 1980s, Arab youths who threw rocks at Israeli settlers’ vehicles might attract collective punishments against their entire community. Though Jewish settlers sometimes tried to locate and beat only the offending individuals, more often they held Arab communities collectively liable, as when bands of settlers closed down or damaged Arab schools and businesses and destroyed Arab property or assaulted Arab residents indiscriminately (Shipler, 1986:124-129; see also Rigby, 1991:67-70, 122; Shalev, 1991:123-126; Weisburd, 1989:64-85). Among the Jewish settlers themselves, however, violence involving a logic of collective liability is rare, if not entirely absent.

Independence

A third variable associated with the likelihood and severity of collective violence is functional interdependence—the extent to which individuals and groups cooperate with one another economically, politically, militarily, or otherwise: Collective violence varies directly with functional independence.

People are comparatively unlikely to attack those who are indispensable to their well-being, but prefer to kill or maim those they can do without. For example, extensive trade ties or alliances reduce the likelihood of collective violence between groups involved in conflict (Black, 1990:45-47). When collective violence does occur, functional interdependence tends to reduce the severity of violence involved. In traditional India, for instance, “untouchables” or others in lowly occupations or lineages sometimes offended high-caste villagers by adopting visible emblems of higher-caste status. When the trans-
gressors provided services indispensable to the community, they were merely shunned or ignored, but when few or none depended on their services, they might be beaten or killed (Mandelbaum, 1970:378–379, 458–459, 474, 477). During European food riots of the 18th century, crowds might seize and redistribute bakers’ and millers’ wares, but seldom eliminated the offenders whose services benefitted the community (Bercé, 1990:170–179; Rudé, 1964:19–45). More extreme forms of violence were reserved for those from whom they were more independent, such as tax collectors and soldiers (Bercé, 1990). The likelihood and severity of lynching in the American South also depended in part on the degree of interdependence between an alleged black offender and aggrieved whites. Black vagrants and transient workers were usually completely independent of any whites they might offend, and they were more vulnerable to lethal lynchings. But a black who offended his white employer—a situation of greater interdependence—would generally receive nothing more than a beating. An employer also might intervene to protect a black employee from punishment by other aggrieved whites (Brundage, 1993:45, 63–64, 84; Senechal de la Roche, 1997).

Variation in the degree of functional independence between workers and employers also helps explain patterns of collective violence in industrial societies. In the early stages of industrialization, independent skilled craftsmen sometimes attacked the new factories and machines that they regarded as a threat to their income and autonomy. In London in the 1760s, for example, silk weavers destroyed newly introduced engine looms. Later, in the English Midlands Luddite outbreaks of 1811–1816, hand-weavers wrecked steam looms and burned factories (Rudé, 1964:66–91). By the 19th century, however, workers rarely destroyed the facilities upon which they largely depended for their livelihood. Instead, most violence during labor conflicts shifted to attacks against those from whom workers were entirely independent: strikebreakers and company guards (see, e.g., Dubofsky, 1985:33–55; Taft and Ross, 1969:281–395). For their part, employers in the 19th century lost their dependence on particular workers as the need for skilled employees declined and as an oversupply of labor made most individuals easily replaceable. And as they became increasingly independent of their workers, employers proved more willing to encourage violence against strikers from their own factories (see, e.g., Taft and Ross, 1969:281–395).

Inequality

Inequality of status, measured by wealth and other variables, is also associated with the likelihood of lynching, vigilantism, rioting, and ter-
torism. The more inequality between parties in conflict, the more these forms of social control occur: Collective violence varies directly with inequality.

Recall that the present analysis pertains only to unilateral forms of collective violence. Inequality, moreover, is the major social characteristic that differentiates conflict structures associated with unilateral collective violence from those associated with bilateral (or reciprocal) forms such as feuding and warfare. Bilateral collective violence may—like unilateral violence—have a conflict structure with a high degree of relational and cultural distance as well as functional independence (Black, 1990:44–45; 1995:855, n. 130), but unilateral violence is not likely to arise where the parties are equal in size and resources. As the vertical distance between antagonists increases, unilateral collective violence becomes more likely.

