ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES OF CHANGES IN GENERATIONAL RELATIONS

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Overview

The title I was given for this paper, 'Economic, Political, and Cultural Consequences of Changes in Generational Relations', implies a causality that seems to me backwards. That is, relations between generations are not an autonomous factor – an independent variable, in social science terms – that causes economic, political, and cultural change. Rather, it is the latter that are the independent variables that cause changes in the relationship between the generations, as when a profligate present generation piles up long-term liabilities that will have to be paid by a future generation. I am therefore taking it as the objective of this paper to look at political, economic, and cultural change, and to discuss what effects it will have on generational relations and inter-generational solidarity.

This, of course, is an impossibly broad topic. There is no aspect of change in any of these broad categories that does not in some way impact generational relations, and there is no way of speaking empirically about changes that may take place in the future in these areas.

In order to prevent this from becoming a completely open-ended exercise in futurology, I would like to focus on trends in politics, economics, and culture that take place over generational time scales. It is this kind of slow-moving change that produces generational cohorts, that is, groups of people born within certain time periods whose views and behavior are similar because they have been shaped by similar experiences. This type of change

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is often continuous; past trends in behavior provide some guide as to what we might expect in the future. Some trends, like demographic change, can be described with a fairly high degree of empirical precision, and carry a momentum that permits a certain amount of prediction. Cultural and normative change also fits this pattern, since it tends to happen continuously and incrementally over generational time scales.[2] Other types of change, like shifts in international relations, are subject to frequent discontinuities as a result of war, revolution, and technological innovation. Since they cannot be projected forward terribly easily, they will be left out of this discussion. Technological change is similarly hard to predict: technologies go through life cycles, with large, discontinuous changes in the early phases as technologies are invented and adopted, followed by prolonged periods of more incremental change as they mature.

Another characteristic of slow-moving, continuous change is that it is usually difficult to affect using short-term policy instruments. And yet, it is important to consider ways in which societies can shape long-term change. Intergenerational solidarity will have no meaning if the conditions affecting the relationship between generations cannot be altered through human choice. In areas like the environment or social security, there clearly are steps that can be taken now that will affect the well-being of subsequent generations, though the vector of policy change is itself also a slow-moving, long-term one. We need to consider whether policy choices are available in other areas as well.

Long-Term Social Change, 1950-2000

The particular areas of long-term change that I want to focus on here concern the interlinked issues of reproduction, family, civil society, and the normative framework in which all of these activities are embedded. The developed world has just gone through a massive series of changes in these areas over the last 35-40 years, changes I have earlier labeled the 'great disruption'.[3] It will be of great consequence to future generations whether these trends continue, accelerate, or reverse course, and it is of course of great importance to know whether and how human agency can affect future outcomes.

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[2] Sometimes, of course, it happens rapidly, as in the case of American attitudes towards the outside world before and after events like Pearl Harbor or September 11.

[3] See Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

The Family

At the core of the great disruption are changes in relations between men and women and in family life. There has been a long and ideologized debate over whether there can be said to be something like a 'natural' family, and it is certainly the case that kinship structures vary dramatically across cultures and over time. There is some recent work coming out of anthropology and evolutionary biology suggesting that the nuclear family has been far more universal in the human species than formerly believed,[4] and that it was a predominant form of kinship in Western Europe for a very long time.[5]

In any event, changes in family structure across the developed world since the early 1960s has been striking. Figures I-IV (pp. 421-422) in the appendix show trends across a series of OECD countries regarding divorce, births to single mothers, total fertility, and female labor force participation that illustrate the magnitude and breadth of what has happened. Beginning some time in the 1960s, men and women began to divorce each other much more frequently; children were increasingly raised either by single mothers, by unwed parents, or in family situations in which someone other than the biological parents acted as caregivers; the size of families dramatically decreased; the amount of time that people spent in family situations (either in their parents' household or in their own) as a proportion of total lifetimes decreased (particularly for women); and women moved in huge numbers into the paid workforce.

One of the striking changes that has resulted from the cumulative effect of these changes is the number of people living alone in advanced societies. Table 1 provides figures for the number of people living alone as a percentage of all households for a variety of developed countries during the 1990s.

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[4] Nuclear families appear to have been the predominant form of kinship in hunter-gatherer societies; large, elaborate kinship structures like tribes and lineages arose primarily after the discovery of agriculture. See Stevan Harrell, *Human Families* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), pp. 26-50; and Adam Kuper, *The Chosen Primate: Human Nature and Cultural Diversity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 174.

