A Heuristic Scheme for Explaining
the Long-Term Development of Violent Crime

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Abstract

Gurr and others have demonstrated that the long-term development of homicide rates in Europe follows a U-shaped curve: There is a fairly steady decline since the 17th century (or even earlier, in some regions) till the middle of the 20th century, and a fairly steady increase since the 1960s. It is tentatively assumed that the increase (or level shift) in the second half of the 20th century does not indicate a temporary deviation from the long-term trend, but a trend reversal or, alternatively, a permanent level shift. A theory propounded to explain aggregated homicide rates must account for the secular decline and for the upward turn as well. It is argued in this paper that Elias's theory of the processes of civilization and Durkheim's theory on social differentiation and moral development offer a good starting point for constructing such a theoretical account. Key concepts are the state monopoly on violence, internalized structures of self-control (Elias), the erosion of collectivism, the institutionalization of justice and equity, departures from the ideal of cooperative individualism via anomie, fatalism, and excessive individualism (Durkheim). The major hypothesis in this scheme is (1) that the secular decline of violent crime is primarily brought about (a) by the development of a centralized (and gradually democratized) state power and (b) by the ensuing erosion of collectivism (as a broad cultural orientation); (2) that the increase since the 1960s is mainly due (a) to a gradual erosion of the causal nexus between the efficiency and the legitimacy of the state monopoly on violence, (b) to structural changes in the relationship between the "state", "society" (social community) and the "economy", thereby creating a contradictory mélange of excessive individualism, regressive collectivism, and anomie. - Some ideas on how this scheme might be elaborated and related to empirical observations will be offered.
Introduction

What I want to present to you is a heuristic scheme that should be of some help in constructing a theoretical interpretation of the long-term development of violent crime (not violence in general). I will start with some data depicting this secular or rather trans-secular trend (which is our *explanandum*). First, let me show several graphs worked out by Manuel Eisner.

Figure 1

They give us, on a logarithmic scale, the homicide rates (murder and manslaughter) since the early modern times in several European countries. (The countries are clockwise from the upper to the lower left: England, Scandinavian countries, Germany and Switzerland, The Netherlands and Belgium). For the pre-statistical period the data have been taken from a large number of historical studies based on local or regional court records. The picture that we get here basically confirms the famous "U-shaped-curve" that was noted some 20 years ago by Ted Gurr on a much smaller data base. Eisner (2001) has extended Gurr's work considerably by compiling a much larger number of case studies, some 300 I think, covering different regions in different countries in a wide span of time. Thus, we now have a much better data base rendering the idiosyncracies - the measurement errors - of each study less influential in shaping the overall trend pattern. Gurr and several other historians of crime have interpreted the increase of homicide since, roughly, the 1960s as just one of several deviations around the discontinuously declining trend, deviations caused by local circumstances and short-lived forces. Gurr might have accepted a somewhat different perspective had he already known the figures extending the

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homicide rate into the 1990s. We can see this from the next figure that shows homicide rates aggregated over seven European countries (England/Wales, Belgium, Sweden, France, Norway, Italy, Switzerland)

Figure 2
Aggregated Homicide Rates, 7 European Countries: Bel, Eng, Fr, Ger, Italy, Swe, Switz

We know from other studies (e.g., R. Gartner) that the basic pattern of increasing rates since the 1950s/1960s prevails in nearly all the other highly developed countries combining market economies and political democracy. The major exception is Japan, where we have a fairly stable homicide rate from the 1950s to the end of the 1980s (Knöbl 1999). Also the US do not fit into the U-shaped curve, their rates follow a quasi-cyclical pattern since the early 19th century (Gurr 1989: 41). But look at the data from another non-European country, New-Zealand, that quite beautifully exhibit the U-shaped pattern.
If the pattern is so consistent across the nations that have followed the Western type path of development [i.e., combining the evolution of market economies with the development of strong states and eventually democratic political systems], then we apparently have to relate these crime trends to fundamental structural changes that have shaped these societies - again in a fairly common way. This has lead some sociologists into using such sweeping concepts like rationalization, individualization or social desintegration in their efforts to explain the increase in violent crime during the last 40, 50 years. But rationalization and individualization have been rising for several centuries during which interpersonal violence decreased - as we have just seen. So, these concepts won't do, at any case, they must be greatly refined. What are the alternatives, then?

