**<CH1>1**

**<CH2>Understanding Violence**

**<HA>Introduction**

<MTFO>In spite of technological and social advances, violent behaviors continue to be common in our contemporary world. Due to the magnitude of these behaviors, they are also considered a public health problem (World Health Organization, 2002). Violent behaviors occur at different levels, from domestic abuse to mass homicide and wars. Table 1.1 shows the percentage of deaths that are the result of violence in different countries around the world. Annually, there are almost one and a half million violent deaths worldwide and the vast majority of them are in low- and middle-income countries. Homicides represent almost half a million deaths annually.

<INSERT TABLE 1.1 HERE>

**TABLE 1.1** Global estimated violence-related deaths (homicides, suicides, and deaths related to wars) at the end of the twentieth century (modified and adapted from the WHO Global Burden of Disease Project for 2000)

 However, violent deaths are unequally distributed among different countries, among different age ranges, and by gender. Homicide rates vary in different regions of the world. Statistics show that there are particularly violent regions, such as Southern Africa and different Latin American regions (Central and South America and the Caribbean). Western European countries have the lowest levels of violent deaths(UNODC, 2013).

 As mentioned, the age and gender distribution of violent deaths is not even (Figure 1.1). Victims of violent deaths are significantly more often male than female, particularly in the medium age ranges. In addition, violent deaths are perceptibly more common in young adults than in any other stages of life.

<INSERT FIGURE 1.1 HERE>

**FIGURE 1.1** Distribution of homicides by gender and age range (modified and adapted from the WHO Causes of Death 2008 database, 2011)

 In some countries, homicides represent one of the leading causes of death. As mentioned, Latin American countries experience particularly high levels of violence and there are civil conflicts in many of them, which lead to perceptible increases in the number of violent deaths, such as in Colombia.

 Despite the fact that the League of Nations was initially created, followed by the United Nations, to avoid wars among nations, those efforts have been partially unsuccessful; aggression not only among people but also among nations continues to be significant. In fact, the twentieth century saw some of the worst wars that humankind has known. Table 1.2 shows the 25 wars throughout history that have resulted in more than one million deaths. Of these, 12 (about 50%) happened in the twentieth century, showing that this century was particularly violent.

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**60,000,000–85,000,000 — World War II** **(1939–1945)**

40,000,000–70,000,000 — Mongol conquests (1206–1324)

36,000,000–40,000,000 — Three Kingdoms War (184–280)

25,000,000 — Qing Dynasty conquest of Ming Dynasty (1616–1662)

20,000,000 — Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864)

**20,000,000 — Second Sino-Japanese War** **(1937–1945)**

**17,000,000 — World War I/Great War** **(1914–1918)**

13,000,000 — An Lushan Rebellion (755–763)

**7,500,000 — Chinese Civil War** **(1927–1949)**

7,000,000–20,000,000 — Conquests of Tamerlane (1370–1405)

**5,000,000–9,000,000 — Russian Civil War and Foreign Intervention** **(1917–1922)**

8,000,000–10,000,000 — Dungan revolt (1862–1877)

3,500,000–6,000,000 — Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815)

3,000,000–11,500,000 — Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648)

**2,500,000–5,400,000 — Second Congo War/Great War of Africa** **(1998–2003)**

2,000,000–4,000,000 — French Wars of Religion (Huguenot Wars) (1562–1598)

2,000,000 — Shaka’s conquests (1816–1828)

**1,200,000** — **Korean War** **(1950–1953)**

**800,000–3,800,000** — **Vietnam War/Second Indochina War** **(1955–1975)**

**1,000,000–2,000,000 — Mexican Revolution** **(1910–1920)**

**1,000,000 — Iran–Iraq War/First Persian Gulf War** **(1980–1988)**

1,000,000 — Japanese invasions of Korea (1592–1598)

**1,000,000 — Biafra War** **(1967–1970)**

**957,865–1,622,865 — Soviet war in Afghanistan** **(1979–1989)**

868,000–1,400,000 — Seven Years’ War (1756–1763)

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**TABLE 1.2** The most deadly wars (which resulted in more than one million deaths) in the history of humankind. Twelve of them (in bold) were in the twentieth century (Roser, 2016)

 In the same way, if we consider homicides over recent decades, it is evident that (1) a significant decrease is not observed, but there is fluctuation over the years (Figure 1.2) and (2) there are important regional differences: the homicide rate in some regions of the world is very high and in other regions is very low. Honduras is the country with the highest homicide rate, at 90.4 per 100,000 inhabitants per year. Japan has the lowest homicide rate, at 0.3 per 100,000 inhabitants per year, that is to say, 300 times lower than the highest rate (UNODC, 2013).

<INSERT FIGURE 1.2 HERE>

**FIGURE 1.2** Homicides in different regions of the world between 1955 and 2011 (modified and adapted from UNODC, 2013)

 The possibility of being at any moment another victim of violence can make us live in constant fear; it can have a serious impact on our quality of life and it can become a factor that determines all of our activities: the places we go, the length of time that we stay there, the kind of security that we try to get, how we dress, at what time we leave the house, and where and when we work. Undoubtedly, violence, aggression, and homicide have imposed, throughout history, high costs on the quality of human life.

