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Capitalism and violence: A test and critique of the alienation proposition

Roger Isaac Roots
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UMI
CAPITALISM AND VIOLENCE: A TEST AND CRITIQUE
OF THE ALIENATION PROPOSITION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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December 2004
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Entitled
Capitalism and Violence: A Test and Critique of the Alienation Proposition

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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ABSTRACT

Capitalism and Violence: A Test and Critique of the Alienation Proposition

by

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The belief that primitive societies are more harmonious than modern ones is “deeply engrained in scholarly discourse” (Edgerton 1992, 2). Durkheim, Weber, and Marx all believed in the notion (Edgerton 1992, 3). Since at least the nineteenth century, social scientists have proposed that capitalism and industrialism represent artificial phenomena, alien to human nature, and that the growth and spread of capitalism in recent generations has spawned an increasing degree of angst, frustration, conflict, and stress on human societies. This concept, known as alienation, has been especially popular among sociologists of Marxist orientation who perceive human misery to be a product of the mayhem and competition of modern capitalism (Derber, Chasin). In this dissertation, the author critiques and analyzes the alienation proposition by delving into its history and comparing it to the recent findings of archaeology, history, and anthropology. The author tests the proposition by comparing contemporary
homicide rates registered by modern nation-states with measurements of market freedom in those same nation-states.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Neither this dissertation, nor the work leading up to it, would have been possible without the aid of a small number of people who supported me, assisted me, and defended me. First and foremost among these is my committee chair, Dr. Fred Preston, without whose support I almost certainly would not have stayed in graduate school for these three and a half years. Dr. Andy Fontana, Dr. David Dickens, and Dr. Hans-Hermann Hoppe also deserve praise for the support they have provided. I must also acknowledge the indefatigable assistance of my loving and long-suffering parents, my three loyal brothers, and all of the friends I have made as a graduate student at UNLV, including Michael Restivo, Joe Silvestri, Mark Warden, and Lewis Whitten.
CHAPTER 1

A TROUBLESOME WORD

“Capitalism” has been the subject of so much discussion in Western discourse that it should lend itself to easy definition. Yet rival theoretical camps within the social sciences attribute different meanings to the term (Laga 2004). Competing conceptions of capitalism are central elements of a number of grand sociological theories. It seems to say something about capitalism itself that its invocation in language provokes such disagreement. To use the term is to give voice to one perspective of human economic history at the expense of others (Phillips 2001, 56). Most importantly, users of the term capitalism have profoundly different answers to the ultimate question of whether it signifies human economic nature or an imposition upon human nature. And, ultimately, these rival interpretations determine whether its users view capitalism as a manifestation of economic freedom or economic slavery (compare Blyth (2004) and Hejeebu and McCloskey (2004)).

Early works about capitalism, like Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776) did not attach such moral significance to the concept. In fact, the term was not widely used until the nineteenth century (Wrong 2004, 26), and it was not until the twentieth century “that it fully burst upon political debate” — and then largely in a perjorative sense (Braudel 1982, 237).¹ The publication of two major theoretical works, Karl Marx’s
Capital (1894) and Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) can be blamed for producing the wealth of conceptual power that we now attribute to the word. Both works invited readers to look beyond the appearances of existing economic structures and into their historical and social development. Each invested hundreds of pages into constructing a meaning of capitalism consistent with the theories of its author. The word never afterward lent itself to simplistic definition.

Although Weber and Marx differed markedly over many things, their depiction of capitalism as an artificial creation rather than a natural occurrence became accepted as sociological law by the 1930s. Weber and Marx looked hard for, and consequently found, “proof” of capitalism’s uniqueness. They conceded the ubiquity of markets of goods in antiquity and across all organized societies but insisted that there were important distinctions between these markets and capitalism. They defined their versions of capitalism with such precision that only their specialized realm of concentration (Europe in the late middle ages to the industrial era) qualified as having it.


It was rationalism—the calm, systematic, machinelike gathering of profits from industry and commerce—that, for Weber, was the keystone. True capitalism, according to Weber, was “the pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit (Weber 1983, 24).
“Where capitalistic acquisition is rationally pursued, calculation underlies every single action of the [commercial] partners” (p. 24). Weber argued that modern western society (“the Occident”) “has developed capitalism both to a quantitative extent and in types, forms and directions which have never existed elsewhere” (p. 25, emphasis added).

“[A]ll characteristic legal institutions of modern capitalism,” wrote Weber from corporations, to negotiable securities, to bills of exchange, to stock certificates, to mortgages, to deeds of trust were inventions of modern Europe (26, 118). Weber believed there were no factories prior to the Middle Ages, only slave-labor operations directed by state officials (1983, 44).

Marxist and Weberian theorists suggested that the definition of capitalism can require as many as a half-dozen specific elements (Wrong 2004). Weber himself defined capitalism as a system in which 1) the appropriation of means of production are in private hands 2) there are free markets, 3) there is mechanization of production, 4) predictable law governing business affairs, 5) free labor, and 6) a "commercialization of economic life"—meaning a robust culture of commercial (i.e., banking and financing) instruments (Weber 1999, 44). “While capitalism of various forms is met with in all periods of history,” wrote Weber, “the structuring of social life around capitalistic methods is characteristic of the Occident alone and even here has been the inevitable method only since the middle of the nineteenth century” (Weber 1999, 43-44). Weber distinguished this natural tendency toward profitable market exchange from capitalism as follows:
The impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money, has in itself nothing to do with capitalism. This impulse exists and has existed among waiters, physicians, coachmen, artists, prostitutes, dishonest officials, soldiers, nobles, crusaders, gamblers and beggars. One may say that it has been common to all sorts and conditions of men at all times and in all countries of the world, wherever the objective possibility of it has been given. . . Unlimited greed for gain is not in the least identical with capitalism, and is still less its spirit (Weber 1983, 24).

This view of capitalism as a new, artificial, western invention has prevailed in sociology for a century. Gordon Marshall’s *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (1998, 53), for example, contains an eight-paragraph definition, beginning with “a system of wage-labour and commodity production for sale, exchange, and profit, rather than for immediate need of the producers.”

Yet rival, less complicated views of the concept have endured since the days of Adam Smith (Wrong 2004). Smith thought that *laissez-faire* economics were most consistent with man’s propensity to “truck, barter and exchange” (1776, 13). “Every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant,” wrote Smith, “and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society” (Smith 1776, 29). Smith found that societies function most smoothly when the “invisible hand” is unfettered and free to distribute goods and services in accordance with private demand. Thomas Sowell, an economist of the neo-liberal tradition, echoed Smith’s view: “Since
capitalism was named by its enemies, it is perhaps not surprising that the name is completely misleading,” wrote Sowell (1995, 207). “Ultimately it is nothing more and nothing less than an economy not run by political authorities” (207).

Sowell’s seemingly simple definition is loaded with unstated assumptions. It assumes that capitalism is the natural economic state of humanity and that impositions by political authorities are artificial insurgents against human nature. Sowell’s definition also assumes that capitalism is the natural economic system of all societies.³

Critics of Adam Smith like economic historian Karl Polanyi, suggested that primitive nonwestern societies uncorrupted by contact with the West operate on a basis of collective economic distribution. Primitive natives, according to Polanyi do nothing at all for personal “gain”; only for “reciprocity” or ritualized “magic.” Markets, according to this view, “became important only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Silver 1983, 796). Prior to that there were “redistributive empires over long periods of time” (Polanyi 1977, 115). “[S]ocial solidarity was accomplished through the declaration of ‘equivalencies’ by the state—that is, by pervasive controls over prices, wages, rent, and interest” (Silver 1983, 827). Market economies were “new phenomena, never witnessed before” (Silver 1983, 827 quoting Polanyi, liii, 6).

Polanyi’s most widely read book, The Great Transformation, ranks along with Karl Marx’s Capital, and Max Weber’s The Protestant Ethic as one of the most commonly read and highly regarded works of economic history. It “borrows haphazardly from economics, sociology, anthropology, and history” (Blyth 2004, 117).
Marx and Weber defined capitalism in part by marryin it to the industrial revolution, and consequently placing it only in the modern world, and primarily in the west. Even if versions of free market economies existed in other cultures—or had existed in pre-industrial Europe—these economic variations did not gel into the all-encompassing form of capitalism that came with the Enlightenment and the Protestant Reformation. Nor, according to Noam Chomsky (1993), were nonwestern forms of market economies as cold and brutal as the western form. Europeans “broke violently into Asian trading systems that had been relatively peaceful before their arrival” (Chomsky 1993, 8 (quoting James Tracy)). Other scholars have suggested that no authentic nonwestern form of free-market capitalism ever really existed, and that where modern nonwestern free-market cultures exist, they had it imposed on them by western nations (Rosenau 2003, 3).

Alienation

The questions posed by these rival definitions of capitalism are more than academic. Those who subscribe to the Marxist or Weberian view advocate interventionist economic policies, while those who view capitalism as humanity’s natural state generally hold more politically libertarian views. Moreover, those who view capitalism as an artificial phenomenon suggest that it disrupts something intrinsic to human social wellbeing. Marx and those who followed him had a word for the human condition that capitalism generated: alienation. Alienation, according to Marx, occurred when
workers were separated from control over production and from the fruits of their labor. "[B]y selling one's labor, the laborer becomes a commodity herself, a kind of product that is owned and consumed by the owner" (Laga 2004, 2). Alienation was akin to Durkheim's anomie, a state of disharmony and tension with nature brought about by social (and economic) instability. Marx wrote that capitalism generated "conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder" among societies that suffered from it (1990, ch. 26). Thus the history of capitalism, according to Marx, was "written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire" (ch. 26).

For the Smithians and neoliberals, in contrast, "capitalism" represents harmony with nature, and anomie is more likely to occur when the capitalistic instinct is suppressed by regulation. Advocates of both these views have different assessments of contemporary political economy and the proper role of public policy. For generations, policymakers have battled over these concepts, occasionally implementing one application or another but never resolving social policy in any one direction.

Sigmund Freud, in his Civilization and Its Discontents (1961, 70-71), summed up the alienation theory of social conflict as well as any writer:

The communists believe that they have found the path to deliverance from our evils. According to them, man is wholly good and is well-disposed to his neighbour, but the institution of private property has corrupted his nature. The ownership of private wealth gives the individual power, and with it the temptation to ill-treat his neighbor; while man who is excluded from possession is bound to rebel in
hostility against his oppressor. If private property were abolished, all wealth held in common, and everyone allowed to share in the enjoyment of it, ill-will and hostility would disappear among men. Since everyone’s needs would be satisfied, no one would have any reason to regard another his enemy; all would willingly undertake the work that was necessary (70-71).^5

According to Marx’s friend and frequent co-author Frederick Engels, in his The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State (1972 [1884]), “[T]he developing money system penetrated like a corroding acid into the traditional life of the rural communities founded on natural economy” (111). And with private ownership of property, according to Engels, came the inequities of class structure:

The lowest interests—base greed, brutal sensuality, sordid avarice, selfish plunder of common possessions—usher in the new, civilized society, class society; the most outrageous means—theft, rape, deceit and treachery—undermine and topple the old, classless, gentile society. And the new society, during all the 2,500 years of its existence, has never been anything but the development of the small minority at the expense of the exploited and oppressed great majority; and it is so today more than ever before (Engels 1972, 101).
Defining Alienation

In the broadest sense, alienation can be defined as the estrangement of individuals from one another, or from a specific situation or process (Marshall 1998). Many distinct philosophical, sociological, and psychological dimensions are invoked with the alienation concept, and not all of them find agreement with each other. Sociological discussions of the concept relate most to Marx’s argument that certain social structures oppress people and deny their essential humanity (Marshall 1998). “Alienation is an objective condition inherent in the social and economic arrangements of capitalism” (p. 14).

The concept of alienation has been discussed and debated extensively since the nineteenth century. Marx suggested that capitalist production economies alienated workers by reducing them to the level of commodities in which their range of choices were limited and their relationships with their work and their families and coworkers became strained (Marx 1944). Others view alienation as essentially a state of mind (Cox 1998). Defining alienation precisely is not easy “since the term has been used to describe a wide range of human experiences” (Smith and Preston 1977, 331). In general, however, the concept is defined as the whole variety of symptoms of estrangement that modern humans face in capitalist economies, including the sense of meaninglessness, powerlessness, isolation, and normlessness associated with wages and occupational specialization (Seeman 1959). But while differences in interpretation exist in contemporary scholarly discourse, the concept of alienation encompasses a broad understanding as “shorthand for the mood of distemper, cynicism, and distrust believed to prevail in contemporary life” (Wrong 1998, 47).
These various facets of the same general concept can be operationalized by means of measurements of social disharmony and frustration. Measurements such as rates of mental illness, rates of domestic violence, levels of aggression, or other measures of violence generally are perhaps the clearest way to assign values to the concept in the real world. The quantitative analysis employed in this study relies on homicide rates as its chief means of operationalizing the concept.

A Tendency to Crisis?

Consistent with their view that capitalism generates alienation and anomie among societies that have adopted it, the alienationists also propose that capitalism is on a trajectory toward crisis (Wood 1999, 1). The contemporary alienation model posits that “[g]lobalized capitalism has changed the face of social reproduction worldwide over the past three decades, enabling intensification of capital accumulation and exacerbating differences in wealth and poverty” (Katz 2003, 256). The current stage, a hypercapitalist or critical stage in capitalism, represents, according to Katz, represents a “demise of the social contract” (2003, 256). Although capitalism may survive for “a few centuries yet,” its ultimate overthrow by socialism is predestined (Marcuse 1978, 178).

The concept of alienation assumes that people trapped in capitalist societies exhibit tendencies toward a wide variety of anti-social disorders. Violence increases because competition for “scarce resources, property, and territory as well as for self-esteem and self respect encourages greed, envy, jealousy, deceit, betrayal, and exploitation” (Rosenau 2003, 47). In the absence of an alternate morality, capitalism
“generates a self-reinforcing spiral of intensifying competition” (Rosenau 2003, 47).

“Evidence of the resulting social stress is everywhere,” according to proponents of the alienation proposition: “in rising rates of crime, drug abuse, divorce, teenage suicide, and domestic violence; growing numbers of political, economic, and environmental refugees; and even the changing nature of organized armed conflict. Violent crime is increasing at alarming rates all around the world” (Kortner 1995, 30).

Moreover, according to the alienationists, these tensions are increasing as capitalism is spread through the world by western hegemony. Fueled by alienation, commodity fetishism, and greed, westerners set out in the eighteenth century upon a mission for global domination, according to the Marxists and Weberians. The ideology they carried with them fueled a brutal imperialism that conquered all in its path. “Europeans ‘fought to kill,’ and they had the means to satisfy their blood lust,” according to Chomsky (1993, 8). Imperial conquest of other continents was typified by savagery and “all-destructive fury.” The European model of mercantilism “relied critically upon the constant use of force” (Chomsky 1993, 8).
CHAPTER 2

THE LITERATURE

The relationship between economic change and social behavior is a frequently revisited topic of sociological research (Catalano and Dooley 1977; Cottrell 1951; Burgess 1925; Ogburn 1936). The most famous classical study of this relationship is Durkheim’s (1897) study of suicide rates in Europe in the early 1890s, which found a relationship between suicide rates and economic fluctuation. Durkheim’s economic analysis of social behavior has since been emulated and largely substantiated by more contemporary sociologists (e.g., Pierce 1967). Pierce found that economic fluctuation, whether in positive or negative directions, reduces social cohesion and leads to increased frequency of suicide. Brenner (1973) also found a relationship between economic change and deviant behavior, as measured by first admissions to New York State mental hospitals.

Barbara Chasin, in her book-length study of the question, *Inequality and Violence in the United States* (1997), subtitled *Casualties of Capitalism*, attributes rates of violence solely to economic structure. She suggests that even institutions like the modern nuclear family are extensions of the capitalist structure of the west, and violence tends to follow the money, so to speak. The western capitalist nations, according to Chasin, are the chief promoters of violence in the world, led by their capitalist flagship, the United States. “Much of the violence in the United States is
linked to the decisions of those in the economic and political command posts with corporate bureaucracies being the most powerful in the United States” (22).

While Chasin’s thesis seems simple at first glance, it soon gains layers of complexity as it is analyzed. Chasin attributes the violence of both the powerless and the powerful to the same underlying cause: capitalism. Violence *by the poor against the rich*, she said, is caused by the hatreds and jealousies that come with lower socioeconomic status. Violence *by the poor against other poor*, likewise, is attributable to the angst of their powerlessness and their mad competition between each other to rise through the social structure. Violence *by the powerful against the powerless*: Again, the competition that drives capitalist economic systems. Even violence *by the powerful against the powerful* is explained as a product of jealousy. Thus, violence is the undergirdler of the the entire modern world order: “a distinct violence of powerlessness as well as a violence of domination” (Gautney 2003, 78).

Few scholars have offered a precise explanation of *how* capitalism generates violence. Pauline V. Rosenau, however, has attempted to define the metabolological and psychological stresses that link open markets to social conflict. Competition “encourages greed, envy, jealousy, deceit, betrayal, and exploitation” and removes inhibitions of hostility and aggression (Rosenau 2003, 47). “Rosenau points to links between stress and hypertention, heart disease, diabetes, depression and reduced immunity (21). Consequently, health stresses are very high for those at bottom of social structure (Rosenu 26).

Boston College sociologist Charles Derber (2002) refers to the violence generated by America’s market economy as the “Wilding of America” and attributes the
high homicide rates in the contemporary U. S. to greed and competition over the “American Dream.” “America now faces a wilding epidemic that is eating at the country’s social foundation and could rot it,” Derber proclaims:

Wilding includes a vast spectrum of self-centered and self-aggrandizing behavior that harms others. A wilding epidemic tears at the social fabric and threatens to unravel society itself, ultimately reflecting the erosion of the moral order and the withdrawal of feelings and commitments from others to oneself, “number one” (Derber 2002, 8).

The only solution, according to Derber, is to erect massive institutions of social welfare and wealth redistribution. Like many proponents of the alienation thesis, Derber sees collective intervention in the economy as an effective means of stemming the tide of global violence.

Derber’s thesis travels through his descriptions of increasing road rage, workplace rage, school rage, and air rage, corporate corruption, family violence and even college cheating scandals. “Expressive and instrumental wilding have in common an anti-social self-centeredness made possible by a stunning collapse of moral restraints and a chilling lack of empathy” (p. 9).

The economic implications of Derber’s thesis are unmistakable. “Systematic connections exist,” said Derber, “between American capitalism and wilding” (p. 12). “The progress of the wilding epidemic is shaped less by the percentage of sociopaths in
the population than by the sociopathy of elites and the rules of the success game they help to define. . . . The wilding epidemic is now seeping into America mainly from the top” (p. 14):

Our current wilding crisis is rooted politically in the “free-market” revolution that began with President Reagan. As conservative analyst Kevin Phillips has noted, the Reagan revolution advanced the most ambitious class agenda of the rich in more than a century, creating an innovative brew of market deregulation and individualistic ideology that helped fan the flames of wilding across the land. In the 1990s, a new Republican congressional majority led by Speaker Newt Gingrich and the “new Democrats” led by President Clinton launched their own wilding initiatives and raced against each other to dismantle the social programs that symbolize our commitment to the poor, to the needy, and to each other. And in 2001, President George W. Bush, despite his rhetoric of compassionate conservatism, promised to complete the revolution of greed that Reagan began (Derber 2002, 14).

Globalization

During the past decade, much sociological commentary has revolved around globalization and its effects on the Third World. Those who subscribe to the alienation thesis have suggested that globalization—the increasing movement of capital, goods,
businesses, culture, and people across national borders—has been a bane to the sociological health of the world. Scholars have drawn disparate conclusions, with some proclaiming lasting benefits to workers in opening Asian markets (Norberg 2003; Sowell 2004) and others seeing a downturn in the opportunities and lifestyles of the world’s poor (Korten 1995; Gautney 2002; Chomsky 2003). The alienation model has been revived to explain and predict the social features of the phenomenon. “[W]e see that the growing violence and the extraction of wealth from apparently independent states are an integral component of contemporary globalization,” wrote Schiller and Fouron, both die-hard alienation theorists (2003, 237). Robert W. McChesney (1999:8) claimed that capitalist reforms have brought terrible consequences to the global community: “a massive increase in social and economic inequality, a marked increase in severe deprivation for the poorest nations and peoples of the world, a disastrous global environment, an unstable global economy and an unprecedented bonanza for the wealthy.”

Noam Chomsky, in Hegemony or Survival (2003) claimed that the growth of global markets has allowed the most powerful state in world history to maintain its global domination through military force. Postmodern critical theorist Frederic Jameson indicated that expanding free markets represent a “new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and horror” (1993, 65). Globalization “creates intense competition between the more powerful and weaker numbers of the crew for a shrinking pool of life-support services,” wrote Korten in his provocative book When Corporations Rule the World (1995). “Some crew members are deprived of
a means of basic sustenance, social tensions mount, and the legitimacy of governance structures erodes—creating significant potential for social breakdown and violence” (Korten 1995: 26).

