Violent Crime

Analysts have long noted that some societies have much higher rates of criminal violence than others. They also have observed that the risk of being a victim or a perpetrator of violent crime varies considerably from one individual to another. In societies with ethnically and racially diverse populations, some ethnic and racial groups have been reported to have higher rates of violent offending and victimization than other groups. This exceptional collection of original essays explores the extent and causes of racial and ethnic differences in violent crime in the United States and several other contemporary societies.

Divided into three thematic sections, the volume begins with empirical analyses of homicide for several large urban areas in the United States. Chapters in the second section examine patterns of domestic violence in the United States, youth violence in Canada and New Zealand, and racially motivated violence in England and Wales. The authors conclude their study by taking on the task of explaining racial and ethnic disparity in rates of violent crime. In the final seven chapters, they critically examine the credibility of the evidence of group differences in rates of violent crime and debate the merits of many of the popular theories that have been put forth to explain them.

Darnell F. Hawkins is Professor of African-American Studies, Sociology, and Criminal Justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is the editor of *Homicide among Black Americans* (1986), *Ethnicity, Race, and Crime: Perspectives across Time and Place* (1995), and *Crime Control and Social Justice: The Delicate Balance* (forthcoming), and he has published more than forty articles. He is a founding member of the National Consortium on Violence Research (NCOVR).

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Violent Crime

Assessing Race and Ethnic Differences

Edited by

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Foreword

James F. Short, Jr.

Despite impressive achievements, American criminology continues to suffer from a host of theoretical and methodological weaknesses. Among these, conceptualization and measurement of race and ethnicity, and of racial and ethnic behavioral differences, are major impediments to the advancement of knowledge. This is not unique to criminology, of course, but that neither excuses nor explains our failure to do a better job. Darnell Hawkins's introductory essay explores both the validity and the reliability of biological and social constructions of race – topics too long neglected by criminologists.

Importantly, this volume explores racial and ethnic distinctions beyond the familiar African-American/white, as well as recognizing that ethnic distinctions have achieved global importance in an increasingly mobile world.

The concentration of American criminologists on crime and criminals *in the United States* is a problem of long standing. This somewhat ethnocentric – not to say myopic – practice is not a major focus of the present volume, but research from Canada, New Zealand, and England and Wales adds a great deal to the book.

Ethnocentrism takes many forms and here again Darnell Hawkins and his colleagues are enlightening. Scholars in the social and behavioral sciences are notorious for conducting our research within the boundaries of our disciplines – this, despite the inherently interdisciplinary nature of criminology. Moreover, we tend to restrict our vision within narrowly defined methodological and theoretical preferences. Chapters in this volume approach racial and ethnic contexts of violence from a variety of disciplinary, methodological, and theoretical perspectives.

This book also addresses previously understudied problems, populations, and violence-related phenomena, such as the historical roots of codes of behavior that support or require violence, and of moral development, and

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the consequences of conceptual ambiguity and "race neutral" theory and research.

Finally, editor Darnell Hawkins issues a clear and unmistakable challenge: ideological biases and simplistic approaches to understanding violent crime have too long hampered both the acquisition of knowledge and efforts to control violence. Moving beyond these limitations requires that the contexts within which behaviors are defined as violent, as well as the contexts in which violence occurs, be understood.

These contributions are consistent with trends in all the social and behavioral sciences, and they are as necessary as they are important. The changing racial and ethnic character of the United States clearly requires a broader focus. In the past, data limitations have limited systematic comparison of races other than black and white, an irony that should escape no one in view of the presence, since European conquest of the continent, of large numbers of native populations and groups.

Part II continues the study of previously understudied populations by comparing native (aboriginal) and other youth in Canada and New Zealand, respectively. The former, by Bill McCarthy and John Hagan, builds on their earlier study of another understudied population – "street youth" (see Hagan and McCarthy, 1997). The international contribution to this rich mix of studies is further enhanced by treatment of "racist victimization" (most commonly referred to as "hate crimes" in the United States; see Jenness and Broad, 1997; Jacobs and Potter, 1998) in England and Wales.