[5] It was long assumed that the nuclear family was the byproduct of industrialization. The 'new family history' associated with Peter Laslett has demonstrated that nuclear families were dominant in Europe well prior to industrialization. Rather than industrialization changing family structure, it may be the case that these changes in family structure were one of the facilitating conditions for European modernization. Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); and Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, *Family Forms in Historic Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Table 1: PEOPLE LIVING ALONE AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS[6]

Country	Households
Austria	29.2
Denmark	50.3
Ireland	21.5
Netherlands	31.8
Norway	45.6
Switzerland	32.4
United Kingdom	12.0
United States	25.1

These changes occurred across virtually all developed countries, though with considerable cross-country variance. Divorce rates in Catholic countries as well as Japan and Korea, and rates of out-of-wedlock births, were lower than in the United States, Britain, and most of Scandinavia. Female labor force participation was highest in Scandinavia, followed by the US and Britain, but remained relatively low in Germany and other parts of continental Europe, as well as Japan (which is an outlier in almost all of these measures). Births to unwed mothers has a very different meaning in Europe than it does in North America, since the rate of cohabitation is much higher there; many such children are actually living in households where both biological parents are present, while in the US they are being raised by single mothers or in households with surrogate parents. Nonetheless, what is striking from these data is how broad and rapid these changes in a very old institution, the family, were.

Social Relationships Outside the Family

If we consider other types of social relationships outside of the family, we see a similar degree of change, though here the trends are more complex and in some cases contradictory. One clear negative indicator of social

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[6] Year of figures: Austria 1993; Denmark 1997; Ireland 1996; Netherlands 1996; Norway 1997; Switzerland 1990; UK 1995; and US 1997.

cohesion and trust are crime rates, and here we see that they increased over roughly the same group of developed countries over the 1965-2000 time period, as indicated in Figures V-VI (p. 423) in the appendix. It has long been recognized that American crime rates are significantly higher than those of other developed countries, and that there are a higher proportion of violent crimes in America than elsewhere.[7] This remains mostly true. But virtually all European countries experienced a significant increase in crime, both violent and property, in roughly the same time period as the United States. Indeed, in some categories of property crime, rates in Europe now exceed those of the United States.

It is much more difficult to measure civic association outside the family, though many efforts have been made to do so since Robert Putnam's pioneering work.[8] Even for a data-rich country like the United States, the trends are highly complex. While Putnam has asserted that there has been a secular decline in social capital in the US since the 1950s,[9] this conclusion has been disputed by a number of authors.[10] Lester Salamon in fact argues that the very period Putnam describes as one of decline in social capital has seen an 'associational revolution'[11] (It is one thing when social scientists disagree on the exact value of a coefficient, and another when they cannot agree whether it is a positive or negative number!).

Putnam draws his conclusions from declining membership in a variety of organizations, as well as times series survey data concerning organizational membership and levels of trust in various social institutions like government at various levels, corporations, the military, labor unions, and fellow citizens. Putnam's case is strongest that trust as measured by survey data has seen a large secular decline over the past forty years (though with some recovery in the 1990s). It is much harder to make the case that peo-

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[7] Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: Norton, 1995).

[8] Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[9] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

[10] See inter alia Everett C. Ladd, *Silent Revolution: The Reinvention of Civic America* (New York: Free Press, 1999); Marcella R. Ray, *The Changing and Unchanging Face of US Civil Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 2002).

[11] See Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, *The Emerging Sector: An Overview* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Inst. for Policy Stud., 1994); and Lester M. Salamon, 'The Rise of the Nonprofit Sector', *Foreign Affairs* 73(4), 1994: pp. 109-122.

ple are correspondingly less socially interconnected in terms of group memberships. The problem, as a number of observers have pointed out, is one of absent evidence, which does not constitute evidence of absence. That is, newer and more poorly institutionalized groups are much less likely to keep good information on their own membership, or to be the subject of surveys carried out by third parties. In the United States, Europe, and Asia, the Internet has emerged in the past decade as one of the central loci of social interaction, and yet there is virtually no good data as to quantity and quality of social connectedness it facilitates.

When one turns to other countries, the data problem is even more severe. There are certain cross-country value surveys like the University of Michigan's World Values Survey that ask questions related to trust and membership in voluntary associations. The data here are also highly contradictory: levels of trust, both in major institutions and in fellow citizens, are down in many countries over the 1981-1996 period, but are up in others. Some forms of organizations like labor unions have seen decreasing membership, while others have had increasing members. Information on new forms of connectedness is as lacking for Europe and northeast Asia as it is for the United States.

