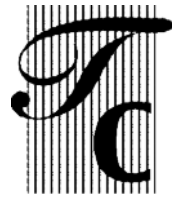
Civilization, economic change, and trends in interpersonal violence in western societies

Dennis M. Mares

Theoretical Criminology 2009 13: 419
DOI: 10.1177/1362480609340401

Theoretical Criminology

Vol. 13(4): 419–449; 1362–4806
DOI: 10.1177/1362480609340401



Civilization, economic change, and trends in interpersonal violence in western societies

DENNIS M. MARES
Southern Illinois University, USA

Abstract

This article moves forward on recent studies on historical trends in violence. Whereas many studies agree that levels of interpersonal violence have subsided since the late Middle Ages, some have found periods of strong increases within this general decline. Building on Norbert Elias's civilizing thesis, this article proposes to incorporate a greater degree of attention to economic processes. Using illustrative evidence from Western Europe and the USA, this article demonstrates how within the overall decline of violence, cycles of increasing and decreasing violence can be tied to the development of both state formation and the growth of a world economic system.

Key Words

violence • Elias • civilizing process • world-system theory • history

Introduction

Historical studies examining the nature and incidence of interpersonal violence have flourished in recent decades. We now have a reasonably reliable estimate of the overall trend in homicidal violence during the past eight or so centuries. Rebuffing the myth of a peaceful past, most of these studies note a strong decline in homicides (Gurr, 1981, 1989; Stone, 1983; Chesnais, 1992; Spierenburg, 1994; Johnson and Monkkonen, 1996; Eisner, 2001, 2003a).

With the greater availability of empirical data, scholars have theorized about what may have prompted this long-term decline in lethal violence. Many agree that Elias's theory of the 'civilizing process' is the most suitable explanation (Mennel, 2007). Elias (1996, 2000) suggested that, along with an expanding and more powerful state, increasing self-control had reduced the incidence of spontaneous violence since the Middle Ages. A problematic issue, however, is that homicide rates did not decline consistently between the 13th century and the 20th century, and that occasional upheavals interrupted this overall decline. Elias's original theory (1996; De Swaan, 1999) does not satisfactorily explain such abrupt reversals, though Elias acknowledged that so-called 'decivilizing processes' can interrupt the civilizing process.

This article acknowledges the importance and power of the civilizing thesis, but also moves beyond Elias toward a criminological theory that can explain both the long-term decline in violence and some of the periodic upswings in violence that occur within this downward trend. As this article demonstrates, Elias's ideas provide a starting point for a more integrated approach to the study of long-term patterns in criminal violence.

The first section of this article features a discussion of Elias's ideas and empirical research focusing on the long-term decline in violence. The following section addresses the nature and extent of increases in violence. The third and final section develops and illustrates a new perspective helping explain both upward and downward trends in violence as part of the same sociohistorical processes.

As this article demonstrates, in periods in which the growth of state institutions of social incorporation is more dominant, levels of homicides appear to subside. In periods in which economic processes undermine social mobility and during which institutions of coercion emerge, levels of homicide appear to surge. Directing attention to economic processes, which has been a serious shortcoming of Elias's theory (Kalb, 1997), enhances the capacity of Elias's civilizing thesis to understand better long-term trends in violence. It also allows Elias's theory to be better integrated within existing criminological thought.

Even though a formal quantitative test of this new theoretical framework cannot be accomplished within the scope of this article, illustrative evidence of homicide trends shows support for some of the key ideas. Even though one may question the validity of historical homicide rates as a measure for violence more broadly, illustrating the theoretical processes with empirical data can provide a starting point and help direct future inquiries. Given the broad scope of this article, it is easily criticized for making overgeneralizations and glancing over important local variations in trends of violence. Nonetheless, as David Garland recently argued in his comparative historical study of social control, a high level of abstraction sometimes has the 'ability to point to the structural properties of the field, and to identify the recurring social and cultural dynamics that produce them' (2001: viii). Criminological thought and research has been moving

away from macro-level theorizing, and in no way does this article deny the importance of micro-level theories. The intention here is to demonstrate that studying interpersonal violence cannot be separated altogether from larger transnational and historical processes, and these must therefore be incorporated in our theoretical perspectives as well.

Elias and violence

Norbert Elias's thesis of the 'civilizing process' has received increasing attention during the past two decades (Gurr, 1981, 1989; Stone, 1983; Spierenburg, 1984, 1996, 2001, 2004; Garland, 1990, 2001; Johnson and Monkkonen, 1996; Eisner, 2001, 2003a; Lacour, 2001; Pratt, 2002). Elias argued that a profound change has taken place in the sensibilities and behavior of citizens of western societies. Since the end of the feudal period, a greater degree of restraint in interpersonal behavior has developed. Elias (2000) offers many examples: increasingly refined table manners, greater control and increasing privatization of reproductive life and bodily functions, and greater restraint in the use of force.

Elias sees increasing restraints in interpersonal relations as the result of two interrelated processes: (1) the emergence of centralized states and the concomitant monopolization of the use of force and (2) the cultivation of a deeply ingrained self-control that has burdened many impulsive behaviors, including violence, with feelings of shame and embarrassment. Both processes themselves developed from the emergence of longer and more tightly knit chains of interdependence between citizens, and between citizens and the state. As people and their institutions grew more dependent on each other for physical and social survival, they benefited from reducing the volatility of everyday life (Elias, 1980).

In line with Weber, Elias argues that states seek control over the means of violence in society (also see Giddens, 1990; Tilly, 1992). However, Elias maintained that people do not simply subjugate themselves to state power; in order to persuade citizens to hand over their independence, states have had to transfer some power back to citizens. Elias named this process 'functional democratization'.

In the early phases of state formation, the promise of personal safety and an orderly production environment may have been sufficient to convince citizens to comply with external sources of control. However, over time, elaborate institutions of social incorporation (welfare, education, healthcare, and so forth) were required to legitimize state control (De Swaan, 1989). Elias always questioned the degree to which the monopolization of force was complete. He recognized that citizens, particularly those living in 'outsider' or marginalized communities, could challenge this state monopoly (Elias and Scotson, 1965; Spierenburg, 2001).

Nevertheless, over time, and very gradually, the social restraints on large sections of the population transformed into internal restraints, leading to

the development of a pacified 'habitus',[1] which represses aggressive impulses and creates a 'natural' distaste for violence:

> This self-restraint is ingrained so deeply from an early age that like a kind of relay-station of social standards, an automatic self-supervision of their drives, a more differentiated and more stable 'super-ego' develops within them, and a part of the forgotten drive impulses and affect inclinations is no longer directly within reach of the level of consciousness at all.
>
> (Elias, 2000: 374)

According to Elias, socialization in family and community drives this process of internalization and establishes itself more firmly in each successive generation (2000: 366–9; Elias and Scotson, 1965: 124). Large-scale changes in social control as a result of the civilizing process are thus also accompanied by changes in 'habitus'. This latter process more permanently alters the blueprints for behavior for various social groups, reflecting the growing societal need for predictable behavior.

The long-term effect of the civilizing process is a pronounced decline in interpersonal violence, most visible in the reduction of homicide rates, considered by many researchers to be the most reliable indicator of violence (Given, 1977; Gurr, 1981, 1989; Cockburn, 1991; Emsley, 1996; Spierenburg, 1996; Sharpe, 1999; Eckberg, 2001; Monkkonen, 2001a; Ylinkangas, 2001; Eisner, 2003a). Ultimately, the civilizing process resulted in a unique historical circumstance: 'Never before have so many people lived in relative peace with each other' (Elias, 2000: 174).

Historians of crime have adopted Elias's insights and recent research reveals much support for his ideas (Gurr, 1981, 1989; Johnson and Monkkonen, 1996; Spierenburg, 1996; Fletcher, 1997; Wouters, 2000; Adler, 2001; Eisner, 2001, 2003a; Lacour, 2001; Mares, 2004). In England, for instance, homicide rates declined from roughly 25 per 100,000 in the 13th century to less than 1 per 100,000 in the 19th century (Beattie, 1973; Given, 1977; Gurr, 1981, 1989; Cockburn, 1991; Eisner, 2001, 2003a). In the Low Countries, homicide declined at a slightly slower pace, but by the late 19th century the Dutch homicide rate neared a low of 1 per 100,000 (Berendt, 1976; Vanhemelryck, 1981; Boomgaard, 1992; Diederiks, 1990; Franke, 1994; Spierenburg, 1994, 1996; Eisner, 2001; 2003a). The pattern is similar in many other European nations (Osterberg, 1996; Eisner, 2001, 2003a; Lacour, 2001).

Although one may question the degree to which Elias presents us with a clear and testable theory, he is particularly successful in making crucial connections between two main criminological paradigms: control and social learning. Moreover, Elias also demonstrates the importance of a historical and comparative approach. Many criminological theories can be criticized for neglecting to explore how theoretical properties are affected by changes in societal contexts. Elias uses these contexts as a crucial starting point.

Elias's civilizing thesis is naturally not without criticism (see Thoden van Velzen, 1984; Van Krieken, 1989). Perhaps the most important issue that critics have brought up is that Elias fails to illustrate the interplay between state and economy (Kalb, 1997). The purpose of this article is not to dismiss the centrality of state formation in the study of violence, but rather to demonstrate that economic processes also need to be incorporated in Elias's theory. Particularly since many recent criminological theories have demonstrated the relevance of economic changes, it seems prudent to expand Elias's theory to incorporate these insights and their connections to changes in crime trends (Wilson, 1987, 1996; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997; LaFree, 1998, 1999; Garland, 2001).