Migrations of many types throughout the world (see Tonry, 1997) virtually ensure that future research will require even more subtle treatment of ethnic and racial distinctions and the contexts within which they exist, as these relate to crime and other behaviors.

In sum, editor Darnell Hawkins here broadens the focus of violence studies in a variety of ways. There is much to be learned in these pages. Readers should be warned, however, not to expect simple or easy answers to the puzzles here addressed. Contributors prudently acknowledge limitations in their data and in their ability to explain observed relationships. Although they break new ground in coverage of racial and ethnic groups, and in recognition of the importance of context, much research and more rigorous theoretical development will be required if knowledge of the important topics here addressed is to be advanced beyond its present relatively underdeveloped state.

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Editor's Introduction

Darnell F. Hawkins

I am convinced that in the next century millions will cut each other's throat because of 1 or 2 degrees more or less of cephalic index.

– Varcher de Lapouge, late 1880s, as quoted by Ruth Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics* (1940)

European expansion overseas, therefore, set the stage for racist dogmas and gave violent early expression to racial antipathies without propounding racism as a philosophy. Racism did not get its currency in modern thought until it was applied to conflicts in Europe – first to class conflicts and then to national. But it is possible to wonder whether the doctrine would have been proposed at all as explaining these latter conflicts – where, as we have seen, the dogma is so inept – if the basis for it had not been laid in the violent experience of racial prejudice on the frontier.

– Ruth Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics* (1940)

Generally speaking, there has been an ethnic succession in all areas of crime, beginning with the Irish, who were the first identifiable minority to inhabit urban slums. In the 1860s *Harper Magazine* observed that the Irish "have so behaved themselves that nearly 75 percent of our criminals are Irish, that fully 75 percent of the crimes of violence committed among us are the work of Irishmen. . . ." Speculation as to the causes of the alarming rate of crime among the Irish centered on ethnic traits, especially the intemperate disposition of the Irish "race."

– Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (1981, 1989)

Living in a culture of inequality, poverty, discrimination, racism, unemployment, and debasement of values, is humanly demeaning especially for blacks, a culture in which the very condition of being black is in some ways treated as a crime, a crime which leads to crime, because the only outlet for the resulting emotional frustration is its effect, namely, violence. In the culture of racism,

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where so many are scarred and criminalized, the victims are euphemistically called "the race problem," implying that the victims are the cause of it. The latest solution to the problem by government is the threatened enlistment of thousands more police, and the building of more overcrowded prisons.

– Ashley Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* (1942, 1997)

Increased use of police power has been justified as necessary to combat civil disorder. But the paradox is that the violence that the police attempt to control is inspired in many instances by the police themselves. And more important, much of the violence in these situations is actually committed by the police.... The state, quite understandably, does not regard its own actions as violence, or if such actions are considered, they are defined at best as "legitimate violence." So it is that the looting of property during race "riots" is defined as violence by the state, but killing of looters is legitimate.

– Richard Quinney, *The Social Reality of Crime* (1970)

In the U.S., Blacks are less than 13 percent of the population but have 50 percent of all arrests for assault and murder and 67 percent of all arrests for robbery.... On the other hand, Orientals are under-represented in U.S. crime statistics.... The same pattern is found in other countries. In London, England, Blacks make up 13 percent of the population, but account for 50 percent of the crime. A 1996 government commission in Ontario, Canada, reported that Blacks were five times more likely to go to jail than whites, and 10 times more likely than Orientals. In Brazil, there are 1.5 million Orientals, mostly Japanese whose ancestors went there as laborers in the 19th century, and who are the least represented in crime.... Studies find that Blacks are more aggressive and outgoing than Whites, while Whites are more aggressive and outgoing than Orientals.

– J. Philippe Rushton, *Race, Evolution, and Behavior* (1999)

Contributors to this volume were asked to provide empirical analyses, theoretical essays, or state-of-the-art reviews aimed primarily at answering two major questions:

- Are there racial and ethnic differences in rates of criminal violence?[1]
- To the extent that differences can be shown to exist, what are the causes of the observed disparity?

