Explaining the Long-Term Trend in Violent Crime:

A Heuristic Scheme and Some Methodological Problems

1. Introduction: defining what is to be explained

In previous articles (Thome 1995; 2001) I have outlined a heuristic scheme for explaining the long-term trend in lethal violence in Europe since, roughly, the beginning of the 16th century. The first part of the present paper offers a more concise and systematized version of this theoretical account; in its second (shorter) part I discuss some of the methodological problems that arise when this scheme is applied in empirical research.

My point of departure is a set of empirical observations that document the long-run decline of interpersonal lethal violence in Europe since about 1500 and the upward trend in violent crime that occurred not only in Europe but in most all of the economically advanced nations that combine democratic political structures with free-market economies (cf. Gartner 1990). The "S-" or "U-shaped-curve" (depending on how far back one goes in history) of this development was depicted by Ted R. Gurr some 25 years ago when he inspected British court records on homicide indictments and other related sources (Gurr 1981; Gurr et al. 1977). More recently, in a series of papers Manuel Eisner (2003; 2004) has extended Gurr's work considerably by compiling homicide data from nearly 400 historical case studies that cover different European regions and nations in the pre-modern era and adding data from national vital or police recorded homicide statistics for the modern era. 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. The pattern that emerges from these data basically confirms the picture drawn by Gurr. Eisner calculates a factor of almost 30 by which homicide rates decreased between the end of the medieval period and the middle of the twentieth century when the mean rate stood at about 0.4-0.6 deaths per year per 100,000 inhabitants (Eisner 2003: 106). There are some discontinuities and short-term departures from the (trans-)secular trend line, but the decline as such is remarkably persistent through time. In addition, since the late nineteenth century the national homicide rates in Western Europe nearly converged till the 1950s and cross-national differences have remained rather small since then. Even in non-European countries like New Zealand the homicide rates between 1880 and 1990 clearly display the U-shaped trend pattern.1 Of course, we do not know, if the upward trend or level shift since around 1960 (roughly doubling the rates till 1990) will persist or whether it will yet be another short-lived departure from the long-term trend. In many countries there is a levelling off in homicide rates during the 1990s, but other types of registered violence, like serious assault and robbery, have generally continued to rise strongly.2 For the sake of argument, I will assume that we are not facing a short- or medium-term discontinuity but rather a reversal of the long-term trend in criminal violence since the middle of the last century. The task for sociology then is to construct a coherent theory that accounts for both: the long decline and its reversal, i.e., the U-shaped-pattern. If such a theory

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1 The data demonstrating this trend were made available to me by Graeme Dunstall (University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand) through personal communication. The most substantial historical study of homicide in New Zealand probably is David V. Madle, Patterns of death by accident, suicide and homicide in New Zealand 1860-1960, interpretations and comparisons. Ph.D thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1996.

2 With respect to death rates (completed homicide) one has to take into account the improvements made over the years in the medical services. Harris et al. 2002 , e. g., have calculated that at the end of the nineties the U.S. homicide rates would have been three times higher than actually registered had there been no progress in medical services and equipment since the sixties.
is available or can be constructed we may switch perspectives and predict that the increase in violent crime will persist beyond the present. Studying the discontinuities, the local and temporary departures from the trend, or the "contextual trajectories" (Eisner) may all be very instructive indeed. But if we want to find the picture behind the puzzle we must have an idea how it might look like. And in order to apprehend the meaning of the picture one first needs to know something about the principles and techniques that were used in constructing it.

If the pattern is so consistent across the nations that have followed the Western type path of development 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 disintegration in their efforts to explain the increase in violent crime during the last forty or fifty years. But rationalization and individualization have been rising for several centuries during which interpersonal violence decreased - as we have just seen. So, these concepts are not sufficient, at any case they must be greatly refined. What follows is an attempt at doing just this.

Being interested in theoretical generalizations I have set up my explanatory scheme in terms of an *explanandum* and certain propositions and descriptive statements that are supposed to provide the ground for constructing the *explanans*. (The explanans itself is, as yet, far from being complete.) The phenomenon to be explained is the long-term trend in interpersonal violence, its U-shaped pattern documented in the work of Gurr, Eisner and others. The core ideas for developing an explanation I have found in the work of Norbert Elias and Emile Durkheim. There is no need to justify the choice of Elias in front of an audience of historians. Most of the historians of crime and violence are very fond of him and his work, whereas Durkheim has been thoroughly neglected, misrepresented or even slighted in the past. I think there is every reason to change this. Without disputing or disregarding Elias' work, Durkheim offers important insights to enrich our understanding of the material that we want to investigate. But let us first turn to Norbert Elias.

2. Concepts and propositions

2.1 Elias' theory of civilization

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

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3 See, e.g., my own or Eric Johnson's study about the increasing violence in Imperial Germany in the late 19th century (Johnson 1995; Thome 2002).