**Norbert Elias**

Historians of crime and criminal justice have, above all, turned to Norbert Elias and his account of the "civilizing process" (Elias 1980). According to Elias, the major pacifying forces that have been unfolding in the long extended civilizing process (or processes) are the following (this is only a brief reminder)

1. The creation of the state monopoly of violence and its subsequent legitimation in the processes of democratization, its constriction by the rule of law. Anticipating my later references to Durkheim, I should like to add a third component or stage in the process of state and nation-building: increasing social inclusion, the balancing of freedom and equality within the institutional framework of the welfare state (in short, "social democracy").

2. The second line of development emphasized by Elias has been the extension of the market
This statement about the cumulative unfolding of a pattern is meant to be descriptive. I do not wish to subscribe to the evolutionary logic adopted by Elias. Although certain configurations may display the potential of systemic unfolding, the unfolding is unlikely to proceed in a linear way. At its beginning, it is also unclear whether or not it leads to a state of equilibrium, dissolution, smooth transformation or violent transition to yet another configuration.

(3) Third comes the promulgation of a culture of non-violence, increasing condemnation of and even revulsion at the infliction of serious bodily harm including corporal punishment.

(4) And finally, the transformation of personality structures in the direction of a greater capacity for affect-control. Apart from the state and the market other agencies of formal social control and generalized disciplin have contributed to this like the school and the factories, and - not least - the protestant church.

All of these processes Elias has shown to be closely interrelated in a way that I will not draw out here. They are more or less cumulative and sufficiently continuous as to fit into a trend pattern that can be imagined to be inversely related to the secular decline of homicide rates. I do see some problems in Elias' heavily Freudian conception of affect-control.

Additional considerations:
If used as an explanatory account for violent crime, the weakest element in this scheme, it seems to me, is the notion of affect control. Even if one assumes that the capacity of individual persons to control their aggressive impulses has increased and trickled down, so to speak, from higher to lower social strata (an assumption not shared by a number of cultural historians), this does not necessarily imply less killings. If indeed the proportion of "killings in affect" should indeed have gone down, a higher incidence of deliberate, instrumental killings would be compatible with it. There is also a severe conceptual problem involved in Elias' notion of affect control. When he explains why the disciplinary forces located in the developing state authorities and market institutions should have stimulated the formation or strengthening of internalized control patterns, Elias, at least in his original study, points to force ("Zwang") and fear ("Angst") as the prime mediators. So he expressly claims that the adolescent youth will never advance to a sufficient regulation of his behavior without experiencing "fear, arising from other human beings" (Elias 1980, Vol. I, p. 447). - Now, force and fear may produce strong super-egos, but weak egos; they promote rigidly controlled behavior, but may also become the seedbed of suppressed neurotic energies waiting for an occasion to explode; they are likely to create authoritarian characters that may refrain from individual acts of crime but quickly unleash their suppressed emotions and turn to violence, if the state or another figure of authority legitimates or demands such action. The rise of totalitarian regimes in the 20th century, particularly nazism

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2 This statement about the cumulative unfolding of a pattern is meant to be descriptive, I do not wish to subscribe to the evolutionary logic adopted by Elias. Although certain configurations may display the potential of systemic unfolding, the unfolding is unlikely to proceed in in a linear way. At its beginning, it is also unclear whether or not it leads to a state of equilibrium, dissolution, smooth transformation or violent transition to yet another configuration.
Piaget's critique (published in 1932) of Durkheim's ideas on moral education (stressing the role of hierarchy and disciplin) would be even more pertinent with respect to Elias's conception. In Germany, and, on a different scale, the destructive consequences of sexual repression point to the limits of an internalized control pattern that has been implanted by force and fear. Elias' theory of affect control therefore needs to be contrasted with another model of acquiring "moral competence" and flexible behavioral control, a model originating in the works of Piaget and G. H. Mead: The learning of moral standards and the creation of a reflective self through participation in cooperative transactions between "equals"; the internalization of the control pattern of "dialogue" which is supported, in the political sphere, by public discourse and democratic institutions. Later in his work Elias has introduced the concept of "deformalization" intended to better account for the growing need of having more flexible structures of self-control. This new analytical element, however, has simply been added to rather than integrated with the old concept.

