Violence:
Do We Know It
When We See It?
To Daniele, Miriam and William:
You are the best!
— D.W.H.

To our family:
Elizabeth, Tatyana & Robin,
and Karl & Marisa & sweet baby James
— Thank you.
You are the sunshine in our lives!
— W.E.T.
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Foreword

The answer to the question posed by editors Dee Harper, Lydia Voigt, and William Thornton, in the title of this volume of readings about various forms of violence is “probably not.” Indeed, as one peruses the table of contents, we see a variety of contributions from a number of noted authors on a rich array of topics that might not be expected in discussions of violence. At the same time, other authors provide chapters on more traditional subjects that push beyond the traditional boundaries of how these topics are typically discussed. Each author makes a case, sometimes passionately so, that the aspect of violence they are discussing is worthy of (re)consideration if we are to fully understand and attempt to respond to violence as a form of human behavior.

In some ways, the metaphor of “not seeing the forest for the trees” comes to mind in contemplating the contribution made by Violence: Do We Know It When We See It?. However, the metaphor operates in reverse here—to fully understand the forest, we have to be able to appreciate the diverse forms of trees that comprise it. Those using this book in a classroom setting can provide an interesting introduction to it by asking the class on the first day to list five (or whatever number) acts of violence. Later, following a discussion of the spheres of violence provided in Peter Iadicola’s opening chapter, the students can be asked to categorize their listed acts into each of those categories, an exercise that, for the methodologically inclined, could serve as a mini-introduction to content analysis. Odds are great that the responses will be heavily tilted toward what Iadicola has termed the interpersonal sphere, the kind receiving the most societal attention and ones with which we are most comfortable in labeling as violence. In contrast, it is likely that the other two spheres he describes, structural and institutional, will be only minimally represented. At that point, the challenge posed by this volume has been issued—to broaden our prevailing conceptualizations of violence, as well as to better understand the correlations, causations, and preventions that are necessitated by this expanded view.

The unique intellectual journey offered by Violence: Do We Know It When We See It? is not necessarily a straight and linear undertaking. The topics cover a diverse terrain; with most challenging readers to reconsider prevailing notions
of interpersonal violence that so dominate societal views and the public’s re-
actions to violence. But, readers are also exposed to issues as seemingly dis-
connected as Guantanamo detentions, environmental crimes as acts of violence,
institutional and structural crimes associated with natural disasters, and sui-
cide. As well, potential solutions for violence reduction are much farther rang-
ing that would be found in a typical treatment of this topic, ranging from a
reconsideration of how violence is portrayed in the media to the role that
broad-based community efforts can play in reducing violence of all kinds.

Ultimately, those who complete the journey through the chapters of this
volume will emerge with a broader understanding of violence and a rethink-
ing of our responses to it. In doing so, the purpose of this volume will have been
achieved. Researchers, policy makers, and politicians take note: you’ve just
been assigned required reading.

Dwayne Smith
University South Florida
Preface

The title of this book, *Violence: Do We Know It When We See It?* suggests that what most of us typically think of with respect to the concept of violence is relatively limited and so this book, which brings together many contributions by well known writers on a broad range of violence–related topics, presents a much more encompassing perspective. This book of selected readings and its companion text, *Why Violence? Leading Questions Regarding the Conceptualization and Reality of Violence in Society*, begins with a consideration of the definition of violence noting that while most of us immediately think of violence in terms of the interpersonal forms of criminal violence (i.e., homicide, rape, robbery, and assaults), there are other spheres of violence that are critical to our understanding of the nature of violence in society.

Part I, which elaborates on the title, *Violence: Do We Know It When We See It?*, deals with the challenges associated with defining violence. Beginning with Peter Iadicola’s introductory chapter, “Violence, Spheres, and Principles,” which describes the different levels of the expression of violence (i.e., interpersonal, institutional and structural) and discusses ten principles for critically approaching the topic of violence, the other chapters in Part I bring to light some of the challenges related to identifying different expressions of violence, which may not be socially apparent. For example, Patricia Easteal considers the contradictory public and legal constructions of intimate partner violence; Dee Harper and Lydia Voigt discuss gendered violence in the context of intimate partner homicide followed by suicide; and William Lindsay presents the risk factors associated with violent offenders with intellectual disabilities.

Part II, *Violence: Where Do We Look For It?,* offers a selection of chapters that focus on natural events, subculture, and even social policies where violence may or may not be found. Kelly Frailing reviews the patterns of violence in the context of various natural disasters; Mathew Lee and Graham Ousey offer a contemporary overview of the Southern subculture of violence thesis; Jana Levitov and Dee Harper provide a subcultural view of the illicit drug trade and retaliatory murder; and Bethany Brown looks at perceptions of safety and control of violence and the role of Homeland Security.

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Part III, Violence: What Do We Know?, begins with Stephen Ostertag’s treatment of media constructions of urban fear and perceptions of violence; Rea Taylor offers an analysis of victim blame and the media; Hugh Whitt, Jay Corzine and Lin Huff Corzine focus on the social construction of suicide, suicide rates and the suicidal act; Ashish Patel and James Wright use rap and the glorification of guns and violence by inner city youths and the code of the streets to put in context current economic trends, crime policies and the administration of justice; and Marc Riedel considers the role and importance of homicide arrest clearances and the need for greater public attention to clearances.

Part IV, Violence: Whom Do We Believe?, starts off with John Mosier’s piece on war looking at its associated taxonomy and contrasting mythology versus reality; Johanna Kalh revisits Guantanamo with a special focus on violence in the context of “legal” transfers; Robert Bohm examines the issue of racial discrimination and the death penalty; Leo Barilile and Neal Slone discuss corporate violence in the context of environmental degradation and EPA’s ability to control environmental destruction; and Brenda Vollman provides an overview of a study on the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church.

Part V, Is Nonviolence Possible?, includes a chapter by Pamela Jenkins noting the barriers to community violence prevention programs and looking beyond the crime narrative to community partnerships for reducing violence; and Loraine Gelsthorpe draws our attention to a consideration of repairing the harm through restorative justice for victims of intimate partner violence; Patrick Walsh, William Thornton and Lydia Voigt raise the issue of Human Rights violations and corruption in the context of post-Hurricane Katrina (including human rights violations by persons in authority and implementation of policies that have operated against certain groups by violating their fundamental rights such as wage theft, detainment, and deportation) and they call for public recognition and affirmation of Human Rights; and finally Reba Parker gives an illustration of a community’s attempts to redefine peace.

The contents of the Violence: Do We Know It When We See It? includes original works from leading experts on violence from around the world addressing a wide spectrum of interpersonal, institutional and structural forms of violence. These selections explore the many ways in which violence is understood and manifest in contemporary society. The companion book, Why Violence? Leading Questions Regarding the Conceptualization and Reality of Violence in Society (Thornton, Harper, and Voigt, forthcoming 2012) provides a comprehensive review of the complexities associated with defining and identifying violent acts and the scientific study of violence including understanding the patterns and causes of violence as well as the controversies surrounding the prevention and control of violence.
We are very grateful to all of the contributors for making this book possible. Due to each author’s unique perspective on the topic of violence and the overall strong commitment to broadening understanding of the concept of violence, we have been able to bring a truly distinct collection of writings together. We would also like to thank everyone at Carolina Academic Press, with special thanks to Beth, Karen, and Kelly for their hard work and support of this project.