Amy Chua’s recent academic best-seller *World on Fire* (2004) suggests that global free markets have tended to benefit insular mercantilist minorities around the globe: Jews in post-Communist Russia, Indians in East Africa, Tutsis in Rwanda, Hungarians in Romania, Chinese in southeast Asia, and whites in Latin America and Zimbabwe—at the expense of population majorities. A “pigmentocracy” has developed in Latin America (Chua 2004: 57), typified by dark-skinned poverty and light-skinned plutocracy (59). This wealth disparity between majorities and minorities, according to Chua, generates demagoguery and ultimately ethnic violence as a backlash. “Thus globalization and free markets in Southeast Asia have generated not only tremendous growth but also tremendous ethnic hatred and instability” (Chua 2004:47). Neil J. Kresel’s recent book *Mass Hate: The Global Rise of Genocide and Terror* (2002) goes so far as to claim that human brutality erupted and expanded in the twentieth century with the advancement of free market global capitalism and “now threatens the very core of Western civilization.”

Naomi Klein’s *No Logo* (2002) offered heart-breaking anecdotes of horrors wrought by corporations like Nike, Levi-Strauss, and Gap. While the virtues of growing commerce in and among developing countries have been increasingly recognized by economists (Norberg 2002; Novak 1982), scholars like Klein suggest that the process is generating a middleman effect whereby the division of labor is increasingly squeezing low-end workers out of their fair share of the economic pie.
The only way to understand how rich and supposedly law-abiding multinational corporations could regress to nineteenth-century levels of exploitation (and get caught repeatedly) is through the mechanics of subcontracting itself: at every layer of contracting, subcontracting and homework, the manufacturers bid against each other to drive down the price, and at every level the contractor and subcontractor exact their small profit. At the end of this bid-down, contract-out chain is the worker—often three or four times removed from the company that placed the original order—with a paycheck that has been trimmed at every turn (Klein 2002: 212).

Said differently, the true culprit is efficiency. Growing rationalization of commerce has confined humanity in the “iron cage” predicted by Weber. Steven Sampson (2003, 310) stated that globalization enriches some but turns others “into truly global proletariats who follow the flow of capital” from region to region. Gautney (2003) suggests that the globalization of capitalism is promoting a “globalization of violence,” a world order where violence is supplanting consent. “Violence is the substance of the 21st-century world order, an order marked by its close proximity to pure war” (65).

The role of force in setting the global distribution of power creates an appearance of a world order increasingly directed toward pure violence,
in which consent—materialized in elections, in consumptive habits, in a
general lack of involvement—emerges as a hollow confirmation of the
force of Empire. It is tacit consent as opposed to participation: an anti-
democratic politics of order. The overwhelming presence of violence
around the globe—from the threat of world destruction to police
brutality to the technical supervision (Gautney 2003, 68).

Scholars like Chomsky, Gautney, Kortner and Klein share a common belief that
the violence and anomie allegedly wrought by economic free markets in western
societies during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have now been spread
across the globe with the expansion of global capitalism since the 1980s. Accordingly,
the turn of the twenty-first century has seen “an escalation of war, preparation for war,
and political repression” (Brecher 2003, 202). Jonathan Friedman, editor of a collection
of recent essays dealing with the relationship between global neoliberalism and
violence, concludes that the current situation produces “increasing violence of various
kinds, in which the character of the violence is increasingly based on processes of
fragmentation of former political units and on the intensive incorporation of the new
fragments into regional and global circuits of control and finance by both state and
nonstate actors” (Friedman 2003, xiv).

Some alienation theorists see the violence attributed to capitalism as a product of
gap between the haves and have nots that capitalism allegedly creates. Noam Chomsky,
one of the most visible contemporary proponents of the alienation model, claims that
“the increasing polarization of the society that’s been going on for the past twenty-five
years, and the marginalization of large sectors of the population” is to blame for an alleged increase in violent crime (2003b). “[T]he basic ideology [of contemporary capitalism] is that a person’s human rights depend on what they can get for themselves in the market system, they have no human value” (2003b: 33). “Larger and larger sectors of the population have no form of organization and no viable, constructive way of reacting, so they pursue the available options, which are often violent” (33).

The Alienation Concept in Literature and Folklore

The belief that primitive societies are more harmonious than modern ones is “deeply engrained in scholarly discourse” (Edgerton 1992, 2). Durkheim, Weber, and Marx all believed in this notion (Edgerton 1992, 3). In fact, the theory predates sociology. Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* suggested in 1754 that inequality was created by the corruption that followed from modern society’s adoption of private property. Rousseau made the man-corrupted-by-modernity paradigm popular throughout Europe for a century (Hocutt 2003).

Looking farther back, one can find the idea of a perfect society corrupted by selfishness and wickedness in man’s earliest myths. The Bible begins with a tale of man’s fall from grace in antiquity, and his banishment from the Garden of Eden, where he is exposed to the suffering and struggle of hard labor, jealousy, and interpersonal competition (Rudgley 1999, 1). Immediately following the Bible’s Book of Genesis is the story of Noah and his ark, which represents a flipside of this same myth; it provides a vision of man sinking into sin, wickedness, and selfishness. Noah, a rare pillar of morality who followed
God's instructions, survived God's wrath against the world by weathering a 40-day flood within the safe confines of a ship that he constructed in strict compliance with God's orders (Exodus 1-12). A return to peacefulness and harmony was experienced briefly with the reestablishment of communal living, but the Bible then proceeds, through hundreds of pages, to recount man's retreat into sin and selfishness. This retreat escalates as Jesus is executed, and culminates in an apocalypse described in the Book of Revelations. Harmony returns (for true believers) after the crisis is over. Like Marx's communist utopia, this end time shall have no poor in the land (Deut. 15: 4, R.V.) and all people will live in peace and contentment, each under his own grape vine and fig tree (Matt. 18:6-14). There will be no disinherited and no unfit, and all people will have equal access to the Tree of Life (Rev. 21:22).

To some extent this version of human events was recreated in sociology in the writings of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), who viewed human antiquity as typified by mechanical solidarity in which individuals acted in concert for the good of the community. Durkheim contrasted this solidarity with life in "the economic world" of today in which anomie describes man's increasing instability, escalating conflict, and social unrest, manifesting in high rates of suicide and homicide (Durkheim 1941, 40):

If, in proportion as societies pass from the lower to the higher types, the rate of criminality, i.e., the relation between the yearly number of crimes and the population, tended to decline, it might be believed that crime, while still normal, is tending to lose this character of normality.
But we have no reason to believe that such a regression is substantiated. Many facts would seem rather to indicate a movement in the opposite direction. From the beginning of the [nineteenth] century, statistics enable us to follow the course of criminality. *It has everywhere increased.* In France the increase is nearly 300 per cent (Durkheim 1986 [1895] 65) (emphasis added).

The Stage Theory of Capitalism

Looked at through the lens established by the alienation paradigm, capitalism might indeed be looked upon as something of a flash in the pan, an anomaly in an otherwise grand social pageant of communitarian cooperation. The alienation paradigm not only assumes that capitalism is a recent anomaly, but also that it is wholly temporary. A sub-theory of this same paradigm, often expressed in academic writing, is the notion that capitalist economies develop by stages. Thus, capitalism grows until the various contradictions inherent in capitalism mount to crisis, and capitalism is destroyed, fades away, or disintegrates. The final stage, like the ultimate paradise foretold in the Bible, will be a return to the placid Garden of Eden where people shared the earth’s resources. Engels claimed this final stage of triumph would simply be a return to these placid origins, of togetherness and equality from whence humanity rose—“a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes” (1884, 22). Utopians tend to see the ancient world as the utopia they advocate interrupted by the ignominies of the present.
The origins of this concept are ancient. The stage theory of capitalism assumes that capitalism—being merely a contemporary, western phenomenon—has a distinct beginning, middle, and end. It began, according to Marx and Weber, in the late Middle Ages when Europeans began to monetize time and labor, passed through its midlife as industrialization spread across the globe, and will end, according to Marxists, when workers’ wages are suppressed to their lowest possible value. Caught in a “self-reinforcing spiral of destructive competition”—western humanity lunges headlong toward an ultimate date with the Armageddon envisioned by Marx and the author of Revelations (Rosenau 2003, 6).

Like apocalyptic visionaries reading Revelations, alienationists have patiently awaited capitalism’s overthrow. Many scholars have suggested we are now living in “late” capitalism, or the final stage before utopia (e.g., Jameson 1993; Korten 1995; Gautney 2003; Chomsky 2003). The credibility of this claim, however, is undermined by the recurrent claims of capitalism’s finality dating back to the time of Marx. In 1916, Lenin wrote a book entitled Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, which anticipated utopia no later than a few years after its publication. Borrowing from Marx, Lenin proclaimed that imperialism was the “monopoly stage of capitalism”—or the last stage to be expected before capitalism’s overthrow. Lenin’s thesis was proved false, however, when the imperial powers retreated from their empires throughout the world in the post World War Two period (Arrighi 1978, 9-34).

The idea that we at this precise moment are in the midst of an especially hyperconsumerist, ultra-capitalist stage is part of the current mainstream sociological “paradigm.” As Ritzer states, “McDonaldization”—his code for hypercapitalism—“is
an infinitely more mature and more powerful force today than it was when [he] first began thinking about it two decades ago” (2000,xiii).

Even social scientists who have rebuked Marxism generally have nonetheless accepted the idea that capitalism has stages and that it will ultimately play out and disappear when class disparity becomes too stratified (Novak 1982; Drucker 1986). Robert K. Merton, in his celebrated 1938 essay “Social Structure and Anomie” claimed that there was “a growing body of evidence” to the effect that capitalism had entered a climactic stage in which “our class structure is becoming rigidified and that vertical mobility is declining” (1938, 273). Irving Louis Horowitz proclaimed in 1977 that contemporary capitalist economies were in the midst of “an intensification of class competition” (1977, 215).

Upon historical scrutiny, however, it is not difficult to find statements uttered generations or even centuries ago suggesting life was in a peculiarly breakneck and critical stage of hecticness. Global trade has apparently always seemed breakneck. In the year 1014, the Archbishop Wulfstan, preaching in York, proclaimed that “The world is in a rush and is getting close to its end,” (Norberg 2003, 20). Washington Irving wrote in 1822 that “Nations are fast losing their nationality. The great and increasing intercourse, the exchange of fashions and uniformity of opinions by the diffusion of literature are fast destroying those peculiarities that formerly prevailed.” Tocqueville wrote in the 1830s that American shipping entrepreneurs had accelerated the rate of ocean-crossing commerce to the most cutthroat level imaginable even by that time. The number of ocean-going ships bearing U.S. flags, wrote Tocqueville, had “grown at almost as quick a rate as the number of [America’s] inhabitants” (Toqueville 401-402).
The discovery of oil as a source for locomotive energy in large quantities near Titusville, Pennsylvania in 1859 produced a similar level of commentary about "hypercapitalism." A recurring oil boom with "the rush for leases, [ ] frantic wildcatting, [ ] overproduction and wars among refiners, [] disastrous fires," and the hectic economic scramble for profits (Furnas 1969, 671). To some, this hypercapitalism seemed to represent the "last" stage around the twentieth century, and an immense progressive movement arose in the United States to arrest the runaway machinery of the oil, steel, and railroad empires of the "robber barons."

Although so many of Marx’s theoretical propositions have been disproved by events that occurred subsequent to his life (Lakatos 1978), few contemporary scholars have challenged his "stage" theory of capitalism. Indeed only a handful of prominent scholars have paused to question the idea that "capitalism" has a definitive beginning, middle, and end. Dahrendorf (1997) wrote that this depiction of a multi-stage capitalism contains built-in contradictions. For juxtaposed against this conception of capitalism as a temporary state is a conception of an extended reign of a utopian collective or communitarian state which will follow capitalism's defeat. Dahrendorf suggested that this conception of an indefinite collectivist utopia was "curiously static" (p. 41).

Alienation Theorists Have Failed to Predict Dates

And if catastrophe has been imminent for capitalism for decades, the greatest economic minds have failed to accurately predict when it will occur. In 1958, Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith wrote what became a renowned nonfiction best-
seller, *The Affluent Society*. Galbraith claimed that the biggest corporations were approaching absolute monopoly and were essentially immune to the marketplace. General Motors, according to Galbraith, was “large enough to control its markets” and no longer feared competition over market share (Sowell 1995, 66). These predictions, like those of Marx, Engels, and Lenin before him, have been disproved (Sowell 1995, 66): dozens of major corporations have folded, declined, or disappeared, and almost half of corporations on the Fortune 500 in 1980 were not there ten years later (Sowell 1995). During the latter half of the twentieth century, small businesses gained market share against big businesses (Norberg 2003).

If “capitalism” is not a stage, but an extension of innate human tendency, then there is no basis to assume that profit-driven capitalism alienates people from their true nature. Humanity has not jumped off track, but is quite thoroughly and healthily on track. “Capitalism”—open markets where individuals and firms are able to exchange their goods and services freely—is the essence of social health and vitality. Consequently, attempts to arrest or hamper it lead to social disruption and dysfunction.

The Role of Ideas

Scholars who contend that capitalism is a temporary condition tend also to argue that capitalism depends on an ideology for its continuing existence. Weber's conception of capitalism as a “spirit” in the title of his most famous work furthered this construction (Wrong 2004, 27). Karl Polany argued that “laissez-faire was planned” (Blyth 2004, 118). Under the reconstruction of these scholars, markets certainly existed in history, but market society represents an entirely new social form, “in which labor is
seen as just another factor of production, divorced from notions of reciprocity and
obligation” (Blyth 2004, 119). “This was the new world of laissez faire” (Blyth 2004,
119). “As Karl Polanyi shows in *The Great Transformation*, the emergence of natural
markets in Europe was not the mechanical product of the gradual extension of economic
exchanges, but the product of a deliberately mercantilist state policy aimed at increasing
domestic and foreign trade” (Bourdieu 2001, 2).

The spirit, or ideology of capitalism that originated in Europe, was promoted by
merchants for their own interests, and made to seem rational by promoters in the
sciences and literature, notably Adam Smith. “[L]aissez-faire actions come from
laissez-faire ideas and institutions they make possible” (Blyth 2004, 129).

“The new order needed a ‘philosophy,’” according to economic historian Robert
Heilbroner, “[a]nd such a philosophy was by no means self-evident” (Heilbroner 1975,
64). According to this view, “the new world of profit-seeking individuals” was
dependent upon a small group of self-interested mercantilist “pamphleteers” who
promoted capitalism as something of a religion (Heilbroner 1975, 64). Chief among
these capitalist pamphleteers, of course, was the father of economics, Adam Smith.

The philosophical underpinnings of this “spirit,” according to alienation
theorists, began in the tumultuous rejection of Catholic orthodoxy during the Protestant
Reformation and were later reinforced by eighteenth-century pamphleteers like Adam
Smith. Eventually, this new economic paradigm spawned a new “cultural logic”—an
underlying paradigmatic orientation that pervades human life. Pauline Vaillancourt
Rosenau’s *The Competition Paradigm* (2003) describes capitalism as the product of a
theoretical paradigm—the competition paradigm—that is unsustainable. Capitalism has
entered a purified form, says Jameson, whereby multinational corporations have greatly increased the range of "capitalized" and commercialized products and fostered a "a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas" (Jameson 1984, 78). Even art, architecture, and other aesthetic products have been commodified to be bought and sold in the marketplace as merchandise (Jameson 1984).

Still others have alleged that capitalism was originally created by public officials. Hine (2002, 50) suggests that "[t]here is nothing 'natural' about markets" and that market trading was invented by governments who intended traders to abide by strict regulations. Since the dawn of the Industrial revolution, however, market-exchange economics has gotten loose from its state-sanctioned tethers and now holds the western world in a hegemonic grip. Hine claims markets originated in Egypt and ancient Greece and Turkey when rulers provided fairs and other venues for trade. Regional city-states guaranteed protection to anyone on his or her way to the fairs (p. 58), licensed vendors, and censored dishonest merchants (57, 56). During the fairs, a "highly restrictive legal code" regulated and taxed vendors (56). "The fair was not merely about commerce," according to Hine, but was a time for celebration of a patron saint or devotion to religious officials, a holy day or "holiday." In which the state acted as market coordinator. In contrast,

[t]oday, most of us spend our lives in a perpetual fair. Someone tries to sell us something nearly every waking moment, and we can buy casually, impersonally, with no wearing negotiation or personal contact. The act of consumption, which was once so exceptional an act in lives
dominated by laborious production, is now commonlace and incessant.

We are all in the market all the time (Hine 2002, 59).

The original markets, according to Hine (2002, 56), required strict regulation by the religious authorities who sanctioned them. "The market itself is a kind of battlefield, as both buyers and sellers seek to charm and intimidate their way to an acceptable price." Without state oversight, markets would quickly degenerate into violent struggles for property ownership.

The Academic Consensus

Although by no means held universally, belief in an alienation explanation for human violence is very popular in contemporary social science. Every professor of sociology's office is adorned with bookshelves that contain works attributing human violence to capitalism, greed, profiteering, lust for property, and class domination. The belief that regulated economies are more peaceful than free market economies is widely held among sociologists today (Edgerton 1993). Generations of scholars within the social sciences have found themselves obsessed with debunking, exposing, battling, and "ameliorating the damages" of capitalism, as George Ritzer puts it (2004, xvi).

It can safely be said that the alienation proposition represents a broad consensus of opinion within sociology and other social sciences. This historical metanarrative has even been promoted by the highest offices within the discipline of Sociology. Joe R. Feagin (2001, 4), in his inaugural address as president of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in 2001, asserted without qualification that contemporary capitalism
is to blame for “racial and ethnic oppression, patriarchy, homophobia, bureaucratic authoritarianism, violence against children, and discrimination against the aged and the disabled.” (Feagin 2001, 4). “Markets reduce everything, including human beings (labor) and nature (land), to commodities” (4).

In the ASA’s official 1996 report on the social causes of violence, authors Felice J. Levine and Katherine J. Rosich indicated that violence, even when collective, is a product of individual, anti-social impulses and that a more communitarian, cooperative society would ameliorate violence. Beginning with the statement that “American society is engulfed in a world of violence,” the 1996 report launched an ambitious drive for more research (and research dollars) to answer the question of what causes violence in U.S. society (1, vii). “The pervasiveness of violence, its spiraling negative impacts, and the emergence of what appears to be an ingrained pattern of violence are all manifestations of a crisis at the most fundamental levels of our social order” the report concluded (p. 1).

Reading this scholarship, one is tempted to believe that a link between growing capitalism and increasing violence has been proven. But violent crime has fallen double digits in the United States since the 1980s even while all indexes of capitalism indicate that most states have embarked on economic agendas that have generally emphasized deregulation and freer markets (Apuzzo 2004). Violence appears to have declined throughout most parts of the world since the Second World War (Payne 2004). This has been especially true in industrializing nations.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overall trajectory of capitalism perceived by Weber, Marx, and Durkheim appears to be correct even if their dates were wrong. It seems undeniable that capitalism is generally on the increase. However the perception that increasing capitalism generates increasing social violence appears to rest on much shallower sand. Moreover, the overarching proposition promoted by the alienation theorists, the notion that "capitalism"—broadly defined—is a modern, artificial, western invention, dependent on the spread of a market ideology among its participants, seems vulnerable to increasingly irreconcilable research findings.

Scholars have been developing an increasingly mountainous record of private ownership of land and property (and therefore, capital) since Polanyi's early writings (Frank 1993, 385). And since the 1970s, "the empirical and analytical refutation of the [Marx/Engels/Polany] argument has been almost unceasing. The evidence—primarily from archaeological finds—has been substantial" (Frank 1993, 385).

The historical interpretations of the founders of sociology have fared poorly against contemporary archaeological, anthropological, and historical developments. To some extent the nineteenth- and early twentieth century theorists who spawned the scientific study of society may be excused because of the state of anthropology and archaeology at the time when these they wrote. Weber's knowledge of ancient societies
and civilizations, for example, was profound and rich, and perhaps as great as any scholar of his own period. But Weber wrote during the 1890s and early twentieth century when accounts of the economies of ancient India, China and the Mediterranean were either nonexistent or not abundant (Andreski 12). He thus was forced to consult primary sources either translated or in the original Greek, Latin or Italian (each of which Weber read fluently) (Weber 1983, 12). Weber's resulting metathesis, like Marx's and Durkheim's has been attacked by dozens if not hundreds of works since the 1930s (Mackinnon 1993, 243). Marshall (1982) pointed out that Weber's demarcation between pre- and post Reformation economies is untenable. "Rational" firms, a free market in labor and commodities, rational technology, a calculable legal system all existed prior to the Protestant Reformation (Cohen 1980).

While Marx and Weber can be forgiven for making mistakes of interpretation regarding human economic history, contemporary scholars should be given no such exemption, however, and their theoretical suppositions need to be strenuously examined in light of current knowledge.

The more knowledge we have, the more we know that the economic system Weber attributed only to Western thinkers was actually far more common in the world than Weber believed. Private property was well protected even in the Athenian courts (Adams 1993, 66). The claims of Weber, Marx, and Polanyi and their defenders in anthropology, history, and sociology have long been challenged with regard to pre-industrial social and economic arrangements (Frank, 385). The evidence accumulated during the twentieth century, according to David Herlihy (1971, 154-55) has "all but wiped from the ledgers the supposed gulf, once thought fundamental, between a
medieval manorial economy and the capitalism of the modern period.” Ancient trade, “both interlocal and international, was geographically extensive and highly profitable” but had a feudal ruling class at the helm. (Weber 1983, 33). Since the 1970s, researchers have developed an increasingly mountainous record of private ownership of land and property among ancient societies (Frank 1993, 385). “[T]he empirical and analytical refutation of the [stage theory] argument has been almost unceasing. The evidence—primarily from archaeological finds—has been substantial” (Frank 1993, 385). Lamberg-Karlovsky (1975) found that profit, wholesaling, supply-demand pricing and production, and private ownership of land have “existed in a market network at least by the end of the fourth millennium in Mesopotamia.”