I think it needs to be expanded or transformed into a more sociological and less Freudian concept. Drawing upon a similar idea put forward by Manuel Eisner I propose a three-dimensional concept of self-control:

The first dimension would, indeed, take up the idea of affect-control: the capacity to control ones impulses and feelings without suppressing them, allowing the person to express her feelings while taking into account the normative requirements encountered in a given situation. This might be called expressive rationality. The second component would be of a strategic nature: the capacity to use ones personal abilities and the opportunities offered by the situation to obtain ones goals, including the capacity to evaluate immediately available gratifications in their consequences for long-term objectives: this we might call instrumental or strategic rationality. The third component refers to moral consciousness, the capacity and the willingness to balance one's personal interest against those of others while taking into account given social norms as well as universal principles. This involves the capacity for "role taking" (as sociologists like to call it), or "empathy" (as psychologists like to put it). We might refer to this as moral competence that comprises a motivational and a cognitive component (cf. Piaget, Kohlberg).

Such a concept of self-control - though not specified in exactly the same way - is the base on which Gottfredson and Hirschi have built up their "General Theory of Crime". And there is good empirical evidence demonstrating that lack of self-control is a major factor in explaining all sorts of deviant behavior (see, for example, the meta-analysis of Pratt & Cullen, Criminology 2000).

As already indicated, I am not sure how much an increase in affect- or self-control has indeed contributed to the decline of interpersonal violence in the past centuries. But I assume that it is

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an important explanatory concept when it comes to explaining the trend reversal that started some 40 or 50 years ago and its possible continuation into the future. At this point I present a two-fold hypothesis, the first part is adopted from Gottfredson/Hirschi, the second from Eisner.

(1a) The lower the capacity of self control the higher the inclination to engage in deviant behavior including violent crime. (Therefore: The larger the proportion of persons with deficient self-control the higher the rates of crime)

(1b) In postindustrial societies there is a widening gap between the quality of self-control demanded from the individual person and the average level of self-control actually reached by the individual persons.

Daniel Bell's observations on the cultural contradictions within capitalism could also be quoted in support of the second hypothesis.

Later on I will return to the concept of self-control, but right now I shall leave it with that and return to the role of the state as Elias saw it. Let us assume, for the moment, that the evolution of the centralized state, specifically its monopoly of violence, has indeed been a major driving force behind the transsecular decline of illegal interpersonal violence. But then, what are we to make of this hypothesis when we turn to the increase of violent crime since the 1950s or 1960s?

To maintain consistency in our reasoning two routes are open to us: the first would be to argue that the legitimized and effective state monopoly of violence has been eroding for quite a while. If the development of the state's monopoly of violence and its subsequent "domestication" within liberal democratic systems is chiefly responsible for decreasing interpersonal violence, one should expect an increase of such violence, if the legitimate monopoly of violence is weakening or crumbling without being supplanted by functionally equivalent forces. The other alternative would be to demonstrate that the monopoly of violence has not been weakened significantly, but that other factors have come forward to push up crime rates. One might even add a third possibility: no matter what happened to the monopoly of violence, other factors are more important.

Several researchers have argued in favor of the erosion hypotheses. They have presented a number of indicators that lend credence to the hypothesis that the institutional nexus in which the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the state monopoly of violence were closely intertwined has started to erode and will continue to do so. The German sociologist Trutz von Trotha, e. g., speaks of an "oligarchic-preventive order of security" (OPOS) which has been emerging in Western democracies during the last decades (v. Trotha 1995).

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It is characterized, among others, by the remarkable growth of private security industries and
services; moves towards privatization of prisons and the promulgation of communitarian control-order. He notes that the newly emerging security system is without a "center", that the responsibility of the political and administrative power centers have been, partially, replaced by the purchasing power of clients in security markets which transform the structures of economic inequality into the social inequality of differentially available security. This commodification of security normalizes the use of violence which progressively penetrates into the web of social relationships (von Trotha 1995: 157-159).

I don't have the time to take a closer look at a body of literature and research, but it seems to me that two sets of hypotheses emerge from these sources.