The result is a collection of essays divided into three major sections. The first part of the volume contains five chapters that explore ethnic and racial

[1] Many contemporary analysts of race and ethnicity also question the idea that terms such as "ethnic" and "racial" denote different social constructs. They suggest that the word "ethnic," as used here to imply cultural distinctions *within* racial categories, may be problematic to the extent that it presumes that cultural differences do not also mark the boundaries between races. In their view, the label "ethnic" can be used to denote differences traditionally thought of as "racial."

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differences for homicide offending and victimization in several urban areas of the United States. In the second section are two chapters that examine racial differences in rates of domestic violence in the United States. Also included are three very informative essays that explore ethnic and racial differences for both lethal and nonlethal forms of violence in Canada, New Zealand, England, and Wales. The final section contains seven chapters that seek and offer explanations for ethnic and racial differences through the use of data analysis and critiques of extant theory. Much of this discussion is aimed at explaining disproportionate rates of violence among African Americans.

The queries to which the authors respond arise out of a long-standing and often highly politicized research tradition within the social and behavioral sciences. Spanning more than a century, the prophetic and pointed observations at the start of this introduction illustrate for the reader the broader historical, political, and socioeconomic contexts within which the chapters contained in this volume are inevitably and inextricably embedded. They also reveal quite clearly the ideological and epistemological disagreement, lack of resolution, and polemics that have resulted from earlier attempts to probe the questions addressed by the present volume. Reflecting their historical link to the promulgation of racist and ethnocentric social policy within and across nations, scholarly and public discussions of race and ethnicity have always been marked by emotion and contentiousness. Similar tensions related to social class, race, ethnicity, politics, and public policy have also permeated scholarly and public discourse on crime and punishment, both during the past and today. Thus, the question of ethnic and racial difference in rates of involvement in criminal violence, the theme of this volume, brings to the fore a combination of the considerable discord that has permeated these two interrelated and highly contested areas of public and scholarly concern.[2]

[2] Many current analysts of race, crime, and justice issues, especially those conducting research in the United States, complain that the contentiousness and political turmoil that often surround this area of research detract from efforts to conduct research that reflects scientific objectivity and an unbridled search for knowledge. Some cite such recent incidents as the cancellation during the early 1990s of a conference on the biology of violence to be convened by an agency of the U.S. federal government after objections from liberal and minority interest groups as evidence of the depths of the current problem. By contrast, even a cursory review of the history of such research in the United States reveals that these tensions are hardly new. Many of the earliest investigators in this area of study, most of whom are now heralded as icons of an objective and politically unbiased research tradition, worked amid the scholarly and public misconceptions of their era. Indeed, their work on this topic arose in response to such misconceptions. Pioneers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Thorsten Sellin, Edwin Sutherland, Clifford Shaw, and Howard McKay used their work to counter perceptions of the innate criminality of African Americans and southern and eastern Europeans. These perceptions were, of course, an integral part of the social Darwinist and eugenicist movements of the period.

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Contexts and Cautions

Although the use of racial categories to distinguish and label various groupings of human beings has been widely accepted in Western and non-Western societies for many centuries, important questions regarding the validity and utility of the notion or concept of "race" remain. Challenges to its presumed meaning and relevance can now be found across a wide range of disciplines, including literary criticism, jurisprudence, and the traditional social science disciplines of anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Building on the pioneering efforts of Ruth Benedict, Ashley Montagu, and other early anthropologists, many contemporary social analysts, some referred to as "critical race theorists," reject what are labeled "essentialist" or "biological determinist" views of race differences. They insist instead that race is a "social construct," the origins of which reflect less an attempt to *objectively* classify humankind than an exercise in social control and dominion. Critics also note that most of the social behaviors that are linked etiologically to racial difference by some social analysts are very complex phenomena whose variability across groups cannot be attributed to "race" differences alone.