4 The major exceptions among the Western countries with respect to the U-shaped-curve are Finland, and the USA. On Finland (and its unique national history) see Ylikangas (1998). With respect to the USA one first has to note that this nation came into existence as a modern state, a full-fledged democracy. Second, there never has been a state monopoly of violence in the sense that this monopoly became established within European states. Third, the US have experienced the biggest waves of immigration and most intensive ethnic conflicts among the Western states, and ethnic conflicts tend to come in cycles. The cyclical pattern that is to be observed in American homicide rates (cf. Gurr 1989) may further be supported by the comparatively low level of social security benefits granted by the state and the high level of economic inequality and social marginalization; both leave the tide of economic ups and downs unbuffered in their consequences on the well being of ordinary people.
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 economy implying the elongation of action chains and increasing functional interdependencies between individual and collective actors. More people are impelled to plan and strive for distant goals and places. (3) Third comes the promulgation of a culture of non-violence, an 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 and informal social control and generalized discipline have contributed to this - like the school and the factories, and, not the least, the rising protestant church. Other scholars (like Weber, Östreich, and Foucault) that have analysed various disciplinary forces shaping modern cultures readily come to mind, but I will not consider specific contributions made along these lines.

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 (cf. Thome 1995), but will not take up this point in the present discussion. Later on (in section 2.3), a revised concept of self-control will be proposed.

There are several routes through which the evolving structures of a centralized and democratic state have promoted the gradual reduction of criminal violence. The decisive point has been and still seems to be that the monopoly of violence becomes embedded within an institutional framework that fuses effectiveness and legitimacy, making one dependent upon the other. Granted that this has happened in Europe (step by step, unevenly and with retrograde movements), 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 three routes are open: the first one 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, and in fact has been, a major factor in bringing about decreasing rates of 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. Finally, a third alternative - favoured here - would be to consider both, the erosion of the monopoly of violence and additional factors as the driving forces behind the trend reversal.

Several scholars have argued in favour of the erosion hypothesis. They have presented a number of indicators that support the assumption 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.

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5 I am not explicitely dealing with the state's potential for starting a war against other nations or misusing its power in domestic affairs. This would make for another explanandum than the one chosen here.
g., speaks of an "oligarchic-preventive order of security" (OPOS) which, in his view, has been emerging in Western democracies during the last decades (v. Trotha 1995). It is characterized, among other things, by the remarkable growth of private security industries and services, moves towards privatization of prisons and the promulgation of communitarian control-orders. 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; for further arguments see, e.g., Garland 1996; Gallgher 1995). "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 loosing ground among an increasing number of individual persons and social groups (cf. Eckert: 1989). In many European states, the trust of people in governmental institutions has been in decline for quite a while (see, e.g., Inglehart 1997; Putnam 2000).

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 (consider, e.g., the civil rights issues and the Vietnam war in the United States, the insistence among members of the young generation in Germany to discuss responsibilities for the nazi-terror). A second, and perhaps even more powerful and still unfolding discussion about delegitimation and diminishing state powers has been set in motion by various technological innovations and economic developments now summarized under headings like "the age of information" and "globalization". 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; van Creveld 1999). 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 itself in a dilemma whereby it either has to let go or apply "big brother" strategies outside the legitimation boundaries (see, e.g., the installment of "Closed Circuit Television-Systems", CCTV, particularly in Great Britain).

2.2 Durkheim: Structural evolution and social pathologies

Some forty years before Elias wrote his now celebrated book on the processes of civilization, 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

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6 This assertion is contested in the literature. For example, using data an capital account liberalization Garret (1995) has shown that in the period between 1967 and 1990 capital mobility has contributed to more capital taxation, particularly in countries with strong labour movements. Such policies, however, have also stimulated higher interest rates, so that even Garrett wonders: “In time, one might speculate that no government would be able to bear this burden ... The integration of financial markets may yet be the death knell of social democracy” (Garrett 1995: 683). In a more recent paper (Brune et al. 2000) still support the more optimistic view. An opposed view has been presented, e.g., by Rodrik (1998).
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. The organizing principles that foster violence are "honour" and "hierarchy". The importance of honour (and its counterpart: defamation) has been widely recognized in the literature (see, e.g., Spierenburg 1998), and I have nothing to add to it for the moment. With respect to hierarchy (cf. Roth 2001: 47) I should like to emphasize the following aspect. If the group counts more than the individual, typically there are particular individuals that are closer to the gods than the masses; there are leaders and followers, masters and servants, insiders and outsiders. In other words, there is rigid stratification, and the members of various strata differ in the amount of honour and respect and value granted to them. These differences seem to have a criminogenic effect on their own. Eisner, in analysing data provided by Ruggiero on violent offenders in early Renaissance Venice, notes that "upper-class people seemingly victimized people of lower standing more often than vice versa, which ... contrasts strikingly with modern patterns. Nobles, it appears, did not scruple to assault, rape, or kill people of lower standing" (Eisner 2003: 116). It would be interesting to speculate on the return of hierarchy in (post-)modern "winner-take-all" societies (Frank & Cook 1995), and the common routines of adoration and defamation on which the mass media thrive.

Traditional collectivism 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 belonging 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 honour 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 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: large-scale 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. Restructured agents of social control and moral guidance, particularly the (nuclear) family, the school and professional organizations, however, remain important for providing the moral underpinnings of social life in modern societies. Durkheim believes, however, that it is not so much the rise of individualism but rather the erosion of collectivism that directly causes the reduction of homicide committals (Durkheim 1992: 115).