(2) **The institutional nexus in which legitimacy had become the base for the effectiveness of the state's monopoly of violence is eroding.**
Trust in government and other social institutions has been declining for several decades. The state (its decision making bodies) increasingly finds itself in a situation where it has to choose between legitimate and effective means in exercising its control capacities. Technological innovations (rendering security systems and individual objects more vulnerable to attack) and the processes of "globalization" (including the internationalization of organized crime) contribute to this dilemmatic structure.

(3) **The opportunity structure for illegal uses of violence has been greatly enhanced in these processes.**
"No-go-areas" outside the reach of (regular) police forces have been expanding. A "culture of violent self-help" (v. Trotha) is re-emerging; the taboo on violence is losing ground among an increasing number of individual persons and social groups (cf. Eckert: 1989). The expansion and visibility of private security services contributes to these processes not the least by stimulating social segregation (Beste 2001).

Additional considerations:
One should also note that talks about a general "legitimation crisis" (Habermas 1973) and the dissolution of the functional prerogatives of the state (Luhmann 1981) have been with us for quite a while not just since the 1990s. In a recent book, Gary LaFree (1998) has linked the rising crime rates in the United States since the 1960s to a wide variety of indicators of diminished legitimacy of social, political, and economic institutions. The protest movements that called into question the legitimacy of "the system" in the 1960s were primarily politically and morally motivated (e. g., civil rights issues and the war in Vietnam in the U.S.A, the insistence of the young generation to discuss responsibilities for the nazi-terror in Germany). In Germany the first post-war economic recession occurred in 1965, and the rate of unemployment has been rising since then (with short periods of recovery). A second, more powerful and still unfolding discussion about delegitimation and diminishing state powers has been set in motion by various
Apart from "honor" (that has to be preserved or regained at almost any cost), "hierarchy" is another important structural component that is conducive to using interpersonal violence (cf. Roth, CHS 5 (2001), no. 2, p. 47). In these processes a positive feedback system seems to have established itself in which diminishing control capacities of the nation-state undermine its legitimacy and subsequently further diminish its regulatory powers (cf. Castells 1997). In particular, globalizing free market economies have undermined the state's monopoly of taxation, upon which - to recall Elias - the monopoly of violence and other regulatory capacities had been founded. On a more concrete level of analysis one would have to talk about the internationalization of organized crime, and about technological developments in weaponry and worldwide electronic communication that have put certain types of criminals into a rather advantageous position over against the state. As a consequence, the state increasingly finds himself in a dilemma whereby it either has to let go or apply "big brother" strategies outside the legitimation boundaries.

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Emile Durkheim

I should now like to proceed to other dimensions of structural change, and for this part of my heuristic scheme, the larger one, I turn to another sociological classic, Emile Durkheim. Some 40 years before Elias wrote his now celebrated book, Durkheim suggested "that with the progress of civilization homicide decreases" (Durkheim 1992: 113). The reason for this, he saw in the de-mystification of the collectivity and its devaluation relative to the "worshipping" of the individual. "Collectivism" he construed as an integrative pattern in which the group - the family, the clan, the caste, a religious community, the nation - was valued more, much more, than the individual and his well-being. The collectivity takes on the quality of a sacred being demanding harsh reactions against those who step out of line, thereby creating a culture of violence. High levels of passion and low respect for the individual person render the individual more likely to become the object of physical attacks by others. This pattern had to break down in the course of increased social differentiation. The individual now is no longer tied into a closely knit mesh of norms, symbols and rituals that define his own identity in terms of his belongig to the collectivity. The fusion of personal and collective identities dissolves. Violations of social norms that occur somewhere in the group are no longer of immediate personal concern. The individual's social standing and reputation are no longer defined by a code of honor that, for example, makes blood revenge obligatory. The expression of identities becomes less body-centered; violence that injures, mutilates or kills another person becomes repugnant, abominable. Even though there is a "collective conscience" also in individuated societies, the highest ranking value in it is the individual "in general" as Durkheim emphasizes; not just the individual "self", but also the individual "other". And such a system implies a lower level of passion and a stronger control of emotions. The reason why passions are lower or more

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constrained in individualist cultures seems to be that the person who violates the norms (and is
to be punished for that) is, so to speak, an incarnation of the very object which is now being
worshipped, i. e., the individual in general (cf. Durkheim 1978). This seems to be reminiscent
of Elias, but note the shift in perspective: pacification is not effectuated by disciplinary forces
holding down individual impulses but by freeing the individual from closely knit bondages that
kept him tied into the collectivity. Durkheim believes, however, that it is not so much the rise of
individualism that directly causes the reduction of homicide committals but rather the erosion
of collectivism (Durkheim 1992: 115). So, we can add a fourth very general hypothesis to our
list

(4) The long decline in interpersonal violence is due to structural and cultural changes (from
segmental to functional differentiation) that move modernizing societies away from
"collectivistic" to predominantly "individualistic" orientations (as a cultural pattern).