Trade in Early Civilization

By the time of the first major civilizations in Sumeria and Mesopotamia, commerce in goods and merchandise was already systematic. Clay tablets with notations representing records of barley transactions before the founding of any of the early civilizations have been found at many locations (Robinson 1999, 62-63). By the early second millennium B.C., trade routes with numerous ports of call were evident throughout the Old World, and private ships available for hire plied their trade over the seas and oceans (Silver 1983, 821).

Frank (1993, 388) concluded that a “single world system [with] historical continuity for at least 5,000 years, emerged with its core in West Asia and Egypt, and then spread to encompass much of Afro-Eurasia.” This system extended across languages and into deepest Africa, the Far East, Although centered in West and
Central Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean, it extended far into three surrounding continents (Frank 1993, 383). The motive force of this worldwide system of trade was capital accumulation (Frank 1993, 388). Moreover, "profit-motivated trade extended far beyond the political borders of any state and connected . . . [all of these] into a single world system" (Kohl 1989, 227).

Markets in Labor

One of Weber's most important and often-repeated points is that the Middle Ages were special because they signaled a switch from slave and feudal labor systems to market wage labor (141). Weber suggested that labor before this time was "unfree," and thus incapable of sustaining capitalistic market economies (141). But evidence accumulated since Weber's death indicates he was incorrect on this point. There were daily wages from 2000 B.C. in parts of Eurasia, and wage rates determined by supply and demand (Silver 1983, 809). A drachma per day in fifth- and fourth-century (B.C.) Athens was a "standard wage" for most workers (Jones 1952, 26). There were both sale and rental markets for slaves in Babylon, suggesting that slave labor was integrated into an overall supply-and-demand labor system (Silver 808). Marx and Weber also overstated the role of feudal production relationships even in the Middle Ages. Half of English peasants worked for wages during the fourteenth century (Hejeebu and CcCloskey 2004: 136).
The Commodification Of Humanity

Alienation theorists like former ASA President Joe Feagin have sometimes claimed that the commodification of humanity brought on by modern capitalism explains why capitalism is so harmful to social health (Feagin 2001, 4). Yet the sale and purchase of humanity in various contexts has an ancient pedigree. Bail bonds to secure a prisoner’s release were known in Ancient Egypt from at least 250 B.C. (Reichel 2002, 80). Hejeebu and McCloskey (2004: 137) point out that “[i]n the European Middle Ages more (depending on how you count these things) was for sale than is for sale now: husbands, wives, slaves, serfs, kingdoms, market days, and eternal salvation.” “Medieval Europe was thoroughly monetized” (137).

Medieval systems of criminal justice were also much more monetized than criminal justice systems of today. Medieval courts operated in accordance with the profits they made for monarchs that administered them (Diamond 1978, 250). This was true in Norman-age England as well as eleventh century Russia, where Article 1 of the code provided for simple systems of fines for even the most heinous crimes:

> If a man kills a man . . . the brother is to avenge his brother; the son, his father; or the father, his son; and the son of the brother (of the murder victim) or the son of his sister, their respective uncle. If there is no avenger (the murderer) pays 40 grivna wergild . . . (Diamond 1978, 244).

The law of the Visigoths, circa 700 A.D., similarly stated that
Whoever shall have killed a man, whether he committed a homicide intending to or not intending to . . . let him be handed over into the protestas of the parents or next of kin of the deceased . . . (Diamond 1978, 244).

If anything, the employment of labor in the ancient world was much more diverse than it is in western societies today. There were many more types of employment contracts, forms of servitude, and slavery. A huge slave trade, with great fluctuations in price, thrived throughout the ancient Eurasian tricontinental region (Silver 1983, 808). Slavery in the ancient world often provided opportunities for slaves to prosper, buy or be granted their freedom and move up through class ranks. In ancient Rome, commerce and industry were heavily led by businessmen who were former slaves (Baumol 1990, 900). Slavery “may have represented the one avenue for advancement for someone from the lower classes” (900). After acquiring business experience, a slave might be retired into the ranks of investor and businessman. Many apparently retired wealthy in the countryside with investments in land and banking (900).

Banking In Early Civilizations

As Hoskins (1985, 5) wrote, “Since the earliest times there have been banks and bankers,” “operated simply to bring a person with money together with a person who needed money and together they became partners in a Joint Venture business enterprise.
For this service banks charged fee. Clay lending tokens issued by bankers are found in
great quantities today in the Eurasian excavations of ancient Babylon (Hoskins 1985, 6).
There were both government banks and private banks such as the Igibi Bank which
flourished in 575 B.C. (Hoskins 1985, 6). “These banks offered almost every service
offered by banks today including the use of checking, savings, letters of credit, and the
Babylonian form of paper money—the clay tablet” (Hoskins 1985, 6). In ancient
Egypt, a canal dug from the Nile to the Red Sea was a commercial speedway. Boats
coming from India could stop by banking barges anchored in the canal and get a loan
“day or night” (Hoskins 1985, 6).

Relationships Between Commerce And War

If ever there was a time in human history when profit motives were nonexistent,
historical texts have failed to identify this period. The claim made by alienation
theorists that greed and avarice are a product of industrialism are false. Judas, after all,
betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver around A.D. 33.

Competition over the fruits of business seems to have been a factor in many of
the world’s early wars. The very first well-documented war, the Trojan War, was
fought over trading rights in the Aegean Sea (Keegan 1993, 241). Many other wars in
ancient times were actually efforts to recruit labor for commercial ventures. Max
Weber characterized many ancient wars as “slave raids” because their purpose was to
“throw more supplies upon the slave market” (Weber 1983, 141). Commercialism and
profit motives were behind much of European colonialism during the seventeenth and
eighteenth centuries. Nearly all settlements in North America were commercial ventures even centuries before the industrial revolution (Hine 2002).

Even the seemingly moralistic American abolitionists whose agitation against slavery drove the United States to civil war in 1860 were buoyed by selfish economic interests: northerners thought slave labor put them at a disadvantage in the marketplace (Hall 1987, xii). Similar economic motivations fueled southern secessionists: federal tariff rates imposed by northern policymakers to equalize the southern slave advantage made trade barriers restrictively high for the South’s cotton economy and drove southerners to seek restoration of free trade through violence (DiLorenzo 2004). So too, slavery was finally eradicated throughout the world because of economic considerations. The nail in the coffin of worldwide slavery was its relative inefficiency as a system for delivering labor services. Slave workers had no economic incentives to work hard and consequently sat idle when not watched (Nisbett and Cohen 1996, 3).

Taxation of business and commerce was also a prevalent cause of wars in history. Taxation in the Roman Empire is credited by many historians with fostering violent revolts that ultimately destroyed the Roman Empire (Payne 2004, 203). The French Revolution was caused in part by the burdensome French tax system (Payne 2004, 206). During the initial uprising, tax offices were sacked and a wall erected to prevent the flow of untaxed goods into Paris was torn down. As the Revolution progressed, thirty-four top tax officials were executed (p. 206). The American Revolution, of course, was an effort to repeal a series of tax acts that impeded the flow of goods in commerce across the Atlantic Ocean. Many of the initial targets of violence by colonists were government tax collectors.
The distinction between modern industrial capitalism and pre-medieval markets
has been shown to be a fiction. So too, the proposition that western industrial capitalism
represents a stark transformation in human behavior has been undermined by
scholarship written subsequent to the publication of The Protestant Work Ethic.

Seeking evidence of capitalist trade in the ancient world was once much like
trying to find the evidence that Darwin (1995) cited as support for his theory of
evolution. The geologic record, wrote Darwin, was “a history of the world imperfectly
kept, and written in a changing dialect; of this history we possess the last volume alone,
relating to only two or three countries; Of this volume, only here and there a short
chapter has been preserved; and of each page, only here and there a few lines” (p. 166).

But we are approaching sufficient evidence to make a few statements about the
accuracy of the prehistoric narrative of the alienation theorists: they were wrong about
the dearth of for-profit private trade prior to the Middle Ages. As scholarly inquiries
have delved deeper and deeper into the past, their discoveries of commerce in the
ancient world have expanded exponentially. Ancient peoples are now seen as much
more technologically skilled, numerous, and organized than archaeologists previously
believed (Milanich 2004). Merely comparing the definitions of capitalism provided by
Weber, Polanyi, et al., with the findings of modern archaeology undermines the
alienation proposition. Polanyi’s definition of “market economy” required as many as a
half-dozen distinct elements, including (1) consumer goods, (2) commodified land, (3)
labor through supply and demand, risk bearing individual enterprise, and loan markets
(Silver 1983, 796). Similarly, Weber’s definition required no fewer than six distinct
phenomena acting in unison: 1) the appropriation of means of production are in private
hands 2) there are free markets, 3) there is mechanization of production, 4) predictable law governing business affairs, 5) free labor, and 6) a "commercialization of economic life"—meaning a robust culture of commercial (i.e., banking and financing) instruments (Weber 1999, 44). All of these have existed since the second millennium B.C. in the Near East, and probably earlier and elsewhere.

We now know that even Adam Smith underestimated the extent of prehistoric commerce and thus can be said to have underplayed his position. Smith plotted the rise of agribusiness and manufacturing as first appearing in Egypt (Smith 1991 [1776], 27). He suggested, in error, that ancient Rome represented the first appearance of minted coins, pointing to references by Pliny the Elder to the effect that coined money first appeared in the time of Servius Tullius. But in fact, coins are substantially older. Archeologists have found coins and other media of exchange (and thus, evidence of standardized trade, if not "capitalism") among the artifacts of some of the earliest protocivilized societies, from ancient Mesopotamia to Phoenicia, to Sumeria, to the ancient Americas (Frank 1993; McCAdams 1992; Silver 1983; Brumfiel 1980; Waddell 1929). According to Toynbee’s *Study of History*, more than 650 primitive societies have been categorized by anthropologists, and since “most of these have used one or more forms of primitive money, it follows that the subject of primitive money is of vast proportions” and that the tendency to invent currency is something of a universal human trait (Davies 1994, 34).

To the extent that coins represent evidence of routinized exchange of property among individuals, we have evidence that ancient societies on every inhabited continent engaged in such exchanges once they were able to shape materials into coins. Almost
every conceivable precious metal, with the exception of platinum and palladium, seem
to have been used as media of exchange at one time or another (Silver 1983, 818).

Coins, or currency, “one of the finest achievements of human reasoning powers”
(Temple 99), represent a systematic means of measuring value that drastically decreases
transaction costs (Silver 1983).
CHAPTER 4

ALIENATION AND THE ARCHEOLOGICAL RECORD

Archaeology, like sociology, owes its origins to the late nineteenth century and did not begin in professional earnest until the 1870s (Amsden 1949, 22). Archaeological knowledge was limited to scattered and poorly catalogued finds, anecdotes, and conjecture. Marx never knew of the findings of Sir Arthur John Evans, or of Hiram Bingham, and Weber was an old man when the first diggings were made at the tomb of Tutankhamen.

Thus, it stands to reason that the theoretical underpinnings of the early sociologists suffered from blindness where they depended upon knowledge of anthropology and archaeology. Stated more accurately, the interpretations of ancient societies advanced by the founders of sociology were largely conceptual rather than factual. And we now know that some of these early conceptions were quite simply wrong.

Marx’s interpretation of economic history fares especially poorly when juxtaposed against the archeological record. Not only is capitalism much older than orthodox Marxism has depicted it, but capitalism is decidedly more diverse in its origins. The archeological record now seems to indicate that market economies with property-right protection arose separately in different parts of the globe. Civilized societies developed currencies generally before they developed written languages.
The first great civilizations were empires of private as well as public trade. Ancient Egypt was a mecca for transcontinental trade in commodities from three continents. Egyptian mines were yielding forty thousand kilograms of gold per year during the second millennium B.C., an amount which was never again reached in world production until the nineteenth century (Oliver and Fage 1970, 39). Marxist social scientists have long argued that Egypt was a centrally-controlled redistributive society (Silver 801). But Silver (1983, 801) points out that “private ownership as well as sale and leasing of land are found throughout Egyptian history.” Interest-bearing loans apparently existed in grain (801) circa 2000 B.C. “It is well known that private individuals could own farm land at all periods of ancient Egyptian history” (Silver 1983, 807, citing Baer 1962).

“By the middle centuries of the fourth millennium, . . . [t]he trade relations of Gerzean Egypt were very extensive” (Oliver and Fage 1970, 34). Metals like lead and silver were regularly imported from island ports in the Aegean sea (Oliver and Fage 1970, 34). Shipbuilders were building vessels of sixty oars (Oliver and Fage 1970, 34). Egypt thrived in later second millennium B.C., with constant stream of oil, wine, olives, fish, cucumbers, salt, garments, and papyrus (821).

Historians and archaeologists have debated Egypt’s fall from prominence for centuries. One of the most compelling explanations is simple economic competition. Like the once-gigantic A & P grocery chain that succumbed to the explosion of discount suburban U.S. supermarkets of the 1950s and ‘60s (Sowell 2000, 59-62), Egypt found itself unable to adjust to the age of iron. Discoveries around the ancient ruins of Meroe, in central Africa, have found piles of iron slag suggesting that Meroe became a
Birmingham of the ancient world (Oliver and Fage 1970, 41). But due to its geography and centuries of overgrazing, Egypt had neither iron ore nor fuel with which to smelt it (Oliver and Fage 1970, 41).

Political Economy In Ancient Texts

If “capitalism” represents the implementation of an ideology that was recently imposed upon human societies, one is hard pressed to identify when in the history of human discourse people first began to state their belief in this ideology. And if recognition of private property was rare in ancient societies, man’s earliest documents are highly unrepresentative of ancient human cultures. Adam Smith’s first rule—the law of supply and demand, and the corresponding fact that items in short supply sell at high prices—was expressed at least two thousand years before the birth of Adam Smith, in the later second millennium B.C. (Silver 1983, 808). Since time immemorial, when people have written about their lives, they have written about markets, trade goods, property, and commerce. Much of what we know about humanity’s past is to be found in written records, and many of the earliest written records were business documents. The earliest and most recurring myths, upon examination, often deal with the quest for riches. “[A] lot of our heroic literature is about someone who is trying to get his hands on a valuable object. Jason sailed after the Golden Fleece. The Arthurian legends recount the quest for the Holy Grail. Wagner’s characters and Tolkien’s, too, are after a ring” (Hine 2002, 9).

In the land known to myth as the Garden of Eden, to history as ancient Babylon, and to modernity as Iraq, texts from the later third millennium already show street
vendors and, “the use of silver to pay rentals and purchase dates, oil, barley, animals, slaves, and real estate” (Silver 1983, 817). “[N]umerous lending contracts of an entirely commercial nature” have been identified dating from ancient Babylon in the second millennium B.C. (Silver 1983, 803). Trade in ancient Babylon apparently reached a breakneck pace around the 1800s (B.C.) when Babylonian businessmen were engaged in a variety of enterprises in the Persian Gulf. Thirty-three pounds of gold was payment for one private contract (Silver 1983, 804). Speculation contracts which specified penalties for future violations, promissory notes payable to the bearer(s), real estate deeds, and letters of credit were all in use by the fourteenth century B.C. (Silver 1983, 804-806). Sales and leases of real estate were common in Mesopotamia throughout its history, and land markets offered guarantees of good title (Silver 1983, 806). Loan documents have been found evidencing financial transactions from the middle to the end of the third millennium B.C. throughout Egypt, Babylon, and the ancient near east (Silver 1983, 802). Many people are familiar with the Hippocratic Oath—an agreement to create and work within a trade union originating (probably) around 400 B.C. in Greece. This oath was a private contract between members of a medical guild and their untrained assistants (Miles 2003).

Earliest Law Codes

The earliest law codes—the Code of Hammurabi and the Eshnunna Code, spoke of establishment of standard weights, protected private property, attempted to regulate interest rates, mentioned daily wages for farm labor as payable in silver or grain, and punished harms to property by fine (Williams 1997, 18). The Code of Hammurabi
(circa 1792-1750 B.C.) “emphasized property rights and spoke to such issues as theft, ownership, and interpersonal violence” (Reichel 2002, 80). Its rules were developed by traders throughout Mesopotamia, emphasizing commercial law and providing “reasonable examples of today’s deeds, partnerships, and other contract forms” (Reicher 1996, 80).

The Bible

Recall the Bible’s many admonitions against greed and its instructions to live selflessly. These statements were rendered within a text that was otherwise replete with stories of commerce, trade, and profit. The Bible, one of the most detail-rich sources of information about ancient Eurasia, contains hundreds of references to commerce, business, and entrepreneurialism (see, e.g., Genesis 23:12-18; 2 Kings 7:1; Amos 8:4-5; Proverbs 11:26). Many of the featured subjects of the Bible, including Abraham and Solomon, were wealthy businessmen (Asimov 1971). Moreover, much of the Bible’s content consists of rags-to-riches stories, extolling an apparent economic mobility even in a society where various government authorities resisted the empowerment of the poor. The Bible describes as heroic numerous struggles by entrepreneurs to evade the taxation and regulatory avarice of government authorities, such as Gideon’s concealment of wheat from Midianite rulers who would otherwise “destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel” (Judges 6:1-6).

The first books of The Bible were apparently a collection of ancient traditions, reduced to writing beginning in the ninth century B.C. and continuing until the time of Christ (Asimov 1968). The Bible also contains a number of legal codes—and like
other early legal codes, the Biblical Law of Moses contains references to greed, envy for property of others, and business affairs. It advises its readers to commit themselves to business ethics and to employ accurate and equitable accounting methods (see, e.g., Proverbs 11:1; 20:23). Note also that the Bible’s Mosaic laws (which include the Ten Commandments), probably date to 900 B.C. and clearly recognize private property ("Thou shalt not steal") and title in land ("Ye shall inherit their land . . . that floweth with milk and honey" (Leviticus 20:24).

Scrutiny of the Old Testament reveals passages indicating that pre-industrial mass commercial production was occurring at some locations. There are references to a Babylonian "city of metal workers" (1 Chronicles 4:14), and a "valley of craftsmen" (Neh. 11:35). A vision by the prophet Ezekiel described merchants rich with inventories of wine, wool, cloth, spices, gems, and gold, who engaged in extremely profitable trade with traveling merchants from throughout the Middle East:

> All the ships of the sea and the sailors in them visited you to trade with you . . . People paid you in silver and iron, tin and lead for your merchandise . . . They bartered men and bronze implements. The people of Beth-togarmah traded you horses, chargers, mules . . . You were paid in ivory tusks and ebony. Edom exchanged carbuncles, purple, embroideries, fine linen, coral and rubies against your goods. Judah and the land of Israel also traded with you, supplying you with corn . . . wax, honey, tallow and balm (Ez. 27:9).
Many scholars have suggested that capitalism was generated by Christianity (Weber 1930; Murray 2004). Yet Hejeebu and McCloskey (2004) note that Christianity glorifies capitalism much less than other major religions. They note the contrast between the Lord’s Prayer, which requests only “our daily bread,” with the Hindu prayer to Durga, the Mother Goddess: “Give me wealth, long life, sons, and all things desirable” (139). Hindus also pray to Ganesha at the outset of any project for “longevity, desired powers, and prosperity” (140). The Vedic hymns are similarly filled with prayers for treasure and wealth (140). Zoroastrianists pray for “rewards, compensation, and hospitality” and for their communities, “possessions, prosperity, . . . and easeful life” (140). Buddha’s “Admonition to Singala” likewise proclaims a philosophy never stated better by a neoliberal capitalist:

The wise and moral man . . .
Makes money like a bee . . .
Such a man makes his pile
As an anthill, gradually . . .
. . . He should divide
His money in four parts:
On one part he should live,
With two expand his trade,
And the fourth he should save
Against a rainy day (Hejeebu and McCloskey 2004, 136).
Taxation In Early Documents

The earliest textual artifacts also manifest evidence of taxation, which by its very nature represents a taking of private property or wealth by governmental authority. There is no known civilization that did not tax, and the dawn of the first civilization we know anything about—ancient Sumeria—is recorded on clay cones recorded the taxation of the period (Adams 1993, 2). Indeed, a “large percentage of all ancient documents are tax records of one kind or another” (Adams 1993, 21). The ancient Egyptians taxed almost everything, including sales, slaves, imports, exports, and businesses (Adams 1993, 7). The Rosetta Stone, “the most important Egyptian archaeological discovery of all time,” according to Charles Adams (1993, 17) was actually a tax document: it gave notice of a tax immunity for a religious temple. Taxation was also at the roots of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, rooted in the tax struggles of the ancient Hebrews against Greek taxation (Adams 1993, 39-43).

The Law's Growing Recognition Of Private Trade Rights

There is one sense in which the Weberian definition of capitalism accurately reflects the conditions necessary for well-functioning free markets. Capitalistic production is most efficient when protected by codes of law that limit the authority of governments to intervene in private commerce. While the private contracts of the ancient world served to add predictability to exchanges between private parties and merchants, they did not restrain government authorities from intruding in personal business affairs with every manner of confiscatory taxation and seizure of property.
What kept capitalist investment from becoming fully routinized in the ancient world was the arbitrariness of government economic regulation. "For thousands of years, governments around the world have attempted to set the prices and control supplies" (Payne 2004, 255). Rarely have authorities resisted the temptation to tax and regulate commerce when they had power to. Trade in commercial markets largely operated around such regulation.