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 (cf. Karstedt 2001). One problem with testing this proposition is that the erosion of collectivism and the formation of the state generally have co-evolve, more or less (at least in Europe), throughout history so that the pacifying effect of one of these processes can
hardly be disentangled from the effect of the other. A strategy for circumventing this problem is the study of cross-sectional units that differ with respect to collectivism but stand equally under the jurisdiction of the same state. Following this strategy I have utilized data on several hundred urban and rural counties in Prussia at the end of the 19th century and treated birthrates as an empirical indicator of the degree of collectivism vs. individualism prevalent in a county. In a multivariate analysis it was shown that birthrate was by far the most powerful predictor of violent crime (serious assault and battery) controlling for various factors of economic development, demographic composition, urbanization, and dominant religious confession. Another noteworthy result that emerged from these analyses: Though violent crime (severe bodily harm) was rising between 1880 and 1900, the rates in highly urbanized areas remained, by a margin of ca. 20 percent, continuously below the rates in rural counties (Thome 2002; parts of the analysis are also presented in Thome 2001).

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 long 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? Does this observation not falsify our (Durkheim's) hypothesis? I will try to answer this objection by specifying the concept of individualism along the lines Durkheim has drawn out. The answer will be that only a specific type of individualism protects against violence or, rather, preserves the pacifying consequences of the eclipse of collectivism. Figure 1 presents the two analytical dimensions on which Durkheim's typology of "normal" and "pathological" states of societal conditions rests (cf. Hynes 1975; Besnard 1993):

Figure 1: Durkheim's analytical scheme

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. Durkheim's major concern here is with integration. The slanting vertical axis represents "regulation", the domain of politics. 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" or "moral" individualism may be realized. Particularly in his book on "Suicide", Durkheim was concerned about two major "pathologies" that he thought would threaten the future 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: over-regulation, 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 - by imposing 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 our heuristic scheme. So let me briefly characterize each of the four social types, first the allegedly "normal" type of

Moral or cooperative individualism

I have already characterized this type in terms of its cultural orientation. It refers to a broad consensus according to which the individual is more valued than the group. But it is not the particularized - egoistic - individual that is addressed here, it rather is a universalistic concep-
tion, the individual "in general". As a philosophical perspective, Durkeim's 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 and to balance personal freedom and equality, mainly by combining social welfare provisions and parliamentary democracy. Durkheim insists on the functional primacy of the state over against the economy which he saw as immanently amoral. On the other hand, he clearly considered it necessary to counterbalance the power of the state by strong secondary social groups.

On evaluating the trend concerning the development of cooperative individualism one might start with various indicators discussed in the literature on "social capital", like memberships in voluntary associations and generalized social trust (Putnam 2000; 2001; Pharr/Putnam 2000). Participation rates in national elections (after partialing out event-specific effects) might also be a useful indicator of shifting weights between cooperative versus egoistic individualism. Cooperative individualism implies a principled readiness to invest in collective goods (like having a democratic government) even without calculable individual pay-offs resulting from one's own investment (or losses resulting from making no personal investments). The "collective good" dilemma involved in voting is overcome by individuals who feel a moral obligation (responsibility) to vote; whereas voting is simply irrational when viewed from a purely instrumentalistic perspective. Shifting membership rates among diverse types of associations might be evaluated in terms of implied contributions they make for collective goods versus individual pay-offs.

Egoistic individualism

On the cultural plane, this is the reversion of the defining characteristics of moral individualism: Particularism instead of universalism; hedonistic self-fulfilment instead of social solidarity; ruthless pursuit of one's own interests while using others as a mere "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 and competition, 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. An important element in this process might be the (presumably) decreasing weight (as agents of socialization) of the family and the school vis-a-vis the peer group and the mass media. Tocqueville already warned against materialism and egoism triggered by too much competition and threatening the moral base for political democracy. Durkheim himself, in his book on suicide, did not interpret egoistic individualism as a force that would promote violence; he saw it only as an aggravating condition with respect to suicide. I have argued elsewhere (see Thome 2004) that

7 Gary LaFree (referring to work done by Steffensmeier) notes that in the United States "the rate of instrumental, felony-related killings (e.g., contract murders) increases substantially during the postwar period (from about 7 percent of all murders in 1960 to about 20 percent in 1990)" (LaFree 1998: 40-41).

8 Durkheim conceived of the state as "the organ of moral discipline" (Durkheim 1992: 72, 69), but he saw it also as the champion of individualism. Without the state the individual could not have been set free from his primordial bondages, without the state there would be no power to protect the individual against the "tyrannic" claims of his group.
his reasoning is not convincing on this point.\(^9\)
As for Durkheim, the role of the state is crucial for safeguarding moral against egoistic individualism. He conceives of the state as being "the organ of moral discipline" (Durkheim 1992: 72, 69), but he also saw it as the champion of individualism. Without the state the individual could not have been set free from his primordial bondages, without the state there would be no power to protect the individual against the "tyrannic" claims of his group. Durkheim expressly rejects the hegelian, the socialist and the utilitarian (liberal) conception of the state. What he had in mind was a democratic state whose power had to be limited by strong secondary groups, free social associations that would mediate between the individual and the state. The state, however, should have adequate regulatory power for implementing the measures necessary for securing sufficient degrees of justice, equity and equality which Durkheim considered to be the structural pre-condition without which moral individualism could not prevail.\(^{10}\)

Structural indicators (preferably, time series data) that one might want to consider on this dimension are, for example: unemployment figures, measures of inequality, the number of insolvencies of firms and private households, the volume of consumer credits and private debts; the number of children growing up in incomplete families, hours spent in watching TV and playing video games, the volume of advertising and sponsoring activities, the share of individually paid fees for using public services and facilities (relative to the volume of taxes and the like used in financing them).\(^{11}\)

\(\text{Anomie or lack of regulation}\)

Durkheim has propounded different versions of the concept of "anomie" that I do not wish to discuss here in any detail (cf. Thome 2003). In my understanding there are three major subtypes of anomie. One is the lack of coordination or a functional imbalance between societal subsystems (like the economy and education); another are the discrepancies between diverse role requirements on one side and the actors' need for self-actualization. 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 is bound to defy moral and political constrictions. (On this point, the pathologies of egoistic individualism and anomie collapse into one category.)