Extralegal beatings and executions, whether inflicted by Lynchers or vigilantes, are usually reserved for poor and subordinate offenders. Riots, however, may be aimed either downwardly at inferiors or upwardly against those of higher status. American anti-black and anti-Chinese riots illustrate the former (see, e.g., Chen, 1980:89–94; Rudwick, 1964; Senechal de la Roche, 1990), whereas some political riots, tax riots, worker violence, and American ghetto riots are examples of the latter (see, e.g., Kerner et al., 1968; Tilly, 1969:5–7, 16–21, 26–27; Tilly et al., 1975). Terrorism is usually upwardly directed, although sometimes poorer members of dominant groups may be included as targets.

Lynchings are more likely to be physically violent and lethal when the offender is poor or a member of an inferior ethnic group, race, or caste. The alleged rape or attempted rape of a respectable white woman by a black in the late 19th-century American South, for example, was more likely to provoke a capital lynching than the same offense committed by a white (see, e.g., Brundage, 1993). But a black’s alleged rape of a low-status white woman regarded as promiscuous or otherwise unrespectable—a case between relative equals—was more likely to go unavenged (Brundage, 1993:63–64; Hodes, 1993:411; see also Senechal de la Roche, 1997; Wright, 1990:55). On the other hand, the most violent lynchings followed the murder of a white police officer by a black, a dramatically upward offense against the polity itself. In these cases, torture as well as execution of the offender often resulted (Brundage, 1993:73, 76–77, 79; see also Downey and Hyser, 1990; Horwitz, 1990:108–113). Black-on-black and white-on-white assaults or killings, which typically involved parties of equal status, rarely resulted in death or torture for the alleged offender (Ayers, 1984:231; Senechal de la Roche, 1997). In the relatively few cases where whites lynched other whites for assaults or killings, the offender commonly was
of very low status (Brundage, 1993:86–102; Senechal de la Roche, 1997). In traditional India, attempts to rise in caste were more likely to provoke severe responses when aspirants were “untouchables” or others nearest the bottom of the social hierarchy (Mandelbaum, 1970:378, 474, 477).21

Vigilantism, rioting, and terrorism vary with inequality as well. Upward offenses by subordinate individuals or groups may spark rioting, as was often the case with American race riots before World War II (see, e.g., Quinn, 1967; Rudwick, 1964; Senechal de la Roche, 1990). Actions by the police in handling individuals or crowds have occasioned extensive rioting in American black neighborhoods in the 1960s and during workers’ protests and street demonstrations in Europe (Feagin and Hahn, 1973:144–146; Kerner et al., 1968; Marx, 1970; Tilly et al., 1975; Tilly, 1978:172–177). Moreover, when vigilantes are drawn from wealthier segments of communities in response to offenses by social inferiors, the severity of penalties increases. An unusually lethal case in Montana in the 1880s, for example, involved large ranchers against diverse inferiors: “a motley assortment of unemployed whiskey traders, wolf hunters, woodchoppers, and trappers” (Malone and Roeder, 1976:122). While conflicts among large ranchers over ownership of land and cattle in rare cases led to feuding, they did not result in vigilantism. Homeless children who beg or steal in commercial districts of Brazilian cities run the risk of being killed by “death squads,” some of which may be run by off-duty police officers (Rosenbaum and Sederberg, 1976:10), but otherwise respectable shoplifters run no such risk. Modern terrorists often have high-status, powerful adversaries, including governments, and the severity of their violence reflects the degree of inequality involved. Terrorists in Northern Ireland or the Middle East, for example, often count the killing of high-status members of targeted social categories (British or Israeli troops and government officials, for example) as a special achievement. Indiscriminate attacks are also made against politically and economically dominant populations, as when Arab terrorists bomb offices, transportation facilities, and crowded public places in Israel.

As the degree of inequality between the parties in a conflict lessens, so does the amount of violence. When the Ku Klux Klan of the Reconstruction South operated as vigilantes, they tended to mete out different punishments to blacks and whites who supported the rising Re-

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21Less severe lynchings without severe injury or execution occur in conflicts where offenders and the aggrieved are relatively close in status. An example is the charivari, a ritualized public punishment of deviants by members of small communities widespread in Europe from ancient times that also occurred in rural America, especially in the South, through the 20th century (Brown, 1975:25, 150–151; Davis, 1975:97–123; Linton, 1968:8–9; Wyatt-Brown, 1982:435–461).
publican Party. Poor blacks received the harshest treatment—often death (see, e.g., Trelease, 1971; Wade, 1987; Wright, 1990). The second Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s often served as vigilantes who punished moral offenses such as fornication and drunkenness by low-status whites with tarring and feathering and whipping, while wealthier whites—those closer in status to Klansmen—were rarely handled in this fashion for similar offenses (Wyatt-Brown, 1982:449–450). In episodes of vigilantism in the 19th-century American West, when offenders were poor and avengers wealthy, punishment was most likely to be lethal (see, e.g., Brown, 1991:87–127; Malone and Roeder, 1976:122–123)²²

But what kind of collective violence is likely to occur?

