The Importance of Testing Criminological Theories in Historical Context: The Civilization Thesis versus the Nation-Building Hypothesis

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As Stanley Lieberson observes in *Making It Count*, it is difficult for social scientists to conduct controlled experiments (Lieberson 1985). In most instances, we can only engage in non-experimental empirical research and try as best we can to make useful inferences from the patterns we find, even though we know it will be impossible to isolate and measure with certainty the causal impact of a particular variable. Lieberson believes, however, that we can learn a great deal from non-experimental empirical research, if we study many places over long periods of time and discover patterns that surface so strongly and repetitively in the presence of a particular variable that they can be described with some confidence as causal.

That is why it is important to test criminological theories against historical as well as contemporary data. I will focus on recent efforts by historians to test two competing macrohistorical theories of violence: the civilization thesis of Norbert Elias (1982) and Pieter Spierenburg (2008) and the nation-building hypothesis, as I would prefer to call it, which was developed independently in the mid-1990s by Gary LaFree (1998), Manuel Eisner (2001), Roger Gould (2003), and myself (Roth 2009). I will then suggest ways in which we might test these

competing theories in the future by studying historical situations that appear at first glance to confound both theories. There may be no universal or timeless pattern. But it is essential to determine when and where the correlates of violence were different, if we are to understand the social circumstances and cultural practices that facilitate or deter aggression. Comparative history offers a promising way to begin.

HISTORICAL STUDIES OF CRIME

First, however, I would like to suggest that historical studies of crime in particular places over long periods of time offer one of the best opportunities to develop new macrohistorical theories of crime. I know it sounds odd to claim that a particular place can be so illuminating, but as a rule of thumb, most social science historians believe—as my teachers taught me—that it is better to study a small number of places over a long period of time than many places over a shorter period, because the former gives us the best opportunity to study change over time. That is especially important when we study deep changes or patterns that may take decades or even centuries to appear.

When I embarked twenty-five years ago on a study of violent crime in northern New England, I adopted that strategy, determined to trace crime trends from colonial times to the present. I decided to study New Hampshire and Vermont because I thought (from FBI data and from data I had already gathered for the early nineteenth century) that they had always had low rates of violence, and that they therefore held the key to understanding how a democratic, pluralistic society like the United States could be nonviolent. Most scholars at the time focused on cultures of violence, almost to the exclusion of cultures of nonviolence. I already knew

northern New England well enough to realize that the theories of "nonviolence" that could be extrapolated from the prevailing theories of violent cultures didn't apply to Vermont and New Hampshire. For instance, northern New Englanders were just as obsessed as antebellum Southerners with their personal honor, and they felt the sting of dishonor deeply, so much so that it could drive them to violence. They simply had a better chance than Southerners of possessing the attributes that made a person "honorable" and better means of defending their honor nonviolently, particularly through ironic or self-deprecating humor. Consider the scorn heaped by the temperate majority in the early nineteenth century upon people who drank, and their willingness to shame drinkers personally and publicly. When a church committee in South Newbury, Vermont, found that a habitual drunkard had backslid, it posted a notice at the post office announcing his excommunication. "Whereas Mr. Lyon has not kept his promise to reform, we the Church Committee return him to the outside world from whence he came. By the church committee." The next day another notice appeared. "Whereas Mr. Lyon is so much worse than when he joined the church, we of the outside world refuse to accept him back. By the Outside Committee" (Roth 2009: 192). The laughter that these responses provoked in church members and nonmembers alike, not to mention the place they received in community lore, affirmed the honor of the insulted members of the community and lessened the standing of those who had insulted them.

But my theories died a horrible death in the face of the evidence. I discovered that the early nineteenth century—the period on which had I based my hypotheses—was the least violent over the past 400 years. By the late-nineteenth century, the homicide rate in northern New England was as high as in London or Manchester, England. Child murders, spousal killings, everyday murders among young men, you name it—they were all more common than they had

been in the early nineteenth century. And I discovered, much to the dismay of someone with my democratic beliefs, that violence had been rare in northern New England in the mid-eighteenth century and that the Revolution had made things much worse for several decades. Something had gone terribly wrong.

The data, however, held the key to developing macrohistorical theories of violence that are more robust and have fit the data from other places I have studied to date. When I separated by type the homicides I had found in New Hampshire and Vermont, I discovered that the patterns made sense in terms of New England's history. Murders of children by adult relatives or caregivers followed a long, smooth curve that was the inverse of the birth-rate: high fertility meant a low child murder rate and low fertility meant a high murder rate (Roth 2001a and 2001b). Marital homicides and romance homicides jumped suddenly in the 1830s and 1840s: decades in which jobs opened to women in education and industry, in which self-employment declined for men, and in which the ideal of companionate marriage took hold (Roth 1999; 2009: 250-290). Homicides among unrelated adults peaked during periods of political turmoil: the Revolution, the Embargo crisis, and the sectional crisis. It appeared, as I put it in the mid-1990s that "state breakdowns and political crises of legitimacy produce surges in nondomestic homicides and that the restoration of order and legitimacy produces declines in such homicides" (Roth 1997). The same pattern was evident on the national level in the twentieth century, for which comprehensive homicide statistics were available. "The theory can be extended to the twentieth century: the crisis of legitimacy in the 1960s and 1970s (especially in the eyes of African-Americans) may have contributed to soaring homicide rates; and the establishment of state legitimacy through the New Deal, World War II, and the Cold War may have reduced homicide rates through the 1950s." The idea that there was a relationship between legitimacy and

crime dawned upon a number of scholars independently in these years, including psychologist Tom Tyler (1990), criminologist Gary LaFree (1998), and sociologist Roger Gould (2003).

I knew, however, that it would take more to confirm these hypotheses than evidence drawn from the history of Vermont and New Hampshire, my area of expertise. Who would believe a theory of interpersonal violence based on New Hampshire and Vermont? I wouldn't! So I put these theories at risk against a wider range of evidence. I extended my research to the colonial period, to early modern Europe, and outward to the South, the Midwest, the West, and the urban East. Everywhere I looked, the domestic murder rate for children followed the inverse of the birth rate up to the end of the nineteenth century, when family planning became more effective and widespread. Marital and romance homicides increased suddenly in the 1830s and 1840s across the northern United States, and in England and northern France. Everywhere I looked, homicides among unrelated adults correlated with political events. I conducted "natural experiments" to prove that correlation. I hypothesized, for instance, that the homicide rate would soar during the American Revolution and remain high for decades afterwards in the Georgia-South Carolina backcountry, where the Revolution was a genuine civil war. I also hypothesized that the homicide rate would hold steady or fall in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, which enjoyed political stability under patriot control throughout the Revolution, and where support for the war effort and the new federal government was stronger than anywhere else in the South. My research in local archives confirmed these hypotheses, which gave me greater confidence in my macrohistorical theories of violence (Roth 2009), although our research has truly just begun.

I hope more scholars will undertake long-term studies of crime and violence in particular places. Such studies are remarkably few. But they hold the key, I believe, to creating original theories. And you don't have to be a genius to come up with those theories—they jump out from

the data, because nothing else fits. I know this may sound like mindless empiricism, because, well, it is! I've always likened social science history to Ohio State's run-first offense under football coach Woody Hayes, which was characterized by contemporaries as "three yards and a cloud of dust." To my mind, social science history is "Three cubic yards of documents and a cloud of library dust." But as I tell my students, "if you want to be original, work!"