Upward trends in violence

Despite the growing number of studies that have observed declines in homicidal violence, we know little about the consistency of this decline. Criminologists have devoted much attention to the violent crime wave of the late 20th century, but have been notably silent on earlier periods (LaFree, 1998, 1999, 2005; Blumstein and Wallman, 2000; LaFree and Drass, 2002). The lack of consistent and reliable time-series data impedes attempts to establish the timing and degree of departures from the overall downward trend in violence. Nonetheless, several source-consistent and relatively long time-series on homicides allow us to assess whether increases took place in select areas (see Monkkonen, 2001a; Eisner 2003a). As previously mentioned, the most reliable indicator for studying violence is homicide. Although its measurement is not entirely free from definitional changes and shifting enforcement priorities (see Adler, 2001), it is seen as the best way to measure changes in overall levels of violence because homicides are less likely to go undetected by the criminal justice system than other forms of interpersonal violence. While we cannot extrapolate overall rates of violence from homicide rates, the latter are likely to provide us with a sense of the overall direction of trends in violence.

It should be pointed out that there are several additional problems in interpreting crime data from the past. Whereas the focus of this article does not allow a thorough review of crime data sources, there is much debate on the reliability of historical crime data (Monkkonen, 2001a; Roth, 2001; Thome, 2001). No matter the data sources (coroner inquests, court convictions, newspaper archives, and so on), our estimates of homicide rates are likely to be lower than the actual rates. How much so, though, is a central question. Variety in definitions, measurement, and the recording practices of violent deaths in the past make it impossible to assess perfectly and compare rates of homicide across time and space. It is nonetheless possible to compare *trends* in homicide, as long as data is of a consistent nature and measured over a sufficiently long time.

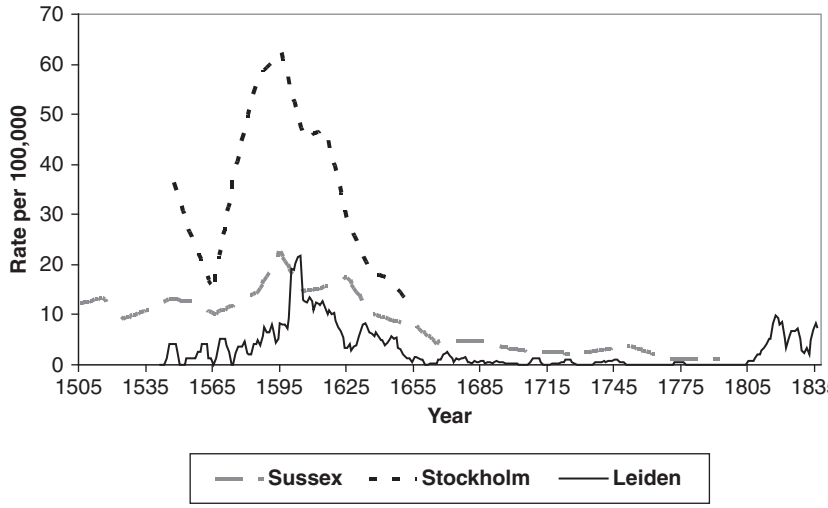


Figure 1
Homicide rates, 1550–1838
Note: All references to numbers and figures are based on five-year moving averages, with the exception of 20th-century data. The actual numbers in Leiden fluctuated from zero between 1571 and 1576 to 69 per 100,000 in 1602.
Sources: For Leiden, see Diederiks (1994a, 1994b, 1994c). For Essex, Sussex, Cheshire, and Stockholm, see Eisner (2003b).

The Netherlands, 1540–1890

One data set that allows for a more detailed assessment of trends in violence derives from court conviction data from Leiden, the Netherlands (Diederiks, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c). While Spierenburg's work on Amsterdam (1993, 1994) has received greater attention, the Leiden data set is in some respects preferable as it is more consistently recorded over a more extensive period. Even though one might run the risk of underestimating the actual homicide rate by using court cases as opposed to coroner inquests, the greater degree of completeness of the records is important for developing a better understanding of trend fluctuations.[2] As Figure 1 illustrates, the overall trend of the Leiden data demonstrates a downward pattern. There are also two periods in which a distinct upsurge in homicide convictions is noticeable: a roughly tenfold increase in the late 16th and early 17th centuries and a more moderate escalation at the onset of the 19th century.

Figure 1 demonstrates that Leiden's initial upsurge in homicides was not unique; Sussex, England and Stockholm, Sweden also indicate a similar upsurge in homicide during the late 16th century and early 17th century (Eisner, 2003b). Although the exact timing of the change and the true magnitude of the rates may differ, the general pattern appears similar across these areas. A possible second wave of homicides (1800–38) visible in Figure 1 is more difficult to describe as the data for Leiden end in 1838, seemingly near the peak of the latest increases.

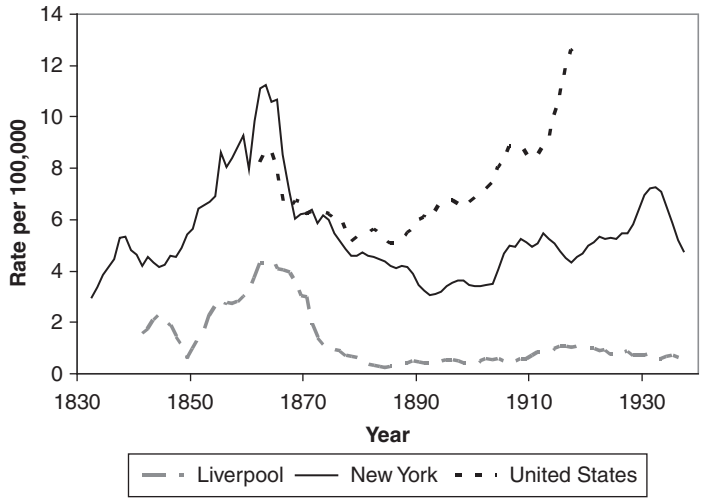


Figure 2
Homicide rates in Liverpool, New York, and the USA, 1830–1940
Sources: Monkkonen (1994, 2001b).

England and the USA, 1830–1940

Even though less research exists on violence in the 19th century, the data are better for this era than for earlier periods. A greater number of records have survived and, in some cases, record keeping became a national responsibility; this had the effect of boosting the reliability and accuracy of the information. A distinct and strong upsurge in homicidal violence occurred in the middle of the 19th century in both England and parts of the USA (Monkkonen, 1994, 2001b). As Figure 2 shows, homicide rates in New York almost tripled between the 1830s and the 1860s. Homicide rates in Liverpool displayed a similar trend, roughly quadrupling between the 1850s and 1860s. While these increases occurred around the American Civil War, Monkkonen (2001c) has pointed out that New York's homicide rates were already rising before this period and declined steeply immediately after the war. Interestingly, it does appear that homicide trends were similar in some urban areas in both England and the USA.

Aggregated homicide arrest data for the largest US cities suggest that homicide rates went up from about 5 per 100,000 in the early 1880s to about 13 per 100,000 just after the end of World War I (Monkkonen, 1994). However, for individual cities, homicide rates sometimes fluctuated more strongly. For instance, St Louis saw a tenfold increase in homicide rates between the 1880s and the 1920s (Decker et al., 2005; see Figure 6). Whereas absolute levels of homicide were much lower in London, the city experienced a quadrupling in homicide rates between the 1870s and the 1930s, a sharper increase than for many US cities such as Chicago (Monkkonen, 2001b; Bienen and Rottinghaus, 2002).

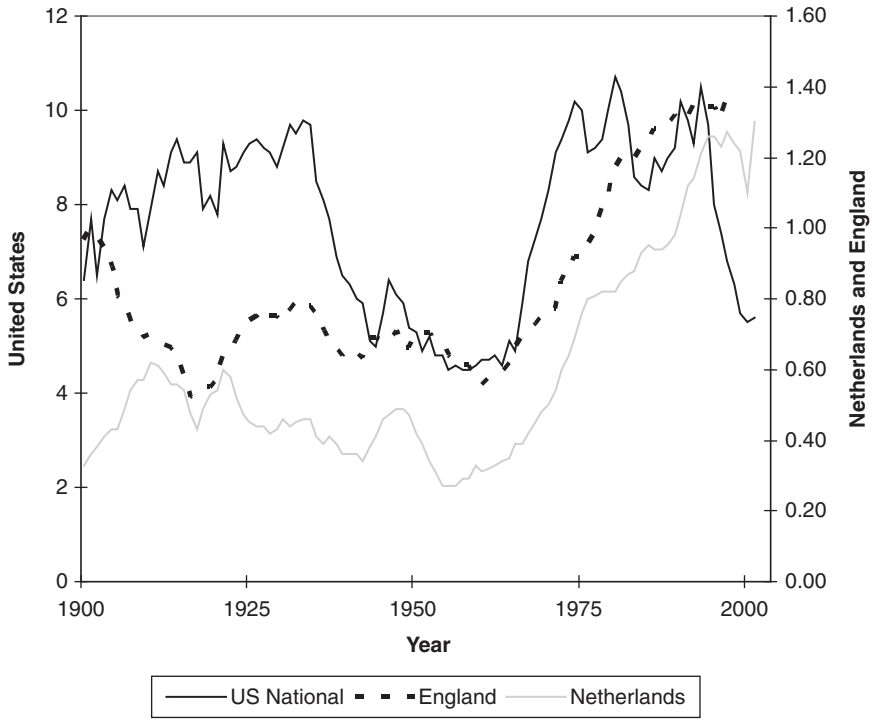


Figure 3
National homicide rates, 1900–2002
Sources: For the Netherlands, see CBS (2006); for England, see Home Office (2006); for the USA, see Monkkonen (2001b).