**THE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE**

Whereas all four forms of collective violence—lynching, rioting, vigilantism, and terrorism—are more likely to appear in cases of conflict with the social characteristics discussed above, the specific form occurring depends on at least two additional variables: (1) the degree of social polarization and (2) the continuity of the deviant behavior at which the violence is directed. Social polarization refers to the combined degree of relational distance, cultural distance, inequality, and independence present in a case of conflict, whereas the continuity of deviant behavior is measured by its frequency and duration.²³

Social polarization and the continuity of deviant behavior predict the breadth of liability (collective or individual) and the degree of organization (high or low) of social control and therefore predict—in combination—the form of collective violence likely to occur in a particular conflict. Collective liability (expressed in rioting and terrorism) occurs where social polarization is greater, whereas individual liability (expressed in lynching and vigilantism) appears where it is lower. A high degree of organization (seen in vigilantism and terrorism) appears when alleged offenses are chronic or enduring, whereas more informal organization (seen in lynching and rioting) typically arises when they are infrequent or transitory.

²²The model presented here assumes that the conflict structure is also characterized by immobility. That is, both sides share a setting and are accessible to one another. The degree of immobility affects the likelihood of the use of self-help as social control (Black, 1990:45–47).

²³In her study of the handling of American housing-code violations, Mileski (1971) distinguishes between continuous deviant acts and those that are discrete events that end in a relatively short time, such as murder, rape, and robbery.
Polarization and Collective Liability

Social polarization, which refers to the degree of relational and cultural distance, inequality, and functional independence, predicts whether collective liability is likely to appear. As social distance of all kinds increases, so does the breadth of liability. More polarized conflicts have a greater likelihood of collective liability: Collective liability to collective violence varies directly with social polarization. Thus, where those in conflict are relationally and culturally extremely distant, have little or no interdependence, and differ sharply in status, forms of collective violence with a logic of collective liability (riots and terrorism) are more likely than those with a logic of individual liability (lynchings and vigilantism).

Consider, for example, pariahs. These nonindigenous minorities typically live in highly polarized social settings: Differences in dress, diet, and religion, along with limited marital and business ties to the indigenous community imply a high degree of relational and cultural distance, and the level of functional independence frequently is high as well. In conflicts with the majority population, therefore, pariahs are especially vulnerable to collective liability. In Southeast Asia and Africa, for example, Chinese and Indians were important economic fixtures in their host societies, but like the Jews of Europe in earlier times, they were also often held collectively liable during conflicts and have experienced riots for decades (Von der Mehden, 1976:218–233). Native groups are far less likely to handle conflicts among themselves in this fashion. More generally, in the growing cities of South Asia, with their distinct mosaics of ethnic, racial, tribal, and religious groups, polarized conflicts with a logic of collective liability are endemic. The sins of the few may damn the many with lightning speed. In Karachi, Pakistan, for example, extensive interethnic rioting in 1985 was precipitated by the death of a schoolgirl struck by an errant bus driven by a man of differing ethnicity (Tambiah, 1990:748–749). Similar mishaps between members of the same ethnic group who know one another rarely, if ever, lead to such actions. Terrorism and rioting between Arabs and Jews in Israel and the occupied Arab territories express enormous polarization as well (see, e.g., Shipler, 1986:79–137, 181–221; Weisburd, 1989:64–85). But terrorism and rioting aimed at fellow members of Arab or Jewish communities is virtually unknown. When collective violence does occur within these communities, it follows a logic of individual liability. During the Palestinian Intifada (the uprising that began in 1987 against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza areas), for example, Arab vigilantes beat or executed those suspected of collaboration with the Israeli authorities, but typically

24 Black offers a similar proposition: “Liability varies directly with social distance” (1987:575).

**Proximity and Individual Liability**

Individual liability is more likely in less polarized conflicts. Hence, a degree of social proximity—intimacy, shared culture, interdependence, and equality between the parties—renders terrorism and rioting less likely and lynching and vigilantism more so.