THE CIVILIZATION THESIS VERSUS THE NATION-BUILDING THESIS: WHICH THESIS IS SUPPORTED BY HISTORICAL HOMICIDE RATES?

Most historians believe that violence has declined drastically and almost steadily since the Middle Ages, and that the theories of Norbert Elias (which are compatible with most modernization theories) best describe the causes of that decline. Elias believed that:

1) Strong central governments suppressed the private use of violence by maintaining a "monopoly" of violence (which was once distributed widely among the nobility and their retainers) and by creating a criminal justice system that could protect lives and property, adjudicate disputes, and redress wrongs.
2) The market economy suppressed violence by demonstrating the benefits of cooperation over coercion and predation.
3) Refined manners diffused through society and increased the capacity for self-control.

Elias and his supporters acknowledge that the downward progress of violence was halted or reversed for brief periods by "decivilizing" forces, but "civilizing" forces are destined over the long haul to suppress violence (Elias 1982; Spierenburg 2008).

What is remarkable is that advocates of the civilization thesis have not put it at risk against the evidence. Its supporters are in the main cultural historians of the modern and early periods who have little interest in quantitative data, little knowledge of medieval history or sources, and little interest in the impact of modern medicine and emergency services on the homicide rate. Our work is far from complete, but a growing number of social science historians doubt the civilization thesis, because it is inconsistent with the evidence.

If we look at Manuel Eisner's latest compilation of the homicide data that are currently available for Europe (Figure 1), we can see that there was no long-term, downward trend in homicide rates between the thirteen century and the early seventeenth century. There were instead two surges in homicide: one in the half century following the Black Death (1346-1425) and one in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They show that the high Middle Ages (1200-1346) was not a period of extreme violence. And these data overstate homicide rates during the High Middle Ages, because they do not take into account the latest estimates of the European population before the Black Death, which are much higher than earlier estimates. And they understate homicide rates in the early modern period, because those rates are based for the most part on indictment rolls, rather than on the full medieval complement of legal and coroner's records.

And when we look in detail at places that were extremely violent during the medieval period, we discover that the problem was not impulsive violence, but calculated violence. Consider, for instance, the motives for homicides in Bedfordshire, England, which had a homicide rate in excess of 40 per 100,000 persons per year in the mid-thirteenth century. The coroner's rolls from 1265-1272 record 187 cases, all but 8 of which include substantial

information on the circumstances of and immediate motive for the homicide (Hunnisett 1961). Were the homicides impulsive?

Impulsive violence: only 3 tavern brawls, 19 spontaneous quarrels, and 3 long-standing grudges

Not much family violence: only 5 spouse murders, 2 murders of persons intervening in marital disputes, 6 murders of relatives, and 2 murders of unrelated persons living within the same household

Robberies claimed the lives of half of all victims: 93 people, 82 of whom died in home invasions and 8 in highway robberies.

Waylaid: 9 were killed on paths or byways by strangers and left for dead.

Sexual assaults: 3 victims

Legal: another 18 victims (10 percent) were killed resisting arrest, resisting attachments of property, or engaging in vigilante violence against murderers who escaped justice by claiming sanctuary and abjuring the realm.

Property disputes: another 16 victims (9 percent) were killed defending their property or asserting their claims to property.

Together, robberies, ambushes, and sexual assaults claimed the lives of 107 victims: 60 percent. There was nothing impulsive about these homicides: they were calculated, predatory, and cruel. Lack of respect for the legal system and lack of faith in its ability to bring felons to justice or resolve property disputes fairly claimed another 34 victims: 19 percent. These homicides were not impulsive, but defensive. This was not a county in which individuals engaged in impulsive violence: this was a society in which law and order had broken down, in which the state was too weak to bring people to justice or to defend life and property, and in which government (and the criminal justice system in particular) lacked legitimacy. It was a "nation building" problem, not a personality problem or a "civilization" problem.

Note that the decline in homicide in Europe was not gradual, but sudden in the seventeenth century: the century in which modern nations began to form, in which citizens were united not merely by the power of stronger central governments, but by:

1. The belief that government is stable and that its legal and judicial institutions are unbiased and will redress wrongs and protect lives and property.

2. A feeling of trust in government and the officials who run it, and a belief in their legitimacy.

3. Patriotism, empathy, and fellow feeling arising from racial, religious, or political solidarity.

4. The belief that the social hierarchy is legitimate, that one's position in society is or can be satisfactory and that one can command the respect of others without resorting to violence.

As historians will be quick to recognize, these are the key elements of successful polities (Roth 2009: 16-26, 384-385). When and where these elements have been in place over the past 450 years, humans have been more willing to cooperate and sacrifice for the good of the whole, and homicide rates have been low. But when these elements have not been in place, and humans sensed that that their political system was in disarray, that their lives and property were in jeopardy, that that their government did not have their interests at heart, that they had little in common with many of their fellow citizens, and that they had little hope of attaining or maintaining their proper place in society, humans have been more contentious, and in extreme cases, more power-hungry and predatory. In such circumstances, homicide rates among unrelated adults have reached catastrophic levels.

And notice too: whenever modern nations have broken down during revolutions, civil wars, or hostile military occupations, or on contested frontiers, homicide rates jumped immediately back to the levels that Europe endured after the Black Death or during the political upheavals of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

1) Eisner's graph, for instance, does not include data from nations that experienced political instability during the Age of Revolution. According to Howard Brown's study of revolutionary France (2006), fragmentary records reveal that the rate of everyday homicides during the later years of the revolution (1795-1801) reached at least 30 per 100,000 in the four provinces he studied—and he believes the homicide rate during the early years of the revolution were much higher.
2) Every period of political instability in nineteenth-century France—1830-1831, 1848-1850, 1870-1871—saw a spike in homicide, not just in places that were engulfed in revolutionary violence, but in places remote from such violence (Figure 2). As Roger

Gould discovered, the homicide rate spiked in the same years even on the island of Corsica, where there were no politically motivated homicides, only an increase in feud violence and honor killings (Gould 2003: 156; Chenais 1982: 76).

3) In England, the frustration of the democratic aspirations of working people in the wake of the Napoleonic wars led to a doubling of the homicide rate after the massacre of voting rights demonstrators at Peterloo in 1819 and to a sustained high rate through the years of Chartist agitation (Figure 3). But when the Second Reform Act passed in 1867, enfranchising propertiless household heads in urban areas, the homicide rate fell suddenly by half; and when the Third Reform Act passed in 1884, enfranchising propertiless household heads in rural areas, the homicide rate fell suddenly by half again (Roth 2009: 246-249, 297).