\(^9\) On the causal connections between a culture of competition, social and economic inequality, and violence see also Hagan et al. 1998; Jacobs/Carmichael 2002; Messner 2004; Pescosolido/Rubin 2000).

\(^{10}\) There have been lively discussions on the ambivalent consequences of advanced welfare capitalism and, in particular, the detrimental effect that bureaucratic routines and universalized benefits may have on personal freedom and the willingness to accept one's own responsibilities. Critics may point to the fact that during the most rapid expansion of the European welfare state in the 1970s criminal violence also rose strongly; defenders may point to various cross-national studies demonstrating that there is a positive correlation between inequality measures and homicide rates (see, e.g., the review of such studies by Messner 2004). Trying to disentagle this mesh of arguments would need another paper.

\(^{11}\) In my view, Fred Hirsch's classic on the "Social Limits to Growth" (1976) is still highly suggestive here.
Working towards an explanation of changing levels of violent crime, I would suggest that on the social-structural plane "anomie" connotes two major dimensions that are analytically distinct though empirically correlated: acceleration and "Entgrenzung".

Entgrenzung: "Grenze" in German means border or dividing line, boundary, bounds, limits. The suffix ent- corresponds to the suffix de- in English. Thus, the term Entgrenzung connotes a generalized tendency or momentum towards lifting, tearing down or dissolving boundaries wherever they are encountered, the transgression of demarcation lines and the conflation or blurring of meanings, the philosophy of "everything goes". Two instances or sub-dimensions of Entgrenzung seem to be particularly important:
The first is the blending or fusion of the private and the public sphere (cf. see Sennett 1977) - just think of the talkshows on Television, the gossip in the newspapers and magazines, and, not the least, 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 a prerequisite for the integration of society. Functionally differentiated societies secure their integration chiefly by roles, not by persons. When personal affairs overtake the incumbents' role performance the functioning of the system is impaired. (Consider the detrimental effects that were inflicted on the US administration by the mass media's revelations upon the president's sex life.) Routinized exhibitionism that figures prominently on TV-programmes and in certain news-papers tend to reduce a person's sensitivity and makes people less attentive to other people's vulnerability. With respect to crime, it also has a more direct effect by reducing the "Präventivwirkung des Nicht-Wissens" - a phrase coined by the German sociologist Heinrich Popitz (1968) who observed that compliance with social norms is greatly facilitated by common ignorance about deviant behaviour committed by others.

A second sub-dimension 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", between truth and falsity, real and imagined worlds or, on another plane, the "de-structuring" of the lifeworld of children vis-a-vis the lifeworld of adults. Driving forces behind these processes are the marketing and advertising business, television programmes and other products of electronic media like computer games presenting orgies of violence. Another arena where the symbolic order of meaning becomes increasingly tenuous is the field of genetics, bio-technology and medicine where research seems to have opened up nearly unlimited possibilities of shaping - and perhaps copying - the human body (or parts of it) 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.

It is hard to find meaningful quantitative indicators on phenomena of Entgrenzung over time. Research on the changing content and consumption patterns of mass-media and the use of modern information technologies (internet etc.) might provide valuable data. The increasing intrusion of advertisements and product placement into TV-programmes and internet pages,

12 There seems to be an increase of brutal violence committed particularly by young people who have sought to imitate or reproduce scenes they watched in movies or computer games.

13 Consider, e.g., Charles Taylor's observation that making strong valuations, as in moral commitments, presupposes that something is beyond our reach, beyond our capacities (Taylor 1989).

14 Between 1991 and 2000, the world wide volume of advertising has increased from 96.34 to
the growth of "infotainment" and the expanding business of "event-management" (i.e., the art of inventing techniques and practices that generalize the principle that "the medium becomes the message") might be indicative of the blending of previously distinct symbolic universes. The sky-rocketing salaries of business managers and investment bankers that have severed any ties with discernable achievements and performances, the volatility of stock market indices and the rising discrepancies between shareholder values and real assets of a firm may all be indicative of the progressive blending of the "real" and the "imagined". With respect to the encroachments on privacy, the installment of video cameras in public places and buildings, and the sales volumes of various devices for collecting personal data (of consumers and clients, for example) are tractable over time.

**Acceleration.** There seems to be wide agreement that cultural and social-structural changes have been accelerating since the 1950s. There has been an increasing shortage or scarcity of available time relative to the rising number of options for using or spending it. Acceleration not only implies that people are more and more forced to economize and fragmentize their use of time; it also means that rapid changing social environments render obsolete previously established norms and social practices and make it hard to establish new ones. The significance of such processes becomes obvious when we consider one of the major functions social norms perform: giving certitude and stability to expectations that govern the daily interchanges among people (cf. Luhmann 1969). The crucial point here is that expectations based on norms (contrary to "cognitive" expectations) can be maintained even when they have not been met; the fault, in this case, is not attributed to the expectation but to those that have not conformed to it. This mechanism, however, breaks down when falsifications are mounting: incertitude replaces certitude.