1945–2002: convergence of homicide trends in Europe and the USA

Between the 1950s and the mid-1990s, homicide rates more than doubled in the USA, Italy, Sweden, and Belgium, almost tripled in England and Wales, and virtually quadrupled in the Netherlands. These differences in rates of increase led to a closing of the gaps in the absolute rates of homicide (Eisner, 2003a). Figure 3 demonstrates that trends in lethal violence in the USA show a growing similarity with those of other industrialized nations. Nevertheless, the USA does remain a country with an exceptional number of homicides. Several recent discussions have helped shed light on the persistence of higher homicide rates in the USA (Zimring, 2003; Monkkonen, 2006; Spierenburg, 2006; Mennel, 2007). For instance, Spierenburg (2006) criticizes simple explanations and instead argues that the process of state formation in the USA developed much more rapidly than in Europe, limiting the establishment of a monopoly of force and promoting modes of private self-help.

Despite the USA's higher rate of homicide, both in the USA and Europe, homicide trends showed a significant upturn in the 1970s, 1980s, and

1990s, underlining the growing trend convergence across western societies (also see Garland, 2001). It appears that increases in homicides have peaked. Rates in the USA have declined during the past decade, plummeting from a high rate of 10.5 per 100,000 in 1993 to a low rate of 5.5 in 2000, but remaining under 6.0 per 100,000 until the most current (2005) data (Blumstein, 2000; FBI, 2006). However, in many European nations, there is no sign of a distinct decline, although rates have been flattening in some countries (CBS, 2006; Home Office, 2006; NCCP, 2006).

The overall picture

Whereas most researchers have taken satisfaction in Gurr's original 'inverted J-curve' (1981), demonstrating a smooth decline, followed by a small upturn since the 1950s, the data presented here exhibit strong and recurrent upheavals. These upheavals could simply be the result of isolated developments such as wars, famines, and the introduction of new definitions of homicide. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that these increases in lethal violence would occur simultaneously across cities and nations. Increases in homicides in England and Scandinavia mimicked the increase in homicidal violence found in early 17th-century Leiden. New York saw a similar increase in homicides in the mid-19th century as Liverpool. This is not to say that all places display simultaneous increases in levels of homicide. The commonality is that as countries become entrenched in a world economic system, trends in homicides appear to adjust to international patterns of economic growth and state formation.

A revised perspective

Even though the data suggest recurrent increases in homicides and show indications of trend convergence (though not necessarily rate convergence), it certainly does not discredit the finding that homicides, and probably overall levels violence as well, have declined since the Middle Ages. It appears likely that temporary upheavals in lethal violence have been an inherent feature within this long-term decline. However, Elias's theory assumes a protracted decline in violence.

This article takes the opinion that Elias's theory, while providing a good base for a theory of historical trends in violence, also needs to incorporate developments that have prompted trends toward a globalizing market economy (see also Garland, 2001). Elias's strong focus on state formation draws away from the crucial interplay between nation building *and* capitalism in western history (Tilly, 1992; Arrighi, 1994; Fischer, 1996). The growth of both market economies and state institutions has never been a smooth and gradual process, but rather one that takes place in bursts and spurts: this should be reflected in trends in violence. Periods in which the economy limits the growth of state institutions tend to undermine the development of

the civilizing process and lead to increases in violence. Periods in which state institutions are capable of mitigating uneven economic development, allowing a greater degree of social mobility and leading to the creation of new institutions of social incorporation, tend to spur the civilizing process and thereby decrease violence. Before elaborating in greater depth on these amendments to Elias's theory, it would be beneficial to elaborate his thought on increases in violence.

Elias also became interested in conditions that temporarily undermine the civilizing process. Elias referred to these counter-processes simply as 'decivilizing processes' (1996: 173, 2000: 157; see also Mennel, 1990; De Swaan, 1999). Decivilizing processes can manifest themselves in two ways (Fletcher, 1997: 83). First, the state can lose its capacity to control sections of its citizenry. This occurs when social institutions break down or political legitimacy is waning (see Cullen, 1994; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997; LaFree, 1998). If a state cannot protect its citizens from a period of misfortune, and social mobility is restricted for substantial sections of the population, the state loses its bargaining power. The resulting disruption of the social contract between citizens and the state can lead to increases in violence.

A second way in which decivilizing processes can prevail lies in the erosion of interdependencies between citizens. In periods in which status mobility is more restricted, social groups become more 'compartmentalized' in 'established' and 'outsider' categories, effectively reducing the interdependencies of outsiders to the rest of society (Elias and Scotson, 1965; De Swaan, 1999). As established groups seek to shut out outsiders, status mobility becomes more restricted for the latter. This reduces the need for outsiders to cultivate self-control, as its status-enhancing benefits have dissipated. The isolation of outsider groups from mainstream society allows the overall thrust of the civilizing process to remain relatively intact, because increases in violence are limited to outsider communities. A contemporary example would be the concentration of interpersonal violence in North American ghettoes (Wilson, 1987, 1996; Wacquant, 1997; Anderson, 1999).

Elias offers criminologists a broad theoretical tool to analyze macro-level changes in violence. Many current criminological studies focus too much on nation and time-specific factors to allow us to see their similarities (also see Garland, 2001). This is not to deny the merit in these explanatory frameworks. The problem that remains with Elias's theory, though, is that it is not specific as to when and where we should expect to find these 'decivilizing processes'. Elias (1996) locates the emergence of decivilizing processes solely in local contingencies, but the deeper social origins of these interruptions in internal pacification remain obscure. To address this problem, the civilizing perspective should pay greater attention to processes of economic change (Kalb, 1997). More specifically, Elias fails to explore fully how state formation and economic processes are interrelated (see Wallerstein, 1974, 1980, 1989; Braudel, 1981, 1982, 1984; Tilly, 1992; Arrighi, 1994).

Although it is difficult to determine whether *either* economic forces *or* state formation has been the most dominant constitutive factor in the development of western societies, they are without doubt interdependent forces (Wallerstein, 1974: 133; Braudel, 1984: 623; Mann, 1986; Arrighi, 1994: 144–58). Interdependence does not mean that a symbiotic relationship has ever existed, as both state formation and economic interests are to some extent mutually exclusive. Even though the overall historical trend is toward a greater pervasiveness of both state power and capital, one process has the potential to undermine the stability and expansionistic tendencies of the other.

Historically, there have been periods in which the growth of state institutions was more dominant and periods in which capital limited the growth of the state. The degree to which either capital or state formation is dominant can play a decisive role in determining trends in interpersonal violence. From a long-term perspective, capital and state formation regularly swap their dominant position in society. In periods when capitalistic pursuits are dominant, the effectiveness of state institutions in the control of violence is undermined and decivilizing processes can emerge. In periods when state formation leads to an expansion of institutions of social control and incorporation, the state harnesses the negative outfall of capital and civilizing processes can take hold, promoting internal pacification. What needs further explanation is why and when capital and state formation change guard in terms of their dominance.

Long centuries of development

An important perspective that explains the interconnected development of the modern nation-state and western capitalism is the 'long centuries' argument first conceived by Fernand Braudel (1981, 1982, 1984), and more recently revised by Giovanni Arrighi (1994). Arrighi argues that systemic hegemonic transitions, or long centuries, marked the development of modern western societies and the market economy that binds these states: 'the central aspect of this pattern is the alternation of epochs of material expansion with phases of financial rebirth and expansion' (1994: 6). Much like the expansion of the civilizing process, the economic world system has grown in strength and geographical influence (Braudel, 1984: 76–88; Arrighi, 1994: 9). Also parallel to the civilizing process are the systemic crises that reverse the growth of the world system.

Nevertheless, in each new 'long century' capital and states expand and connect more humans and institutions. The increasing interdependencies that Elias (1980, 1991, 1996, 2000) saw as central to the civilizing process are at the very least in part connections built by the growth of this world economic system. The overall growth of the state and capital could be the primary driver in the reduction of levels of violence during past centuries.

In the process of economic and state integration, 'hegemonic centers' play a prominent role in each long century as sites of economic and political innovation. They are also the sites where both the benefits and drawbacks of the system are most clearly visible. Since the 1500s, three such hegemonic centers (and thus long centuries) can be identified: the United Provinces[3] (1550–1830), England (1750–1933), and the USA (1870–present[4]) (Wallerstein, 1974, 1980, 1989, 2000, 2003; Arrighi, 1994). The growth of the world system has led to the gradual incorporation of larger geographical areas. Interestingly, the overall drop in homicide rates occurred first in the core nations of the world system (the Netherlands and England), and gradually spread outward as more nations were incorporated in this economic system (Eisner, 2003a).