Consider as well homicide rates since the end of the Cold War in nations in the former Eastern Bloc. Political instability coincided with a sudden jump in homicide rates to pre-modern levels (12 to 18 per 100,000 persons per year) in most of the European states of the former Soviet Union, and to catastrophic levels in the three nations with the highest proportions of ethnic Russians: the Russian Federation, Latvia (half Russian), and Estonia (a third Russian) (Figures 4 and 5). They had rates from 25 to 33 per 100,000 per year after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. (Note that Lithuania, which is only 9 percent Russian, had a homicide rate that peaked at a much lower rate: only 13 per 100,000.) It will take years of research to be certain, but there is little doubt that the collapse of the Soviet Union was most keenly felt by ethnic Russians, many of whom felt powerless, unrepresented, bitter, and betrayed. But those nations in Eastern Europe that experienced the most peaceful and successful transitions to capitalism and representative democracy—Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic—saw their

homicides decline rapidly after a brief bump in the early 1990s. Again, the nation-building thesis fits the data better than the civilization thesis.

We must also consider the impact of modern emergency services, trauma centers, antisepsis, antibiotics, fluid replacement, etc. Our work is still in its infancy, but Eisner (2013) has tried to assess their impact on homicide rates since the early nineteenth century, when emergency services and medicine began to take their modern form (Figure 6). Eckberg (2013) would modify Eisner's chart by showing little improvement in life-saving since 1960. The big gains in life saving occurred earlier, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, with the advent of antisepsis, fluid replacement, emergency services, antibiotics, and improved would care and surgical techniques. In life and death situations, it's still best to drive the victim straight to the hospital, rather than wait for the squad, if the hospital is no more than a few minutes away, and that's what many city folks did in 1960, when few assault victims died if they managed to survive the first hour.

There is little quantitative evidence that medieval people were more impulsive and less capable of controlling their emotions than people today: a point that humanistic medieval historians have made again and again in recent years. There is simply no evidence that the modern economy, the modern state, or modern manners have had any long-term impact on the predisposition to violence. When nation building is successful, in countries as diverse as post-World War II England or Mussolini's Italy, homicide rates tend to be low. But when national building fails, Europeans today are as capable as ever of interpersonal violence. The spread of literacy, refined manners, and involvement in national and international economic markets has not made a difference. When states break down, homicide can be as serious a problem as it has ever been in the past.

THE CIVILIZATION THESIS VERSUS THE NATION-BUILDING THESIS:

WHICH THESIS IS SUPPORTED

BY HISTORICAL MEASURES OF FEELINGS AND BELIEFS?

We cannot, however, place the historical study of homicide on a scientific basis unless we find ways to quantify the shifts in feelings and beliefs that proponents of each macrohistorical thesis believe are important. How, for instance, can we measure feelings toward government and society in the United States? I made an effort to do so in a recent essay (Roth 2012), which contains a full discussion the quantifiable indicators that I've developed so far to test the competing claims of the civilization thesis and the nation building thesis. I hope interested readers will refer to that essay, because I only have time for an abbreviated discussion. But for example, for the colonial and revolutionary period in the United States, a number of proxies for political instability, government legitimacy, and fellow feeling are available that can serve as potential correlates of the homicide rate among unrelated European American adults. First, near-complete lists of legal executions are available that identify persons who were executed for treason or sedition—a measure of political instability and of challenges to the legitimacy of government. They also identify persons who were executed for heresy, witchcraft, or moral offenses (adultery, bestiality, pederasty, etc.)—a measure of hostility, division, and distrust within communities. Second, if we divide deadly riots and rebellions into those that were political (involving contests for power or protests against the abuse of power by the government or its officials) and those that sought to regulate the behavior of members of the community (involving the persecution of persons suspected of witchcraft,

heresy, or moral offenses), we can develop a second measure of political stability, government legitimacy, and fellow feeling (Turchin 2010; Gilje 1996, 2011). And we can supplement these time series with a third series that enumerates conflicts that led to the banishment or forced exile of persons who were on the losing end of community or political conflicts, such as the expulsion of Antinomians from Puritan Massachusetts or of Tories during the American Revolution.

What happens when we track these indicators of political stability, government legitimacy, and fellow feeling through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? The indicators were high through the Glorious Revolution, negligible from the end of the Glorious Revolution through the French and Indian War, and high during the American Revolution, tapering up during the Imperial crisis, 1765-1774, exploding during the Revolution itself, and tapering down in the 1790s (Figure 7). That is precisely the pattern followed by the homicide rate among unrelated European American adults in the places that have been studied to date: New England, Pennsylvania, and the Chesapeake (Roth 2009: 27-107, 145-179; and Marietta and Rowe 2006). Political stability, government legitimacy, and fellow feeling did indeed hold the key to low homicide rates in colonial and revolutionary America.

I have also developed more direct measures of feelings and beliefs that look at hate speech (an indicator of lack of fellow feeling) and at patriotic sentiment (an indicator of fellow feeling and faith in government). These measures also correlate well with the homicide rate among unrelated adults in the colonial and revolutionary era. I can't go into the details here or extend the argument through the nineteenth century for fear of plagiarizing myself (and of violating the copyright of the publisher of my article!), but I hope interested scholars will refer to my article in *Homicide Studies* (Roth 2012).

Quantitative measures are also available to test rival theories of homicide. Proponents of Norbert Elias's "civilization thesis" argue, among other things, that the improvement of manners after the Middle Ages led to a higher degree of self-control and restraint, which in turn caused a gradual decline in the homicide rate. However, the diffusion of refined manners and the rhetoric of self-mastery and restraint, which Elias considered both causes and consequences of the civilizing process, had little impact on the level of violence in the United States. These cultural changes took hold in colonial America in the early and mid-eighteenth century, after the homicide rate had already fallen, and they failed to restrain interpersonal violence when the political order lost legitimacy and destabilized in the late 1760s and early 1770s. In the eighteenth century, words like "polite," "manners," and "refinement" assumed a more prominent place in British and American print, according to Google Ngrams (Figures 8, 9, and 10) (Michel 2011). Colonists turned increasingly to civil courts to resolve disputes over slander, trespass, assault (which included threats and verbal abuse), and assault and battery (which included physical violence). The movement toward restraint and refinement was evident as well in quantifiable changes in daily habits and material culture. Between the 1720s and the 1760s, colonists of all classes gradually stopped throwing their garbage into their yards and began to bury it neatly in deep garbage pits. They began to purchase chamber pots for the disposal of human waste. They moved away from the practice of eating with spoons out of communal trenchers and drinking out of communal cups, and embraced the modern practice of eating with forks and using individualized plates and cups. They ate fewer stews and potages, and more tripartite meals with discrete portions of meat, starch, and vegetables. Archaeologist James Deetz associates these changes with a movement toward "order, control, and balance"—away from the "medieval" emphasis on community and toward a modern emphasis on the individual, which he associates

with the adoption of the cultural style of the Georgian-era British elite (Deetz 1996; Roth 2009: 88-90).

Elias's theory associates these changes with a decrease in interpersonal violence, caused by the increase in self-monitoring and restraint. But as noted, these changes followed the sudden decrease in violence in the late seventeenth century, and they were powerless to prevent an increase in violence during the revolutionary period. Improvements in manners may have been a consequence of successful nation-building and a decline in interpersonal violence, rather than a cause. It may be that manners improved most rapidly during periods of political stability, government legitimacy, patriotic feeling, and low homicide rates, when members of the middle class and working class, because they felt an attachment to the nation's elites, were more willing to adopt the elites' "civilized" behaviors, purchase inexpensive copies of the elites' "civilized" possessions, and turn to legal institutions run by the elites to redress their personal grievances.