For a social order to be maintained it does not suffice that people follow its norms merely for fear of sanctions. Rather, compliance must be motivated by the recognition that the norm conforms to universally valid moral principles, or else the norm, resp. the principle on which it rests must have been internalized as a component of one's own "need-dispositions" (Parsons). Transmitting the norm from one generation to another is the major route towards internalization. Unrestricted (and time-consuming) "discourse" among equals is the prime method for solving moral conflict or dilemmas on the bases of universally held moral principles. Rapid social change is detrimental to both of them. For example, normative traditions provide no solutions for the moral dilemmas posed by recent advances in genetics, bio-technology and medicine. The options they open up expand faster than the capacity to define or apply the criteria for choosing among them and creating a social consensus that would support them. Consequently, moral questions are being increasingly transformed into economic and political questions, thus strengthening the impetus to instrumentalist thinking.

**Over-regulation: regressive collectivism**

Durkheim's concept of "fatalism" refers 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 Durkheim's concept upside down. Rather than concentrating on a purely subjective response to a dreadful situation brought about by suppressive means of regulation, we can think of "over-regulation" 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. Large collections of survey data provide useful information on these issues.

2.3 Macro-micro-linkages: The role of self-control

Though crime rates are characteristics of groups or regions, they are nothing but standardized sums of classified individual behaviour. One would thus like to specify the intervening variables that transform structures into individual actions. When looking at various approaches in the theory of crime one encounters at least a dozen of them, middle-range theories each specifying bundles of variables thought to be conducive to crime in general or to criminal violence in particular - e.g., differential social learning theory, social disorganization theory, theories of subculture, strain theories, control theories, opportunity theory, anomie theory etc. Decades of research have passed by, thousands of articles and books have been written, but no unified theory has emerged (though some authors have claimed that they had accomplished just this). Many of these different approaches do not really compete with each other but simply focus on different subsets of variables that prove relevant on different occasions. A multitude of possible linkages connecting macro-structures and criminal behaviour could thus be constructed. Before getting lost in such an exercise it might be more feasible to be selective and adhere to the principle of parsimony. Most approaches to analysing violent crime look at it as resulting from some kind of deficiency, for example: The actor has no sufficient command over or access to legitimate means for obtaining commonly sought or accepted goods he, too, aspires to. (Highly competitive cultures and high degrees of inequality tend to open up this gap for a large number of persons). Or the actor aspires to illegitimate goals (because of deficiencies in his socializing experiences or because he belongs to a subculture insufficiently integrated into society). Or the actor has no sufficient control over his impulses impelling him to commit deviant acts including physical aggression. (If the future becomes increasingly uncertain, e.g., in terms of employment or return of investments, deterrence of gratification becomes less plausible. Consequently, internalized control structures are less likely to develop strongly.) Or the actor does not get the recognition and respect that he would need for acquiring or maintaining a sufficient degree of self-assurance. This may happen because he is discriminated against or because he does not have the instrumental or expressive capacities for being well received by others. Again, high competitiveness and exclusivistic solidarities nourished by regressive collectivism may render such experiences more likely.

Gottfredson & Hirschi in their "General Theory of Crime" (1990) have, in a way reminiscent of Elias, declared lack of self-control to be the key variable making all sorts of criminal acts more likely to occur. Their argument, however, is somewhat simplistic: crime doesn't pay, they say, therefore criminal behaviour is irrational. As Gary Becker and others have shown, however, many criminal acts do have a sizable payoff or, at least, can be expected to have one. Therefore, they do not generally result from a lack of self-control as construed by Gottfredson & Hirschi.

The concept of self-control should be expanded in the direction of a more sociological concept of "agency". Drawing upon a similar idea put forward by Manuel Eisner (1997) I propose a three-dimensional concept: The first dimension would, indeed, take up the idea of affect-control: the capacity to control ones impulses and feelings without suppressing them,

\[\text{For affirming, but also relativising, the important role of self-control in explaining deviant or criminal behaviour see the meta-analysis by Pratt & Cullen (2000).}\]
allowing the person to express his or her feelings while taking into account the normative requirements encountered in a given situation. This might be called expressive competence. The second component would be of a strategic nature: the capacity to use one's personal abilities and the opportunities offered by the situation to obtain one's goals, including the capacity to evaluate immediately available gratifications in their consequences for long-term objectives: this we might call instrumental or strategic competence. 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 and, on a higher level of competence, universal principles as well (principles that might contravene group based norms). This involves the capacity for "role taking" (as sociologists like to call it), or "empathy" (as psychologists put it). We might refer to this as moral competence that comprises a motivational and a cognitive component which, however, might be less congruously related to each other than Kohlberg would have liked it (cf. Nunner-Winkler, forthcoming).