Beyond these widely cited social scientific challenges and reconceptualizations of the notion of race, potential critiques of traditional racial categorizations also have come from the biological sciences. Many contemporary medical scientists and researchers continue to see some utility in racial labels. Aware of the large racial differences often seen in rates of illness and death from various diseases, researchers have used clinical trials that take into account the race or ethnicity of subjects in an attempt to determine if there are group differences in genetic susceptibility to some diseases. Similar trials have been used to determine the extent to which groups differ in their responses to medications and treatment protocols. Findings from some of these studies have proven to be quite promising; but researchers have been quick to note that global racial categories, such as those based on skin color or other superficial markers, may prove in the long run to be of only limited use for such purposes. The ongoing Human Genome Project is likely to show that racial differences are not entirely a figment of the "biological imagination," but preliminary findings from this important scientific breakthrough may have already begun to reveal the inadequacy of simplistic, global, phenotype-based racial categories.

Within the criminal justice arena, similar challenges to conventional ideas and beliefs can be noted. Over the last several decades, many criminologists, often labeled as conflict theorists or critical criminologists, have challenged the meanings assigned to many of the core concepts employed in this area of research. For these analysts, "crime" (including criminal violence) does not represent a phenomenon whose definition is uniformly clear or uncontestable. Similarly, the labels "criminal" and "criminality" are said to denote

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neither fixed traits nor conceptions that are divorced from the political economy and power differentials found in a given society. In this regard, they have observed that conceptions of what constitutes a "crime" often vary considerably across race, ethnic, and class boundaries, from one nation or society to another, and from one era to another within the same society. Furthermore, even if one accepts the idea that definitions of criminal conduct flow from widely agreed-on norms and values, work conducted within the conflict perspective also reminds us of the considerable bias and exercise of discretion that is frequently observed in law enforcement and in the administration of justice. For researchers in this tradition, questions of whether racial differences in crime and violence exist, and the offering of reasons for any observed differences, often cannot be fully disentangled from questions of bias, power, privilege, and protection of group interest. See Taylor, Walton, and Young (1973) for an excellent review of research in this tradition in the United States and Europe. As Quinney (1970) notes above, whether an act of violence is seen as a crime or not is often in the eye of the (powerful) beholder, or his or her agent.

Other analysts of race, crime, and justice, including those commentators whose observations appear at the beginning of this introduction, offer other necessary cautions to those who would take on the tasks assigned to contributors to this volume. These cautions derive from our knowledge of the history of American and world race relations and its relevance to the topic at hand. The study of racial difference in the tendency to resort to violence is complicated by the fact that acts of violence and aggression, whether at the level of the individual, the crowd, or the nation-state, have routinely marked the presumed boundaries between racial and ethnic groups. Indeed, violence has been used to "define" these groups and, once defined, to enforce public and private adherence to such labeling. Throughout human history, particularly in instances of societal attempts at *ethnic differentiation*, actual social and cultural differences between groups are often trivial at the start of this process. Any profound differences that do emerge appear gradually over time and typically in the aftermath of repeated acts of organized intergroup violence. In addition, although geography and climate have played a major role in shaping over many millennia what are now perceived as racial differences, recent human history has seen numerous instances within multiracial societies where violence has been used to prevent interracial sexual contact and intermarriage. These are, of course, obvious means of reducing what is perceived as racial "difference."

Thus, at first glance to ask whether there are racial and ethnic differences in levels of violent offending and victimization appears to beg the question. Violence has been the tool by which some racial and ethnic groups have conquered others. Violence also has been instrumental in subsequent efforts by such groups to amass the social, economic, and political capital

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required to maintain dominance, including the power to label individuals as members of one racial or ethnic group as opposed to another. Given the historically grounded link between violence and ethnic or racial differentiation, it is plausible that though perceived racial and ethnic groups may differ in other ways, the resort to violence may not be a behavioral trait that distinguishes them. Critical criminological analysts remind us that the crimes of the powerless are more numerous than those of the privileged only if we fail to remember that "a crime by another name – (is still a crime)" (Reiman, 1984).