The civilization thesis may have the causal arrow backwards.

THE CIVILIZATION THESIS VERSUS THE NATION-BUILDING THESIS: FURTHER TESTS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

More research is needed to understand how and why homicide rates have changed over time and varied from place to place. Did different kinds of polities—hunter-gatherer bands, chiefdoms, ancient empires, medieval kingdoms, nation states, and trans-national entities—encourage different patterns of interpersonal violence? The correlations between homicide rates and feelings and beliefs about government and society are nonrandom and robust, but they may

have been strong only during the modern and early modern periods, when nation states were ascendant or dominant—that is, when a particular form of political organization prevailed.

The correlates may be different for different kinds of polities. Barbara Hanawalt discovered, for instance, that there was no correlation in fourteenth-century England between "political disorder" (faction fights, coups) and homicide rates at the local level (Hanawalt 1979, 223-229). Loosely integrated feudal states were less likely than modern nation states to be the focus of loyalty, identity, and personal ambition for the majority of the population, so their political affairs may have had less impact on the behavior of non-elites.

Today, the relationship between politics, society, and homicide may be shifting again as international trade and cultural exchanges intensify and trans-national institutions proliferate. The sudden drop in crime rates (including homicide rates) that occurred in the 1990s appeared in every affluent, democratic, capitalist nation, despite differences in demography, economic performance, and criminal justice policy. The downturn began in the preponderance of those nations, as Eisner (2013) observes, between 1988 and 1992: the years when the Cold War ended and the most formidable adversary of capitalism and representative government disappeared (Figure 11). The synchronicity Eisner discovered is remarkable, and as we've already noted, it extends to nations in the former Eastern Bloc that made a smooth transition to democracy and capitalism. If it proves that the relationship between politics and homicide is different for the medieval and postmodern eras, it would indicate that the relationship may depend heavily on the character of the polity. [Note also: the spate of deadly riots that gripped the United States beginning in 1964 ended in 1992. Once again, deadly riots are a good proxy for measuring political instability and a powerful correlate of interpersonal violence among unrelated adults.]

It is important to acknowledge as well that forging a polity is a complex process. Not every group or region responded in the same way to events at the national level, and divergent responses could have a profound effect on homicide rates locally, sometimes driving them in the opposite direction from the national trend. Why, for instance, were some peoples who were incorporated by conquest into larger empires, including the French Canadians of British Quebec and the Sinhalese of the Sri Lankan interior, able to maintain relatively low homicide rates (Fyson 2010, Wood 1961, Rogers 1987)? Was it because their conquerors left their property and institutions relatively undisturbed within their ethnic enclaves and so preserved a degree of government legitimacy and social solidarity at the local level? And why did some peoples who were oppressed, including Catholics in nineteenth-century Ireland and enslaved African Americans, murder one another at lower rates than their oppressors killed one another (McMahon 2009, 2013; Roth 2009)? Was it because they forged a strong sense of solidarity among themselves—a solidarity that proved elusive for other oppressed peoples? What happens to homicide rates under authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, like Saddam Hussein's Iraq or Stalin's Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany? Can the power of the state be so terrifying or its ideology so spell-binding that they suppress everyday violence, at least among members of in-groups? There will be no universal pattern. But it is essential to determine when and where the correlates of homicide among unrelated adults are different, if we are to understand the precise connections between the circumstances that increase or decrease homicide rates, and the thoughts and feelings that may have been more common under those circumstances.

It will also be necessary to develop measures of feelings and beliefs that may be correlates of other kinds of homicide, such as homicides of children by parents or caregivers, or homicides of intimate partners. It would be helpful, for instance, if it were possible to measure

misogyny over time—to chart its intensity and map its social geography, so we might know if it is a correlate of violence against women or of particular kinds of violence against women. It would also be helpful to measure the ambitions of young women and men—not just pipe dreams, but modest ambitions—whose frustration might lead to violence against children or intimate partners.

THE CIVILIZATION THESIS VERSUS THE NATION-BUILDING THESIS: THE PROBLEM OF SCALE

One of the greatest difficulties we face, however, in testing macrohistorical theories of violence is to study the relationship between the macro and micro—that is, to understand the connections, if any, between homicidal behavior on the scale of entire societies and behavior on the scale of communities or individuals. As was evident in the case of medieval Bedfordshire, it is possible when the data are of sufficient quality to determine whether behavior on the local level mirrors behavior on the societal level. In the instance of Bedfordshire, the individual data suggest—as conditions at the county level did—that law and order had broken down, as had faith in or regard for the legal system.

Unfortunately, few historians share their data, and those who do seldom record detailed information on the motive and circumstance of crimes or have access to such information. So we don't have enough data yet to know if certain kinds of homicide among unrelated adults tended to be more common during periods of political instability and community strife. But it is also possible that the rates of all kinds of homicides among unrelated adults go up and down together

as nation-building is more or less successful. We need to know which pattern is more common before we can begin to theorize about causal linkages between the macro and micro.

To pose a couple of problems of scale:

1) We know that abused children are more prone to violence as adults, but generations that appear to have been subjected to the greatest violence (as measured in studies of skeletal remains or rates of child homicides) do not necessarily become the most violent generations as adults, nor do generations of children who suffer proportionately less violent necessarily become the least violent generations as adults—patterns that appear in the data we have for the 19th century in the U.S. and Great Britain.
2) We know that people suffering from certain forms of mental illness are more likely to commit acts of violence, but why do so few homicides by people who can be identified as delusional, paranoid, or schizophrenic occur when homicide rates among unrelated adults are low? Does the macro effect swamp the micro effect, and if so, why?

Wendy Regoeczi of Cleveland State and I are gathering such data for Ohio, 1959-present. It is probably too early to speculate on our findings, but I can't help but be struck by the stunning increase in gruesome predatory violence against women in the late 1960s and 1970s (when the modern feminist movement caught hold and the economic balance of power shifted once again toward women), or by the increase in violence in those years between whites and blacks (when political alienation increased). Not being a native Buckeye, I did not know about Posteal Laskey, an African American who raped and murdered 7 or 8 white women in Cincinnati 1966-1967. Nor did I know about the "hit and skip" murderer in Dayton, a white supremacist who killed 6 people (five black and one a white civil rights worker) and wounded fifteen more (all of them black).

Nor did I know about the war between Black Panthers and the police in Cleveland, or the senseless murders that occurred in Ohio during the race riots of 1968, or the murders committed in Belmont County in 1969 by a white woman who killed the parents of her son's fiancée and tried to kill his fiancée because she did not want her son to marry into a black family. It makes sense that the rate of such murders would have increased relative to others kinds of murder at a time when blacks and whites were losing faith in the government and when political instability (as measured by deadly riots and rebellions) was increasing. But can we gather sufficient data to prove these kinds of murders increase under such circumstances? We don't yet know the degree to which broader changes in feelings and beliefs increase the likelihood of specific crimes. We need both a qualitative and quantitative understanding of trends in interpersonal violence, if we are to develop historically robust theories of interpersonal violence.