It seems that with the passing generations, however, written codes of law tended to become more tolerant of rational trade, and less arbitrary in their control over economic matters. The *Edict of Diocletian* (1939), drafted circa 301 A.D. and issued and ratified in the name of four Caesars, established a maximum schedule of prices for commodities and services throughout the Roman Empire. This edict was purportedly the law of the land across several nations for years; inscriptions of it have been found on tablets found at different places in Greece and Asia Minor. The Edict imposed the death penalty on merchants throughout the empire who charged more than the prices of Caesar. "No one should deem this a harsh measure," the Edict proclaimed, since any merchant could easily "avoid its severity by keeping his profits within bounds." Death was also imposed upon merchants who declined to trade commodities they possessed, or who hoarded commodities if the public needed them.

It is not clear if the *Edict of Diocletian* was ever rescinded or stricken from the laws of Rome, but historians note that this code dropped into disuse after merchants went out of business and scarcity of products increased. In some cases, merchants were required to sell commodities at lower prices than they paid for them, and bloody street brawls and violence followed (p. 3). Nonetheless, the Edict represented a long step
toward legal sanction for routinized trade and standardized taxation and regulation of
business. Although predictability in trade relations was the purpose behind most inter-
merchant contracts, the intrusion of sovereigns into commercial affairs had previously
been something unpredictable, a domain of great discretion. Law, like other institutions
of civilization, took time to develop.

Bills of rights which sought to codify or limit the powers of states were rare or
nonexistent in ancient texts. The Magna Carta, signed under duress by King John of
Great Britain in 1215 A.D., may represent the first attempt to establish formal written
limitations on the power of a sovereign. But with each passing century, there were
more and more such documents. The English Bill of Rights was drafted in 1689, the
French Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, and the American Bill of Rights in
1791. To the extent that markets function best where property rights are predictable,
there is support for the idea that rationalized capitalism was on the gradual increase over
this period.

Robinson (1999) notes that writing itself probably arose from primitive tallies of
business transactions in ancient Mesopotamia. Although scholars of early written
languages have been intensely interested in certain important documents, most early
writing consisted of mundane identity markings and property markers (10). The earliest
known evidence of writing came from Sumeria around 3300 B.C., probably growing
out of a long-standing counting system of clay tokens to keep track of goods and
commodities in trade (11). Such tallies and clay tokens had been used since around
8,000 BC to represent inventories of sheep, grain, or other commodities (58-59). Later
tokens and clay “envelopes” may have functioned as early bills of lading to accompany
merchandise shipments (60). Indeed, the evolution of written language probably reflected the increasing complexity of commercial affairs throughout the Indo-European zone (62). Writing probably evolved from similar origins in the Inca civilization across the Atlantic (55).

Marxist historians long believed that Egypt was a redistributive society with administrative management of property (Silver 1983, 801). But we now know that “private ownership as well as sale and leasing of land are found throughout Egyptian history” (801). Loan documents involving private persons have been found from the middle to the end of the third millennium (2500-3000 B.C.) throughout Egypt, Babylon, and the ancient near east (Silver 1983, 802). There were both sale and rental markets for slaves in Babylon (Silver 1983, 808) and daily wages from 2000 B.C. determined by supply and demand (Silver 1983, 809). Tanning, metal, garment, and winemaking were all done on massive scales in the second millennium B.C. (811-812).

The Americas

Interpretations of archaeological discoveries in the Western Hemisphere, for example, have blown some gaping holes in the Marxist/Weberian “stage” thesis. According to Henry F. Dobyns (1966), there were more people living in the Americas in 1491 than in Europe (Mann 2002, 43). The sparsely populated New World described by the first European visitors to North America was already artificially low—reduced by the wildfire spread of disease brought by Italian, French, and Spanish explorers like Columbus and DeSoto in the 15th and 16th centuries. “The first whites to explore many
parts of the Americas may therefore have encountered places that were already depopulated” (Mann 2002, 43).

Alfred Crosby’s *The Columbian Exchange: Biological Consequences of 1492* (2003) concluded the Indian groups of central Mexico independently created nearly all the major Neolithic innovations that were invented in Sumeria and Mesopotamia in the third millennium BC. And, as in Eurasia, written languages apparently evolved as a means of accounting by traders.

The American civilizations, though lacking the wheel and steel, handily outmatched the early European civilizations in agriculture, developing strains of corn, tomatoes, and potatoes that later sustained societies worldwide (Mann 2002, 48-49). One theory is that the Amazon rain forest was originally planted as an orchard by Native Americans farming fruits, nuts, and palms about 4,000 years ago (Mann 2002, 51). In the Americas, this agribusiness sustained some of the world’s largest and most ornate cities, several of which were larger than Paris or London in the 1500s. Unlike European cities, the central American cities employed large forces to keep the crowded streets clean of sewage and detritis (Mann 2002, 49). Evidence of the immense distance traveled by American farming culture can be seen in the fact that John Smith found Massachusetts in 1614 to be “so planted with gardens and Corne fields” that it amazed him (Mann 2002, 49). The original strains of these corn plants had been developed thousands of miles away in South and Central America.

In 1539, Hernando De Soto, “half-warrior, half venture capitalist,” according to Mann (2002, 44), landed at Tampa Bay with 600 soldiers, 200 horses, and 300 pigs. For four years, De Soto’s disease-carrying army trudged through what is now the
American Southeast in search of gold. Although De Soto himself died on the expedition, the accounts of his surviving soldiers record the existence of heavily populated large towns and small cities in which many hundreds of native Americans lived in close proximity. They also noted wide streets, markets filled with goods from hundreds of miles away, and ornately decorated buildings (Mann 2002, 49).

The diseases of the Spanish took an immense toll on the cities of ancient North America. No European visited these parts of the Mississippi valley for more than a century afterward, when the French explorers who ventured into the same areas found them deserted. Our contemporary perception of early Native Americans as nomadic hunters, according to UCLA’s Russell Thornton, was created by the epidemics that wiped out these ancient Indian civilizations of North America. (Mann 2002, 45).

The disaster of epidemics wrought by the De Soto, Columbus, Cortez, and other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century expeditions left the New World virtually deserted by the seventeenth century when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. We now know that the astounding tales told by De Soto’s troops have been authenticated by archaeological findings. For the most part, these findings have come after the deaths of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim.

Archaeological discoveries involving the ancient Americas indicate that the Western Hemisphere—like Europe, Asia, and Africa—was traversed by merchants and traders apparently acting individually over generations and geographic distances, and was typified by levels of social violence substantially greater than levels experienced in western nations in the twenty-first century. Research at Huexotia in eastern Mexico dating to the Aztec period (ca. A.D. 1150-1519) shows that the daily markets contained
"an astonishing variety of goods and were attended by thousands of people" (Brumfiel 1980, 460). Great "quantities of salt, spindle whorls, obsidian, and probably cloth from nonlocal sources" (Brumfiel 1980, 460). "By the date of Spanish conquest, market exchange had existed in the Valley of Mexico for at least two centuries" (Brumfiel 1980, 460).

Going back even further, evidence of highly-developed market-based civilizations have been identified throughout the Western Hemisphere. “As long as people have populated North America, economic incentives have been at work” (Barrington 1999a, 4). Textile weaving was as advanced in the Americas 10,000 years ago as anywhere in the world (Barrington 1999a). The southwestern Anasazi constructed dams and irrigation canals since at least 1300 A.D. The Cahokia civilization, which thrived for hundreds of years before Europeans began to explore North America, engaged in an immense trade in flint and copper and had a large network of trade routes that criss-crossed the Arkansas, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers (Barrington 1999a). By 1000 A.D., the Cahokia had constructed some of the largest man-made structures in the world. The Huron maintained trade routes for hundreds of years that extended from one end of the Great Lakes to the other (Barrington 1999a, 6). It seems, even, that the arrival of Europeans merely integrated with, rather than displaced this trade, and that it utilized the same trade routes.

The more we discover about the ancient world, the more complex its patterns of exchange and travel become. “We have evidence that the mammoth hunters of the Russian steppes obtained Mediterranean shells in trade, as did also the Cro-Magnon hunters of the central valleys of France” (Heilbroner 1975, 23). Ancient human remains

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with blond hair and Caucasian features have been found far outside Europe in places as far removed as China and North America (Bahn 1996, 152). Mummies found in the Altai mountains of Russia dating from the last millennium B.C. have been found with silk artifacts from as far away as China and Persia (Bahn 1996, 151). These seemingly bizarre misplacements were at one time seen as fakes or fruits of faulty analysis—but are now considered testaments to a world-crossing commerce of peoples and goods that preceeded contemporary globalization by thousands of years. The past is now seen as much more diverse than we once imagined; Caucasian corpses in western China are adorned in the clothing of western societies, suggesting travel, rather than migration or colonization. Archaeologists continue to bump into artifacts and specimens that are grossly out of place according to their previous interpretations of human history. Recently-discovered evidence of human habitation on the Yana River in Siberia dating to circa 30,000 B.C., for example, shows that human occupation in the Arctic is twice as old as previously known (Stewart 2004).

The Evidence From Linguistics

The research of linguists confirms the immensity of this prehistoric commerce among the earth's peoples. Word roots common to languages on several continents reveal that humans in antiquity are all, in the broadest sense, members of an immense network of intercultural trade and exchange. For example, Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, has been shown to be related to Latin and Greek (Rudgley, 35). Iranian, Indian, Slavic, Celtic, Germanic, Italic, Greek, Lithuanian and Albanian are all branches of the Indo-European language family (Rudgley 35). These languages—and
others even further removed in west Asia and Africa apparently split off before the advent of agriculture (Rudgley 42). A common “Nostratic” language that was the mother tongue 10,000 to 15,000 years ago (Rudgley 42). Indeed the seven global language etymologies share many basic terms for man, woman, child, hole, vulva, finger, and water—words that correspond across hundreds or more languages. As Rudgley writes (p. 44), “It seems absolutely remarkable that such correspondences should exist across time and space and that languages found as far a field as the deserts of southern Africa, the Amazon rain forest, the Arctic and the cities of Europe still retain links from a remote time when they were all closely connected” (p. 44). The evidence is “striking and is hard to dismiss simply as mere coincidence” (p. 45).

By the Middle Ages, commerce over Europe was so extensive that even the tiniest and most isolated town—“a dot on the map without so much as a road to connect its few hundred souls to the outer world” was visited by dozens of traders on a monthly basis (Heilbroner 1975, 49). “[P]rofit-motivated trade extended far beyond the political borders of any state and connected . . . [all of these] into a single world system” (Kohl 1989, 227).

Even the world’s oldest fully preserved human body, the “Iceman” found by German hikers in the Italian Alps in 1991, was in possession of garments and tools of copper and flint that established the existence of mining and smelting operations of some intermediate level (Bahn 1996, 140-145). His hair showed heavy contamination with copper and arsenic, which suggested exposure to early industrial copper smelting of malachite or azurite ore some 5,300 years ago (145). Precisely where such metals were mined and processed remains unknown; however, copper production was heavy
around the Arabian peninsula during the period (Frank 1993, 394). If the Iceman’s tools were forged thereabouts, they traveled the better part of a thousand miles. By 1500 B.C., metallurgical factories and processing centers had developed over a chain of provinces stretching from the Pacific to the Atlantic (Frank 1993, 396).

Mining on a huge scale occurred in the Ural Mountains as well as Kazakhstan, the Altai Mountains and Russia; two million metric tons of ore was mined and some 100,000 tons of copper was smelted at just two Kazakh sites (Frank 1993, 396). Copper ore was systematically transported 300 kilometers through the mountains of Eurasia; tin was traded over a 1,000 kilometer commercial route (Frank 1993, 396). “Caravan cities” rose like railroad towns, and the entreprenuers melded widespread differences of culture and language into a common commercial language (Frank 1993, 401). But this commerce was often at arms length due to the constant threat of violence. Spears and shields were the everyday attire of merchants. “Without being armed,” wrote Tacitus, “they transact nothing, whether of public or private” (Payne 2004, 30). The Ice Man of the Italian Alps mentioned above was initially reported to the world as having died mysteriously; initial examinations showed no signs of violent death (Bahn 1996, 140). But subsequent X-rays showed the body to have been slain by an arrow (“Iceman’s last two meals included big game meat” 2002). Thus, this single human specimen refutes two of the major components of the alienation thesis: it exemplifies violent death within a commercial theatre some five millennia before the Industrial Revolution.
Factories

Recall that one of Max Weber's precepts for distinguishing modern capitalism from the markets of antiquity involved the absence of factories in the latter and their presence in the former. But we now know of the existence of many production operations in the ancient past of immense size and output. There were actual factories in fifth-century B.C. Babylon that produced and bottled oil in containers for delivery throughout three continents (Silver 1983, 812). Archaeologists recently unearthed an ancient brewery in southern Peru that operated more than 1,000 years ago. The brewery pre-dated the Incan empire by at least four centuries and was capable of producing thousands of liters of beer-like grain alcohol per day for consumption in the region (Babwin 2004). Granaries privately owned with no apparent connection to either government or religious temples were used by agricultural merchants throughout Eurasia before the time of Christ (Silver 1983, 801). Tanning, metal, garment, winemaking were all done on massive scales in the second millennium B.C. (Silver 1983, 811-812). "In what can only be called an industrial revolution," an iron industry flourished in northeast China between 910 and 1126 (Williams 2003, 140). Production reached 125,000 to 150,000 tons by AD 1078, a level similar to the total western and Russian European output of the early nineteenth century and only surpassed Great Britain in 1796 (Williams 2003, 140).

No one has ever identified a society living or dead whose members engaged in no advantageous commerce with others. Former American Anthropological Association president Ernestine Friedl (1978) documented exchanges by members of rival primitive hunter-gatherer societies of goods like flint, salt, and tools. Many
accounts of explorers’ first contacts with natives in exotic lands illustrate the willingness of natives to trade services and commodities despite every barrier of language and culture. European slave traders began kidnapping Africans for enslavement and transportation to the Western Hemisphere in the 1600s quickly found that African entrepreneurs stepped forward to act as middlemen in the industry, saving valuable time and effort (Manning 1990). Illiterate natives of West Africa instantly adopted capitalism when offered it (Bauer 1954). The African slavers may have deposited more prosperity in western African ports than any industry since.

People with no “capitalistic” traditions are known to become capitalists very quickly when the benefits of free markets are weighed against their costs. “There is no better way of thoroughly refuting Polanyi’s weeping about the lost glories of “society,” wrote Rothbard (2004, 5) than to observe the numberless millions who have chosen the way of the market when they had free choice” (Rothbard 2004, 5). “[P]eoples all over the world, regardless of cultural tradition, abandon their supposedly beloved culture, in order to adopt Western ways, Western clothes, get a Western-type job or serve Western tourists, and earn Western money—and drink Coca-Cola and go to Hollywood movies, as well. It took only a few years, for example, for the people of Japan to abandon their thousand-year old traditional culture and folkways to turn eagerly to these supposedly decadent market-brought goods of the West” (Rothbard 2004, 5).

When the international fur trade exploded in the eighteenth century, Native Americans quickly became the major producers in what was one of the world’s most lucrative industries. Indian production of beaver pelts and deerskins “generated the fourth highest export earnings in the British North American colonies on the eve of the
American Revolution” (Murphy 1999, 152). Indians also worked for pay as guides, rowers, and frontier laborers in the American backcountry (152). As Carlos and Lewis (1999) recount, Native Americans were central players in these industries rather than passive agents in white men’s trade.

Indeed, human progression from hunting and gathering to agriculture can be interpreted as a “capitalistic” endeavor. The evidence clearly establishes that farming produces more calories than hunting and gathering for each unit of labor invested, measured in time or energy (Sillitoe 2002, 454), and individuals who opt to make the switch are maximizing profits of energy and resources. This progression was likely produced by the urge to optimize the acquisition of resources and capital (Sillitoe 2002, 456).

Summarizing World Economic History

Heilbroner (1975, 53) points out that the famous trade explorers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (e.g., Columbus, Vasco de Gama, Cabral and Magellan) were “state adventurers,” commissioned and supplied by kings and queens as their agents. Where traders acted privately on their own behalf, they often navigated a treacherous landscape of taxation and predatory regulation by governmental authorities. “Over a journey of a hundred miles, a traveling merchant might fall under a dozen different sovereignties, each with different rules, regulations, laws, weights, measures, money. Worse yet, at each border there was apt to be a toll station” (Heilbroner 1975, 52).
Authoritarian economic organization The Great Wall of China constructed in medieval China, the great public works of ancient Rome, the Great Pyramid of Cheops were all built by command economies (Heilbroner

Summing up the vast literature of human economic history and development is fraught with difficulties. One must conclude, however, that the claims of Weber, Marx, and Durkheim that profit-driven trade is a new, western phenomenon has been undermined substantially by the research of the past half-century. At the very least, "capitalism" as defined by both Marx and Weber is much older than the theorists assumed it to be.

At the same time, it must be conceded that capitalism has grown both in the scope, scale, and speed of transactions, and the dependability and predictability of banking, credit, and purchasing systems. It seems safe to conclude that "capitalism"—the free exchange of goods and survives according to private, individual, choice—is expanding in most of the world (Kessler 1973). Free labor "has become the norm in much of the world today" (Sowell 2004, 32).

It seems appropriate to concede that the alienation-model theorists were at least correct with regard to their overall assessment that human economic exchange has generally increased over the centuries. The evidence seems clear that markets that were once controlled by state authorities or closed to private enterprise have opened up; that cross-global trade has increased in real terms over time, and that private firms independent of state-directed execution have circulated more goods, produced more products and exchanged more private wealth as human history has unfolded.
Boswell and Chase-Dunn (2000) documented an observable trend in the average world trade globalization (measured by world imports versus global GDP) from 1830 to 1990. Although global trade over these generations exhibited many cyclical peaks and valleys, peaks generally rose higher than earlier peaks with each cycle. Similarly, Timothy Earle’s prodigious *Bronze Age Economics* (2002) reconstructs a general trend from chiefdoms to centrally-controlled agrarian civilizations to industrialized market economies. A “long-term trend of intensification” may be the most descriptive conception of this progression (Earle 2002, 322).

Payne’s analysis of taxation trends supports the view that free markets have gradually benefited from lower taxes over the centuries. Rates of taxation were extremely high in some corners of the ancient world, inhibiting commerce and causing violent revolts that contributed to the deaths of the Egyptian and Roman empires (Payne 2004, 200-212). In contrast, rates of taxation have generally declined in most nations over the past fifty years.

This conceptual view of capitalism as a growing trend is substantiated, at least in recent decades, by figures from Freedom House, which has ranked countries according to levels of capitalism since 1972. Freedom House’s first tabulation in 1972 counted 42 countries—some 30 percent of the world’s nations—as “free.” By 2001, 57 countries, or 41 percent of the world’s nations, were rated free (Freedom House 2002).

The Freedom House index, established in 1972, evaluates countries according to a checklist of questions regarding political rights and civil liberties as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nations are ranked on a scale of 1 to 7, with seven representing the lowest level of freedom and one representing the highest.
Averages on scales of political rights and civil liberties are combined to determine whether countries are designated Free, Partly Free, or Not Free (Karatnycky 2003).

Since the first annual publication of the Freedom House ratings, the scores have tended to show significant gains for freedom around the world. Advances for freedom have outpaced reversals by a margin of three to one. “This means that over the last thirty years, the number of Free countries has more than doubled; the number of Partly Free states has grown by 17; while the number of the most repressive Not Free states has declined by 21. This represents a landmark change in the political landscape of the world” (Karatnycky 2003, 4).

Another index of capitalism, the Economic Freedom of the World (EFW) index kept by the Canadian Fraser Institute, originated in a series of conferences put together by Michael Walker and several Nobel Prize winners including Milton Friedman, Gary Becker, and Douglas North. The index is currently available for 123 countries, measures five key ingredients of economic freedom, including size of government (as measured by expenditures, taxes, and enterprises), legal structure and the protection of property rights, access to sound money, freedom to trade outside national borders, and degree of credit, labor, and business regulation. A number of other components and sub-components are also factored into each country’s index score, so that 38 distinct pieces of data. The EFW index is generally thought to be superior to the Freedom House rankings because it relies on more points of data and is maintained with greater deference to third-party evaluations. However, the EFW is not a perfect measure of capitalism.
CHAPTER 5

MEASURING CAPITALISM

For more recent years (i.e., since the 1980s), there are published index scores measuring levels of capitalism in various nations, as published by economic think tanks such as The Fraser Institute, Freedom House, and the Heritage Foundation. Social violence will be generally measured by homicide rates, for reasons of expediency and necessity. I will explain this reliance on homicide data in my methods chapter(s).