Despite the overall growth of both state and capital, Arrighi (1994) distinguishes distinct phases within each 'long century': (1) an explosive expansion phase, (2) a sustained expansion phase, and (3) a contraction phase. In the first expansion phase, capital concentrates geographically in areas where the political power structure is advantageous (Wallerstein, 1974; Braudel, 1984; Arrighi, 1994). A rapid development of manufacturing and a strong inward flow of migrants mark the first part of this phase. During this period, the state is unable to counter the fallout of this uncontrolled growth. Institutions to harness the side effects of fast-paced economic growth have not yet matured. Rather than focusing on social incorporation, state institutions impose new methods of social coercion. If we apply Elias's insights to this period of rapid growth, violence should increase. State institutions lack legitimacy and social mobility is limited among outsider groups. This situation clearly resembles the traditional social disorganization scenario, which is not surprising since this theory was originally developed during an expansion phase (see Shaw and McKay, 1942; Bursik and Grasmick, 1993). The key difference between the current approach and social disorganization theory is that the latter makes predictions about community crime differences, whereas the former explains why, during *certain* times, levels of violence ought to increase in *certain* places.

During the sustained expansion phase, the state becomes more effective in developing institutions to counter the negative effects of fast-paced economic growth. Ultimately, the state manages to foster relations of interdependence with citizens by the creation of institutions of social incorporation, and thereby contains some of the negative effects of rapid economic development. Both states and economies benefit from a stable workforce, but in order to create the requisite level of self-control among workers, states need to transfer some social power back to workers (see Arrighi, 1994; Wallerstein, 2003). A process of 'functional democratization' is set in motion that increases the social power of workers and leads to a greater degree of social mobility. A strong decline in violence should characterize this period. Not only does the shift from institutions of social

coercion to institutions of social incorporation lead to a greater degree of political legitimacy, but the growing social mobility of former outsider groups ought to fuel processes that spur the development of self-control. Macro-level criminological theory has generally neglected to theorize about declining crime rates (but see also Blumstein and Wallman, 2000). However, considering the empirical support for the long-term decline in homicides, further development of theories that can explain this process are critical for the discipline. Elias's state-centered theory, combined with a greater sensitivity to economic processes, can thereby fill an important void in the literature.

In the third phase of each 'long century', the contraction phase, the power of state and workers has grown to a point where profitability is undermined. Rising taxes and wages make production more costly vis-a-vis locations where the state has not grown as complex. A process of deindustrialization and a shift to financial services emerges as capital from the dominant center relocates to a newly emerging hegemony.[5] Once again, the legitimacy of the state monopoly of force is undermined. A declining tax base makes it harder to maintain governmental institutions that have aided in the pacification of workers. Reducing employment opportunities fragments workers' power as competition for jobs intensifies and social mobility recedes.

Capitalist profit considerations reduce some, but not all, of the advances made in the second part of the expansion phase. Applying Elias, we should expect an increase in violence because social interdependencies decline. Decivilizing processes emerge with the weakening of the state and the renewed 'compartmentalization' of society in distinct 'established' and 'outsider' groups (De Swaan, 1999). As mentioned earlier, the rise in violence that we would expect during this phase could serve to undermine governmental legitimacy further, particularly in outsider communities (Sampson and Bartusch, 1998; Anderson, 1999). Nevertheless, given that state institutions and the growth in self-control ought to have extended their hold, levels of violence should not rise beyond the increases experienced in the first phase of the expansion phase. This process clearly is similar to the more recent variants of social disorganization theory that developed because the original theory appeared inadequate to explain rising crime during the 1970s and 1980s (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993). Nonetheless, the current perspective puts more emphasis on institutional breakdown and therefore underlines the importance of incorporating more institutionally focused theories (LaFree, 1998; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997). Furthermore, the amended civilizing perspective also puts more emphasis on the unifying similarities between western societies, rather than focusing on more contextual circumstances (such as race in the USA and social class in Britain). The following pages illustrate how these large-scale processes play out and affect changing levels of homicide in Holland, Britain, and the USA.

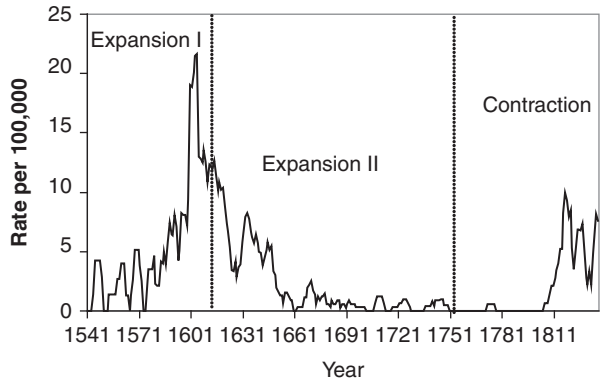


Figure 4
The Dutch long century: homicides in Leiden
Sources: Diederiks (1994a, 1994b, 1994c).

The Dutch long century, 1550–1830

Expansion phase I: 1550–1609

The United Provinces already was a highly urbanized society by the early 1500s. This was particularly the case for Amsterdam, which during the late 16th century took over Venice's role as the world's main entrepôt and financial center. Amsterdam's leading position also had profound effects on the economies of the other urban areas in Holland (Braudel, 1984: 184).

The economic growth translated into a greater demand for labor, and between 1500 and 1650 the United Provinces saw its population double from 1 million to 2 million (Braudel, 1984: 184). In cities, population growth was even more explosive. For instance, Leiden, which played a prominent role in the development of the textile industry, tripled in size between the 1570s and the 1630s (Braudel, 1982: 184–8, 499–502; Diederiks, 1990: 60–1). A large factor in the population growth of the United Provinces was the influx of immigrants from various parts of Europe (Wallerstein, 1980: 45; Braudel, 1984: 185–6).

During this period, the Dutch rapidly became world leaders in shipbuilding, textile processing, and international trade. These industries were all labor intensive and created a strong demand for skilled workers. The opening of the Beurs, the world's first stock market, and the establishment of the VOC (United East-Indies Company), the first multinational corporation, were also examples of the high degree of economic sophistication of the United Provinces.

Nevertheless, while some made fortunes, the majority of the population, particularly immigrants, often lived in misery: 'there were many pathetic scenes of poverty in seventeenth century Holland, where the rich were richer than anywhere else, and the poor as numerous and perhaps even worse-off, if only because of the chronically high cost of living' (Braudel, 1984: 185).

In Leiden, the strong increase in homicide convictions up to the early 17th century reflects the explosive population growth and squalid living conditions that accompanied this growth. Nevertheless, two additional factors contributed to the growth in violence. First, the still fragile Dutch state was ill suited to promote the incorporation of large groups of immigrants. For these outsiders the legitimacy of the state's monopoly of force was less self-evident, particularly since the newly forming Dutch state sought to expand its control by relying on social coercion. One example of the exertion of such social controls was the establishment of the Rasphuis (1595) (Foucault, 1977; Schama, 1987); another was continued reliance on severe corporal punishment (Spierenburg, 1984).

Second, the new leadership of the Dutch state drew its members from the commercial upper class; this had a particularly strong effect on political decision-making (Wallerstein, 1980: 61). To a large degree, the economic ascendancy of the United Provinces was only possible as a result of governmental resources which were appropriated to establish economic advantages and to defend the interests of the ruling class (Arrighi, 1994: 151).

In these circumstances, the monopoly of force enjoyed little legitimacy among less powerful social strata. Outsider groups reaped little of the growing affluence, and had little reason to abide by the discretionary powers of the state (itself focused on coercion rather than on social incorporation). The growth of violence in Leiden during this period seems to underline the importance of these processes (see Figure 4).

Expansion phase II: 1609–1750

The early 17th century heralded a turning point for both the Dutch economy and the Dutch state. Not only did the war of independence with Spain end in 1609, but the Dutch were also able to keep themselves out of active conflicts during the Thirty Years war (Braudel, 1984: 213). The establishment of the Beurs and the VOC signaled the further maturation of its economic success.

Amsterdam became the focal point of the world economy in the 17th century, and the concentration of trade, production, and finance created unprecedented wealth for a large group of Dutch merchants and a growing urban bourgeoisie. Production of consumer durables surged in the United Provinces, providing further opportunities for employment. Even though roughly half of Amsterdam's population continued to live in squalid conditions, social opposition to these conditions was minimal. The relatively generous welfare arrangements that emerged in this period help explain the lack of social unrest (Wallerstein, 1980: 64). The extent to which the working class in the United Provinces actually achieved a greater deal of social mobility is unclear. In Leiden, laborers unhappy with low wages and repressive policies by the state and employers engaged in multiple strikes during the 17th century, which at the very least points to some degree of empowerment of the working class (Braudel, 1982: 500).

The nature of social control also changed during this period. Reform rather than control of the dangerous classes came to embody this period (Foucault, 1977; Spierenburg, 1984; Franke, 1995; Pratt, 2002). The increasing use of prisons exemplified the move to more rationalized forms of punishment. These institutions were now designed to aid in the 'civilizing' of the lower classes and gave further legitimacy to the state monopoly of force.

It appears that between the early 17th century and mid-18th century, social conditions were favorable for a large decline in violence. The establishment of state institutions of incorporation helped pacify outsider communities. While poverty was still widespread, the promise of social advancement and the provision of some forms of welfare served to legitimize the state monopoly on force. The growing affluence of the middle strata of Dutch society also set in place a process of 'distinction' in which many adopted French customs and language to demonstrate their cultural refinement. This latter process may have contributed to a greater development of self-control among upwardly mobile groups, and thus appears to have contributed to the decline in lethal violence during this period.