Yet, it is also true, as Fanon (1967, 1968) has argued, that under conditions of prolonged and profound subordination, perhaps especially in societies where "race" marks lines of social cleavage, much of the violence of the oppressed tends to turn inward against members of their own group. At the same time, the institutionalization of group oppression and disadvantage may reduce over time the need for ongoing violent, militaristic repression on the part of the dominant group. This observation may have much relevance for our understanding of the comparatively high rates of interpersonal violence that are observed among "minorities" in many industrialized nations and in many developing, postcolonial societies of the world at the turn of the twenty-first century. The problem of within–race and within–ethnic group violence among disadvantaged populations is a theme that is explored in each of the three sections of the present volume. The persisting problem of internecine violence among African Americans is of particular concern for contributors to the volume.

Despite such critiques of traditional conceptions of race, crime, and criminal violence, many researchers have continued to use primarily "essentialist" conceptions of race in an attempt to explain group differences for a wide variety of behaviors and social attributes. These include intelligence, athletic ability, criminal conduct, human aggression, sexual conduct, family formation and functioning, and economic and cultural progress and achievement. In recent years, views of the relationship between race and violence can be found in the work of such researchers as Wilson and Herrnstein (1985), Herrnstein and Murray (1994), and Rushton (1995, 1999). All have suggested that racial differences in rates of violence likely reflect innate predispositions to such behavior. Although considered controversial, their views have found considerable acceptance among some communities of scholars and among members of the general public. Theirs and other, similar investigations published over the last four decades illustrate quite clearly that despite continuing criticisms of traditional conceptions of race and criminality, many continue to believe in the existence of separate and distinct "races" of humankind, whose biological differences are linked to, among other things, varying levels of violent and aggressive behavior. Although many social scientists have chosen to ignore or downplay the importance

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of these views of race and crime, they remain part of the mix of competing explanations for any differences in rates of violent conduct observed across those groupings said to be the world's "races." The three sets of authors cited above have provided data, research findings, and lines of argument that are neither strikingly original nor without conceptual and methodological flaws. In each instance, however, through their critical and often detailed examinations of alternative hypotheses, they have succeeded in highlighting the very real inadequacies and weaknesses of the assortment of "environmental" theories favored by their critics as explanations for racial and ethnic differences. Therein lies their potential contribution to the literature in this developing area of research.

Coverage and Scope of Volume

In my earlier work on the subject of race and ethnic differences in rates of crime and violence, I have staked out clear ideological stances (Hawkins, 1986, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1995b, 1997). Many of these stances are evident in my commentary in this introduction. However, two major nonideological themes run consistently through all of my own work. One is the proposition that social scientists who conduct research on this topic must first clearly delineate what we know *and do not know* about the extent of such group differences. I have cautioned that much remains unknown about the *true* extent of ethnic racial disparity for the *full range of behaviors* defined as crimes or violence, and across the *multiplicity of racial and ethnic* groups that reside in modern industrial societies such as the United States, and increasingly, Western Europe. A second major theme has been the suggestion that where wide racial and ethnic disparity is shown to exist, as in the United States both during the past and today, social scientists must move beyond mere documentation of such difference to attempt to determine its causes. Whereas these are the avowed goals of all who study race, crime, and justice, numerous observers have noted our failure over the years to accomplish this seemingly straightforward task.

Given my observations in this introduction, some readers may question the omission of chapters that provide data and detailed discussion of each of the multifaceted dimensions of the race-ethnicity-violence nexus that I have sought to describe. Because no single volume can assemble the full array of contributions needed to provide a truly comprehensive view of the interplay among race, ethnicity, and violence, certain decisions regarding coverage had to be made. Both practical considerations and matters of interest guided those decisions. Authors were asked to provide chapters that would explore the problem of *interpersonal criminal* violence, typically those acts referred to as *common law* offenses in the United States and other nations influenced by Anglo-Saxon legal traditions. These are the forms of violent behavior