There is some empirical evidence from cross-national studies indicating that there is a positive
correlation between the degree of collectivism and the level of interpersonal violence in a
society. One problem with testing this proposition is that the erosion of collectivism and the
formation of the state co-evolve, more or less, throughout history so that the pacifying effect of
one of these processes cannot be disentangled from the effect of the other. I think I have found
a way to get around this problem by using the birthrate as an empirical indicator of the degree
of collectivism vs. individualism. In a study using data on several hundred urban and rural
counties in Prussia at the end of the 19th century I have shown that birth rate was by far the
most powerful predictor of violent crime - assault and battery - controlling for such factors as
economic development, urbanization, dominant religious confession and some others. Another
noteworthy result: Though violent crime (measured by "severe bodily harm") was rising
between 1880 and 1900, the rates in highly urbanized areas were, on the average by a margin of
c. 20 %, continuously below the rates in rural counties. [An article on this has just appeared in
issue no. 4/2002 of Geschichte und Gesellschaft].
But if we are prepared to accept Durkheim's hypothesis on the effects of collectivism, an even more formidable problem seems to arise. If the erosion of collectivism is said to explain the decline of violence, how do we account for the rise of illegal violence in the second half of the 20th century - a period that has brought us even more individualism? Doesn't this observation falsify Hypothesis No. 4? I will try to answer this objection by specifying the concept of individualism along the lines Durkheim has drawn out. To this purpose I present another figure which summarizes Durkheim's typology of "normal" and "pathological" states of societal conditions:

Durkheim works with two analytical dimensions (cf. Hynes 1975, Besnard 1993). The horizontal axis represents the dimension of cultural and structural evolution from collectivism to individualism, from mechanic to organic solidarity or from segmental to functional differentiation, as we would put it today. [Culture, economy, demography] The somewhat slanting vertical axis represents "regulation", the domain of politics if you wish. Now, if regulation optimally fits in with the possibilities and restrictions given by the structural elements inherent to "modern" societies, then Durkheim's ideal type of "cooperative individualism" may be realized. Particularly in his book on "Suicide", Durkheim was concerned about two major "pathologies" that he thought would threaten the further course of societal development: one would be "anomie" (a lack or breakdown of regulation) the other "excessive" or "egoistic" individualism. The analytical scheme provides for a third pathology: overregulation, which in Durkheim's terminology figures as "fatalism" - perhaps a misleading term, since it connotes subjective reactions rather than the normative arrangements and material conditions that might cause this reaction, conditions that impose severe restrictions on the autonomy of the individual, restrictions that run counter to the opportunities provided by the degree of social differentiation.
and economic productivity reached within the given society. Durkheim downplayed the role of this particular pathology, but I think that there are good reasons to include it in the heuristic scheme. So let me briefly characterize each of the four typus, first the allegedly normal type called

*Moral or cooperative individualism*

I have already characterized this type in terms of its cultural orientation. It refers to a broad value consensus in which the individual is more valued than the group. But it is not the particularized - egoistic - individual, it rather is a universalistic conception, the individual in general. As a philosophical perspective Durkeims moral individualism comes close to contemporary communitarianism (but with a completely different conception of the state). As a social praxis, moral individualism is based on mutual sympathy and respect for others - any other person; it targets social inclusion and it postulates the right of self-actualization for all. On the social-structural and political plane this type seeks to secure justice, the balance of freedom and equality, bei combining social welfare provisions and parliamentary democracy. Durkheim insists on the functional primacy of the state over against the economy which Durkheim saw as immanently amoral. On the other hand, he clearly saw the necessity to counterbalance the power of the state by strong secondary groups.