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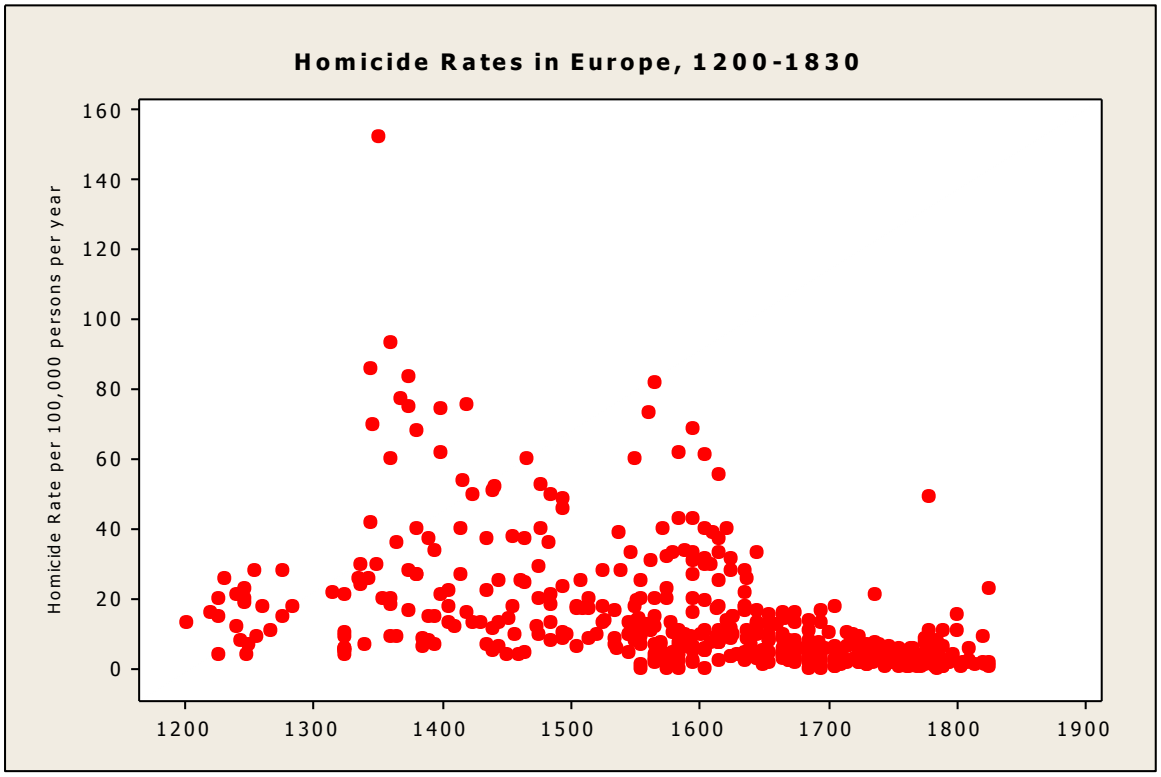
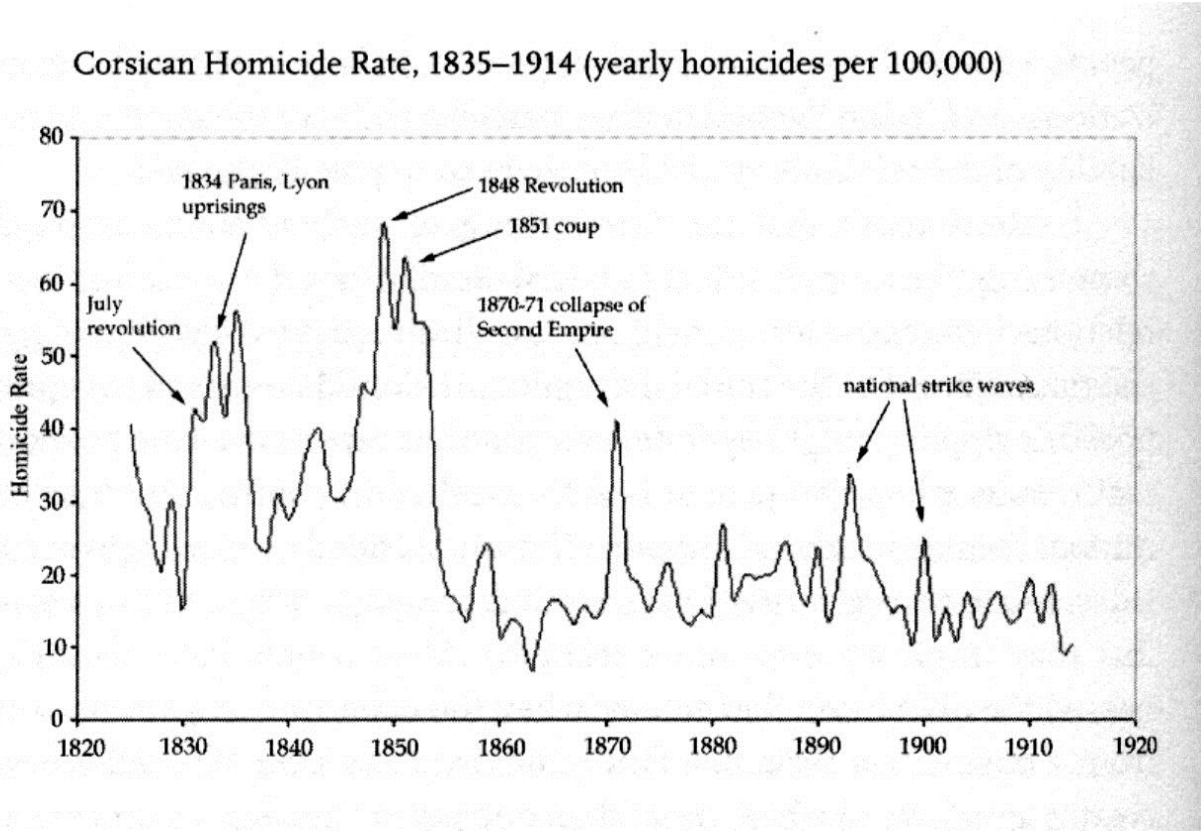
FIGURES

Figure 1



Eisner (2001): supplemented with additional data by Eisner since publication.