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that have been the subject of most past criminological research on racial and ethnic difference, for example, see Hindelang (1978). Increasingly, the study of race differences in interpersonal violence also encompasses work on violence and aggression conducted within the behavioral sciences and in public health. With the exception of the public health arena, researchers within these traditions have tended to focus on racial and ethnic differences among those who *commit* acts of violence, as opposed to *victims*. A more comprehensive examination of racial differences that incorporates greater attention to group-level violence, for example, mob actions, riots, revolts, and also subtler forms of violence committed by the privileged or on their behalf must await future volumes. I do include in the present volume two very insightful chapters by Ben Bowling and Coretta Phillips and Frankie Bailey. They explore important dimensions of intergroup violence in England and the United States. See Kelman and Hamilton (1989) for an informative social psychological study of "crimes of obedience," a category that includes many governmentally sanctioned forms of interpersonal violence.[3]

For many other readers, my discussion of the historical and ideological origins of research and public discourse on race, ethnicity, crime, and violence may seem informative, but its usefulness for improving our understanding of *contemporary* patterns of interpersonal violence may be questioned. In response, I would suggest that the chapters in this volume offer much to show that knowledge of the past always informs our understanding of the present. I also believe that a reflexive analytic approach (Gouldner, 1970) that explores the assumptions and intellectual legacies that underpin our scientific inquiries is extremely valuable. I include in the volume several chapters that explore racial and ethnic differences for both violent offending and victimization in societies other than the United States (e.g., see McCarthy and Hagan, Chapter 6; Fergusson, Chapter 7; and Bowling and Phillips, Chapter 8). These contributions illustrate for the reader the relevance of the cross-national perspectives offered by the commentators whose observations are cited at the start of this introduction. Their inclusion also reflects my view that interpersonal violence, in all its various forms, represents at the dawn of the twenty-first century a problem of global magnitude. Although violence rates have dropped in the United States over the last decade, they remain at levels far exceeding those found in most other industrialized nations. In addition, much evidence suggests that rates of interpersonal, criminal violence are rapidly increasing in many other parts of the globe, including portions of Eastern Europe, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, and other parts of Latin America.

[3] The term "interpersonal violence" does not necessarily exclude all forms of intergroup conflict and aggression. What is currently labeled "hate crime" and many other violent encounters involving small groups of individuals are essentially interpersonal in nature.

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The contributors to the present volume have had to overcome several hurdles. My own earlier work (1986) and recent essays by LaFree (1995) and Sampson and Wilson (1995) have noted the reluctance of contemporary criminologists and other social scientists in the United States to engage in discussions of the extent and causes of racial differences in crime and violence. For quite understandable reasons, some of which have been described in this introduction, race and race differences remain emotionally and politically charged and divisive topics in the United States and in many other societies around the world. Reflecting this contentiousness, the scientific study of race, ethnicity, and violence must be conducted in a society in which racial and ethnic stereotyping often leads to perceptions of unequal levels of violence across groups even in the absence of reliable or conclusive data. For example, a 1990 survey of a nationwide sample of Americans revealed that 56 percent of white respondents described African Americans as more prone to violence than whites. Latinos were also described as more violent than whites or Asians (Bobo and Kluegel, 1997). These beliefs may reflect the effects of persisting racial stereotypes on perceptions among the public, an awareness by respondents of the wide racial disparity that exists in rates of criminal violence in the United States, or a combination of both. There is some evidence that due to the nature of media coverage of crime, many Americans believe rates of crime and violence among African Americans to be higher than they actually are. The potential misuse of social scientific research to further foster such stereotypes may be one factor contributing to the disinclination of many contemporary researchers to engage in research and discussion of racial differences in crime.