Contraction phase: 1750–1830

By the mid-18th century, it became clear that Dutch supremacy was waning as economic and political competition undermined the Dutch hegemony. Other nations had seen the success of the VOC and copied this form of state capitalism, undermining Dutch trade monopolies (Braudel, 1982: 228; Arrighi, 1994: 156–7). As a result of intensified international competition, Dutch merchants switched from trade in tangible goods to a more exclusive specialization in high finance (Arrighi, 1994: 142). This shift to financial services affected industrial centers such as Haarlem, Leiden, and Delft, and a gradual process of deindustrialization commenced that undermined the social stability of many cities (Diederiks, 1990).

The Dutch state also came under increasing attack from foreign governments, particularly the English. Not only did the United Provinces lose its international prominence, but also the state lost much of its internal legitimacy, as evidenced by the *patriotten* movement. It is unclear exactly what lay at the basis of these domestic disturbances, the miserable economic conditions in the latter part of the 18th century or the last Anglo-Dutch war between 1781 and 1784 (Braudel, 1984: 275–6). The *patriotten*, driven by the lower urban bourgeoisie and upper working class aimed to overthrow the ancien régime and its rigid power structure. While not successful, the *patriotten* movement made it clear that opposition to the state was growing.

The social and economic conditions during the contraction phase may help explain why rates of homicide increased in Leiden during this period. The growing disparity between the rich and the poor, combined with declining legitimacy of the state, served to heighten the differences between established and outsider groups. The growing social mobility in

the expansion phase halted and was likely even reversed, creating resentment among the lower and middle classes who saw their prospects of social mobility diminish. Nevertheless, levels of homicide in Leiden did not surpass those in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, suggesting that a growing degree of self-control may have provided somewhat of a buffer to the reversal of economic fortunes.

Overall trends in violence in Leiden followed the predicted path quite well (see Figure 4). Data from several English counties and Stockholm also follow the homicide trends in Leiden in the late 16th and early 17th centuries (see Figure 1 and Eisner, 2003b), while national data from Finland and Sweden (both starting in 1754) indicate an increase in homicide rates from the early 1800s (Verkko, 1951: 179–84). Data from London (Monkkonen, 2001b), Kent (Cockburn, 1991), and Amsterdam (Spierenburg, 1993, 1994) are perhaps not as supportive. Although homicide data for Amsterdam and London are not available until the mid-17th century, both show a large increase and then a decrease in lethal violence between roughly 1680 and 1750. It appears that during the hegemony of the Dutch, urban centers that relied heavily on the production of goods display trends of violence that coincide with the theoretical perspective, but regions strong in trade did not necessarily follow this pattern.

The British long century, 1750–1931

Expansion phase I: 1750–1860

Britain's rise to hegemony was of a different nature than that of the United Provinces (and later the USA). Whereas the United Provinces' rise might have derived from a trade empire, Britain established its power as a territorial empire (Arrighi, 1994). While London's population and influence grew from an early date, the rest of Britain remained predominantly agricultural until the early 19th century. This meant that the problems associated with urbanization and industrialization did not emerge as early on during the British hegemony as they did in the United Provinces. The industrial revolution only took off after a build up in population across many urban areas. Birmingham's population, for instance, increased tenfold between 1760 and 1830 (Braudel, 1984: 564–5). After the initial jumpstart of industrialization, the process continued to absorb people, and many of the cities in the North (such as Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, and Sheffield) relied heavily on immigrants from the rest of the British Isles and Southern Europe (Braudel, 1984). As in the United Provinces two centuries earlier, this profound population growth and speed of urbanization created many social dislocations (Thompson, 1966; Engels, 1968; Pearson, 1983; Roberts, 1990; Davies, 1992; Humphries, 1997).

Along with these social dislocations, the perceived level of deviance of the working class led to growing concerns among the urban middle and upper classes. The state's response was to implement new forms of social control

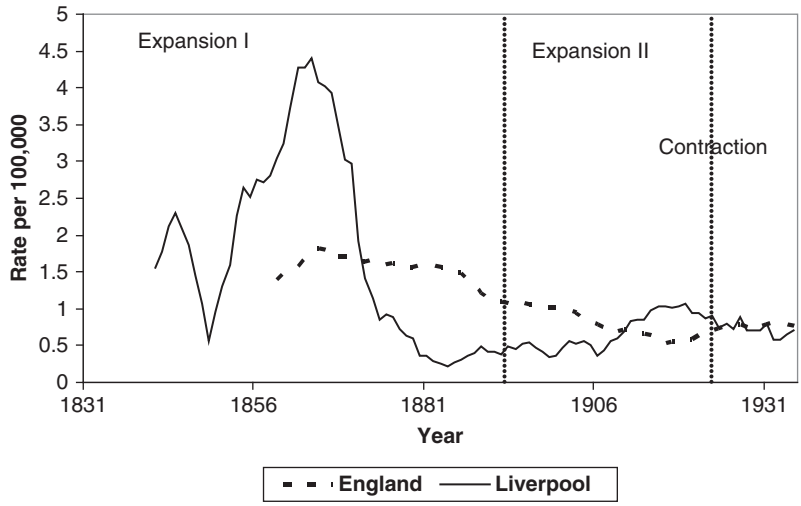


Figure 5
The British long century, 1750–1933 (showing 1831–1936)
Sources: For England, see Home Office (2006); for Liverpool, see Monkkonen (2001b).

that were meant to clamp down specifically on the perceived criminality of the poor because 'lawlessness was believed to foreshadow the possibilities of political insurrection among the lower orders' (Pearson, 1983: 159).

Prisons had already become the dominant form of punishment by the early 19th century, but the supposedly corrupting influence of these 'older style' prisons led to increasing resistance. The opening of London's Pentonville prison in 1842, which would become a model for quite some time thereafter, was an example of the latest innovations in social coercion designed to counter the negative effects of unbalanced growth (Pratt, 2002). The prison's austere and purpose-built architecture facilitated supervision and symbolized the increasing bureaucratization of social control. Another major innovation in social coercion emerged even earlier. Robert Peel's organization of the metropolitan police in 1829 would soon become the model for other police forces across Britain (Emsley, 1996: 225–41).

The working class did not attach much legitimacy to these new social institutions. Gangs continued to fight their turf battles in the streets, men and women continued to bring their domestic disputes out in public, and officers of the law were assaulted in large numbers (Pearson, 1983; Davies, 1998). Homicide data from the city of Liverpool show strong increases during the mid-19th century, peaking around the 1860s (see Figure 5).

Expansion phase II: 1860–1914

During the second half of the 19th century, a strong decline and stabilization of homicide trends set in. In Liverpool, homicide rates dropped from a high of approximately 4.0 per 100,000 in the early 1860s to a low of

approximately 0.4 by the close of the century (Monkkonen, 2001b). In England and Wales, homicide rates were more than halved during this period, dropping from 1.96 in 1865 to 0.97 in 1900 (Home Office, 2006). At this time, population growth in urban areas leveled off and salaries of the working class increased. The growing affluence of the working class also meant they became a political force, prompting the state to develop new forms of social incorporation.

Many of the changes initiated by the British state in the mid-to-late 19th century aimed to pacify the working class. For instance, the growing power of the working and middle classes was instrumental in the development of public education, particularly in the Elementary Education Act of 1870 (De Swaan, 1989: 112–8). Healthcare, social security provisions, and public utilities, such as sewage and water, also gradually became the province of the state. While a formal social security system did not emerge until the early 20th century, an elaborate and well-regulated system of provisions for the poor existed by the 1880s (De Swaan, 1989: 200).

The growing power and affluence of the British working class prompted by changes in state institutions led to both a wider acceptance of the state monopoly of force and to a pacified habitus (Elias and Scotson, 1965). Whereas the working class had been geographically and socially isolated until the mid-19th century, the economic and social changes gradually socialized them into middle-class behavior, allowing them even more social and geographical mobility as their behavior became more attuned with that of middle- and upper-class groups.

During the mid-to-late 19th century, levels of violence in England dropped markedly. Not only was this the result of growing state institutions and their increasing legitimacy, but also of an increasing degree of self-control that developed as working-class families sought to adopt middle-class lifestyles.

Contraction phase: 1914–33

The social and economic developments that occurred during the second part of the British expansion phase ultimately served to undermine its hegemony. The growing power of the working class and the increasing bureaucracy of the state made labor more expensive and investors gradually turned to other and more lucrative markets for investments (Arrighi, 1994: 166). A gradual process of deindustrialization ensued as investment capital left Britain. Interestingly, the degree of deindustrialization in Britain was never as profound as it was in the United Provinces.

Nevertheless, the gradual decline of British hegemony created a growing income polarization between the working class and other social classes (Arrighi, 1994). Whereas the Edwardian period was an age of affluence for the well-to-do, the working class suffered.

Trends in homicide in Liverpool (Monkkonen, 2001b) during the British long century largely conform to theoretical expectations: a strong (albeit delayed) increase and decrease in the initial expansion phase and stabilizing

rates of homicide during the latter part of the expansion phase, with increases in homicidal violence starting just before the beginning of the contraction phase. National records in England and Wales began counting homicides in the 1850s, a period of increases in homicides (Home Office, 2006). A downward pattern of lethal violence in England and Wales exhibits itself during the second expansion phase, and during the contraction phase levels of homicide mildly increased (Home Office, 2006). When comparing the data for England and Liverpool, it appears as if national data lag about 10–20 years behind trends in Liverpool. Homicide trends in Liverpool also show a greater variability in actual rates. This indicates that the effects of economic and political changes may be more concentrated in industrial centers, as in the Dutch period. Interestingly, homicide trends in New York are very similar to those in Liverpool for this period (Monkkonen, 2001b). However, homicide trends in London (Monkkonen, 2001b) do not exhibit a strong resemblance to those of either England or Liverpool. From the 1750s to the early 20th century, homicide trends in London remained much more stable though rates went up after the First World War. Time series from Sweden and Finland (Verkko, 1951) also show little resemblance to trends found in Liverpool or England. The origins of these differences may be rooted in local peculiarities. For instance, Lehti (2001) suggested that the higher homicide rates in Finland might have been a result of the distinct Finish industrial revolution and its strong dependence on forestry.