The Economic Freedom of the World report published by Canada’s Fraser Institute ranks nations according to criteria measuring the degree to which a nation’s institutions and policies promote voluntary exchange, protection of property rights, open markets, and minimal regulation of economic activity. The Fraser Institute’s indexes were designed by Nobel-Prize winning economists like Milton Friedman. The first Economic Freedom of the World Report was published in 1996 after a decade of research by more than 100 scholars from various fields. The Fraser index uses 38 variables for each country where available. The top quintile of economically free countries have an average score of 9 or 10 on the United Nation’s Human Development index, whereas the bottom quintile least economically free countries have an average score of 6 or less. Hong Kong garnered the highest economic freedom rating, followed by Singapore, the United States, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.
The data gathered by Miles, Feulner Jr., and O'Grady (2004) also show a discernable worldwide trend toward increasing economic liberalization. Their annual report, The Index of Economic Freedom, published jointly by the Wall Street Journal and the Heritage Foundation, employs 10 factors to measure economic freedom around the world. The Index of Economic Freedom (hereafter, the WSJ Index), also scores Hong Kong as having “the world’s freest economy” (xi). Also like the EFW index, the WSJ index has Europe claiming the largest number of countries in the top 10.

The WSJ index measures how well 161 countries score on a list of 50 independent variables, with low scores being more desirable. “The higher the score on a factor, the greater the level of government interference in the economy and the less economic freedom a country enjoys” (p.1). Hong Kong and Singapore lead the world according to the index because of their good investment climate characterized by strong property rights (p. 2). Europe claims six of the 10 freest countries. The authors note that European countries have recently reduced their fiscal burdens by privatizing industries, lowering taxes and tariffs, and contracting out for government services.
Measuring capitalism may be the easy part. Measuring the second component of the alienation model, violence, turns out to be at least equally difficult. Attempting to measure and compare violence across world jurisdictions over time poses “a veritable methodological quicksand” (Archer and Gartner 1984, 10) due to varying standards of violence and criminality around the world. World jurisdictions vary tremendously in the ways they define, record, and act upon different behaviors of the same crime label (Archer and Gartner 1984). Different societies employ different indicators of basic crime categories. Some countries measure homicide by offenses known, some by arrests, some by court cases, some by convictions, and some by incarcerations (Archer and Gartner 1984).

International institutions that systematically collect a wide variety and depth of data about the world’s nations do not systematically collect even the most basic crime data in a standardized form. It appears that the United Nations (UN) may have attempted to collect such data at different times, but that its member nations have objected or sought to suppress the publication of this data (Archer and Gartner 1984, 20). Political sensitivity may explain this recalcitrance (Archer and Gartner 1984, 21).

Interpol collects annual submissions of crime data by member nations, but its records are often discontinuous and inconsistent in their standards (Archer and Gartner
1984, 18). "The murder category excludes ‘accidental manslaughter’ in 1953, but by 1969 it excludes all ‘manslaughter’" (Archer and Gartner 1984, 18). Even where ‘homicide’ data are reported, they often represent varying measurements.

During the 1970s, sociologists Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner (1984) undertook an ambitious study to obtain crime reports from 110 nations covering the years 1900 to 1970. They established a data set entitled the Comparative Crime Data File (CCDF) which was published in the mid 1980s. The CCDF data set is discontinuous and widely varying. Nations vary in the ways they define and record behaviors. Homicide can include (1) first and second-degree murder, (2) manslaughter, meaning “unintentional” or negligent homicide.

The Peculiar Case Of The United States

The inquiry into a capitalism-homicide relationship suffers from the overrepresentation of data and insights from the United States. “An undesirably large part of existing research on crime and violence is grounded in [this] single case” (Archer and Gartner 1984, 5). This emphasis on the United States for data on crime and violence has major implications to the overall trajectory of research into alienation, and to this study. Western scholars have suffered from “America bias”—a tendency to view homicide and economic relationships within the United States as unrealistically representative of world trends. The basis for this bias is the lack of systematic research on homicide in other nations (Archer and Gartner 1984).

And the United States represents an extreme outlier: it is both extremely high on every index of economic freedom but also produces relatively high rates of homicide.
American social scientists who have suggested the existence of a capitalism-violence relationship have had only to point to their own country for anecdotal evidence supporting the existence of a relationship. Yet without a rigorous cross-national comparison, the generality of this proposition cannot be ascertained (Archer and Gartner 1984).

The Failure Of Previous Methods

The failure of social science to accurately account for violence in nowestern societies has only come to light during the last two decades. This failure is most profound with regard to simple, so-called Third-World societies. Ethnographic researchers from the field of anthropology have skewed the picture of violence among simple societies for generations. Ever since the days of Marx and Weber, many social scientists have internalized the vision of primitive man as a “noble savage.” As Edgerton (1992) writes, anthropologists in the field who carry such “Rousseauist illusions” tend to dismiss evidence of disharmony, jealousy, and violence as the products of contact with “colonial officials, soldiers, missionaries, or traders” (8).

Anthropologist Robert B. Edgerton concluded that “it is likely that the ethnographic record substantially underreports the amount and kind of human suffering and discontent that has actually existed in the world’s small societies” (5). Many ethnographies are “idealized, even romanticized portraits.” For example, Jane Belo described the Balinese as a society in which babies did not cry, small boys did not fight, and everyone behaved politely and respectfully—claims discredited by descriptions in the same text if not by other sources (5). Robert Redfield described the Mexican village...
of Tepoztlan as tranquil and content, but his own student Oscar Lewis described the same society as filled with malice, distrust, hatred, and fear (5-6).

Elizabeth Marshall Thomas's book *The Harmless People*, about the Kalahari Bushmen was later exposed as providing a one-sided, overly sympathetic image of Kalahari life: later research revealed the Kalahari to produce very high homicide rates (6). Colin M. Trunbull's *The Forest People*, "probably the most widely read ethnography ever written" (Edgerton 1992, 6), described Zaire's Mbuti tribesmen as a society without homicide, suicide or rape, and without war. This ethnography, in print continuously since 1961 and still prescribed reading in anthropology classes worldwide, depicts a "prototype of a folk society" (Edgerton 6). Just as with other primitive ethnographies of the mid-twentieth century, however, *The Forest People* proved to be a romanticized yarn with regard to its depictions of tribal harmony (Edgerton 1992, 6).
CHAPTER 7

VIOLENCE IN DECLINE

Calculating historical national homicide rates without standardized reporting criteria within each U.S. state may ultimately be an act of speculation. Even today, regional norms of violence are so diverse that it might be more accurate to speak of America's homicide rates in the plural sense. Louisiana, for example, had a 1997 homicide rate of 15.7 per hundred thousand population while South Dakota had a rate 11 times lower, only 1.4 per hundred thousand. From such a diversity, it seems almost misleading to say that the United States has a unified homicide rate today.

The same is even more true for generations past. While seventeenth-century Virginia was a violent and disorderly place, the Massachusetts Bay Colony was not; although the South and the western frontier experienced very high levels of violence, rural New England and Mormon Utah were recognized for their social tranquility (Courtwright 1998, 3). Computing a national homicide rate for a given historical period, therefore, seems unduly difficult. We have rough figures for only a sparse cross-section of locales for the nineteenth century, and eighteenth-century homicides are even harder to count.

Scholars of violence disagree, however, over whether interpersonal violence has increased or declined over time. Rates of violent crime in the United States have been recorded with something approaching systematic order only since the 1950s (Lane
Social scientists and historians can be said to be in disagreement over the nature, prevalence, and scope of social violence prior to the twentieth century. Stacks of scholarly books obtainable from any large library promote rival positions (compare Chasin 1995; Montagu 1968 with Payne 2004; Kealey 1998). Articles in the most prominent sociology and criminology journals come to competing conclusions.

The question of how rates of interpersonal violence have changed over history has been frequently revisited by sociologists and historians (Brearly, 1931; Chesnais, 1992; Lane, 1997). In 1969, the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, under the auspices of presidential authority, compiled studies by a number of historians and scholars on trends in American violence (Graham and Gurr, 1969). The background for the study was the urban and campus rioting of the 1960s, and policymakers expected clear evidence of historic upward trends in violence. The historians came to no compelling consensus, however. A general conclusion was that American rates of violence have always been substantially higher than those of other western societies, and that overall violence had actually declined slowly as the United States matured.

A more recent treatise by Roger Lane (1997) concluded that the America of the 1990s was probably less violent than the America of the year 1900, which was in turn probably less violent than the America of 1800. Lane found that American rates of violent killings fell by about a third in cities like Philadelphia between the early nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries (p. 185), a phenomenon attributable to the work habits engendered by the industrial revolution and an increasingly sober and educated population (p. 183-185).
Reports of violence and crime have taken up an increasing proportion of American news coverage during the past two decades (Glassner, 1999). But as Ted Chicicos (1998) and others have shown, fear of crime has no relationship to the incidence of crime. In fact, news media coverage of crime has generated a spiraling effect among media consumers. Fear of crime and violence has been found to be more closely related to modern news exposure than to real experiences. Those who express the highest levels of fear of violence have rarely suffered from such violence. The public’s perception of an increase in violent crime in spite of the declining crime rates during the 1990s (Shichor 2000, 8).

This erroneous picture of chaos and disorder painted by social commentators brought about radical changes in American society throughout the 1980s and ‘90s. Zero tolerance policies in schools and playgrounds and mandatory arrest laws have been enacted by policymakers to quell the alleged crisis of violence facing American society. Average criminal sentences for violent crimes more than doubled between the 1970s and 2000.

Growth in American regulatory culture has also had an impact on rates of violence. The United States was founded in an era when professional police forces were unheard of, and law enforcement was the duty of the common citizen (Roots, 2001). “With every passing decade,” however, “the police advantage grew” (Lane, 1997, p. 182). By the late nineteenth century, police held such firm control over private violence that it had become almost unthinkable for individuals to prevail against them (Lane, 1997, p. 182-183). As America’s history has progressed, its laws have been
more stringently enforced by police, its prosecutors have let fewer suspects go, and its juries have been increasingly likely to convict (Lane, 1997, p. 194-195).

Under zero tolerance policies, students who commit even minor acts of violence or possess any type of weapon are excluded from institutions. Toy guns, butter knives to cut bread, nail files, Swiss army knife key chains, shooting paper clips with rubber bands, or waving two spent firecrackers in a pocket have all resulted in suspension or expulsion. Bringing the medication Midol to school to alleviate menstrual cramps, sharing lemon cough drops, tasting Alka-Seltzer, possessing Tylenol have also led to suspensions for "drug-related" infractions. A student who wrote an essay for Halloween with violent overtures was not only expelled but jailed in Texas. In Sayreville, New Jersey, four kindergartners suspected of pointing their fingers at other students and pretending to shoot them were reprimanded. A 15-year-old Chicago student who brought an elaborately carved cane to show-and-tell was expelled for bringing a weapon to school. A 15-year-old Tulsa, Oklahoma girl was suspended for putting a hex on a teacher.

The irony is that Zero Tolerance, a product of the most peaceful period in American history. Chicago expulsions jumped from 21 in 1994-95 to 668 in 1997-98, an increase of 3,000 percent. In Massachusetts, there were 90 expulsions in 1992-93, but now expels approximately 1500 students each year. Chicago actually had to establish a special school for expelled students in 1998. There has also been a major shifts toward use of psychiatric drugs. Millions of children are already on Ritalin, and hundreds of thousands are under other medications. Prozac, ironically, this forced medicating, creates "potted plant syndrome" according to Professor Ferris.
Driven by rising public fear of violence, public health officials declared violence to be a national public health threat during the 1980s and 1990s (Gilligan, 1996; Moynihan, 1993). In 1983, a ‘Violence Epidemiology Branch’ was created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). During 1999, the Branch was involved in research activities such as the reduction of injuries from firearms, school violence prevention, and reduction of suicide (Potter & Saltzman, 2000, p. 1, 4). The June 10, 1992 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* was devoted entirely to the subject of violence and included an editorial cosigned by United States Surgeon General C. Everett Koop entitled “Violence in America: A Public Health Emergency” (Moynihan, p. 1993).

Even when empirical evidence indicates violent crime is on the decline, politicians and public officials often paint violence as a growing threat. U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno told one audience during the mid-1990s that “no corner of America is safe from increasing levels of criminal violence.” “Parents are afraid to let their children walk to school alone. Children hesitate to play in neighborhood playgrounds. The elderly lock themselves in their homes, and innocent Americans of all ages find their lives changed by the fear of crime” (Greenbaum, 1997, 136). Former President Richard Nixon, in his 1994 book *Beyond Peace*, grieved that liberal judges and lawyers had brought on a “fearful increase in violent crime” (Nixon, 1994, p. 231).

“Having reviewed the sociology of violence, we believe we have made a strong case that our society has become organized around unresolved, multigenerational traumatic experience” (Bloom and Reichert 1998, 99). The pervasive violence inherent in American society creates a “robopathology” a state of deep and pervasive alienation
in which values are “grounded in material possessions, rather than in feelings, social welfare, mercy, love, or peace” (Bloom and Reichert 1998, 93).

It is noteworthy that the American Sociological Association has also endorsed the view that violence has become so prevalent that only a public health mobilization can deal with it effectively. “Beyond the criminal justice and mental health systems, public health institutions most directly deal with violence on a day-to-day basis. The enormous burden placed on emergency room and rehabilitation facilities from gun injuries alone has made violence a major public health problem and a crucial arena for further study” (Levine and Rosich 1996, 64).

Reconstructing Violence Rates From Anecdotal Evidence

For the most part, trends in violence prior to 1900 must be reconstructed from anecdotal evidence. The violence historian becomes an estimator rather than a measurer. However, recordings of assessments and reflections regarding violence are by no means difficult to find. Commentators from Tocqueville to Dickens published their observations of the prevalence of violence around them and many literate laypersons likewise noted their perceptions of the violence around them in diaries and journals.

And the picture painted by writers of the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries depict a social landscape ridden with excessive violence. For much of American history, violence has been a part of everyday life. Both parents and teachers used corporal punishment routinely until quite recently (Siegel 1995, 2126). Even soldiers, prisoners, and sailors were routinely disciplined with whips and clubs throughout most
of American history (Siegel, 1995, 2125-26 n.26-27). Misdemeanor offenses in the nineteenth century had to be dealt with by the private citizen on his own terms. “The farther back the [crime rate] figures go,” according to Lane (1968), “the higher is the relative proportion of serious crimes” (Lane, 1968, p. 452). Many common acts of criminal violence in such times were never reported to the agents of the law, as “those affected either shrugged off their injuries or struck back directly” (Lane 1968, 450). British forensic psychiatrist John Gunn (1973) pointed to interviews of older police officers who said that a considerable amount of violent behavior was taken for granted and not reported and recorded in earlier times, as it would be today. Saturday night brawls and knife fights, once overlooked in crime statistics, became more uniformly recorded as the twentieth century wore on (Gunn, 1973, p. 130).

Anecdotes from Europe establish similar horrors from previous centuries. French historians have observed that personal brutality and crimes of violence were strikingly common in medieval times. . . . In Russia, historian Alex de Jonge notes that “Seventeenth-century Moscow was an extraordinarily violent city. Robbery and murder were commonplace, and every morning there would be a fresh batch of corpses to be found and laid out in the streets.” He quotes a contemporary source who reported that “No night passes without a murder” and that the number of murders could reach as high as 15 in one night (Payne 2004, 185).

British emissary William Crawford, who undertook a systematic study of American criminal justice in the 1830s, concluded that many brutal slayings went totally unnoticed “in a legal sense” (Crawford, 1834, 26).
Crimes are of course matters of frequent occurrence, and yet . . . the discrepancies between the number of commitments and the actual extent of crime, in the more western as well as the southern States, merit peculiar attention. There exists in those parts of the country a great recklessness of human life. Personal insult is resented by the immediate gratification of revenge. A custom prevails of carrying pocket pistols, or of wearing a dirk in the bosom, while scarcely any of the labouring classes are without a large clasped knife, which, opening with a spring, becomes a truly formidable weapon. Hence assaults of the most desperate character in the public streets frequently occur, and death to the parties often ensues. Prosecutions, however, arising out of these acts of violence, are by no means common (Crawford, 26).

Murder Rates In American History

The murder rates of contemporary American cities pale in comparison to those experienced in transient communities of the western United States during the gold rush. The small mining town of Bodie, Colorado, for example, experienced 29 killings between 1877 and 1883, giving it a statistical homicide rate almost four times higher than modern crime capitols like Atlanta and Miami at the peak of their homicide rates in the late 1980s. (White 1991, 331). Larger cities, especially those with substantial migrant populations, also had higher crime rates than we know today, although exact figures are in many cases difficult to obtain. San Francisco, for example, experienced
more murders in one year in the late 1880s with a population of around 30,000 to 35,000 people, than in the late 1980s with a population of 700,000 (Miller, 1994, p. 12). The Los Angeles riots received tremendous exposure in 1992, but they pale in comparison to the draft riots in New York City in the mid 1800s (id.).

Since national crime statistics are dependent upon local data, regional differences in categorizing and crime recording make generalized interpretations difficult. Alterations in the tabulation of New York crime statistics, for instance, led to a 72 percent increase in 1966 in the official records (Guis 96). Another prominent crime researcher complained as recently as 1996 that “[h]omicide is the only crime [the official FBI Crime Report] measures accurately enough to make cross-jurisdictional comparisons” (Neuman & Wiegand, 2000, 132).

Homicide as a Measure of Overall Violence

Due to these problems with measuring (or even precisely defining) “violence” on a general basis, violence scholars have often used homicide rates as rough substitute measures of over-all social violence (Caplow, Hicks, and Wattenberg 2001, 214).19 Most students of violence are familiar with graphs charting homicide rates in the U.S. from 1900 to 2000. These graphs show that homicide rates peaked at highs of greater than nine per hundred thousand persons on and off during the 1980s and early 1990s and also during the early 1930s. Although rates of homicide have subsequently declined to around 5.8, they are still higher than rates from earlier in the twentieth century.
Murder, unlike other categories of violence, is "relatively immune" to underreporting (Archer and Gartner 1984, 35). Within western nations, there are strong reasons to believe that homicide is fully counted in national crime statistics. A presidential crime commission concluded that homicide is "an especially valid indicator because it appeared to be invulnerable to police misclassification" (Archer and Gartner 1984, 35 (citing Mulvihill and Tumin 1969)). Homicide also appears to be "relatively invariant in definition and tabulation" (Archer and Gartner 1984, 35). The combination of these factors make homicide data a valid basis for comparative research on both trends and levels of violent crime (Archer and Gartner 1984).

Homicide Rates Before 1900

Expanding the graph to apply to earlier generations is exceedingly difficult. The twentieth century was "the first measured century," and previous generations had no traditions of counting and measuring social conditions (Caplow, Hicks, & Wattenberg, 2001). Crime itself is a phenomenon whose records were not systematically kept until at least the second quarter of the twentieth century (Lane, 1997: 307). "Before 1900, there are no national figures at all," and the regional records that are available are a "potpourri of arrests, indictments, imprisonments, and executions, with a few runs of coroners' reports . . . not easily comparable to each other [across jurisdictions, and] rarely span many years or decades in any given township, county, city, or state" (Lane, 1997: 309). "Above all they undercount, to some unknown degree, the number of killings actually committed" (309).
Infanticide

Accounts of crimes against children in the distant past make today's child abuse rates seem incredibly mild in comparison. Most societies at one time systematically killed a substantial proportion of female infants—sometimes by selective neglect, but often by smothering or abandonment. This form of murder, known as infanticide, was prevalent in Europe until fairly recently. In 1835, the French government recorded the abandonment of more than 150,000 infants. In Britain it was not uncommon in the eighteenth century to find the corpses of babies lying on dungheeps or in the streets. (Stark, 340). Nor were Americans immune from the tendency to murder or abandon infants rather than care for them:

Through the 1850s no record was kept of "dead infants found" in vacant lots, privies, and gutters, but at times during the following decade the reported annual total for Philadelphia reached about one every other day. In addition to these, thousands were reported each year as stillborn, or having died either of suffocation or of a number of other causes impossible for the medical science of the day to distinguish from strangulation . . . (Lane, 1997, 119).

Conflicting Assessments Of Violence Authorities

Nothing demonstrates the difficulty of assessing rates of homicide from historical anecdotes like the disagreements of noted scholars. The great criminologist Cesare Lombroso, writing before the turn of the twentieth century, found the United
States between the 1860s and the 1890s to exhibit a level of lawlessness that had “no equal in the rest of the world.” Lombroso’s statistics purported to show that crime rates rose 445 percent while the U.S. population rose 170 percent during the period (Bettman, 1974, p. 87). Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace, editors of *American Violence: A Documentary History*, regard the Reconstruction era as “the bloodiest period of American civil violence, as whites acted to reverse their military defeat” (1970, 223). But according to Roger Lane, one of the foremost authorities on the history of American murder rates, the antebellum years of 1830 to the 1840s were “the most disorderly and bloodiest in our history” (Lane, 1997, 92):

European travelers to Georgia or Tennessee brought back gory accounts of the number of men whose ears or noses had been bitten off, or eyes gouged out, in tavern brawls. These fights, if conducted “fairly,” were considered a form of purely private recreation, carried on without official interference from the few extant officials of law enforcement. In Richmond, during its frontier stage, there were no prosecutions for assault; it was not done to call the sheriff (Lane, 1997, 86).