Figure 2



Gould (2003)

Figure 3

Homicide Rate in England and Wales, 1810-1914

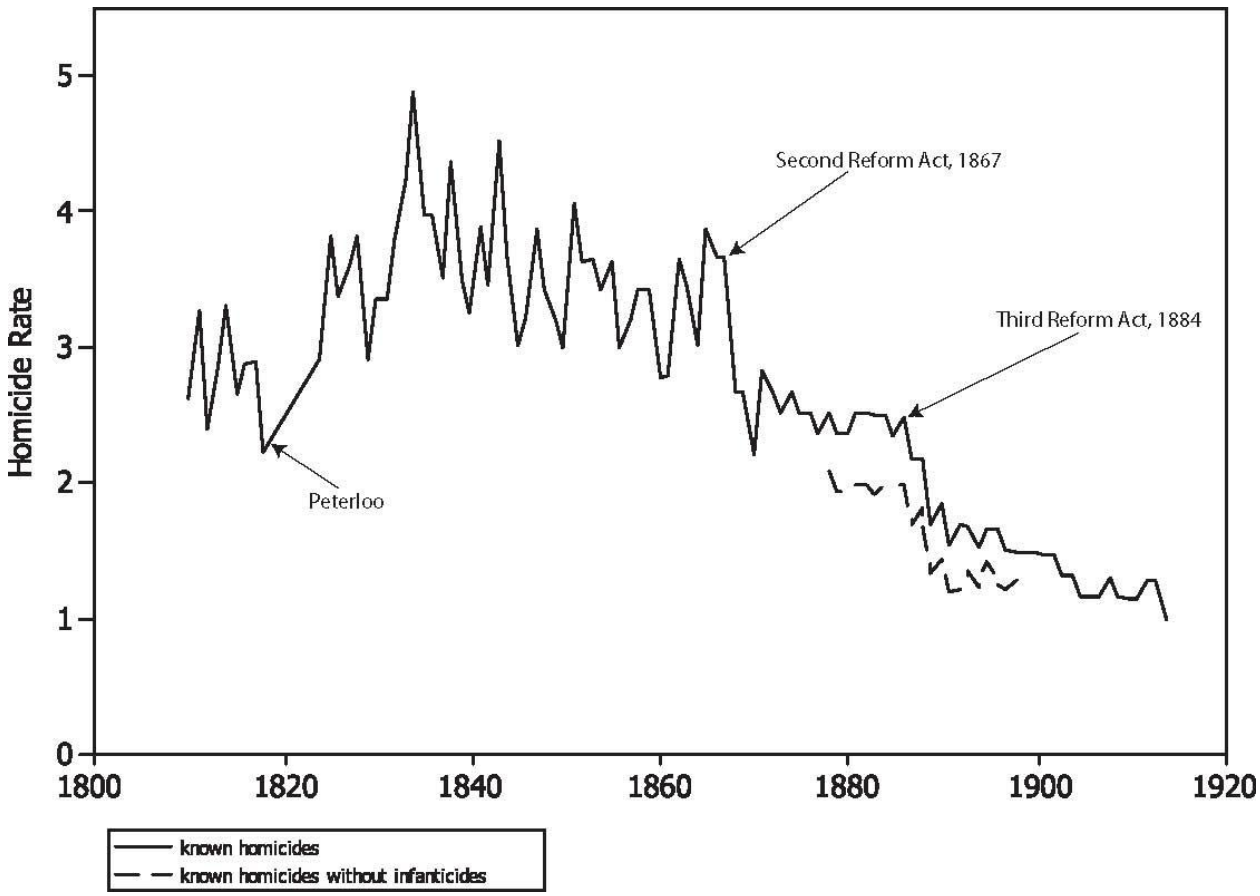
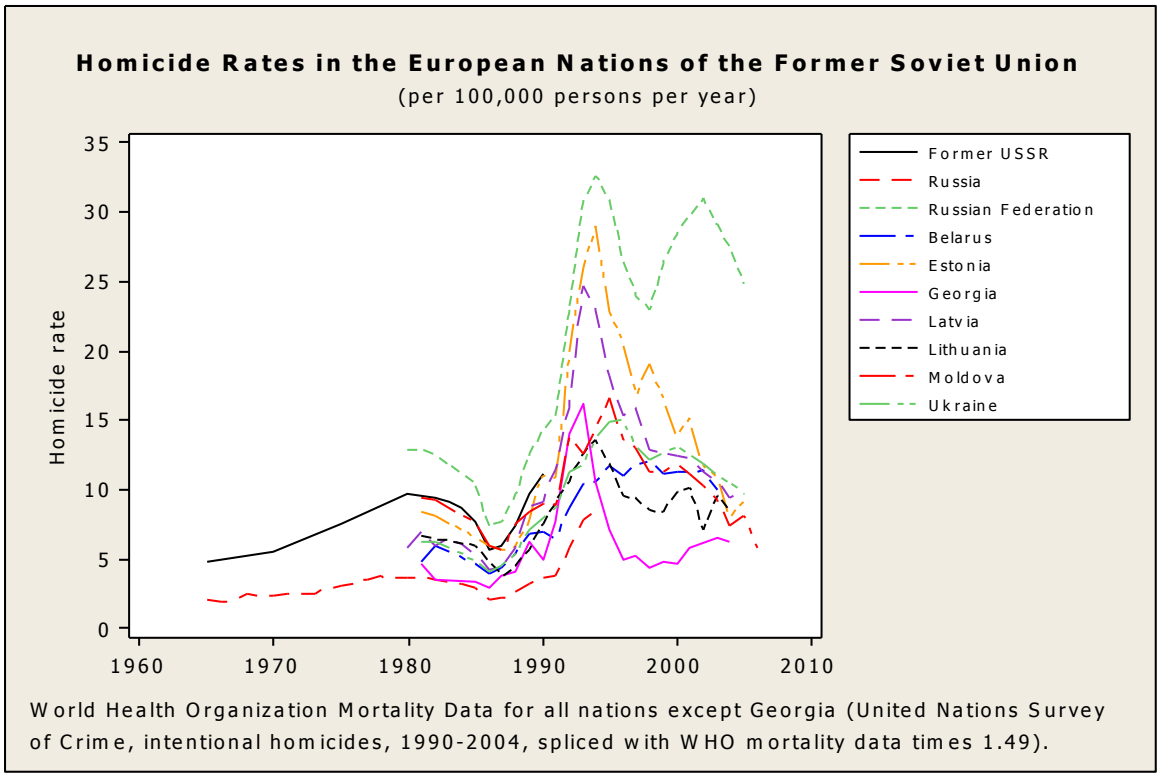


Figure 4



World Health Organization Mortality Data for all nations except Georgia (United Nations Survey of Crime, intentional homicides, 1990-2004, spliced with WHO mortality data times 1.49).