 In an effort to combat this impact, there have been increasing numbers of investigations looking at understanding the causes of violence (e.g. Geen & Donnerstein, 1998; Gilligan, 1996; Jewkes, 2002; Zimring & Hawkins, 1997) and at developing effective treatments (e.g. Brieden, Ujeyl, & Naber, 2002; Connor, 2002; Connor et al., 2006; Gerevich, Bácskai, & Czobor, 2007). Surely, in the future, the number of investigations and publications that try to better understand individual and social violence will continue to grow.

**<HA>Violence and Aggression**

<MTFO>The natural starting point in looking into this area is to understand what we mean by aggression and violence, and to determine if these are different or partially coincident phenomena (Siegel, 2005). Violence and aggression seem to be synonyms. However, it is typical in the study of these behaviors to consider that violence is different from aggression because the latter has an important biological function in the acquisition and defense of territory and food sources.

<BOX>

<BH>Some definitions

<BMTFO>*Aggression:* the act of attacking someone to kill, injure, or cause damage to him or her.

<BMTFO>*Violence:* behaviors or situations that []cause or threaten to do damage or lead to serious subjugation. It is a kind of aggressive behavior that is exerted with the purpose of causing damage.

<BMTFO>*Homicide:* a crime that consists of killing someone without the concurrence of circumstances of perfidy, cost, or aggravated brutality.

<BMTFO>*Assassination:* the action and effect of killing.

<BMTFO>*Assassinate:* to kill someone with premeditation, perfidy, etc.

<BMTFO>*Crime:* a serious felony; the voluntary action of killing or injuring someone seriously.

<BMTFO>*Criminal behavior:* antisocial behavior that includes a wide range of acts and activities that infringe rules and social expectations. Most of them involve actions against the environment, people, and properties.

<BMTFO>*Cruelty:* inhumanity, fieriness of mind, and impiety.

<BMTFO>*Hostility:* a permanent state of anger.

<BMTFO>*Psychopathy:* a personality disorder characterized by enduring antisocial behavior, diminished empathy and remorse, and disinhibited or bold behavior.

<BMTFO>*Sociopathy:* a personality disorder characterized by antisocial behavior involving a lack of a sense of moral responsibility or social conscience.

<BMTFO>*Maltreatment:* excessive cruelty.

<BMTFO>*Sadism:* refined cruelty, with pleasure gained by the person who executes it.

<BMTFO>*Ire:* fury or violence associated with the desire for revenge, rage, or rancor.

<BMTFO>*Anger:* a movement of spirit that causes ire against somebody.

</BOX>

 Some psychologists and psychiatrics distinguish between benign aggression and malignant aggression; the latter can be called violence. For example, Fromm (1973) defines *benign aggression* as a brief reaction to protect ourselves from danger. In contrast, *malignant aggression* is hurting others purely for sadistic pleasure. Fromm believes that people feel helplessly compelled to conform to the rules of society, to conform at work, and to be obedient to authority in all situations. This lack of freedom to make decisions and the inability to find meaning and love in one’s life causes resentment and sometimes malignant and sadistic aggression.

 Then, we might ask: In what way does a personality that shows malignant aggression (violence) emerge? Some people can be hostile and seem to find pleasure in causing damage, killing, or destroying. Unfortunately, multiple examples of this kind of situation can be found in daily life. For example, the man who attacks his wife or partner and demands constant attention for even the smallest necessity; the mother who imposes her authority over her children and takes advantage of their weakness; and the boss who, from their slightly increased level of power, enjoys abusing their authority and humiliating their subordinate employees.

**<HA>Ingredients of Violence**

<MTFO>Violence is an aggressive behavior that is exerted with the intention of causing physical or psychological damage. It is important to note that the definition of the word *intention* is crucial, as physical and psychological damage that occurs by accident or without intention is not and must not be considered as violence. In other words, aggression can exist without violence — for example, when we defend ourselves against a physical attack or when we hit another person accidentally — but violence cannot exist without aggression, and this type of aggression is always exerted with the purpose of causing damage.

 Psychological, anthropological, and biological dimensions of these two terms have been investigated (Neades & Jack, 2007). Through such investigations, it is often shown that human aggression is not innate, but learned and encouraged by culture. In particular, anthropologists say that many human societies are pacific, and such societies that are less industrialized (e.g. hunters and gatherers) show low levels of aggression and value other attributes such as compassion and solidarity (Walker, 2001).

 Ethologists, namely experts in animal behavior, however, do not share the same opinion. According to Konrad Lorenz (1966), who won the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine in 1973, all of us are carriers of an animal that wants to manifest itself, but it is almost always repressed because of an energetic system of social control. For Lorenz, this repression is precisely what sets us free and turns us into human beings. In this system, the brain is the organ that guides our behavior and, thus, is the fundamental object that must be considered to understand the origin of behavior.

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