The disagreements between scholars regarding the prevalence of violence in the past shows that reconstructing homicide rates from anecdotal writings is accomplished only with great speculation.
James L. Payne (2004, 184) cites a study of 13th-century European court records that suggest an average homicide rate around 19 deaths per 100,000 population per year. "Because this 13th-century figure is based on court trials, not reported homicides, it almost certainly understates the homicide rate of the time" (p. 184). Payne also identifies a homicide rate of 110 per 100,000 in Oxford in the 1340s, a rate approximately 100 times the modern rate in England (2004, 184). Rome and other Italian cities had a homicide rate of about 180 per 100,000 in the eighteenth century (Payne 2004, 184). This rate is more than thirty times greater than contemporary American rates.

When the trends for all the studies are combined, they show that the homicide rate declined from about 20 in the 1200s to about 10 in the 1500s, and then to 1-2 in the modern period, that is, since 1860. From the evidence, it is clear, as historian Michael MacDonald puts it, that "seventeenth-century villages bore no relation to the peaceable kingdoms anxious urbanites imagine made up 'the world we have lost;' hatred, fear and violence were endemic in rural England before the Industrial Revolution" (Payne 2004, 184).

Going back further, violence becomes only one of multiple strands of constant human miseries that humanity had to contend with. As Payne (2002) writes, for "some forty centuries of history spanning tens of thousands of tribes, kingdoms, and empires around
the world, virtually all of the information about violence over all this time and in all these places has been lost or was never recorded (448):

What little we know about the past reveals that it was appallingly bloody. Start, if you like, with the Bible, which reports in the book of Joshua that the Hebrew conquest of the Holy Land was a systematic program of God-ordained genocide, an extermination of every man, woman, and child in each conquered city. Turn your attention to China, and you will find a history of stupendous civil wars, each costing millions of lives, as one can estimate from the abrupt declines in population following the upheavals. For example, as a result of the fighting and massacres of the Nanking revolt in 1853-64, the population of the province fell by 70 percent (Payne 2002, 449).

Violence In Early Myth And Texts

If man’s earliest writings are replete with references to trade and commerce, they abound with accounts of violence. The Palette of Narmer, from Hierakonpolis, Upper Egypt—sometimes described as “the first page of the first chapter of the written history of Egypt”—depicts a powerful king smiting a kneeling victim with a blow to the head (Rudgley 1999). Every known society’s founding myths emphasize violent death, violent war, and violent conflict.

Most readers of the Bible are struck by the ubiquity and savagery of violence recorded in it. A number of facts become clear to any reader of The Bible: both the
ubiquity of commerce and the ubiquity of violence in the world of its authors. From Genesis to Revelations, The Bible provides a history of middle-eastern warfare in the theatre of commercial trade.

Ultimately, we are left with little more than archeological evidence, for indicia of homicide rates in human antiquity. Even the fossil record reveals scrapes, scalplings that can only be attributed to aggression by one person against another.

Domestic Violence

Claims that violence is on the increase are often made within the context of domestic violence. Family violence scholars like Felder and Victor (1996) have referred to “the increasingly widespread problem of domestic violence” (p. 39). “There is a war being waged on women in America,” according to Felder and Victor (1996).

Despite such proclamations, studies of family violence indicate that the actual incidence of such violence has declined markedly over three decades. Historically, minor violence in the home was so universal that it rarely captured the public’s attention. Minor spousal beating was considered a prerogative of spouses under American law until the mid-1800s (Siegel, 1996, p. 2125). Later, the law changed to deny husbands the privilege of beating their wives, but granted them immunity from prosecution for wife-beating under marital privacy rationales (Siegel, p. 2120). Only in the 1970s and ‘80s did spousal violence come to be a real concern of the criminal justice system.

Evidence indicates that the increased prevalence of domestic violence and child abuse among violent crime statistics is almost certainly an example of better crime
reporting rather than real changes in crime (Gelles & Strauss, 1988). Before the 1970s, signs of battery on small children were rarely reported, whereas increased public recognition of domestic violence has made the reported figures leap up. (Gunn, 139). The probable reality is that violence by intimates has declined markedly in a quarter-century. In 1996, intimates committed 36 percent fewer murders than in 1976 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998). Spouse murder, the largest component of intimate murder, declined by 52 percent in the same period (id.). Gelles and Straus (1988) documented a substantial drop in projected domestic violence between 1975 and 1986. They attributed this drop not to new formal (criminal justice) constraints but to lower social tolerance for wife batterers.

It is also known that accounts of crimes against children in the distant past make today's child abuse rates seem incredibly mild in comparison. Most societies at one time systematically killed a substantial proportion of female infants—sometimes by selective neglect, but often by smothering or abandonment. This infanticide was prevalent in Europe until fairly recently. In 1835, the French government recorded the abandonment of more than 150,000 infants. In Britain it was not uncommon in the eighteenth century to find the corpses of babies lying on dungheeps or in the streets. (Stark, 340).

The reality is that men have approved of wife beating in virtually every pre-industrial society (Edgerton 1992, 81). In many such societies, choice, desirable foods were denied to women simply because men reserved them for themselves. In his review of food taboos, Frederick Simoons reported that after women among the Chukchee of Siberia had done all the work of slaughtering, butchering, and cooking
reindeer, Chukchee men ate their fill, leaving only scraps and bones for the women. These men left no doubt about how they felt when they said, “Being women, eat crumbs.” The Chukchee were hardly unique. Peter Freuchen observed that for the Hudson Bay Inuit, boiled meat was “man’s food, too good for women to have.” Similarly, in many parts of aboriginal Australia, women were not allowed access to food that men were especially fond of: instead, the men ate alone, then “threw” what they could not eat to the women (Edgerton 1992, 81-82).21

Thus, the observations of other types of violence seem applicable to domestic violence. As American sensitivity to domestic violence has grown, so have popular restatements of its severity increased, and so has its actual incidence declined.
CHAPTER 8

OVERALL TRENDS IN AMERICAN VIOLENCE

Crime statistics demonstrate that contemporary life in the United States is now less violent than ever measured before. Violent crime in general plummeted 27 percent between 1993 and 1998. Nonfatal violent crime has never been so low since the Justice Department began tracking the data in 1973 (Grier, 1999, p. 4). Homicide rates in the American workplace are possibly at an all-time low, with a decline of 46 percent of robbery-related homicides registered between 1994 and 1998 (Providence Journal, Aug. 5, 1999). The homicide rate has recently declined to a mere 6.3 per 100,000, lower than at any time since the late 1960s (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000).

Indeed, America has become so safe from violence that the risk of accidental death has increased substantially in comparison. 31 percent more Americans died from falling in 1999 than in 1992 (Wald, 2000). Accidental poisonings increased by 48 percent in the same period. Also during the same period, 29 percent fewer Americans died from firearms accidents in 1999 than a decade earlier. Much of this growth in accidental death rates is attributed to an increase in numbers of elderly people prone to falls and drug overdoses (Wald, 2000).
Payne’s History Of Force

James L. Payne’s A History of Force (2004) suggested that the underlying course of human history was away from violence and toward more peaceful resolutions of social conflict. “As far as we can tell from the historical record, we live in a much more peaceful world than has ever existed,” Payne wrote (p. 7). Claims to the contrary, he asserted, were attributable to a trio of culprits: “the fallacy of presentism” (the well-recognized tendency to believe that our own time is special or important), the bias of interest groups (including politicians and police officials) with stakes in the promotion of the alienation thesis, and sampling bias by the media (p. 8).

The fallacy of presentism appears to distort the judgment of every observer. Edward Gibbon, author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, remarked that people universally tend to “exalt the past and depreciate the present” (Kilpatrick 2003). Even learned historians make the mistake of assuming “that events of the present are larger, more important, or more shocking than events of the past” (Payne 2004, 8). Irving Louis Horowitz described it as “an assumption that the period they are living through is somehow more fragile than any other, filled with tragedies not before felt, and accomplishments not before realized” (Horowitz 1977, 115).

Nearly every human generation has believed itself enveloped in a mushrooming surge of violence and crime. The majority of Englishmen in the nineteenth century, according to British criminologist J.S. Cockburn, “were convinced that crime was increasing as never before.” “[T]he authors of the eighteenth century, likewise, were terrified at what they considered to be the advent of a wave of violent crime.” (Chesnais 1992, 233).
This current-time-and-place bias has followed American pop-criminology into its present era (e.g., Bloom and Reichert 1998; Prothrow-Stith 1991). Even during the mid-1990s, when empirical evidence indicated violent crime was on the decline, politicians and public officials painted violence as a growing threat. "[N]o corner of America is safe from increasing levels of criminal violence," said Attorney General Janet Reno during a speech in the mid-1990s. "Parents are afraid to let their children walk to school alone. Children hesitate to play in neighborhood playgrounds. The elderly lock themselves in their homes, and innocent Americans of all ages find their lives changed by the fear of crime" (Greenbaum, 1997, 136). Richard Nixon, in his final book, lamented that liberal judges of the 1960s and '70s had brought about a "fearful increase in violent crime" in the 1990s (Nixon, 1994, p. 231). Even academics have fallen for this temptation to paint violence as "increasingly widespread" (Felder and Victor 1996, 39).

The Decline Of War

But what about wars and other forms of collective violence? Again, the evidence indicates that military conflicts around the world are claiming fewer and fewer lives. Payne (2004, 15) notes that the rate of killing in wars is now less than 1/100th the pace of a century ago. The deadliest known war in North American history on a per capita basis was King Philips War in 1675-76, when approximately one-fourth of all participants lost their lives. The French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, and the Civil War also produced extremely high proportionate casualty counts. But not
since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor has there been a military exchange of any scope in North America.

The Difficulty Of Compiling Historical Crime Figures

Official crime figures from America’s past tell very little of the whole story of American crime. Since national crime statistics are dependent upon regional data, differences in categorizing and crime recording make generalized interpretations difficult. Alterations in the tabulation of New York crime statistics, for instance, led to a 72 percent increase in 1966 in the official state records. (Guis, 96). Even at the turn of the twenty-first century, “[h]omicide is the only crime [the official FBI Crime Reports] measures accurately enough to make cross-jurisdictional comparisons (Neuman & Wiegand, 2000, 132).”

In general, formal criminal justice institutions of past generations dealt only with the most severe crimes. Criminal justice in the nineteenth century concentrated on the more important prisonable offenses, “to the neglect of others, even indictable ones” (Lane, 1968). Many common acts of criminal violence in such times were never reported to the agents of the law, as “those affected either shrugged off their injuries or struck back directly” (id., 450).

Misdemeanor offenses in the nineteenth century had to be dealt with by the private citizen on the private citizen’s own terms. “The farther back the [crime rate] figures go,” according to historian Roger Lane, “the higher is the relative proportion of serious crimes” (Lane, 1968, 452). In other words, before the advent of professional police, fewer crimes—only the most serious crimes--were brought to the attention of the
courts. Professional police have thus helped spread the onus of criminality over larger masses of the population.

British forensic psychiatrist John Gunn (1973) argues that the prevalence of crime dropped substantially in both Britain and the United States over the course of the twentieth century. Any increase in the official figures reflects only a decreased tolerance of crime, according to Gunn. Gunn points to interviews of older police officers who said that a considerable amount of violent behavior was taken for granted in the past and not reported and recorded, as it would be today. Saturday night brawls and knife fights, once overlooked in crime statistics, now are more uniformly recorded. (Gunn, 130).
CHAPTER 9

AMERICAN VIOLENCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

American society is not only much safer now than in the past, it is also much safer than many societies of the present. In such places as Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador (all scoring quite low on indexes of capitalism), murder is the prime cause of death among young male adults. Among the native populations of Venezuela, nearly half of all males over 25 have participated in a killing. Data from central African countries is difficult to come by but probably demonstrates similar rates (Chesnais, 219). Private firearm ownership is extremely rare in each of these societies.

Modern commentators often decry the too-frequent use by juveniles of firearms to resolve conflicts. “Disputes that would previously have ended in fist fights,” according to Stuart Greenbaum (1997), “are now more likely to lead to shootings.”

Yet this argument loses support when considered in historical context. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, dueling with pistols was considered a standard rite of passage for young men in both America and Europe. Between 1819 and 1826, more than 800 young men were killed in duels in the French army alone in a seven year period. The vast majority of such duels were over petty grievances and trivial rivalries (Chesnais, 224).

In antebellum Virginia, violence between students was so common that students routinely went armed to defend themselves from attack. “Challenges are continually
passing; fights are had almost every day,” wrote one student to his parents. Another student assured his faculty that the bowie knife he carried was intended only for use “against a person who should insult him and refuse to give him honorable satisfaction” (Ayers, 1991, 103-04).

The modern reality is that youth homicide rates have declined by 30 percent in recent years and more than three times as many people die from being struck by lightning than by violence at schools (Glassner, 1999, xv). Schools are generally safer at school among other students than outside of school.

Firearm Violence

Much of the scholarship about violence involves firearms and the impact of firearms on American life. The United States does indeed have rates of firearm deaths higher than many industrialized nations. However, the rate of actual exposure to firearm violence may be somewhat exaggerated. Firearm deaths declined nine percent between 1990 and 1996 (USA Today, 1999, A1).

More than half of all firearm deaths every year are suicides, which are preventable by the victim. The 13,000 or so annual firearm homicides in the United States represents less than half of the number of Americans who die annually from occupational hazards and disease (Reiman, 1999, 80) and less than even the number of Americans who die prematurely from medical malpractice (id.). Firearm homicides also pale in comparison to the 400,000 Americans who die from tobacco (id., 84) and the 50,000 Americans who die from traffic accidents every year.
Even the modern shibboleth of the “drive-by shooting” is nothing new. Such acts were quite common in America during prohibition and even led Congress to place regulations on machine guns in the 1930s. Just as the much less capable semi-automatic “assault weapons” have been targeted for regulation as “the gun of choice for drug dealers and street gangs.” (Ferris, 162).

Never before have so many armed people lived as safely as now in the United States. America with its 200 million privately-held firearms is much safer—exponentially safer—than the England, or the America, of a century ago. Indeed, guns may be the safest and most effective means of protection for hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Americans each year (Kleck, 1991). While the specific numbers of defensive uses of firearms may be in dispute (Duncan, 2000, 1), few deny that hundreds of thousands of Americans use personal firearms to protect lives and property each year (Waters, 1998).

Violent crime in general plummeted 27 percent between 1993 and 1998. Nonfatal violent crime has never been so low since the Justice Department began tracking the data in 1973 (Grier, 1999, 4). Homicide rates in the American workplace are possibly at an all-time low, with a decline of 46 percent of robbery-related homicides registered between 1994 and 1998 (Providence Journal, Aug. 5, 1999). The homicide rate has recently declined to a mere 6.3 per 100,000, lower than at any time since the late 1960s (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000).
Accidental Violence

America has become so safe from violence that accidental deaths have increased substantially in comparison. 31 percent more Americans died from falling in 1999 than in 1992 (Wald, 2000). Poisonings increased by 48 percent in the same period (id.). In the same period, 29 percent fewer Americans died from firearms accidents (id.). Much of this growth in accidental death rates is attributed to an increase in numbers of elderly people prone to falls and drug overdoses (id.).

Interpersonal violence has probably never been so rare in the United States as at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Violence in American schools, in American homes, and in the American workplace is at or near an all-time low. Although homicide rates remain higher in the United States than in other industrialized nations, homicide trends appear to be declining sharply from a decade ago.

Popular proclamations and images indicate that violence in America in the year 2000 is exceedingly prevalent. Violence in schools, violence in the workplace, and violence on the roads have taken up an increased proportion of American news coverage (Glassner, 1999). Violent crime in modern America is often presented by the news media with emotion-laden language (Chiricos, Eschholz, & Gertz, 1997). Headlines in major news magazines include “Teen Violence: Wild in the Streets,” “Danger in the Safety Zone,” “In a State of Terror,” “Taming the Killers,” and “Florida: State of Rage” (id., p. 342). Three Florida State University professors have described a “burst of media coverage” in which television and newspaper stories about violent crime increased more than 400 percent during four months in 1993 (id.).
Nor has the popular press had a monopoly on the characterization of American violence as epidemic. Attorney General Janet Reno recently told an audience that “no corner of America is safe from increasing levels of criminal violence” Greenbaum, 1997, 136). “Parents are afraid to let their children walk to school alone. Children hesitate to play in neighborhood playgrounds. The elderly lock themselves in their homes, and innocent Americans of all ages find their lives changed by the fear of crime” (id.).

Margaret Mead sparked a romance among western anthropologists for the noble simplicity and passivity of primitive people. Throughout the 1950s to the 1970s, anthropologists traversed islands in the South Pacific, journeyed to remote regions of Africa, and explored the interior of South America in search of hunter-gatherer societies, producing studies with titles like The Harmless People (Thomas 1959), Never in Anger (Briggs 1970), and A Nonviolent People of Malaya (Dentan 1979). E. Richard Sorenson’s descriptions of the Fore people of Papua New Guinea (1977) likewise described an affectionate, trusting society in which “sibling rivalry was virtually undetectable” until exposure to trade goods, jobs and money brought “[e]pisodes of infant and child frustration, not seen in traditional Fore hamlets [along with] repeated incidents of anger, withdrawal, aggressiveness and stinginess.” In the 1980s, however, this picture of pre-agrarian man was shattered by the research of anthropologists like Richard B. Lee, Bruce M. Knauft, Napoleon Chagnon, and Robert Edgerton and sociobiologists like Kanrad Lorenz who found that many of these simple societies actually produced homicide rates substantially higher than those found in the West.
Knauft (1987) found that the otherwise polite and amicable Gebusi people of New Guinea had a homicide rate of approximately 683 per 100,000 prior to contact with the West in the 1960s. The Yanomamo tribes of central Venezuela murdered each other at a rate of 165.9 people per hundred thousand annually in the 1970s. Even the egalitarian, noncompetitive people of Samoa, of which Margaret Mead wrote so fondly, generated homicide rates more than twice as high as those found in the United States (Knauft 1987, Table 2).

Figure 1 Homicide Rates (per 100,000 Population) of Selected Societies

The immense discrepancy between the ethnographic observations of anthropologists like Mead, Thomas, and Dentan and the quantitative calculations offered by Knauft, Lee, and others may do more than call into question the
methodology of qualitative research. They may actually mean that rates of homicide among simple societies are not accurate measures of overall social violence. If so, this discrepancy virtually undermines the notion that homicide rates are a rough overall measure of social violence.

Knauft himself (1987) suggested that this discrepancy may be for the most part isolated among primitive peoples. "Especially in egalitarian societies, there may be a pattern of social life that is generally peaceful and tranquil but is punctuated by aggression which, when it does occur, is unrestrained [which] may result in a high ratio of lethal violence to aggression despite a low overall incidence of aggression" (459). But observations of peace and tranquility accompanied by known high incidences of lethal homicide are by no means confined to simple societies. Loutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer noted in his accounts that his heavily armed cavalrmen were often polite and courteous with one another, even though their sidearms. U. S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen J. Field, who carried a pistol and bowie knife at all times while living among the California gold rush, commented that "I found that a knowledge that they were worn generally created a wholesome courtesy of manner and language" (Swisher 1963, 66). Historical accounts from western commentators also suggest that homicide may not be an accurate measure of overall violence.

Table 1 illustrates the high level of consistency of national homicide rates over time. Although homicide rates fluctuate greatly over time in every nation, they tend to remain consistent across the international panel of nations when cross-comparasins are made. Thus, the homicide scores of Venezuela may differ wildly from year to year, but remain consistent in relative terms when compared to the other countries on earth.
Homicide rates recorded for a typical country in 1970 correlate with homicide rates for the same country in 2000.

Because homicide data is not measured in accordance with strict standards across the international spectrum, various agencies report different numbers for the same country in the same year. Some data sets contain only numbers of prosecuted murder cases, while others may contain all reports of homicide to police regardless of whether prosecutions were commenced. Table 1 also shows significant relationships between these different homicide measurements.
Table 1. Correlations between international homicide rates, 1970-2000 (significance)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993/1996 homicide rates</td>
<td>.908** (.000)**</td>
<td>.359** (.010)**</td>
<td>.676** (.000)**</td>
<td>.335* (.021)*</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>.961** (.000)**</td>
<td>.905** (.000)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 combined homicide rate</td>
<td>.399** (.005)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>.523** (.002)**</td>
<td>.969** (.000)**</td>
<td>.359** (.010)**</td>
<td>.887** (.000)**</td>
<td>.608** (.001)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 homicide rate</td>
<td>.439** (.007)**</td>
<td>.969** (.000)**</td>
<td>.559* (.013)*</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>.335* (.021)*</td>
<td>.967** (.000)**</td>
<td>.653** (.001)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 homicide rates</td>
<td>.935** (.000)**</td>
<td>.887** (.000)**</td>
<td>.968** (.000)**</td>
<td>.967** (.000)**</td>
<td>.961** (.000)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>.992** (.000)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 homicide rates</td>
<td>.650** (.000)**</td>
<td>.608** (.001)**</td>
<td>.771** (.002)**</td>
<td>.653** (.001)**</td>
<td>.905** (.000)**</td>
<td>.992** (.000)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970 homicide/murder rates</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>.399** (.005)**</td>
<td>.898** (.000)**</td>
<td>.439** (.007)**</td>
<td>.908** (.000)**</td>
<td>.935** (.000)**</td>
<td>.650** (.000)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 homicide/murder rates</td>
<td>.898** (.000)**</td>
<td>.523** (.002)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>.559* (.013)*</td>
<td>.676** (.000)**</td>
<td>.968** (.000)**</td>
<td>.771** (.002)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
CHAPTER 10

CORRELATIONS

Are high index scores of market freedom correlated with high homicide rates?