Consider, for example, collective violence in frontier settings. From the 15th century onward, European colonization in the Americas, Africa, and elsewhere created highly polarized settings of newcomers and indigenous populations. Conflict between the two sometimes ended with mass expulsion or virtual extermination of native groups. Functional interdependence between settlers and natives, however, significantly reduced the probability of collective liability during disputes. Where trade ties entailed mutual dependence, as in the French Canadian fur trade, collective liability was far less likely than in the British colonies to the south, where trade and the use of Indians as laborers were less developed (Blalock, 1967:76–79; Nash, 1974; see also Fredrickson, 1981:37–38, 47). French settlers in 17th- and 18th-century Canada, who were mostly young, single males, also depended on Indians for a supply of wives—another form of interdependence that reduced the collective liability of the Indians (Nash, 1974). During the late 19th-century gold mining of the Canadian Yukon Territory, “a man’s relations with the Indians could be as consequential for his well-being and survival as his relations with his fellow miners” (Stone, 1988:86). Indians who stole from or murdered whites were typically treated with a logic of individual liability (Stone, 1988:95–100). Retaliatory violence did not spread to an Indian offender’s family, village, or tribe. But in northwestern California, where some tribes kept aloof from settlers and were unimportant to whites, miners might hold an entire Indian settlement collectively liable. The miners might even destroy the offender’s entire village and its inhabitants. If his home village was unknown, they might level the Indian village nearest the site of the offense (Hurtado, 1988:117–122).

In the rural American South in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, lynching was, so to speak, a sign of closeness between blacks and whites. Though the races drifted apart during this period of increasing segregation, they remained sufficiently intimate, culturally close, and interdependent that lynching, and not rioting or terrorism, was the favored form of collective vio-
Chronic Deviance and Organized Violence

The continuity of deviant behavior is low where offenses are infrequent and momentary and high where offenses are frequent or chronic. Examples of the former are isolated acts of theft, vandalism, or murder. The latter would include so-called epidemics of crime or rowdism as well as single deviant acts that endure over time, such as the maintenance of a house of prostitution, a landlord’s violation of housing standards, or an industry’s pollution (Mileski, 1971:10). A colonial regime similarly creates an enduring grievance among the conquered by its mere presence.

The organization of collective violence varies directly with the continuity of deviant behavior. Vigilantism, for example, generally arises with multiple instances of deviant behavior, such as repeated livestock thefts, robberies, and violations of moral standards. Vigilantes are “repeat players” (rather than “one-shotters”) who deal with a number of offenders over time.25 Even so, vigilante groups tend to be short-lived compared to terrorist groups, some of which may last for many years, as in the cases of the Irish Republican Army or the Palestine Liberation Organization. The United States produced an estimated 300–500 vigilante groups from the 18th to the early 20th centuries, but few lasted as much as a year (Little and Sheffield, 1983:803–804). One short-lived but effective vigilante group, nick-named Stuart’s Stranglers after its leader, organized in Montana in 1884 after ranchers suffered prolonged and severe livestock losses. In less than a month, the group hunted down and executed as many as 60 alleged out-

25Galanter (1974) uses the terms “repeat players” and “one-shotters” to classify users of courts.
laws, some of whom were seized from the authorities. When cattle theft disappeared, Stuart’s Stranglers disbanded (Malone and Roeder, 1976:122–123). In Uganda, shortly after independence in 1962, ardent nationalists organized as vigilantes to punish whites and Asians who did not support the new nation. They kidnapped a European newspaper editor, for example, because he hosted “a racialistic cocktail party” at which he and other white guests allegedly lamented “the demise of the empire” (Mazrui, 1976:198). When whites and Asians became more circumspect, the vigilantes disappeared. In East Africa, young vigilantes supporting “decency in dress” roughed up and humiliated young women who wore miniskirts, wigs, or tight trousers in public during the late 1960s (Mazrui, 1976:198). Single incidents provoked no such systematic forms of social control.