Figure 5

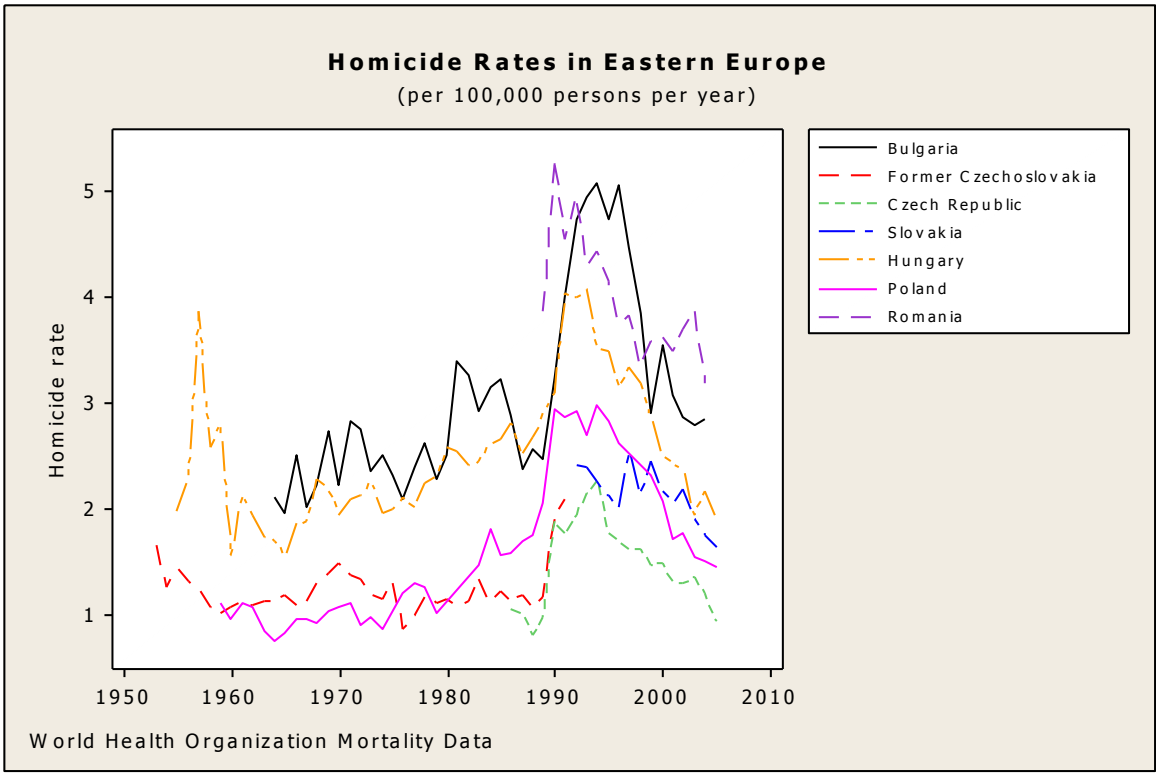
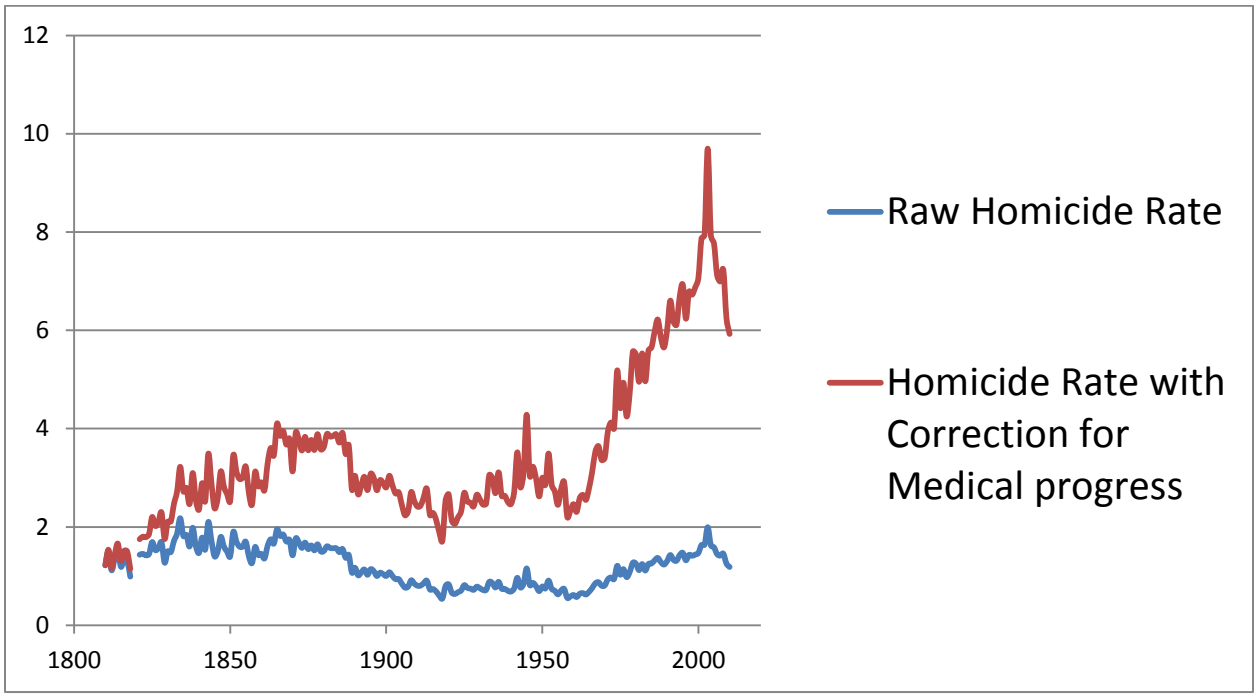

Homicide Rates in Eastern Europe
(per 100,000 persons per year)
Homicide rate
1
2
3
4
5
1950
1960
1970
1980
1990
2000
2010
Bulgaria
Former Czechoslovakia
Czech Republic
Slovakia
Hungary
Poland
Romania
World Health Organization Mortality Data

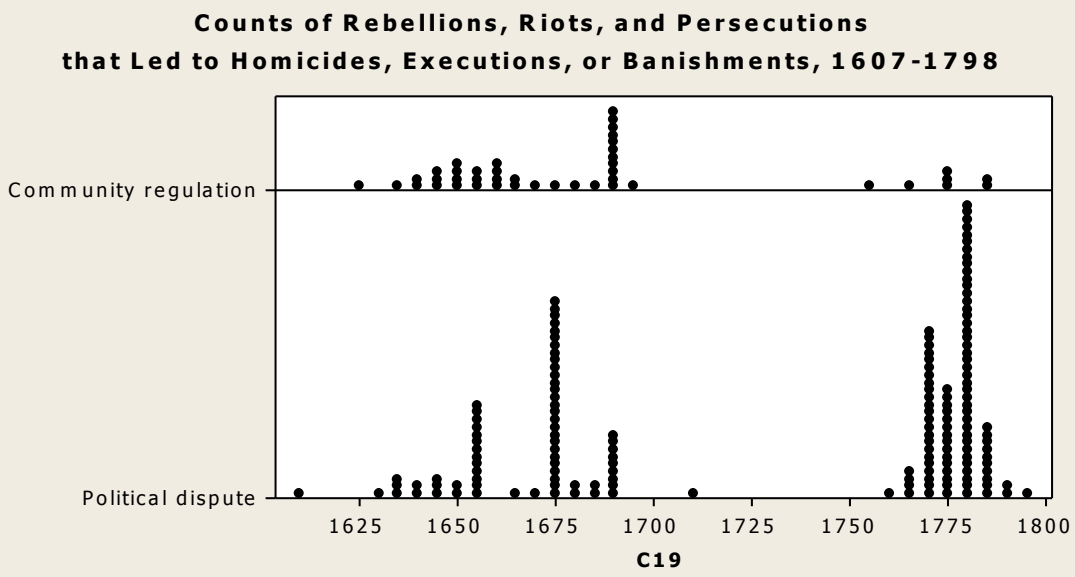
Figure 6

Homicide rates in England and Wales with and without Medical Progress



Eisner (2013)

Figure 7



Note: Banishments include sending prisoners to England in chains for trial, forced exiles by non-judicial means, transportation, and life imprisonment. Each symbol represents up to 2 observations.