One possible explanation for the differences in trends in these cities is that urban centers with an overreliance on manufacturing are more affected by long centuries than cities with a more diversified economic base. Arguably, both Leiden and Liverpool had less diversified economies than either Amsterdam or London. If processes of industrialization and deindustrialization fuel changes in homicide trends, then it should come as no surprise that these economic processes affect industrial cities more than cities with more diversified economies. A larger sample of cities is clearly required to bring a more conclusive answer to this issue.

The USA, 1870–present

The long century dominated by the USA begins in 1870 and continues to the present. Similar to Britain being the recipient of Dutch investments during the closing stage of Dutch hegemony, the USA became the largest recipient of investments from Britain between the late 19th century and early 20th century. After the First World War, the USA's hegemony was firmly established (Arrighi, 1994). Even though the aftermath of the war and in particular the Great Crash of 1929 threw the world into a deep recession, the USA managed to expand both its economic and political influence until well after World War II. Only by the 1960s did the USA's supremacy wane.

Trends in homicide during the USA's long century show a more consistent pattern: as during the previous two hegemonic cycles, there was a strong

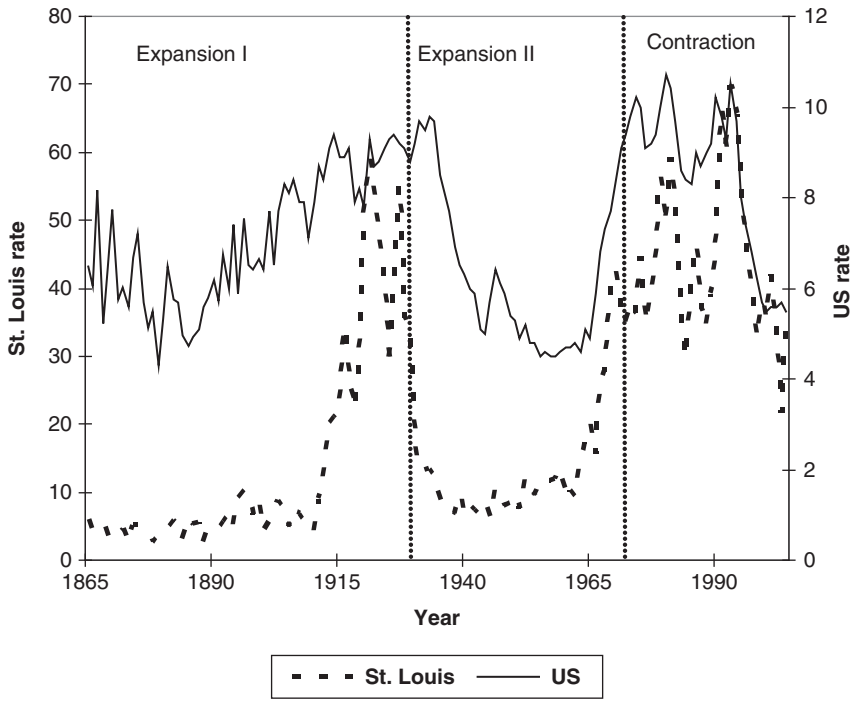


Figure 6
The US long century, 1870–2004
Sources: For St Louis, see Rojek (2003); for the USA during 1870–99, see Monkkonen (1994); for the USA during 1900–2004, see Monkkonen (2001b).

increase during the initial expansion and industrialization phase, a decrease and stabilization during the second part of the expansion phase, and an increase during the contraction phase (see Figure 6).

Expansion phase I: 1870–1929

During the initial expansion phase the USA industrialized and quickly transformed into a highly urbanized nation. The percentage of the population living in cities quickly rose from about 10 percent in 1840 to almost 40 percent by 1900 (Carter et al., 1997). High levels of overseas immigration drove much of this staggering urban growth, and as in the United Provinces and Britain, these immigrants settled in overcrowded tenements in socially disorganized neighborhoods (Shaw and McKay, 1942). State provision for immigrants was rare. Whereas about two-thirds of US-born whites received federal pensions by the 1890s, African Americans and immigrants remained excluded (De Swaan, 1989: 211). On the other hand, concerns over growing levels of delinquency led to a growth in institutions of social coercion. One of the earliest examples was the Walnut Street prison in Philadelphia, where prisoners were kept in solitary confinement to

avoid 'contamination' by other delinquents (Rothman, 1990: 105). In 1899, Chicago was the first city to create a separate juvenile court system. Aside from heavily relying on a growing justice system, the state undermined its legitimacy by outlawing behavior (such as opium and marijuana use) associated with specific ethnic and social groups (Szasz, 1985; Adler, 2001). Similar to Leiden and Liverpool, uneven economic growth, explosive urbanization, and an overreliance on institutions of coercion appeared to fuel growing levels of homicide in the USA.

Expansion phase II: 1929–73

Perhaps the realization that misfortune could strike anyone prompted profound changes in people's opinion of social provisions immediately following the 1929 crash. By 1935 the Social Security Act had been brought into effect and various other welfare programs, such as Medicare (1965) and Medicaid (1965), followed swiftly (De Swaan, 1989: 215). Despite the economic recession, the US economy continued to inch forward. The single most important driving force behind the economic dominance of the USA was its high degree of mechanization (Harvey, 1990). Not only did companies in the USA build products at lower cost, they also paid higher wages, meaning that workers were able to purchase some of the products they manufactured. Many immigrants who previously lived in ethnically homogeneous inner city neighborhoods were now able to move to more affluent and ethnically mixed suburbs. The combination of a growth in institutions of social incorporation and growing social mobility appears vital to declines in violence during this period.

Contraction phase: 1973–present

The economic fortunes of the USA took a turn at the end of the 1960s, when labor costs and taxes undermined the profitability of companies (Harvey, 1990; Reich, 1991; Wallerstein, 2003). As in the United Provinces and Britain, the USA shifted to a focus on high finance, displacing a good portion of its industrial workforce. The ensuing process of deindustrialization had profound social and political consequences. Income polarization widened from the 1970s, and limited the social mobility of low-status groups (Newman, 1988; Reich, 1991). A political shift that de-emphasized welfare provisions, but promoted the use of social coercion undermined the legitimacy of the state monopoly on the use of force, particularly among young African American males.

Homicide trends during this long century conform largely to theoretical expectations. Levels of homicide in the USA rose during its initial expansion phase, particularly in the first part of the 20th century (Monkkonen, 1994, 2001b; see Figure 6). After the Great Crash of 1929, national levels of homicide quickly dropped and stabilized for much of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Levels of homicide rose again in the late 1960s and remained

high until the mid-1990s, after which a sharp decline set in. Interestingly, when comparing city to national data, some similarities between the US and British long centuries can be observed. For instance, data for St Louis indicate that trend changes manifested themselves sooner and more extremely in this predominantly industrial city than in the nation as a whole (Rojek, 2003; see Figure 6). Other major cities in the USA with more diversified economies, such as New York, also follow the national-level data, but display less fluctuation than industrial centers (Monkkonen, 2001b). Although trends in homicide in Europe do not uniformly follow trends seen in the USA, there is a growing resemblance between European and US trends in homicide in the late 20th century. Both England (Home Office, 2006) and the Netherlands (CBS, 2006) saw stronger increases in homicidal violence in the latter part of the 20th century than in the early 1900s. Part of these differences may stem from the degree of industrialization that these nations previously experienced. For instance, the Netherlands and England already were industrialized nations before the 20th century which may have mediated some of the stronger fluctuations in homicide in the early 20th century.

In 1993, homicide rates in the USA peaked, declining steeply thereafter and stabilizing at a rate of around 5.5 from 2000 onward (FBI, 2006). The decline in violence in the USA appears to mark the end of processes of deindustrialization that drove up violence between the 1970s and 1990s. Other industrialized nations were not as quick to follow. In Sweden, homicide rates have continued to inch upward (NCCP, 2006), but in both the Netherlands (CBS, 2006) and England (Home Office, 2006) homicide rates have ended their upward march and stabilized from 2000 onward.

When looking at the available evidence for the past three long centuries, trends in violence display a mixed bag when compared to the theoretical expectations. The theory appears to explain trends in homicides in industrial cities and for the most recent long century. More economically diversified cities do not display the same degree of support. This could be a result of limited amounts of data or it could result from the fundamentally different role that industrial cities play in a world economic system. However, given the good fit for some places and times, it would be prudent to conduct more in-depth analyses of the theoretical outline sketched above.