For researchers who overcome their hesitation and are willing to undertake such studies, significant barriers to the collection of complete and reliable data exist, many of which are described in various chapters of this volume (see also Short, 1997). Race and crime data–gathering efforts reflect the biases and policy concerns of government agencies and the interests that they represent. For example, in the United States today, unlike during the past when "white" immigration was a matter of public debate, there are significant practical and political barriers to the collection by government of data for persons of European heritage. As a result, crime and violence data do not exist for most of the diverse white ethnic groupings found in the nation. For social scientists pondering the questions posed at the start of this introduction, such data would be invaluable, as would data sources that would allow for the calculation of rates of crime and violence for the diverse ethnic groups that comprise Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and, increasingly, African Americans. Among other uses, such data might help social scientists test various theories that posit the importance of cultural and subcultural differences for explaining group differences in rates of violence. Almost every contribution to the present volume alludes to or

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explicitly explores the significance of cultural and subcultural differences in explaining racial and ethnic variations in rates of violence.[4]

Despite inadequate data and the very real potential for distortion and misuse of findings, social scientists in the United States, Western Europe, and other parts of the world have begun in recent years to confront head-on the questions surrounding race and ethnic differences in crime and violence. Several notable edited or authored volumes have appeared in just the last few years (e.g., see Hawkins, 1995; Marshall, 1997; McCord, 1997; Short, 1997; and Tonry, 1997). Each volume has shown the need to engage in more and more sophisticated research and to mine alternative and previously overlooked sources of data on race and ethnic differences in crime and violence. The present volume, the first devoted in its entirety to exploring the multiple dimensions of the nexus of race, ethnicity, and *violence*, builds on those earlier efforts with a full awareness of some of the limitations of the present work, as well as the work that preceded it. While marking an excellent start to dialogue in this very important area of criminological and race relations research, contributors to this volume are unanimous in their belief that there is much work to be done. Definitive answers to the questions posed earlier do not come easily, often because of the paucity of data available and partly due to the very complexity of the research designs needed to fully explore racial and ethnic differences and to test rival hypotheses.

Much of that complexity is evident when one takes note of both longstanding and newly emerging findings and facts from this area of research. For example, explanations that are grounded in the view that *either* biological *or* abiding cultural differences across groups explain ethnic and racial disparity in rates of interpersonal violence have long had to contend with a variety of seemingly anomalous findings. Among these are studies that show substantial variation in the rates of violence *within* demarcated racial and ethnic groupings. The arguments of Rushton (1995, 1999) and Herrnstein and Murray (1994) are challenged by studies that show much variation in rates of interpersonal violence among persons of African ancestry in the United States and Africa in the past (Bohannan, 1960) and within the black population of the United States today (Hawkins, 1999). As in the past, within-race analyses pose serious challenges to theories that posit the existence of large and innate race differences in behavior. As shown in the present volume, apart from the example of African Americans, many other within-race and between-race differences in levels of interpersonal violence in the United States also exist and require explanation. Many have not been explored due to an absence of reliable race- and ethnicity-specific crime data and the resulting tendency of American criminologists to focus almost

[4] Limited data on both race and ethnicity in Canada and Western Europe also hamper research efforts in those areas of the world.

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exclusively on the study of black-white differences (Hawkins, 1999). Within-race and within-ethnic group analyses, such as those conducted in several chapters in the present volume, also raise questions regarding the applicability of many theories and explanations that are based on notions of economic disadvantage or culture.

Explaining change over time has proven to be a problem for most efforts at theory making within the social sciences. Several major temporal shifts in levels of interpersonal violence in Europe and America also may suggest that many of the currently competing theories of ethnic and racial difference may require amendment or revision. For example, a sharp rise and gradual decline in rates of criminal violence in Western European societies and America over the last four to five centuries has been reported by Gurr (1977) and others. Other studies have shown a decline in rates of violence among white ethnics and Asian Americans in the United States during the last two centuries or less (Lane, 1979, 1986, 1997; Gurr, 1989; Monkkonnen, 1995; Steinberg, 1995; Hawkins, 1993, 1999). Without modifications, many widely cited social theories that posit the importance of culture, subculture, economic deprivation, structural disadvantage, or biological difference appear to be inadequate for accounting for such change.