The multi-dimensional concept goes beyond Elias' or Gottfredson & Hirschi's dichotomy by shifting our attention to the individual's capacity to integrate several functional requirements: identities must be expressed, personal interests must be satisfied, non-exclusivist solidarities must be preserved, and none of them must be satisfied at the cost of neglecting the other. To the extent that this capacity is lacking vis-à-vis the restrictions and opportunities offered in a given situation the probability rises that the individual resorts to criminal activities, including the use of illegal violence. Durkheim's pathological types (excessive individualism, anomie, and oppressive over-regulations) refer to structural conditions that, in a given population, impede the development of sufficient measures of self-control among a relevant number of persons. I have indicated some of these linkages in previous sections. For example, rapid social change and the decomposing of symbolic structures of meaning (i.e., "anomie") undermine communicative processes needed to build up moral competence. Likewise, the erosion of cooperative individualism by increased competition and re-commodification of social relationships may de-emphasize normative considerations in favour of instrumental rationality.

3. Some methodological problems

All these hypotheses, to be sure, bear the marks of speculative thinking. Let us consider some of the methodological problems that come up when we try to apply and test the propositions just presented. The first question to be raised might be: does the presumed explanandum exist at all? Has there really been a rising level of criminal interpersonal violence in the second half of the last century? The rival hypothesis would be that the increase in registered violence is due to higher reporting rates, intensified law enforcement practices or other factors diminishing the gap between "true" and "registered" crime rates, or - bringing in labelling theory - pushing up the rate of crime by ways of creating (inventing) instances. Clearly, we do not have the means to settle these questions once and for all. Victim surveys, for example, are marred by sampling errors, the chronic under-representation of people who are most likely to become victims of violence. It seems reasonable to assume that change rates, too, are higher among these disadvantaged groups, which would entail underestimating the overall time trend as depicted by victim surveys. Clearly, we do not have the means to settle these questions once and for all. Victim surveys, for example, are marred by sampling errors, the chronic under-representation of people who are most likely to become victims of violence. It seems reasonable to assume that change rates, too, are higher among these disadvantaged groups, which would entail underestimating the overall time trend as depicted by victim surveys. Occasional changes in the sampling framework (as in Great Britain in 1992) or in technology (e.g. telephone interviewing instead of face to face interviews) add to these problems. At any case there is no reason to assume that victim surveys or more reliable than police recorded crime. However, we are more confident when both sources produce similar trend patterns.

Two results are helpful in this respect. Looking at the data collected in British Crime Surveys (BCS) for the period between 1981 and 1991 Maguire (1997) notes that apart from vandalism
"'BCS crime' and 'police crime' (in categories covered by the BCS) would have appeared in 1991 to be increasing at fairly similar rates" (p. 167); and between 1991 and 1995, the BCS crime rate increased more than the rate of police recorded crime. Eisner (2004) observes that in the USA homicide rates and overall victim rates for violent crime as provided by National Crime Victim Surveys (NCVS) developed in great accordance without a clear-cut trend between 1973 and 1998; whereas the police recorded overall rate of violent crime continued to rise until the early 1990s. Since then, all three time series went downward at about the same speed, the NCVS rates even a bit later. So, it may well be that trends in police recorded rates and comparable rates resulting from victim surveys diverge and converge temporarily, over relatively short periods, but do not exhibit significantly diverging movements over several decades. At any case, we have no reason to assume that the doubling or tripling of homicide rates since 1960 could be completely artifactual. Quite to the contrary, taking into account Tony Harris's findings on the downgrading effects on homicide rates of continuously improving medical services taking care of wounded victims (Harris et al. 2002), one has to assume that the rate of completed homicide had increased even more had it not been lowered by technological and organizational inventions in the medical sector.

We may face more severe problems when we turn from the dependent to the independent variables. The hypotheses that make up the explanatory scheme outlined above have introduced a number of key concepts that need to be measured somehow. That is, one needs to establish observable indicators that are either correlationally or analytically related to such concepts as legitimacy, anomie, or instrumentalism. In previous sections I have offered some suggestions regarding feasible indicators, but all of them are open to debate. For example: How do we measure if or to what extent there has been an erosion of the state's monopoly of violence? Are clearance rates a valid indicator for its effectiveness? (Probably "no" in the short run, but possibly "yes" in the long run?). These problems are not unique to the approach I am recommending here; they are common to any approach trying to relate macro social structures to rates of crime or other types of problem-behaviour in a cross-sectional or cross-temporal perspective (see, e.g., Eisner 2002; Messner/Rosenfeld 1997 or the review by Messner 2004). The relationship between (observable) indicators and a non-observable theoretical construct is (must be) hypothetical; the burden of proof thus lies with those who want to criticize it. In order to illustrate the kind of discussion that might come up on such an occasion let me briefly return to my decision to use birthrates as an indicator of the degree of collectivism vs. individualism present in the culture of a given nation or region (Thome 2002). Of course, high birthrates do not "mean" high degrees of collectivism, but they may still serve as "correlate" indicators. There are two possibilities here: First, lower birthrates might be a consequence of less collectivism; second, the demographic transition taking place in late nineteenth century brought about higher survival rates of children, thus inducing (potential) parents to opt for having less children (thereby producing lower birthrate) – which, in turn, raised the value of the individual child, i.e., propelled "individualism" in the sense construed by Durkheim. Another objection might be that birthrates correlate with other variables, like demographic composition or degree of urbanization, that compete with "collectivism" in explaining violent crime. This objection can be answered by directly controlling for those competing variables in multivariate statistical analyses (as was done in my aforementioned study). I have made these claims with respect to the closing 19th century when the issue was the erosion of collectivism (as conceived by Durkheim) and the average birthrate was much higher than today. As for the present, one might still ponder on the idea of using birthrate as an indicator - this time for assessing the relative weight of cooperative vs egoistic individualism. Once more, having children or not is not a reliable indicator of a person's inclinations towards cooperative vs. egoistic individualism, since the individual decision always has to take into account widely varying circumstances and conditions. But if
in a society as a whole the rate is very low, this means that societal arrangements, including cultural patterns, are of a kind as to make the average individual less disposed to having two or more children. If potential parents are not willing to accept the costs for raising children, either these costs are too high (higher in Germany than in Sweden, for example) or the desire to have children generally is too low over against the opportunities for reaching self-fulfillment, a professional career e.g., without bearing this particularly strong responsibility for another human being. The actual decisions are taken individually, but the result, i.e. the birthrate, reflects economic, social and cultural arrangements alongside the dimension of cooperative vs. egoistic individualism.