Whereas vigilantes withdraw when predators or other deviants disappear or modify their behavior, terrorism normally arises with intractable offenses of longer standing. Like vigilantes, terrorists are repeat players, but they commonly have only a single grievance, be it social, political, or economic. The condition they define as unjust or immoral cannot be remedied with the punishment of one or several deviant individuals or with a single attack (as in a riot or lynching), for it is nearly always a large and powerful group that is defined as blameworthy in a continuing fashion. Invasions, military dictatorships, and other patterns of domination provide fertile conditions for terrorism. In the West Bank of Israel, for instance, years of anti-Israeli terrorism followed what Palestinians defined as an unjust invasion and dispossession by European Jews. Another example was the terrorism by the Ku Klux Klan and kindred groups in the American South immediately following the Civil War: Confronted with a massive change—imposed by the North—in social relations with their former slaves, some whites turned to collective violence, targeting both blacks and whites who supported the new order. The Klan repeatedly engaged in killing, beating, property destruction, and occasional wholesale expulsion of blacks from their homes (see, e.g., Wade, 1987:19–77; Wright, 1990). Such measures are unlikely when deviant behavior is more transitory and isolated.

Transitory Deviance and Unorganized Violence

Unlike vigilantes and terrorists, rioters and lynchers are “one-shotters” rather than “repeat players” (Galanter, 1974): A single incident typically precipitates a single instance of collective retaliation or punishment. Here again the organization of collective violence reflects the continuity of the behavior: Rioters and lynchers are less organized than vigilantes and terrorists. In the late 19th-century American South, for example, where an alleged
killing of a white by a black preceded many lynchings (Brundage, 1993:72; Tolnay and Beck, 1995), some southern communities could rapidly raise a white crowd to avenge one of its residents. Yet once the alleged offender was dead, the lynchers nearly always dispersed. On rare occasions, such as when a poor black allegedly killed a higher-status white or a police officer, the crowd might not only lynch the alleged killer but also go on to attack the black community at large—a case of lynching evolving into rioting. Even then, however, the lynchers-turned-rioters organized only informally and temporarily. Since southern whites seldom faced continuous deviance by blacks, they seldom organized in the manner of vigilantes or terrorists.

In short, each of the four forms of collective violence varies with both the degree of social polarization and the continuity of deviant behavior:

—Lynching varies inversely with social polarization and the continuity of deviant behavior.
—Rioting varies directly with social polarization and inversely with the continuity of deviant behavior.
—Vigilantism varies inversely with social polarization and directly with the continuity of deviant behavior.
—Terrorism varies directly with social polarization and the continuity of deviant behavior.

Thus, lynching is most likely in less polarized cases of conflict and when the grievance involves a single offense. Rioting is also most likely when a single incident is involved, but where social polarization is greater. Vigilantism is most likely in conflicts with less polarization but continuous offenses. Finally, terrorism is most likely in polarized conflicts where the grievance endures. Figure 2 illustrates these patterns:

CONCLUSION

Most collective violence is social control: a process that defines and responds to conduct as deviant. It is self-help by a group and, when unilateral, has four major forms: lynching, rioting, vigilantism, and terrorism. Following Black’s paradigm, I seek to develop a pure sociology of collective violence. My central assumption is that collective violence varies with the social structure of conflict. I offer ten propositions that predict and explain variation in the likelihood, severity, and form of collective violence. The following propositions address collective violence in general:

1. Collective violence varies directly with relational distance.
2. Collective violence varies directly with cultural distance.
3. Collective violence varies directly with functional independence.
4. Collective violence varies directly with inequality.

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Fig. 2. Social distribution of four forms of collective violence.
Two propositions address variation in the breadth of liability and in the degree of organization of collective violence:

5. Collective liability to collective violence varies directly with social polarization.

6. The organization of collective violence varies directly with the continuity of deviant behavior.

Four propositions address the combinations that predict and explain the forms of collective violence:

7. Lynching varies inversely with social polarization and the continuity of deviant behavior.

8. Rioting varies directly with social polarization and inversely with the continuity of deviant behavior.

9. Vigilantism varies inversely with social polarization and directly with the continuity of deviant behavior.

10. Terrorism varies directly with social polarization and the continuity of deviant behavior.

Although scattered evidence tests and provides preliminary support for my propositions, a fuller assessment of their predictive and explanatory power will require further investigation. It is likely, moreover, that other structural variables not yet discovered will prove pertinent. In any event, further comparative work will clarify the circumstances under which the various degrees of severity and forms of collective violence are found. We might focus on a single variety of collective violence such as lynching or rioting, for example, draw a national, cross-cultural, or longitudinal sample of cases, and determine whether its likelihood and severity follow the predictions implied by my propositions. These and kindred investigations would yield not only a meaningful assessment of my initial formulations, but might also yield new directions for the future.

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26For example, Black's (1976) analysis of law includes other variables, such as the degree of integration and conventionality, that may explain variation in collective self-help as well.
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