Conclusion

This article began by criticizing the description of the history of violence as one of consistent decline. By demonstrating that levels of homicide rebounded on at least several occasions during the past five centuries questions emerged about the applicability of Norbert Elias's civilizing thesis. Rather than rejecting this perspective altogether, though, this article expanded the civilizing thesis and incorporated an economic perspective within it. This new perspective focused on the interactions between state formation and long-term economic developments. Drawing on Arrighi's idea of

long centuries (1994), three separate phases within long centuries were identified. In each of those three phases, distinct changes in state institutions and the economy affected trends in violence. Illustrative evidence from the United Provinces, Britain, and the USA appears to coincide with some of the theoretical expectations. While data are sparse and contradictory for some locations, the most recent long century (that of the USA) demonstrated much consistency with expected trends in violence. One notable conclusion is that the theoretical modifications appear to be more applicable to explaining trends in homicide in industrial centers (such as Leiden and Liverpool), but that trends in more economically diverse cities are not as consistent (Amsterdam and London). To reach a more solid conclusion on the applicability of the theory, further data collection is necessary. In particular, data on increases in violence before the 1900s are still scarce.

Despite these issues, the merging of the civilizing thesis with the long-centuries arguments helps shed some light on the seemingly cyclical downward nature of homicides in western societies. The article thereby addresses a major concern about Elias's theory, and it could serve to introduce his important thoughts and observations to mainstream criminological work.

Whether the current perspective provides us with a viable forecast of future trends in interpersonal violence remains to be seen. The processes of economic and state integration now span the entire western world. Expansion of the economic world system is now taking place outside the western context with both China and India showing much potential for taking over the economic dominance of the USA. The civilizing thesis developed by Elias explains historical changes in the European cultural context, and it is doubtful that industrialization in other cultural spheres will produce identical changes in criminal violence. Nonetheless, as Europe and the USA will remain integrated in international economic networks, the historical processes outlined will continue to exert their influence on western trends in interpersonal violence. While it is impossible to predict how rates of violence will change, trends in violence will likely follow patterns outlined above as market economies expand and contract. However, unforeseen developments could throw a wrench in these forecasts. For instance, global warming could throw up new challenges in the future development of states and economies, and thereby introduce entirely new variables in the study of crime. All things being equal, though, we would expect that criminal violence will further subside, albeit interspersed with occasional upheavals. Levels of homicide clearly cannot fall too much more, and it is likely that the civilizing process will manifest itself in other forms of violence (Mennel, 2007).

Particularly if 'traditional' forms of interpersonal violence (such as homicide and robbery) are all but subdued by social and self-controls, the civilizing process may extend into 'newer' types of criminal violence. The growing outrage at and policing of child abuse and domestic violence give us an indication of what types of interpersonal violence could see a greater influence

of civilizing processes. Given the difficulties already present in the long-term measurement of homicide, a seemingly straightforward type of violence, the broadening of what is considered serious interpersonal violence will likely present us with even more difficulties in the future.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2003 American Society of Criminology meeting in Denver, CO. The author would like to thank Manuel Eisner (Cambridge University) for permission to use the History of Homicide Database as well as his constructive criticism of earlier versions of this article as well as Rick Rosenfeld, Richard Wright, and Scott Decker for their constructive criticism and support. The author would also like to extend his gratitude to the anonymous reviewers of *Theoretical Criminology* and to Lynn Chancer for her supportive role in the review process.

1. For a more elaborate discussion of 'habitus', see Elias (2000), Bourdieu (1977, 1990), Fletcher (1997), and Smith (2001).
2. Spierenburg (1993: 6), for instance, estimated that only one in nine homicides resulted in convictions. Whereas the Leiden data might be a serious underestimation of the actual number of cases of lethal violence, it is preferable for researchers interested in trend fluctuations. The homicide rates calculated by Spierenburg (1993, 1994) are aggregated in periods of up to 25 years and, thereby, may mask some strong fluctuations. The starting period of his data is the late 17th century, a time in which the Leiden data also shows a downward trend.
3. The United Provinces covered most of what is today the Netherlands.
4. It is as of yet unclear whether the US phase of dominance is over. Some have suggested that the Asian Tigers are the newly emerging hegemonic center, but recent crises have led others to doubt this assessment.
5. The decline of a hegemonic power coincides with the emergence of a new core power, and the contraction phase in the 'old' core coincides with the expansion phase of a 'new' core.

References

Adler, Jeffrey S. (2001) 'Halting the Slaughter of the Innocents: The Civilizing Process and the Surge of Violence in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago', *Social Science History* 25(1): 29–52.

Anderson, Elijah (1999) *The Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: Norton.

Arrighi, Giovanni (1994) *The Long Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso.

Beattie J.M. (1973) 'The Pattern of Crime in England: 1660–1800', *Past and Present* 62(1): 47–95.

Berendt, Dirk Arend (1976) *Misdaad in de Middeleeuwen: Een Onderzoek Naar de Criminaliteit in het Laat-Middeleeuwse Utrecht*. Haarlem: Gottmer.

Bienen, Leigh B. and Brandon Rottinghaus (2002) 'Learning from the Past, Living in the Present: Understanding Homicide in Chicago: 1870–1930', *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 92(3–4): 437–534.

Blumstein, Alfred (2000) 'Disaggregating the Violence Trends', in Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman (eds) *The Crime Drop in America*, pp. 13–44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blumstein, Alfred and Joel Wallman (eds) (2000) *The Crime Drop in America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boomgaard, Johannes Everandus Antonius (1992) *Misdaad en Straf in Amsterdam*. Zwolle: Waanders.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Braudel, Fernand (1981) *The Structures of Everyday Life: Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century*. New York: Harper and Row.

Braudel, Fernand (1982) *The Wheels of Commerce: Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century*. New York: Harper and Row.

Braudel, Fernand (1984) *The Perspective of the World: Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century*. New York: Harper and Row.

Bursik, Robert J. and Harold D. Grasmick (1993) *Neighborhoods and Crime*. Lexington: Lexington Books.

Carter, S.B., S.S. Gartner, M.R. Haines, A.L. Olmstead, R. Sutch and G. Wright (eds) (1997) *U.S. Bureau of the Census: Historical Statistics of the United States on CD-ROM: Colonial Times to 1970 – Bicentennial Edition* [machine-readable data set]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CBS (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek) (2006) [machine-readable data set], URL (downloaded 20 December): www.cbs.nl.

Chesnais, Jean-Claude (1992) 'The History of Violence: Homicide and Suicide through the Ages', *International Social Science Journal* 44(2): 217–34.

Cockburn, J.S. (1991) 'Patterns of Violence in English Society: Homicide in Kent 1560–1985', *Past and Present* 130: 70–106.

Cullen, Francis T. (1994) 'Social Support as an Organizing Concept for Criminology: Presidential Address to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences', *Justice Quarterly* 11(4): 527–59.

Davies, Andrew (1992) *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900–1939*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Davies, Andrew (1998) 'Youth Gangs: Masculinity and Violence in Late Victorian Manchester and Salford', *Journal of Social History* 32(2): 340–69.

Decker, S.H., J. Rojek and E. Baumer (2005) 'A Century – or more – of Homicide in St. Louis', in B. Baybeck and E.T. Jones (eds) *St. Louis Metromorphosis: Past Trends and Future Directions*, pp. 257–74. St Louis: Missouri Historical Society.

De Swaan, Abraham (1989) *Zorg en de Staat: Welzijn, onderwijs en gezondheidszorg in Europa en de Verenigde Staten in de Nieuwe Tijd* (*In Care of the*