Figure 8

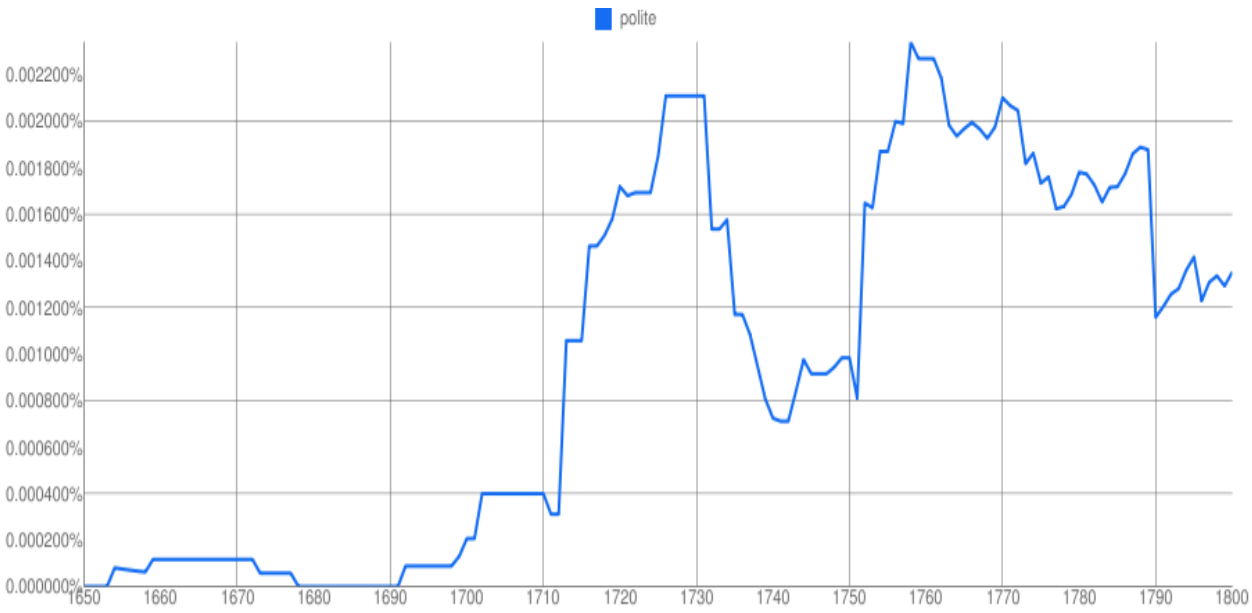

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Figure 9


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Figure 10

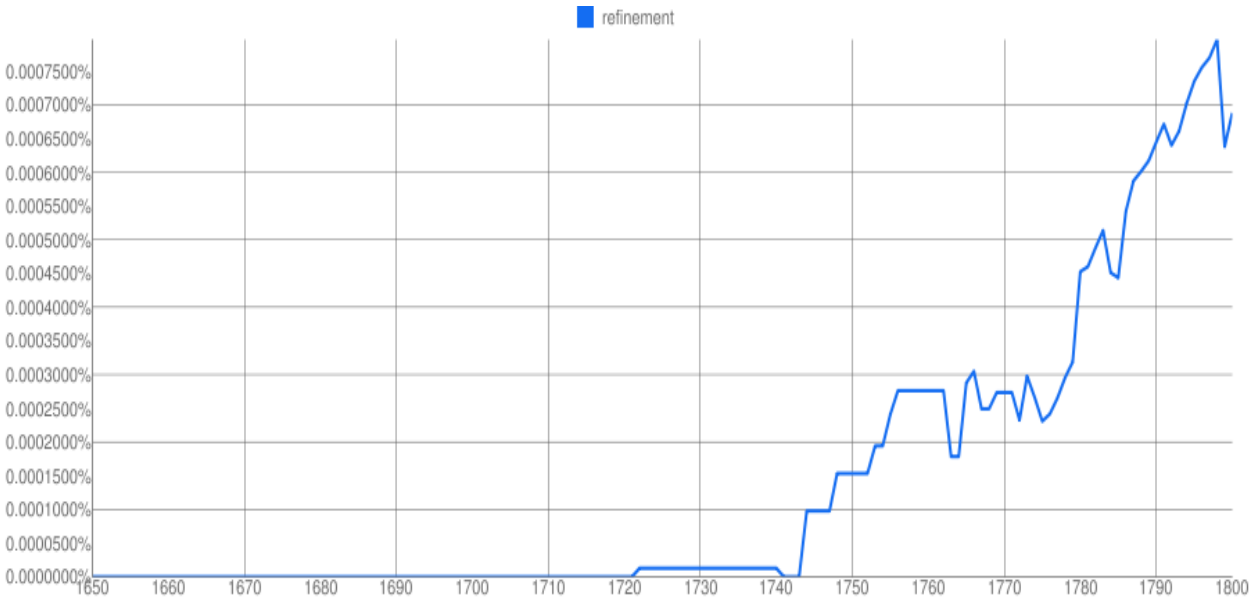
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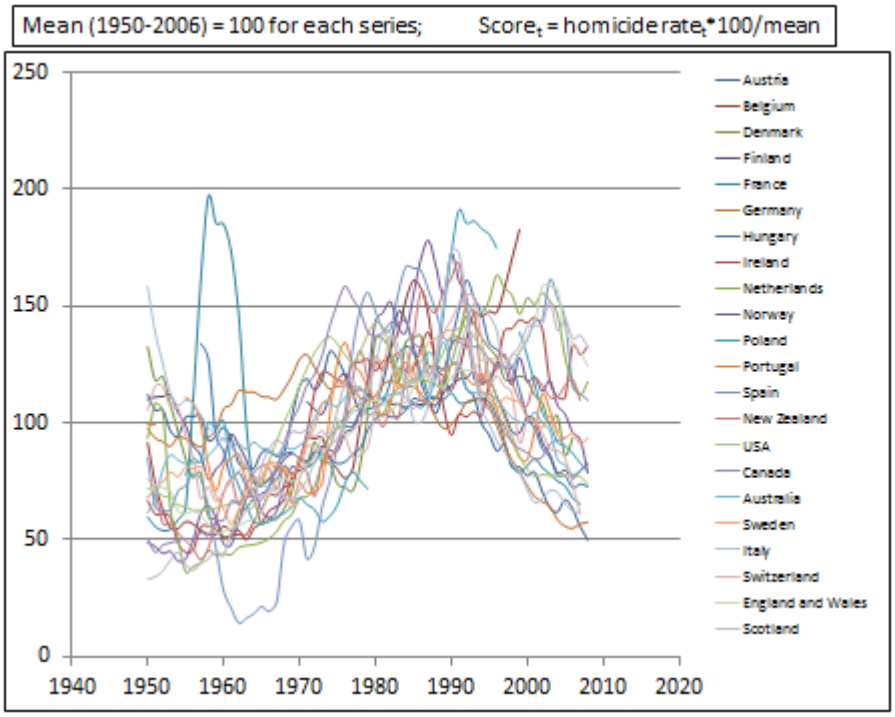
Figure 11

Homicide Rates in European Nations, 1950-2008



Eisner (2013)