Figure 2 shows the correlation coefficients obtained when homicide data is analyzed against the market-freedom indexes of three different economic research institutions. Significant correlations were found between Fraser Institute capitalism rankings from 1970 and homicide rates in 1975. No such correlation was found, however, between the same index scores and either the homicide/murder rate figures for 1970 or 1975.

What is most distressing from the viewpoint of the alienation thesis is the total absence of support for the notion that greater capitalism equals higher homicide rates. Indeed, the only significant correlations identified in Table 2 below are negative correlations. A significant negative correlation was identified between the Fraser scores for 1975 and worldwide homicide rates for the same year. This seems to suggest not only that the alleged relationship between increasing capitalism and increasing violence is untenable or without support, but that it is actually false.
Table 2. Correlations between economic freedom and homicide rates (significance)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fraser rankings 1970</td>
<td>-.174 (.253)</td>
<td>-.259 (.285)</td>
<td>-.374* (.029)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser ranking 1975</td>
<td>-.149 (.267)</td>
<td>-.165 (.464)</td>
<td>-.381* (.014)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser index 1975</td>
<td>-.132 (.424)</td>
<td>-.074 (.778)</td>
<td>-.375* (.014)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser index 1990</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.358 (.190)</td>
<td>-.270* (.031)*</td>
<td>-.137</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser index 1995</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.446 (.095)</td>
<td>-.257* (.029)*</td>
<td>-.393* (.031)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage index 1995</td>
<td></td>
<td>.248 (.413)</td>
<td>.112 (.422)</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom House index 1995</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.290 (.276)</td>
<td>-.190 (.192)</td>
<td>-.138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage index 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.064 (.807)</td>
<td>.136 (.254)</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

What about relationships between noneconomic social variables like fertility rates, birth rates and population density? No significant correlations were found between any of these variables and homicide rates.
Table 3  Correlations Between Homicide Rates and 3 Social Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birthrates 2000</td>
<td>-.131 (.616)</td>
<td>.188 (.117)</td>
<td>-.299 (.097)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density 2000</td>
<td>-.131 (.616)</td>
<td>-.118 (.358)</td>
<td>-.207 (.263)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility rates 2000</td>
<td>.299 (.260)</td>
<td>.089 (.460)</td>
<td>.028 (.883)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obvious questions arise regarding the consistency of economic freedom measurements by these different economic think tanks. Correlation analysis was run with capitalism scores of all three indexes as well as scores registered by the three indexes for different years. There is remarkable consistency between these indexes across time. Table 4 lays out the extent of the correlations between the three indexes of capitalism. Not only do the rival indexes track each other significantly for the same years, but they correlate significantly with each other in all years for which data was analyzed.
Table 4. Correlations Between Rival Indexes Of Capitalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fraser rankings 1970</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>.802** (.000)**</td>
<td>.772** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.703** (.000)**</td>
<td>.545** (.000)**</td>
<td>.542** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.639* (.000)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser rankings 1975</td>
<td>.873** (.000)**</td>
<td>.963** (.000)**</td>
<td>.718** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.557** (.000)**</td>
<td>.491** (.000)**</td>
<td>.572** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.557* (.000)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser index 1975</td>
<td>.802** (.000)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>.742** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.640** (.000)**</td>
<td>.384** (.021)**</td>
<td>.560** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.489* (.000)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser index 1990</td>
<td>.772** (.000)**</td>
<td>.742** (.000)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.734** (.000)**</td>
<td>.677** (.000)**</td>
<td>.854** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.695* (.000)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage index 1995</td>
<td>-.703** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.640** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.734** (.000)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.810** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.784** (.000)**</td>
<td>.831* (.000)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom House 1995</td>
<td>.545** (.000)**</td>
<td>.384** (.021)**</td>
<td>.677** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.810** (.000)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>.635** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.853* (.000)**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.854** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.784** (.000)**</td>
<td>.635** (.000)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.683* (.000)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage index 2004</td>
<td>-.639** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.489** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.695** (.000)**</td>
<td>.831** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.853** (.000)**</td>
<td>-.683** (.000)**</td>
<td>1** (.000)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(significance)
** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
Regression Analysis

To determine whether economic freedom is a predictor of homicide rates, regression analysis was run with 1975 homicide rates as the dependent variable and the Fraser rankings for 1970 and 1975 as the independent variables. To further test the strength (if any) of the relationship, the raw index scores of the Fraser indexes for 1975 were also analyzed in regression. Again, a predictive relationship resulted, in the opposite direction from the trajectory predicted by the alienation models.

Table 5 Regression, with 1975 homicide rates as the dependent variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(standard error)</th>
<th>significance</th>
<th>Mean 1975 homicide rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fraser rankings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>-4.369** (.971) [0.002]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser rankings</td>
<td>9.985** (2.061) [.001]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>-7.189** (1.964) [.006]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser Index of</td>
<td>-3.441* (1.345)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 nations</td>
<td>(1975)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 shows the results of similar regression analysis when homicide rates for the year 2000 are the dependent variable and 2000 fertility rates, 2000 population density scores, and the 1995 index scores reported by the Heritage Index, the Freedom
House Index, and the Fraser Index. The Heritage (WSJ) and Fraser scores were found to be significant predictors of homicide rates in the year 2000. Interestingly, neither fertility rates nor population density figures were significant predictors.

Table 6 Regression: Dep Variable: Hom Rates 2000 (standard error) [significance]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fertility rate 2000</td>
<td>.463 (3.239)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density 2000</td>
<td>-.014 (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage index scores 1995</td>
<td>-4.044* (2.049)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom House scores 1995</td>
<td>.091 (.474)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser index scores 1995</td>
<td>-2.130* (.965)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Regression relationship is significant at the 0.05 level


Similar findings are achieved when conducting regression analysis on 1995 Fraser Index scores and homicide rates registered in 1993 and 1996. There is a significant negative relationship between the two variables: as levels of market freedom go up, homicide rates tend to come down. By inference, increasing capitalism is significantly linked to greater safety from social violence (especially homicide). Table 7 displays these findings.
Table 7 Regression With Mid-1990s Homicide Rates
As the Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fraser Index of 73 countries (1995)</th>
<th>B (standard error)</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-2.887* (1.296)</td>
<td>.029*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(* = Regression relationship is significant at the 0.05 level)

Although this relationship is significant, it by no means translates into a smoothness of predictability regarding any individual country. Figure 3 below illustrates the haphazardness of this capitalism/homicide relationship during the mid-1990s. While some capitalist countries like Hong Kong and the Netherlands have very low homicide rates, others, like the United States and some of the newly independent nations that once made up the Soviet Union, are quite violent.
Findings

The findings from these analyses provide no support for the proposition that greater capitalism is equated with growing violence. In contrast, there is support for the proposition that greater capitalism is linked to decreasing social violence, as measured by rates of homicide. Societies with high indexes of economic freedom also tend to report homicide rates below the international mean.

"What is curious, however, is that this concern with violent individuals has all too often eclipsed the study of violent authorities" (Archer and Gartner 1984, 64). Social violence, after all, must include violence by state agents against individuals. And a test of the alienation proposition—the idea that increasing capitalism increases social violence—must take violent repression by governments into consideration. Here the
alienation proposition runs up against immediate obstacles. The quest to eliminate and repress capitalism has cost more than one hundred million lives since the turn of the twentieth century (Rummel 2003).

Of course, “[s]erious violence, including homicide, is produced routinely in the course of law enforcement, criminal punishment and executions, crowd and riot control, political subversion and assassination and, of course, war” (Archer and Gartner 1984, 63).

The Apparent Trend of Underreporting By Socialist Nations

The quality of homicide comparisons across nations is undermined by varying rates of underreporting by nations. National governments probably never overreport the prevalence of homicide within their jurisdictions, but often publish reports that understate homicide rates when international studies or record-keeping organizations seek data from them. It might even be said that each nation has its own underreporting rate. One technique for determining the rate of underreporting involves the comparison of surveys of crime victims with official crime reports (Archer and Gartner 1984).

It can safely be said, however, that “the degree of underenumeration varies inversely with the seriousness of the offense,” and homicide is underreported at rates much lower than other violent offenses. It needs also to be said that socialist nations have apparently exhibited a greater proclivity to underreport or decline to report their homicide data. Archer and Gartner 1984, 17) note that socialist countries represented “exceptions to [the] general pattern of remarkable cooperation” in their study of cross-national violence from 1970 to 1984. The U.S.S.R. and several other Eastern European
societies refused to participate in the study and the People’s Republic of China returned all requests for crime data unopened (p. 17).

Apparent Trend of Accelerating Effect

The trend against violence appears to accelerate in capitalist countries (Payne 2004, 121). Violent practices went for thousands of years without much change. “Most of the progress [against violence] seems to have come in the past two or three centuries—that is, since the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions” (Payne 2004, 121).
CHAPTER 11

HOMICIDE PERCENTAGES IN THE DISTANT PAST

Archaeological revelations have also shattered the illusion of most Marxists that egalitarian simple societies were typified by peaceful coexistence, placid, and tranquil. The native American societies of the U. S. Southwest, the Anasazi, once thought—and described in textbooks, museums and National Park Service documents as peaceful and nonwarlike—have now been revealed as a violent people whose walled residences were designed for combat defense—and who participated in bloody massacres of one another long before the arrival of western capitalism (LeBlanc 2003).

Indeed, this Rousseauian bias has for too long infected archeology itself. “Virtually all the basic textbooks on archaeology ignore the prevalence or significance of past warfare, which is usually not discussed until the formation of state-level civilizations such as ancient Sumer” (LeBlanc 2003, 20). Keeley, the author of War Before Civilization (1996), argued that prehistorians “pacified the past,” presuming peacefulness even where evidence of warmaking could not be ignored (LeBlanc 2003, 21).

But the closer one looks at the record, the more violent it becomes. Prehistoric bone armor found in the Arctic; skeletal evidence of deadly blows to the head among ancient Aborigines. LeBlanc (2003, 22) contends that the prehistoric Indians of southern California—once though to be peaceful acorn gatherers—exhibited the highest
incident of warfare deaths ever known in world history or prehistory. Thirty percent of males of first century A.D. had wounds or did violent deaths. For women, the rates were about half this. “When we remember that not all warfare deaths leave skeletal evidence, this is a staggering number” (22).

All well-studied prehistoric farming societies had warfare (LeBlanc 2003, 23). Ancient China, Micronesia, etc. were all well-fortified. Defensive walls hundreds of miles long were shared by Maya, Inco, Sumerian, and Hawaiian culture (LeBlanc 2003, 23). “As soon as societies can write, they write about warfare” (LeBlanc 2003, 23).

LeBlanc (2003) describes the proposition that white Westerners spread warfare to peaceful people as “a patently false but prevalent notion” (LeBlanc 2003, 23). LeBlanc calculated the proportion of foraging and farming societies that died from warfare and violence and found “that foragers and farmers have much higher death rates—often approaching 25 percent of the men—than more recent complex societies” (LeBlanc 2003, 25). Thus, modern capitalistic environs like the contemporary United States are much safer than pre-industrial societies. LeBlanc (2003, 25) credits the Industrial revolution for bringing homicide rates down, as have others (Lane 1997). “In a nutshell,” writes Steven Pinker (2002, 56) “Hobbes was right, Rousseau was wrong.”

To begin with, the stories of tribes out there somewhere who have never heard of violence turn out to be urban legends. Margaret Mead’s descriptions of peace-loving New Guineans and sexually nonchalant Samoans were based on perfunctory research and turned out to be
almost perversely wrong. As the anthropologist Derek Freeman later
documented, Samoans may beat or kill their daughters if they are not
virgins on their wedding night, a young man who cannot woo a virgin
may rape one to extort her into eloping, and the family of a cuckolded
husband may attack and kill the adulterer. The !Kung San of the
Kalahari Desert had been described by Elizabeth Marshall Thomas as
“the harmless people” in a book with that title. But as soon as
anthropologists camped out long enough to accumulate data, they
discovered that the !Kung San have a murder rate higher than that of
American inner cities. They learned as well that a group of the San had
recently avenged a murder by sneaking into the killer’s group and
executing every man, woman, and child as they slept (Pinker 2002, 56).

Counting societies instead of bodies leads to equally grim figures.
In 1978 the anthropologist Carol Ember calculated that 90 percent of
hunter-gatherer societies are known to engage in warfare, and 64
percent wage war at least once every two years. Even the 90 percent
figure may be an underestimate, because anthropologists often cannot
study a tribe long enough to measure outbreaks that occur every decade
or so (Pinker 2002, 57).
One method of reconstructing the homicide rates of the ancient past involves looking at the archeological record. Human remains sometimes exhibit signs of violent death such as broken bones, lacerations, or even imbedded arrowheads. By simply counting human specimens that appear to have died violently and comparing their numbers to remains dating to the same period, we can draw crude estimates of the prevalence of violence in a particular period.

Archeology-based methods pose special risks for researchers. It is not always easy to tell whether a mummified or preserved corpse died by violence. For this reason, homicide rate estimates from archeological sources underestimate homicide prevalences to some unknown, but probably substantial, extent.

Moreover, the haphazard placement of archeological finds makes estimates of broader prevalences difficult. A site with five murdered corpses found at an ancient American quarry, for example, may say very little about the overall homicide rate of North America, or even the plains. Thus, even if such homicides show high rates in a given year or decade, their relevance to the homicide rates of an entire century or millennia is questionable.

The standard measure of the prevalence of homicide is murders per 100,000 members of a population per year. Computing the statistic requires three separate measurements: time period, homicide deaths, and total population. The farther we look into the past, the more difficult it is to determine each of these components. Even if the population of a specific city or region during a certain period is known, surrounding populations may be quite difficult to determine. In the case of some locales, historic population estimates may differ within a range of several multiples. Scholars of North
American Indian populations before the arrival of Columbus, for example, have offered estimates ranging from 1.8 million to 18 million (Mann 2002, 46). Thus, even if the number of homicides among this population were known, estimates of the homicide rate might vary by a factor of ten.

The dimension of time adds further complexity. Because of the difficulty of dating archaeological finds with exact precision, we can only attribute a given find to a range of years. This problem grows as we look farther back in time. Estimating historical homicide rates in this manner is also haphazard because what we know of archaeological remains are rarely found through systematic archeological searches. Instead, most archaeological discovery comes to us accidentally or through salvage excavations (Bahn 1996, 11). For this reason, archaeological samples may not be representative of the place or period in question.

At most, we can say only that a known rate of uncovered remains with signs of having died violently has been identified out of a total number of known uncovered remains within a given area dating to a particular range of years. This method of determining homicide prevalences is as simple as stumbling across a cemetery filled with human corpses and estimating how many died by violence. An overall period of interment in the cemetery might establish the temporal element. We might be able to say, for example, that a burial ground dating to the 200-year period from 1750 to 1950 exhibited a crude rate of 1.5 percent violent deaths.

A rival and far less precise method for determining the historic prevalence of homicide is to simply find textual summaries of archaeological findings and conduct content analysis of them, counting up deaths described as attributable to homicide and
dividing this tally by the total number of deaths reported in the same source(s).

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Applying this method to one general treatise on archaeological finds yields
results that are quite surprising. Paul Bahn’s *Tombs, Graves & Mummies* (1996)
provides case studies of “fifty of the world’s best documented sites of bodies and
graves” (Bahn 1996, inside front cover). This compendium of 50 discoveries in world
archeology, from Lucy, the 3-million-year-old australopithecine found in Ethiopia to
Zhoukoudian and Java Man, to the killings of Custer and his cavalry at Little Big Horn
in 1876. Bahn’s sample of fifty sites was selected in accordance to no sampling
rationale except to show “the incredible variety of human remains that survive the
archeological record (11). Bahn notes that a “surprisingly large number of bodies that
have come down to us with soft tissue intact (p. 10).

Findings

Bahn’s fifty archeological discoveries yield the remains of something like
18,670 human beings. Of this number some 4,983, or 26.7 percent, of the bodies
exhibit indicia of violent death, either because they are associated with battlefields, or
because the corpses show signs of mortal violence, either on the skeleton, on the soft
tissues, or because of mutilation. When obvious battlefield deaths are removed from
the total, the proportion who died violently is cut almost in half, to about fourteen percent of total deaths. (Of course this figure underestimates the actual percentage of deaths in the sample attributable to homicide because many ancient skeletons and bodies of murdered persons exhibit no outward signs of violence).

Fortunately, the percentage of Americans who die by homicide is known. In 1991 any randomly selected American had a one in 151 lifetime chance of suffering homicide (National Institute of Justice 1993). Or 0.66 percent of all Americans die by the hands of others. Thus, homicide in previous centuries (according to a nonrepresentative sample of human remains dating to different continents and millennia) may have been more than twenty times more prevalent than today.
CHAPTER 12

THE NOTION THAT CAPITALISM CREATES INEQUALITY

These findings also beg reconsideration of the oft-repeated catechism that capitalist economies generate greater gaps between rich and poor than planned economies. Research by former World Bank economist Surjit S. Bhalla illustrates that this age-old understanding may be without substantiation. Calculating the world distribution of income at twenty-year intervals, Bhalla found that the world’s poor were getting richer faster than the wealthy during the last half of the twentieth century (Sanchez 2003). Thus, during a period which almost every scholar describes as one of growing capitalism worldwide, the world became dramatically more egalitarian.

Naisbitt’s *Megatrends* (1984) suggested that growing commercialism is achieving the very purposes of human equality that its most hostile detractors call for. Commercialization is breaking up the traditional hierarchies that thrived during the centralized, pre-industrial eras of most Western nations. In place of the old boy hierarchies of the past, wrote Naisbitt, contemporary individuals in modernized societies have substituted “the network model of organization and communication,” which is more natural, egalitarian, and spontaneous than the social hierarchies of the pre-computer age. Networks formed by like-minded peers restructure the flow of power and communication from a vertical to a horizontal power structure.
According to Naisbitt, the "failure of hierarchies to solve human problems" has been resolved by expanding access to information. This decentralized flow of knowledge has had an equalizing effect (1984, 221). "What occurs in a network is that members treat one another as peers—because what is important is the information, the great equalizer" (1984, 220).

Anticapitalists like Naomi Klein paint the contemporary trend as one in which large dominant corporations like WalMart, Mobile, and Nike are playing an increasing role. But the data refutes this image resoundingly. Small businesses have exploded in relation to big business during the past generation (Norberg 2002). The 30 years between 1950 and 1980 saw the rate of new businesses explode from 93000 per year to 600,000 per year (Naisbitt 1984, 160). Self-employment has also boomed. Nearly 2/3 of all new jobs created between 1969 and 1976 were in firms of 20 or less. "During the 1970s, by contrast, the Fortune 1,000 [corporations] produced virtually no job growth" (Naisbitt 1984, 161). This capitalistic altruism stands in contrast to life among members of some primitive societies. "The Siriono Indian of Bolivia eats alone at night because, if he eats by day, a crowd gathers around him to stare in envious hatred. The result among the Siriono is that, in reaction to this pervasive pressure, no one will voluntarily share food with anybody" (Rothbard 2004b).

Ludwig Von Mises showed that socialists willing to give up significant material advantages in the name of their ideals were a minority (Von Mises 1966, 679). The evidence indicates that acquiring property lifts the human spirit, while failure to acquire it leaves people depressed. Chronic kleptomaniacs—shoplifters—generally steal to treat themselves to a cure for anxiety and depression (Hine 2002).
Moreover, the implications for human happiness overwhelmingly support the conclusion that alienation is the product of centralized socialistic redistribution rather than capitalism. Hocutt (2003) argued that the clear weight of human experience establishes that people choose economic systems with recognized property rights over systems of centrally-managed property whenever they have the option:

But give people a choice between a country in which they may acquire real property and one in which they are precluded from doing so, and soon you will see droves of unhappy but hopeful souls leaving the latter to join the former, as the dismal history of the former Soviet Union and its dreary satellites confirms. They will be kept in their political prison only with barbed wire and armed guards (Hocutt 2003, 179).

Moreover, the picture of social harmony in primitive societies depicted by the alienation theorists is challenged by contemporary insights into daily life in such societies. The Inuit, who prize egalitarianism, nonetheless commonly torture animals, beat their sled dogs, and kill each other at a very high rate (Edgerton 1992, 79-80). The Mbuti, according to noted anthropologist Colin Turnbull (a firm believer in primitive peacefulness, incidentally) “kicked [their hunting dogs] mercilessly from the day they are born on the day they die” (101). It seems therefore that man is both self-seeking and altruistic; a natural capitalist and a provider of charity to those in need. He seeks personal profits but also shares his surplus with others. In one sense, participating in
free markets is a kind of sharing in that it brings one's energies and resources to members of the community but under terms of personal title and ownership.

In practice, Marxist states have cost the lives of some 100 million human beings, many of whom were murdered. In Marxist Cambodia, the death squads murdered every literate person. In modern North Korea, some two million persons—approximately ten percent of the country's population—died between 1996 and 2002 of starvation, malnutrition and persecution (Kang 2003). Per capita GDP in neighboring South Korea (which was the other half of the same country in 1948) was 13 times the level in North Korea in 2002 (Brooke 2003). Nazi Germany’s pogrom against the Jews—though the numbers are somewhat disputed—were promulgated to recoup losses perceived to be attributable to profiteering Jewish speculators who flew into Germany from London, Paris, and New York to buy German assets for pennies on the dollar (Roots 1997). The Nuremberg Laws of 1936 were intended to redistribute this Jewish property back to Germany.