I am aware of some objections that could again be raised here, for example: If lower birthrates in recent decades are the consequence of shifting by social welfare regulations resources towards the old at the expense of young families (as some researchers have observed), this does not necessarily imply a general shift in society from cooperative to egoistic individualism. On the other hand, one should not neglect the socializing effect of having children (versus having no children). Parents, e.g., are more likely to be engaged in voluntary social or political work than non-parents. Since their "self-interest" reaches beyond their own lives, it tends to be less ego-centered and more oriented towards improving living conditions in their social environments. In this case, higher birthrates would still indicate a larger potential for cooperative individualism. The most serious objection, however, might point to other cultural components, apart from moral or egoistic individualism, that influence birthrates - for example, religious traditions and a more generalized disposition for self-confidence and optimism regarding the future. The comparatively high fertility rate among American women, even white women, may have its roots in such a unique cultural tradition. In cross-national comparisons, such factors defy inclusion into statistical models, since the dominance of a certain cultural tradition, e.g., a variant of protestantism, is not adequately reflected by the number of people who belong to a protestant church.

In historical analyses we generally have to rely upon records and data that were not designed to fit our theoretical concepts. A LISREL-type modelling strategy integrating theoretical hypotheses of the type "If A then B" with measurement hypotheses linking indicators to concepts usually is unavailable in such settings. In some cases, however, we might extract stochastically trending time series data on multiple indicators of the same construct. In such a case, we might be able to test if they are cointegrated\(^{16}\). If this proves to be the case, this would support the assumption that they are valid indicators.\(^{17}\)

This moves our discussion to another set of problems: Provided that sufficiently valid indicators have been procured, how do we establish causal relationships between the structural (economic, social and cultural) indicators and rates of violent crime? Most of the indicators one might think of are trending as well: the gross national product, unemployment or divorce rates, insolventcies and advertising budgets have been rising, trust in government institutions, membership in certain voluntary associations have been declining, for example. If they were not trending, inversely or conversely, along with crime rates, they could not be valid indicators of potent explanatory variables in the first place. Trending series, however, correlate with each other even without any causal linkage. Causality can be tested only if

\(^{16}\) For the statistical model of "cointegration" see, e.g., Hamilton (1994), for applications in criminological analysis see Field 1999; Hale 1998.

\(^{17}\) The only social science example that I am aware of as realiizing a LISREL-type modelling strategy with time series data taken from official statistical records is to be found in Beck (1989) who applied the Kalman-filtering technique.
stochastic trends correspond to each other, i.e., if the series are "cointegrated". Cointegration tests can be run only with long time series, 50 measurement points are not enough, a rule of thumb calls for at least one hundred measurements. A solution to this problem might be a pooled cross-section time-series analysis with violent crime varying more over time than across countries or regional units. (I am presently collecting data from England/Wales, Sweden and Germany to realize such a design). Note that in my explanatory scheme I search for level relationships not just for correlated change scores. But the rate of (rapid) change in a structural variable may have an effect that diverges from the long run level effect. As already mentioned, in Germany at the end of the 19th century population growth associated with increased urbanization is positively related to assault and battery, but highly urbanized regions have lower rates of violent crime than rural counties (Thome 2002).

Pooled cross-sectional time series analyses are likely to be the most efficient design in studying long-term relationships between structural indicators and crime rates. The offer a better leverage for dealing with measurement problems. In causal analyses, measurement errors may be conceived of as a special type of omitted variables. Omitted variables distort the estimation of impact parameters (like regression coefficients) only to the degree that they covary not just with the dependent but also with the independent variables specified in the model.\cite{footnote18} Some of the measurement errors (and other uncontrolled sources of variance in the dependent variable) may systematically confound over-time variance but not the variances across units - or vice-versa. Besides, so-called fixed-effect models may help to neutralize cross-unit differences in legal provisions, policing and registration practices.

Instability of relationship might be another problem to arise: a unit increase in an explanatory variable may have varying long-run effects depending upon the time period. So, one would like to have a large number of cases available in each subperiod to check this out. Instabilities over time point to misspecified models: there must be a confounding, but unspecified factor varying over time or the linear/non-linear form of an estimated relationship is incorrectly specified.