Findings from contemporary Europe and other industrialized nations offer similar etiological challenges. Although much of the work on this topic in these regions has just begun, early studies may suggest that many of the explanations long associated with the study of group differences in the United States may not be applicable. Group differences in rates of crime and violence observed in those areas of the world do not appear to be easily explained by traditional notions of minority versus majority, white versus nonwhite, and possibly economically disadvantaged versus advantaged (Marshall, 1997; Tonry, 1997). My own work and that of Martinez (1999) on homicide trends has suggested that many puzzles remain in terms of explaining the ethnic and racial distribution of lethal violence and its change over time in the United States (Hawkins, 1999).

Further complicating and informing efforts to explain the racial and ethnic patterning of interpersonal violence are two distinct, but increasingly interconnected, streams of research that have examined characteristics *of the individual offender* and the immediate *contexts and environments* in which offenders live and in which acts of violence occur. Studies focusing on the former have examined traditional social and personal correlates of interpersonal offending as well as the neuropsychological and neurochemical bases for differences between individuals. These studies are far more sophisticated (conceptually and methodologically) than the psychological studies of aggression, abnormal behavior, and psycho- and sociopathology that marked an earlier era. Chapters in the present volume by Fergusson (Chapter 7) and Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber (Chapter 11) are examples

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of research in this tradition. Studies in the latter tradition have examined local community and neighborhood effects on varying levels of violence. Innovative studies of how community- and neighborhood-level contextual factors impact racial differences in rates of interpersonal violence have also been published in recent years (e.g., see Krivo and Peterson, 1996; Sampson, 1997; and Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). Increasingly, the best work in each of these areas of research combines elements of both modes of analysis.

Together, these research protocols may ultimately take us far toward an understanding of varying levels of violent involvement by individuals living under similar conditions, and individuals living in certain neighborhoods as compared to others. They also may prove to have much to offer discussions of race and ethnic differences. In fact, some progress has already been made toward that end. For example, researchers have observed that *within* racial and ethnic groupings, attention to individual differences (e.g., inherited predispositions, developmental pathways, etc.) and to differences in localized environmental contexts may explain varying levels of interpersonal violence. Still at issue in this research is the question of the extent to which explanatory models based on individual-level and neighborhood-level correlates of violent offending "map" onto models that are based on the presumption of the etiological significance of race and ethnic group membership. That is, can they fully account for ethnic and racial differences?[5] This is a question posed by Farrington, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber in Chapter 11 of the present volume. Much more work remains ahead in this important line of inquiry, partly because many of the samples of subjects used to analyze developmental trajectories for violent offenders have not always been racially or ethnically diverse.

All of the authors contributing to the present volume are cognizant of the long-standing problems in the study of race, ethnicity, and violence that I have described in this introduction, and all have sought to overcome or address them in various ways. My own biases and predilections notwithstanding, my objective when soliciting authors to contribute to this volume was to assemble a very diverse group of scholars who would offer new and innovative approaches to the study of race, ethnicity, and violence. Despite my unsuccessful attempts to solicit chapters on racial and ethnic differences

[5] Even in societies marked by ethnic, racial, and social class cleavages that lead to much intergroup conflict, not all individuals (even those of the same age, gender, etc.) are equally likely to engage in the intergroup violence that marks group boundaries. In addition, in times of relative "peace" between groups or under conditions of geographic isolation, some individuals exhibit much higher rates of intragroup aggression and violence than others. The fact that individual differences matter for the etiology of interpersonal violence does not, however, suggest that race and ethnic differences are driven by precisely the same factors that account for differences among individuals.

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in the nineteenth century, violence among Native and Asian Americans, and a review of the biogenetic literature, I believe the present collection of essays largely represents substantial progress toward that goal. Although they share a commitment to scientific methods, the use of appropriate data, and the accuracy of data interpretation, these authors hardly speak with one voice. They differ in the conclusions they reach, and often within the same chapter, competing, alternative explanations and interpretations for reported findings are offered. Through their collective effort to engage in such criticism and self-examination, the authors have avoided the tendency to replace a legacy of biological determinism in this area of research with a nonreflexive form of social determinism. The chapters build on the past but offer much to help guide much needed future research efforts in this important area of social inquiry.

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