*Egoistic individualism*

On the cultural plane, this is the reversion of the defining characteristics of moral individualism: Particularism instead of universalism; hedonistic self-orientation instead of social solidarity; ruthless pursuance of one's own interests using others as means in strategic interactions. In the tradition of the Frankfurt School of social thought, it is the triumph of "instrumentalism". With regard to social structure and politics it implies the functional primacy of the economy, the diminution if not the dismantling of welfare state provisions, the re-commodification of social relationships, the strengthening of forces that advance social marginalization and exclusion.

*Anomie or lack of regulation*

Durkheim has propounded different versions of the concept of "anomie", and, of course this is not the place to get into a detailed discussion of the various shades of meaning embraced or conveyed by this concept. In my understanding there are three major subtypes of anomie. One is the lack of coordination between societal subsystems; another are the discrepancies between the role requirements confronting actors and their abilities and their need for self-realization. The third is the most prominent one: anomie as a lack of normative orientation and bounding. These tendencies are most prominent in times of rapid social and economic change. But in his
book on "Suicide" Durkheim also envisioned the possibility of "chronic" anomie induced by the internal dynamics of an economy that defies moral and political constrictions.

With respect to our theme, the explanation of violent crime, I would suggest that on the social-structural level "anomie" connotes two major dimensions: acceleration and progressive *Entgrenzung*. *Entgrenzung* means a generalized trend for lifting boundaries wherever they may be encountered, the transgression of demarcation lines and the conflation or blurring of meanings, the philosophy of "everything goes". In the project that I am working on I focus on three instances or sub-dimension of Entgrenzung - but let me emphasize that all this is very tentative and I am looking forward to receiving your suggestions on how to improve on it.

The first subdimension is the blending or fusion of the private and the public sphere - just think of the talkshows on Television, the personality shows, the gossip in the newspapers and magazines, but also the increasing availability of and access to personal data by commerce and state agencies. The distinctness of the private and the public sphere, however, is constitutive for our personal integrity and dignity, and it is also a prerequisite for the integration of society. Functionally differentiated societies secure their integration chiefly by role structures not by persons. Routinized exhibitionism reduces a person's sensitivity and makes people less attentive to other peoples vulnerability. With respect to crime it even has a more direct effect by reducing the "Präventivwirkung des Nicht-Wissens" (Popitz), the prevention of crime by being unaware of the violation of norms committed by others.

A second subdimension of "Entgrenzung" is given by the blurring or blotting out of distinctions constituting the symbolic order of meaning, e. g., the distinction between the "profane" and the "sacred", of truth and falsity, reality and virtuality, the lifeworlds of children and the lifeworld of adults ("infantilization of society"). Driving forces behind these processes are the marketing and advertising business, television programs and other electronic media like computer games presenting orgies of violence. A second route is the progress made in biology, medicine and biotechnology that has opened up the perspective of unlimited possibilities of shaping - and perhaps copying - the human body and manipulating the chemistry of the human brain. This threatens to undermine the foundations on which any system of morality has to rest: the distinction between what is given by nature or divine providence and what is left to the responsibility of human beings making their own decisions and being accountable for them.

I don't want to say much about the last aspect of anomie, "Beschleunigung", acceleration,

i.e., the increasing shortage or scarcity of available time relative to the rising number of options
for using or spending it. Acceleration not only means that we are forced more and more to economize and fragmentize the use of time; it also means that our social environment tends to change more quickly, rendering obsolete previously established norms and social practices and making it hard to establish new ones, thereby creating a normative void or vacuum. The gap between generations widens and the future increasingly appears to be uncertain and unpredictable. This, in turn, strengthens the inclination to discount the future and to seek short-lived gains and pleasures in the present - which (remember Elias) lowers self-control.

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Additional considerations:
Any humanist moral systems not only decrees limits and boundaries, but it rests upon commonly perceived boundaries thought to be given by nature or divine providence. Without this grounding, the field of moral responsibility cannot be defined. As Charles Taylor put it: making strong valuations presupposes that something is beyond our reach, beyond our capacities. We can act responsibly only if there is a limit to our responsibility. A telling example of this kind of problematics is the present discussion about PID and consumptive research on human embryos. Scientific discoveries and technological innovations have made arbitrary any definition on which point exactly human life begins [and they have opened up the possibility that a person may manipulate the genetic outfit of a human being to be born]. Not only that we differ on the criteria to be applied, but we suffer from a lack of conviction that some criteria is well founded and could, in principle, be agreed upon by autonomous persons engaged in a moral discours. That is the moral discourse will be replaced by a political discourse that seeks a compromise between different interest. Economic gains or losses are generally easier to grasp than the correct application of moral principles. So, once again, we witness the triumph of instrumentalism and the weakening of the idea of the sacredness of human life. [The threshold of inhibition to attack another person or even to take his life in order to satisfy one's own needs is lowered in a culture which has been compromising the idea of the sacredness of human life].