To establish causal linkages between structural indicators and crime rates over time it might be helpful to consider cross-sectional and individual level relationships as well, particularly if no sufficient time series data are available for the structural variables. For example, if there is a negative relationship between individuals' trust in political or governmental institutions and the probability of committing acts of violent crime (cf. Sampson/Bartsch 1998), it seems reasonable to assume that declining levels of trust (inferred, e.g., from irregular series of public opinion polls) should contribute to rising levels of violent crime. The problem with this strategy is that the evidence on social and political trust presented in the literature is rather mixed. And this applies to other issues as well. One only needs to look at the literature concerning the consequences of divorce or growing up in a one-parent family.

On the other hand, one has to realize that weak or even insignificant relationships on the individual level may have sizeable effects on the aggregate level. For example, if only two of 100,000 persons exposed to violent scenes in TV programs during the course of a year are thereby pushed over their probability threshold for committing murder, this might double the homicide rate in the country. But no experimental setting with, say, 2000 individual subjects will demonstrate any significant effect for a probability difference of 0.000002.

\footnote{With respect to error-ridden measurements of suicide rates, Pescosolido & Mandelsohn (1986) have demonstrated that those errors do not necessarily distort the impact parameters estimated for various explanatory variables.}
Many of the structural changes are likely to have contradictory effects upon crime rates. For example: increased female labor-force participation may indicate decreased guardianship and increased exposure to crime as well as less social control of children, all of which would help crime rates to rise. On the other hand, increased female labor participation may reduce criminal motivations due to improved economic conditions. With regard to rising levels of mass education ambiguous effects may be be stated as follows: "An individual's education level \(e\) may impact on the decision to commit a crime through several channels. Higher levels of educational attainment may be associated with higher expected legal earning \(...)\. Also, education, through its civic component may increase the individual's moral stance \(...\). On the other hand, education may reduce the costs of committing crimes \(...\) or may raise the loot from crime \(...\). Hence the net effect of education on the individual's decision to commit a crime is, a priori, ambiguous. We can conjecture, however, that if legal economic activities are more skill- or education-intensive than illegal activities, then it is more likely that education induces individuals not to commit crimes" (Fajnzylber et al. 2002: 1328). At any case, the aggregate relationship will reveal the net effect that a unit increase in the level of education (or the other "ambiguous" structural variables) will have on the crime rate. For a methodological individualist this may not mean a great deal. But the aggregate effect may still guide his search for moderator variables that would specify which of possibly diverse effects apply to what kinds of individuals.

This brings me up to the (in)famous "ecological fallacy" theorem, which is one of the most mis-represented methodological theorems in the social sciences. Often, it has been interpreted as implying biased regression estimates if these estimates are based on aggregated data although the theoretical interpretation refers to the individual level relationships. Indeed, a positive "correlation" between the proportion of blacks and the crime rate does not prove that blacks commit more crimes than whites. It might well be the case that whites commit more and black commit less crimes when the proportion of black people in a population increases. If this were the case, the bivariate relationship (with crime as the criterion and race as the predictor variable) would imply a grossly misspecified model that excludes the additive and also a multiplicative context effect. As Lutz Erbring (1989) once put it: There is no aggregation bias, but, under specific circumstances, bias aggregation. If the model is correctly specified (with correct functional form, and all of the relevant explanatory factors included) the slope coefficients (as causal effect measures) are unbiased no matter what the aggregation level is. (The correlation coefficients, of course, will be raised; but the size of correlation-coefficients is irrelevant here). The sad fact, however, is that often our models are not correctly specified, due to lack of data or false reasoning. But in this case, individual level relationships may occasionally be more deceptive than aggregate level relationships. For example, a zero-correlation between long-term individual unemployment and readiness for committing crimes does not preclude rising unemployment levels from causing higher crime rates. Being unemployed may directly stimulate individual motivation (as specified, e.g., by a theory of relative deprivation); it may also, as a contextual variable, indicate intensified competition and hence higher levels of criminogenic instrumentalism among the successfully employed. In a bivariate individual level relationship the direct effect and the contextual effect may cancel each other out; in the aggregate relationship they (correctly) accumulate.

Finally, if a relationship between macro structural indicators and crime rates has been established, this link is not invalidated by missing specifications concerning intervening variables that mediate between macro and micro level. As for structural equation modelling, it has been shown (cf. Diekmann 1980; Tuma/Hannan 1984) that the total effect of endogenous variables can be reliably registered without intervening relationships (as long as the system under study is non-explosive).
4. Conclusion

The major components of the explanatory scheme presented here can be summed up in the following propositions:

(1) The (trans-)secular decline in interpersonal violence (homicide rates) that took place between ca. 1500 and 1950 is mainly due (a) to the processes of nation-building that established a monopoly of violence held by the state, domesticated by law, legitimized by democratic participation and supported by social welfare; (b) to structural and cultural changes (from segmental to functional differentiation) that moved modernizing societies away from "collectivistic" to predominantly "individualistic" orientations.

(2a) The institutional nexus in which effectiveness and legitimacy of the state's monopoly of violence mutually supported each other has been eroding in postindustrial societies in the second half of the twentieth century.

(2b) The opportunity structure as well as the motivation for illegal uses of violence has been enhanced in these processes.

(3a) 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 egoistic individualism.

(3b) Free-market postindustrial societies are evolving in the direction of strengthening the elements of egoistic individualism and anomie that in turn stimulate, at least temporarily, the growth of regressive collectivism.

(3c) The "pathologies" mentioned in 3b increase the likelihood that individuals take recourse to acts of criminal violence.

(4a) The lower the capacity for self-control the higher the propensity 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.)

(4b) 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 reached by them.