State: Health Care, Education, and Welfare in Europe and America During the Modern Era). Amsterdam: Bert Bakker.
De Swaan, Abraham (1999) 'Dyscivilisatie, massale uitroeiing, en de staat' ('Decivilization, Mass Extermination and the State'), *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 26(3): 289–301.
Diederiks, Herman (1990) 'Quality and Quantity in Historical Research in Criminality and Criminal Justice', *Historical Social Research* 15(4): 57–76.
Diederiks, Herman (1994a) *Criminal Justice in Leiden, 1533–1811* (NIWI F1501) [machine-readable data set]. The Hague: Dutch Historical Archive.
Diederiks, Herman (1994b) *Hof van Assissen, 1811–1838* (NIWI F1503) [machine-readable data set]. The Hague: Dutch Historical Archive.
Diederiks, Herman (1994c) Data from the 'Rechtbank van Eerste Aanleg' in Leiden, 1811–1838 (NIWI F1502) [machine-readable data set]. The Hague: Dutch Historical Archive.
Eckberg, Douglas (2001) 'Stalking the Elusive Homicide', *Social Science History* 25(1): 67–91.
Eisner, Manuel (2001) 'Modernization, Self-control, and Lethal Violence', *British Journal of Criminology* 41: 618–38.
Eisner, Manuel (2003a) 'Secular Trends of Violent Crime: Evidence and Theoretical Interpretations', *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review* 31: 83–142.
Eisner, Manuel (2003b) 'History of Homicide Database' [machine-readable dataset], personal data collection. Cambridge University.
Elias, Norbert (1980) *What is Sociology?* New York: Columbia University Press.
Elias, Norbert (1991) *The Society of Individuals*. London: Blackwell.
Elias, Norbert (1996) *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Elias, Norbert (2000 [1939]) *The Civilising Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, revised edn. London: Blackwell.
Elias, Norbert and John L. Scotson (1965) *The Established and the Outsiders*. London: Frank Cass.
Emsley, Clive (1996) *Crime and Society in England 1750–1900*. New York: Longman.
Engels, Friedrich (1968 [1844]) *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
FBI (2006) *US homicides: 1986–2005* [machine-readable data set], URL (downloaded 4 January 2007): http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/data/table_01.html.
Fischer, David Hackett (1996) *The Great Wave: Price Revolution and the Rhythm of History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Fletcher, Jonathan (1997) *Violence and Civilization*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Foucault, Michel (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage.
Franke, Herman (1994) 'Violent Crime in the Netherlands: A Historical-Sociological Analysis', *Crime, Law, and Social Change* 21: 73–100.
Franke, Herman (1995) *The Emancipation of Prisoners: A Socio-Historical Analysis of the Dutch Prison Experience*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Garland, David (1990) *Punishment and Modern Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Garland, David (2001) *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Giddens, Anthony (1990) *The Nation State and Violence*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Given, James Buchanan (1977) *Society and Homicide in Thirteenth-Century England*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Gurr, Ted Robert (1981) 'Historical Trends in Violent Crime: A Critical Review of the Evidence', in Michael Tonry and Norval Morris (eds) *Crime and Justice*, Vol. 3, pp. 295–353. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Gurr, Ted Robert (1989) 'Historical Trends in Violent Crime: Europe and the United States', in Ted Robert Gurr (ed.) *Violence in America, Volume I: The History of Crime*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Harvey, David (1990) *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. London: Blackwell.
Home Office (2006) *Research Development Statistics* [machine-readable data set]. London: Home Office.
Humphries, Stephen (1997) *Hooligans or Rebels: An Oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth, 1889–1939*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
Johnson, Eric A and Erik H. Monkkonen (1996) *The Civilization of Crime: Violence in Town and Country since the Middle Ages*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Kalb, Don (1997) *Expanding Class: Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities. The Netherlands, 1850–1950*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Lacour, Eva (2001) 'Faces of Violence Revisited: A Typology of Violence in Early Modern Rural Germany', *Journal of Social History*, spring: 649–67.
LaFree, Gary (1998) *Losing Legitimacy: Street Crime and the Decline of Social Institutions*. Boulder: Westview.
LaFree, Gary (1999) 'Declining Violent Crime Rates in the 1990s: Predicting Crime Booms and Busts', *Annual Review of Sociology* 25: 145–68.
LaFree, Gary (2005) 'Evidence for Elite Convergence in Cross-National Homicide Victimization Trends, 1956 to 2000', *Sociological Quarterly* 46: 191–211.
LaFree, Gary and Kriss A. Drass (2002) 'Counting Crime Booms among Nations: Evidence for Homicide Victimization Rates, 1956–1998', *Criminology* 40(4): 769–800.
Lehti, Martti (2001) 'The Homicide Wave in Finland from 1905 to 1932', URL (consulted 10 December 2006): http://www.optula.om.fi/8610.htm. Helsinki: National Research Institute of Legal Policy.
Mann, Michael (1986) *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Mares, Dennis M. (2004) 'Civilization, Economic Change, and Trends in Interpersonal Violence', unpublished doctoral dissertation. St Louis: University of Missouri at St Louis.
Mennel, Stephen (1990) 'Decivilising Processes: Theoretical Significance and Some Lines of Research', *International Sociology* 5(2): 205–23.

Mennel, Stephen (2007) *The American Civilizing Process*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Messner, Steven F. and Richard Rosenfeld (1997) *Crime and the American Dream*, 2nd edn. Belmont: Wadsworth.
Monkkonen, Eric H. (1994) *Police Departments, Arrests, and Crime in the United States 1860–1920* [machine-readable data set]. Ann Arbor: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.
Monkkonen, Eric H. (2001a) 'Estimating the Accuracy of Historic Homicide Rates: New York City and Los Angeles', *Social Science History* 25(1): 53–66.
Monkkonen, Eric H. (2001b) *Homicides in New York City 1797–1999 (and Various Comparison Sites)* [machine-readable data set]. Los Angeles and Ann Arbor, MI: University of California and Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.
Monkkonen, Eric H. (2001c) *Murder in New York City*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Monkkonen, Eric H. (2006) 'Homicide: Explaining America's Exceptionalism', *American Historical Review*, February: 76–94.
NCCP (National Council for Crime Prevention) (2006) *Total Number of Reported Offences, 2005* [machine-readable data set], URL (downloaded 10 December 2006): http://www.bra.se.
Newman, Katherine S. (1988) *Falling From Grace: Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Osterberg, Eva (1996) 'Criminality, Social Control, and the Early Modern State: Evidence and Interpretations in Scandinavian Historiography', in Eric A. Johnson and Erik H. Monkkonen (eds) *The Civilization of Crime: Violence in Town and Country since the Middle Ages*, pp. 35–62. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Pearson, Geoffrey (1983) *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*. London: Macmillan.
Pratt, John (2002) *Punishment and Civilization*. London: Sage.
Reich, Robert B. (1991) *The Work of Nations*. New York: Vintage.
Roberts, Robert (1990 [1971]) *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century*. London: Penguin.
Rojek, Jeffrey (2003) St Louis homicide arrest data collected from the St Louis Police Department [machine-readable data set] (personal communication).
Roth, Randolph (2001) 'Homicide in Early Modern England 1549–1800: The Need for a Quantitative Synthesis', *Crime, History, and Society* 5(2): 33–67.
Rothman, David J. (1990) *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*. Boston: Little Brown.
Sampson, Robert J. and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch (1998) 'Legal Cynicism and (Subcultural?) Tolerance of Deviance', *Law and Society Review* 32(4) 777–804.
Schama, Simon (1987) *Overvloed en Onbehagen: De Nederlandse Cultuur in de Gouden Eeuw* (*The Embarrassment of Riches: Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*). Amsterdam: Contact.
Sharpe, J.A. (1999) *Crime in Early Modern England: 1550–1750*. New York: Longman.
Shaw, C. and H.D. McKay (1942) *Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, Dennis (2001) *Norbert Elias and Modern Social Theory*. London: Sage.
Spierenburg, Pieter (1984). *The Spectacle of Suffering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Spierenburg, Pieter (1993) 'Lange termijn trends in doodslag' ('Long-Term Trends in Homicide'), *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 20(1): 66–106.
Spierenburg, Pieter (1994) 'Faces of Violence: Homicide Trends and Cultural Meanings: Amsterdam, 1431–1816', *Journal of Social History* 27(4): 701–17.
Spierenburg, Pieter (1996) 'Long-Term Trends in Homicide: Theoretical Reflections and Dutch Evidence, Fifteenth to Twentieth Centuries', in Eric A. Johnson and Erik H. Monkkonen (eds) *The Civilization of Crime: Violence in Town and Country since the Middle Ages*, pp. 63–105. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Spierenburg, Pieter (2001) 'Violence and the Civilizing Process: Does it Work?' *Crime, History and Society* 5(2): 87–105.
Spierenburg, Pieter (2004) 'Punishment, Power and History: Foucault and Elias', *Social Science History* 28(4): 607–36.
Spierenburg, Pieter (2006) 'Democracy Came Too Early: A Tentative Explanation for the Problem of American Homicide', *American Historical Review*, February: 104–14.
Stone, Lawrence (1983) 'Interpersonal Violence in English Society 1300–1980', *Past and Present* 101: 22–33.
Szasz, Thomas (1985) *Ceremonial Chemistry*. Holmes Beach: Learning Publications.
Thoden van Velzen, H.U.E. (1984) 'The Djuka Civilization', *The Netherlands' Journal of Sociology* 20(2): 85–97.
Thome, Helmuth (2001) 'Explaining Long-Term Trends in Violent Crime', *Crime, History, and Society* 5(2): 69–86.
Thompson, E.P. (1966) *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage.
Tilly, Charles (1992) *Coercion, Capital, and European States: AD 990–1992*, revised edn. London: Blackwell.
Vanhemelryck, F. (1981) *De Criminaliteit in the Ammanie van Brussel van de Late Middeleeuwen tot het Einde van het Ancien Regime (1401–1789)* (*Criminality in Brussels County from the Late Middle Ages to the end of the Ancien Regime (1401–1789)*). Brussels: Paleis der Academien.
Van Krieken, Robert (1989) 'Violence, Self-Discipline and Modernity: Beyond the Civilizing Process', *Sociological Review* 37(2): 193–218.
Verkko, Veli (1951) *Homicides and Suicides in Finland and their Dependence on National Character*. Copenhagen: GEC Gads Forlag.
Wacquant, Loic J.D. (1997) 'Elias in the Dark Ghetto', *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 24(3–4): 340–8.
Wallerstein, Immanuel (1974) *The Modern World-System, Volume I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. San Diego: Academic Press.
Wallerstein, Immanuel (1980) *The Modern World-System, Volume II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy: 1600–1750*. San Diego: Academic Press.

Wallerstein, Immanuel (1989) *The Modern World-System, Volume III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730–1840s*. San Diego: Academic Press.
Wallerstein, Immanuel (2000) *The Essential Wallerstein*. New York: New Press.
Wallerstein, Immanuel (2003) *The Decline of American Power*. New York: New Press.
Wilson, William J. (1987) *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Wilson, William J. (1996) *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Vintage.
Wouters, Cas (2000) 'Changing Patterns of Social Controls and Self-Controls: On the Rise of Crime since the 1950s and the Sociogenesis of a "Third Nature"', *British Journal of Criminology* 39(3): 416–32.
Ylinkangas, Heikki (2001) *Five Centuries of Violence in Finland and the Baltic Area*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
Zimring, Franklin E. (2003) *The Contradictions of American Capital Punishment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

DENNIS MARES is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice Studies at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. A native of the Netherlands, he received his MA in Cultural Anthropology from Utrecht University, the Netherlands and obtained his PhD in Criminology from the University of Missouri at St Louis. His publications focus on juvenile gangs, the neighborhood dimensions of violence, and the history of crime and social control.