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That much about anomie and some of its sub-dimensions. Let me now briefly turn to the third "pathology" Durkheim conceived of, i. e.

**Overregulation**

Durkheim's concept of "fatalism" refered to suppressive conditions and norms that make life unbearable to a person thereby pushing him towards committing suicide. In a way, I would like to turn upside down Durkheim's concept. Rather than concentrating on a purely subjective response to a dreadful situation brought about by suppressive overregulation, we can think of "overregulation" as a **desired** state of affairs seen as a remedy to another dreadful condition caused by the **lack** of regulation and/or excessive, disintegrative individualism. This orientation though arising within modern societies leans backward toward traditional social forms incorporating collectivistic orientations. To set it apart from "traditional" collectivism we might
speak of "regressive" collectivism. This orientation may manifest itself in all forms of xenophobia, intolerance towards those who think differently, contempt for democratic principles and procedures, defining certain people or groups as being inferior by nature, emphasizing hierarchy and leadership over against participation.

Now we have reached the point where we should sum up Durkheim's reflections upon social pathologies. We can do so by adding another very general hypothesis to our list:

(5a) The pacifying effect of the erosion of traditional collectivism can only be maintained to the extent that cooperative individualism dominates over against the forces of excessive individualism, anomie and regressive collectivism.

And to this I would add the empirical assumption, still quite speculativ

(5b) Postindustrial societies evolve in the direction of strengthening the elements of excessive individualism and anomie.

These propositions lead to the conclusion that rising levels of violent crime (or a permanent level shift of unknown magnitude) will accompany the evolving postindustrial societies.

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Additional considerations:
This reminds us of Durkheim's idea that there is a "normal" rate of crime for every type of society. Even though we lack a precise definition of "normality", the concept is heuristically useful. Durkheim calls our attention to two diverging routes of departure from normality: (1) Due to insufficient regulation, the crime rate may rise above the normal level set by the structural features of a given society; (2) on the other hand, a totalitarian regime may be able to hold down the crime rate below the normal level by using repressive forces that, in the long run, undercut its capacity for innovations needed to adapt to a changing environment. The communist regime in Eastern Germany exemplifies the second case. Thus, our assumption that the efficiency of the monopoly of violence depends on its democratic legitimation needs qualification. It applies when there is a strong and fairly homogeneous middle class wielding economic power; as long as such a class has not developed, a totalitarian regime suppressing the freedom of expression and likewise the committal of (many) criminal acts may last - for quite a while. Chinas authoritarian regime, to point to another example, was forced, for economic reasons, to deregulate the economy. It now experiences rising crime rates that will not level off before it (eventually) democratizes its political structure.

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Of course, we need more specific, testable hypotheses that relate these large-scale processes to individual behavior that in the aggregate make up the rate of violent crime. In the project I am working on I concentrate on the concept of self-control as an intervening variable - or set of variables - that relate the effects of the exogenous variables onto the dependent variable, i.e. the frequency of acts of violent crime. So, for example, I assume that the "Entgrenzungsprozesse" mentioned before generally make it more difficult to construct and maintain personal identities that are a prerequisite to develop strong self-control.

At present, however, I am more engaged in a search for empirical indicators that would allow me to "operationalize" and "measure" the broadly defined theoretical concepts. The major problem here is to find or construct indicators that, on a broad scale, represent the dimensions outlined above for the whole period - starting from the 1950s or 1960s and extending into the 1990s. I can give you a preliminary collection of such indicators that I am now considering in the following table

Table of Indicators of Structural Change

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<td>Expansion of private security services (sale volumes, personnel)</td>
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<td>Clearance rate (?!); Fear of crime; attacks against policemen</td>
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<td>Participation in elections; Protest behavior</td>
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<td>Garhammer (1999); Berger (1996)</td>
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