Writing in 1930, Sigmund Freud predicted this ultimate outcome of the communist experiments then taking place around him. "One only wonders," he remarked, "what the Soviets will do after they have wiped out their bourgeois" (Freud 1961,73). Although he did not live to see the darkest days of Soviet terror during the 1950s, his insight into the fundamental paradoxes of Sovietism proved prescient.

Very few true hunter and gatherer societies exist today. However, the few in-depth ethnographies of hunter-gatherer societies, such as Alln R. Holmberg's 1941 to 1942 study of the Siriono people of Bolivia. The Sirione were chronically hungry and seemed to care little about one another's welfare. Constantly quarreling over food, the
Siriono often hoarded and hit it, refusing to share it with others and ate alone at night or in the forest. Women hid food in their vaginas. Sick or elderly persons who could not keep up with the nomadic movements of the tribe were abandoned to their deaths. When offered Western tools or weapons or the opportunity to work as tenant farmers, they were eager to accept, “even though they were badly mistreated” (Edgerton 1992, 14).

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CHAPTER 13

EXPLANATIONS

If capitalism is linked to decreasing violence instead of increasing violence, how then can this be explained? Upon what conceptual basis could a causal relationship be stated? In this section, a number of hypothetical explanations are employed to answer these questions.

Tilly (2003) suggests that collective violence follows patterns even in all its varied forms—barroom brawls, peasant rebellions, labor strikes, ethnic struggles, civil wars and even international wars. Tilly concludes that democratic political regimes are the best cure for collective violence because they tend to promote broader participation and a more extensive array of rights and institutions that distribute social power across a greater swath of the social structure.

Another possible explanation is that Max Weber’s conception of human linearity (although discredited with regard to his conception of economic prehistory) accurately accounts for the diminishing violence experienced in modern capitalist societies. Weber’s theory of rationalism assumes that modern social institutions steadily become more efficient over time as individual agents within the institutions (“bureaucrats”) develop means to accomplish institutional goals with less and less output of effort and resources. This rationalism may explain why individuals interacting with each other within highly developed market-based systems of exchange employ violence less and
less over time: interacting nonviolently is simply more efficient (so long as property
claims are recognized by all parties).

In the absence of clearly defined property and transaction rights, violence serves
as a tool for asserting such rights—and a vehicle for enforcing the social contract
(Jacobs, et al., 2000). One way to visualize this rationalization explanation is to
examine what violence really accomplishes in human interaction. Violence is employed
in some cases where property rights are not clear or where parties perceive a void in
ownership of property or territory. The use of violence is the most efficient means to
secure property, territory, or other interests in the absence of clear property rights.
However, violence is inefficient in many instances, and is certainly a far less certain
tool than legal protections of property. While it is difficult for some people to view
contemporary western legal systems as efficient, such systems do provide an avenue for
parties to make property claims with certainty and predictability. Weber’s theory of
rationalization may explain why violence appears to decrease as legal protections for
property and private commercial exchange grow. Looked at in this way, recognition of
property rights offers a substitute for violence.

Batten (1908), wrote that the history of progress is the gradual diminution of
waste. “In all the lower stages of life the amount of waste is enormous, and
comparatively few living creatures ever reach maturity” (Batten 1908, 233). Thus,
Batten suggested, violent struggle is “Nature’s way of detecting fitness” in primitive
societies (Batten 1908, 234). Man’s natural progression, accordingly, is toward
genility and sociability. In advanced societies, “The fittest in Nature are not by any
means those who are continually at war with others, but those who aid one another" (p. 235).

Of course, violence and war are likely to occur where groups and individuals perceive a likely benefit (Melotti 1985). In societies where prosperity is offered through the market, people have fewer incentives to engage in violence to obtain prosperity. As Von Mises (1966, 821) stated: “The market economy involves peaceful cooperation. It bursts asunder when the citizens turn into warriors and, instead of exchanging commodities and services, fight one another.” Humans with foresight generally perceive that greater advantages can be derived from cooperation in a market economy than from conflict. The “essence of the laissez-faire philosophy,” according to Von Mises, is cooperation for the purpose of gaining personal material well-being (830). “Under laissez faire peaceful coexistence of a multitude of sovereign nations is possible” (824).

Or perhaps the overall material well-being associated with capitalist economies—and not capitalism itself—is the true cause of decreased violence among free-market societies. The link between economic capitalism and wealth is demonstrated by each index. Per capita GDP averages $22,922 (U.S.) among the top fifth of nations on the Fraser index, compared to $3,251 (U.S.) among the bottom fifth. Economic freedom also correlates with economic growth, meaning that citizens of capitalistic countries are components of a growing concern, while citizens of countries in the lowest fifth of the Fraser rankings actually witness their nations decline in economic power. We can only speculate about the impacts of these trends on the prevalence of social violence.
“Of all the systems of political economy which have shaped our history, none has so revolutionized ordinary expectations of human life—lengthened the life span, made the elimination of perty and famine thinkable, enlarged the range of human choice—as democratic capitalism” (Novak 1982, 13). “Famine emerges from a lack of inter-local trade” and only occurs where anti-market regulations have been imposed (Rothbard 2004). Economists note that countries that share strong trade relations almost never wage war upon each other (Norberg 2003).

In the wake of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the U.S. State Department established a “State Failure Task Force” to study the geographic, environmental, economic, and historical factors that contribute to violent political and social turmoil (Homer-Dixon 298). In essence, the objective was to predict large-scale violence before it happened. The Task Force examined two million pieces of data and 600 variables. “The results were sadly meager,” according to Thomas Homer-Dixon (299). “In the end, the findings of the State Failure Task Force said more about the limits of contemporary social science, especially political science, than about the reasons states fail” (299). “Most important, the task force failed, despite the extraordinary skills and resources at its command, to develop a theoretical or statistical approach that could cope with the complexity of human conflict” (300). Only three of 600 variables—in combination—were found to predict future levels of state violence: (1) openness to international trade, (2) infant mortality, and (3) a nation’s degree of democracy.

John Naisbitt’s best-selling book Megatrends (1984) suggested that increasing efficiency and commercialism is creating greater and more diffused opportunity and choice among consumers. Today’s western societies are “Baskin-Robbins” societies,
where everything comes in 31 [or many more] flavors. Writing in the early 1980s, Naisbitt described a U.S. auto market that offered 752 distinct car models to choose from, and thousands of choices in light bulbs and cigarettes alone. This “multiple-option society” has “spilled over into other important areas of our lives: religion, the arts, music, food, entertainment” (260-61). Increasingly diverse living, lifestyle, and family arrangements mean that there is no such thing as a conventional family or home life. “And like Rubik’s cube, the chance of getting it back to its original state are practically nil” (Naisbitt 1984, 261). Today, individuals can “shop” for lifestyles, careers and hobbies like never before, accepting or rejecting traditional family or work values. “More than ever before people live alone” rather than submit to the desires of others (Naisbitt 1984, 261). A multitude of work options, different shifts, part-time options and multiple options for working at home or in the field.

The lifestyle empowerment seen in contemporary capitalist societies also contributes to an increasing political empowerment. Freer economies lead to wealthier people and wealthier people tend to demand political freedoms. “The political notion of governance is being completely redefined. Today’s well-informed citizen is capable and desirous of participating in political decisions” (Naisbitt 1984, 261).

Limitations

Although the relationship between greater market freedom and lower rates of violence appears to be supported by this study, the question of causation leaves the parameters of the relationship in some doubt. Generally, researchers can infer the existence of a causal relationship when there is a clear relationship between changes in
two variables, the allegedly causing variable precedes the caused variable, and all other explanations can be eliminated. In the case of the relationship between capitalism and violence, there are many other variables and factors that can possibly explain changes in both factors.

Payne, however, suggested that declining violence is the *cause* of greater economic freedom and prosperity rather than the effect. “What kind of economy,” he asked, “can a community have in the midst of perpetual civil war?” (2004, 2). “A reduced use of force is obviously a necessary condition for prosperity” (p. 2). And to what does Payne attribute the astounding decline in rates of interpersonal violence over the centuries? History itself, the steady march of human progress, or linearity. “One is almost tempted to answer that ‘History’ is the protagonist in this drama” (p. 27).

There is some evidence that the increasing availability of low-priced consumer goods and technology of a widening variety has an equalizing power for the poor and disadvantaged. A quarter-century ago, Anthony Smith suggested that increasing print-media options were shifting “sovereignty over text” from authors to receivers (1980). We now know that Smith drastically *understated* the egalitarian power of this trend. Sovereignty over media sources has rapidly shifted to the individual, and this trend shows no signs of abating. In modern commercial societies, members of society have more media options than they can possibly partake of. Media consumers now have an endless supply of “texts” of their own choices—movies, videos, games, internet entertainment as well as print media.

One of the most likely explanations for an inverse relationship between capitalism and violence involves the pluralistic nature of sociolegal relations in free-
The pluralistic model structure orders conduct by restraining individuals and resolving disputes between competing individuals and groups (Quinney 1978). Under the pluralistic model, no one group holds power indefinitely. Although western adversarial legal systems apply a winner-take-all rule, no winner can expect victory in every case. Elections divvy up power between rival sectors of the electorate.

Finally, there is the conclusion that must be faced: that humanity’s natural state may be a capitalistic one, and that man is most at peace when freed to engage in the economy without restriction. The evidence supporting this proposition is mounting. Twenty centuries of trial and error with other economic systems have failed to produce adequate results. Lester Thurow, in The Future of Capitalism (1996) concluded that “no other economic system other than capitalism has been made to work anywhere” (p. 1). “Capitalism’s nineteenth-and early twentieth-century competitors—fascism, socialism, and communism—are all gone” (p.1).

Lastly and most importantly, if the alienation proposition, one of the primary components in mainstream sociology for more than a century, is without empirical support, the implications to sociology, economics, and political science are immense. Certainly, the findings of this dissertation study cast great doubt on the alienation thesis, and hint that humanity’s “natural state” may be much closer to what Adam Smith and Ludwig Von Mises suggested than to a communal or collective state.
CONCLUSION

The findings of this dissertation study suggest that the thesis that capitalism and free markets cause tension, disharmony, conflict, and disruption in the social fabric is largely without support empirically. At least when "capitalism" is operationalized by means of published index scores by economic think tanks and "violence" is operationalized by published homicide rates, there is no provable "alienation" link. On the contrary, an analysis of this limited evidence suggests that capitalism may be linked with decreasing violence. More research is necessary to determine the precise nature of this relationship, and the years ahead will likely provide further data to assist in this analysis. However, it can be concluded from this preliminary study that the traditional Rousseauan "alienation" proposition is without strong support in the economic and homicide data available at the turn of the twenty-first century.
NOTES

1 According to Holmstrom and Smith (2000), capitalism is defined as a “unique social relationship” that depended on “two kinds of commodity sellers: on the one hand, a class of capitalists vested with a virtual monopoly of the ownership of the means of production and, on the other hand, a propertyless proletariat dispossessed of the means of production and subsistence and, consequently, with nothing to sell but their capacity to labor” (Holmstrom and Smith 2000, 2).

2 Smith’s thesis, often criticized for its simplicity, was that “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the banker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never take to them of our own necessities but of their advantages” (Smith 1776, 20). Thus, self-interest acts as an invisible hand that guides products and services to destinations that need them most. “[E]very prudent man in every period of society, after the first establishment of the division of labour,” wrote Smith, “must naturally have endeavoured to manage his affairs in such a manner, as to have at all times by him, besides the peculiar produce of his own industry, a certain quantity of some commodity or other, such as he imagined few people would be likely to refuse in exchange for the produce of their industry” (Smith 1991 [1776] 29-30).

3 Sowell provides the example of Chinese nationals who have left or fled the Chinese mainland since the beginning of the twentieth century, often to places like Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Australia. While an observer of the Chinese in China during the mid-twentieth century may have drawn the belief that Chinese are culturally not inclined toward capitalism, an observer of Chinese people elsewhere in the world would likely draw the opposite opinion. Sowell points out that “Altogether, ethnic Chinese living outside China produced as much wealth as China itself in the early 1990s” (1996, 176).

4 The ethnocentrism with which the founders of sociology viewed world trade history can be partially attributed to the dominance of imperial Europe during the period they wrote. Marx, Weber, and Durkheim wrote from the comfortable roosts of Western industrial preeminence in the late nineteenth century. Looking back to the fifteenth to century, these writers saw that Europeans had visited almost every part of the world, meeting people weaker than themselves and ultimately conquering them through the
promotion of trade advantages (Parry 1965). “The ‘expansion of Europe’ was not, of course, deliberately planned, [but] proved irresistible” (Parry 1965, 7).

5 Interestingly, Freud expressed the view that the alienation theory was “an untenable illusion” (1961, 71). Abolishing private property, wrote Freud, would not alter the differences in power and influence that nature has introduced—“injustices against which there is no remedy” (71 n.7).

6 Heilbroner (1975, 56n.) cites the years 1202 A.D., and 1494 A.D., as two historians’ potential start dates for “capitalism,” referring to the estimations of German economic historian Werner Sombart and Oswald Spengler, respectively.

7 There is, of course, some justification for the view that life is speeding up for many of the world’s citizens. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, an average person probably met only a few hundred people in a lifetime (Homer-Dixon 2002: 25). Almost all information was communicated through speech. Transportation was only as fast as a horse or a sailing ship could move. Today, a typical man might meet hundreds of thousands of people, reach anywhere on the planet within one day, and exchange information with other people on the others side of the world instantly by gigabyte (Homer-Dixon 2002).

8 Notably, Sigmund Freud was a skeptic of the alienation theory. Freud in his Civilization and Its Discontents, remarked of the communist view that “Aggressiveness was not created by property. It reigned almost without limit in primitive times, when property was still very scanty, and it already shows itself in the nursery almost before property has given up its primal, anal form” (71). “As a rule,” wrote Freud, man’s “cruel aggressiveness waits for some provocation” to manifest itself spontaneously and reveal “man as a savage beast to whom consideration towards his own kind is something alien” (69).

9 Like Marx, Weber’s writings often concentrated on humanity’s economic evolution. Weber himself wrote a book-length social and economic history of antiquity entitled The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations (1909). Weber’s expertise in economic matters was vast. Weber was, in fact, as much a professor of Economics as Sociology, and he taught both subjects over the course of his career. His record of books, essays, and lectures on economic subjects surpasses his “sociological” publications. A man of letters, Weber read and spoke several languages including Latin and Greek. Few scholars living at the time of his death in 1920 knew more about pre-historic Eurasian political economy.

10 Weber cited Beloch, who estimated that the annual trade of Piraeus in 401-400 B.C. was 2,000 talents (13 million gold franks) based on records of customs duties.
"Considering that this was in Piraeus alone, that it was soon after the Peloponnesian War [and thus in a depressed economy, relatively], that no allowance is made for changes in the purchasing power of money, and that even so 2,000 talents is approximately the equivalent of one-tenth of the foreign trade of the present kingdom of Greece [2000 years later], this sum is certainly an impressive figure" (Weber 1983, 34-35).

11 “Ancient Egypt” cannot be categorized as one scenario, because it thrived for several millennia. There is one thing certain, however, the business of Egypt was business. And business was profitable. “It has been estimated,” wrote Oliver and Fage (1970, 37), “that Egyptian peasants of the third millennium B.C. may have been able to produce perhaps three times as much as their own domestic requirements.” And such great profits inevitably fueled inequality. “A specialist stone-worker might now spend a whole year grinding out a single vase in polished porphyry to adorn a rich man’s house or to furnish his tomb” (Oliver and Fage 1970, 36).

The Egyptian experiment demonstrated the advancements in survivability that had been wrought from agriculture and business. One estimate of the Nile Delta estimated that the entire valley could only have supported twenty thousand hunter-gatherers; but in its commercial prime during its ancient dynasties was probably between three and six million (Oliver and Fage 1970, 26).

12 Coram (1987) tested the proposition that a set of norms and values, or a “dominant ideology” is necessary for capitalist societies to exist—a common belief underlying much social theory (464). He concluded that the proposition is based upon untenable underlayments and could not survive scrutiny. Capitalism exists even in the absence of a state that supports it (Schlosser 2002).

13 Isaac Asimov, in his Guide to the Bible (1968) plots the “Eden” of Genesis as the area of the Tigress and Euphrates Rivers where ancient civilization arose in the fifth century B.C. The Bible, according to Asimov, is “a history book covering the first four thousand years of human civilization” written from the perspective of the people of Canaan, a small section of Asia bordering the Mediterranean Sea (1968, 9).

14 Gary North, a Calvinist libertarian who has written approximately 8,000 pages on the economics of the Bible, concludes that that “Mosaic economic law as a whole was pro-market, pro-private ownership, pro-foreign trade, pro-money-lending (Deut. 28:12)” (North 2004). Moreover, writes North, “The New Testament did not break with most of these laws, and the few that it did break with, such as slavery and the jubilee land law, made the resulting position even more market favorable.”

15 If we look only to the Bible as our source for data regarding ancient Eurasian civilizations, we must reject the alienation thesis outright. Even if some Biblical
stories were exaggerated or mythologized, their essence reveals social violence of an appalling level (Payne 2004). The Bible describes the ancient near East as a landscape of incessant wars, massacres, and homicides. Economically, the region was typified by private pursuit of commercial success in the face of state repression.

16 Chiricos, Eschholz, and Gertz (1997) surveyed 2,092 adults in Tallahassee, Florida, where news coverage of violent crime has been particularly prominent. They asked respondents to rate on a scale of one to ten how much the respondents feared being robbed by someone with a gun or knife, being burglarized, and being physically attacked. The study found a substantial relationship between exposure to television news coverage and fear of crime. Moreover, the frequency of watching television news is “significantly related” to higher fear levels for women, whites and the middle-aged.

17 Research indicates that some substantial portion of the public’s fear of violence and crime can be exclusively attributed to news headlines. Only 22 percent of people interviewed by one professor cited personal experience as their basis for their fear of crime (Glassner, 1999, xxi). The rest (76 percent) cited stories they had seen in the media (id.). In the case of drug abuse scares, eight out of ten adults have never experienced problems with drug abuse in their family yet nonetheless hold fears about drug abuse around them (id.). News panics of a drug abuse epidemic increased by more than 400 percent during one six-month period in the late 1980s (Chiricos, 1998, 60).


19 Not all authorities agree that official murder rates reflect actual rates of violence, and indeed, there is support for the idea that early figures did not reflect reality. Conventional wisdom suggests that murders have always been recorded in some manner or another. Not so, according to the accounts of some early American chronaclers. William Crawford, a British emissary commissioned to undertake a systematic study of American criminal justice in the 1830s, concluded that many brutal slayings went totally unnoticed “in a legal sense” (Crawford, 26):
Crimes are of course matters of frequent occurrence, and yet I was informed during my stay in America that there was not a single prisoner in the [Illinois] penitentiary convicted of any serious offence. The discrepancies between the number of commitments and the actual extent of crime, in the more western as well as the southern States, merit peculiar attention. There exists in those parts of the country a great recklessness of human life. Personal insult is resented by the immediate gratification of revenge. A custom prevails of carrying pocket pistols, or of wearing a dirk in the bosom, while scarcely any of the labouring classes are without a large clasped knife, which, opening with a spring, becomes a truly formidable weapon. Hence assaults of the most desperate character in the public streets frequently occur, and death to the parties often ensues. Prosecutions, however, arising out of these acts of violence, are by no means common (Crawford, 26).

20 Lanc (1997) points out that the earliest national system of quantifying homicides, based upon the registration of death certificates, began only in 1906 and that the system was seriously flawed by regional variations in coroner practices (229). The earliest attempts at establishing a national homicide rate were made by Professor H.C. Brearily in the early 1930s.

21 As Edgerton wrote, these practices do more than simply impose male dominance and can deprive women of important proteins and nutrients. In India, West Africa, Morocco, and South America, women and their children are more vulnerable to disease and death form poor nutrition. The Fore of Paua New Guinea, for example, are often so deprived of animal flesh that that women supplement their diets by eating the flesh of deceased relatives (p. 82). As a consequence, they contract kuru, a neurological disease caused often only seen among cannibals (p. 82).


24 In contrast, the average American in 1991 had a one in 38 chance of dying by accident and a one in four chance of dying from heart disease (National Institute of Justice 1993).

25 Note that laws on the books throughout the history of the United States prohibited government officials from acting in bad faith when negotiating real estate transactions with Native Americans. Congress’ Northwest Ordinance of 1787 proclaimed:
The utmost good faith shall always be observed toward the Indians; their land and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and in their property, rights and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress, but laws founded in justice and humanity shall from time to time be made, for preventing wrongs being done to them (Northwest Ordinance, 1787, Third Article, as found in Prucha 1990).

26 President Theodore Roosevelt, who had experiences in the frontier West as a young man, scoffed at claims that the Plains Indians held the lands they roamed upon in the manner of owners. Writing in the 1880s:

To recognize the Indian ownership of the limitless prairies and forests of this continent—that is, to consider the dozen squalid savages who hunted at long intervals over a territory of a thousand square miles as owning it outright, necessarily implies a similar recognition of the claims of every white hunter, squatter, horse thief, or wandering cattleman. (Jamieson 1996, 32).
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