Causality

The changes described above – between the sexes, in the family, and in the way that individuals related to the broader society (whether negatively, as measured by crime rates, or positively, as measured by civic association) – were massive and occurred in a relatively restricted period of time. These trends are also clearly related to one another: female labor force participation affects family stability; family structure affects crime; relationships outside of the family both complement and displace those within it.

When aggregated up to the level of entire societies, the complexity of these causal relationships is so great that social scientists are usually reluctant to draw broad conclusions. It is not possible to control for all of the variables that affect these outcomes, or understand all of the complex causal paths by which they are related to one another. It is much safer empirically to assert micro-level relationships, say between ethnic diversity and crime in a particular neighborhood.

The problem with this approach is that it risks missing the forest for the trees. That is, there were large changes in certain social variables that occurred across a wide variety of countries over a relatively short period of

time. Cultural variables, and particularly ones concerning the most intimate aspects of sexuality and family life, do not as a general rule change rapidly, and yet they did in the period from 1960-1990. This suggests that some deeper causes were operating despite all of the cross-country variation.

In the paragraphs below, I want to lay out my interpretation of the causal connections between these phenomena. James Q. Wilson, in a review of *The Great Disruption*, offered an alternative interpretation of these developments, and said that I could not prove my view any more than he could prove his. He is of course correct in saying this, if by proof we mean a statistical regression which shows correlations between these phenomena to a very high confidence level. This does not mean, however, that it is pointless to try to think through the sources of social and cultural change, since our interpretation of the past will very much affect what we think is possible with regard to policy affecting future outcomes.

Let us begin with some of the interior connections between sex, male-female relations, and the family. We know that several major aspects of behavior began to change rapidly beginning some time in the mid-1960s: sex became increasingly detached from reproduction, women began entering the paid labor force in large numbers, divorce rates and later out-of-wedlock births began to climb, and feminism emerged as a large and powerful political and cultural force in virtually all Western developed countries. Everyone who lived through that period knows that behavioral change was accompanied by large ideational changes in the way that people thought about sexuality.

The conventional interpretation of these events is that culture was the independent variable and that the behavioral phenomena were dependent. Many would say that the cultural changes that occurred in this period were the working out of certain inherent tensions in the entire Western post-Enlightenment secular tradition that placed great emphasis on the individual and individualism at the expense of various forms of communal authority. Individualism is required by modern capitalism and the principle of the economic autonomy of individuals had spread widely by the first half of the twentieth century. It was only inevitable, the argument goes, that these same principles of individual choice should then be applied to the realms of sex and family.[12] The authority of institutionalized religion, in particular,

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[12] For a version of this argument, see Alan Wolfe, *Moral Freedom: The Search for Virtue in a World of Choice* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

had been under challenge since at least the Protestant Reformation, and the growing secularism of modern societies that accelerated in the 1960s was simply a continuation of this trend.

It is obvious that as a long-term description of ideational or cultural change, this account is incontrovertible. But as an explanation for why these changes occurred in the second half of the 20th century, they leave much to be desired. There was, for example, both a mini-sexual revolution and a feminist movement born in the wake of the first World War in Europe and North America. Why did they not lead to the sorts of massive behavioral change that occurred from the late 1960s onward? Why were cultural values so susceptible to change after the 1960s? Culture does on occasion shift spontaneously, but there was no new prophet or religious vision that suddenly emerged in the 1960s. Hugh Hefner was hardly a source of charismatic authority for this generation.

So while the broader pattern of post-Enlightenment cultural development in the West exists as a background condition for change, we must look to more proximate causes to explain why that change took place when it did. I would point to two specific developments that can be dated to this period and that did have a direct impact on sexual behavior and family life. The first was the introduction of the birth control pill in the early 1960s, that permitted the separation of sex and reproduction; the second was the emergence of a post-industrial workplace in which women had vastly greater opportunities for paid employment outside the home.

The birth control pill was a technological innovation that produced an enormous range of unintended consequences. At its introduction, it was seen as an aspect of women's liberation, since it would permit women to enjoy sex as men did free from the responsibilities brought on by pregnancy. It is clear in retrospect, however, that it also acted as an agent of male liberation as well, by freeing men from the norm of responsibility for the children that they fathered. Within less than a decade, the burden of responsibility for raising an unexpected child shifted from the man to the woman,[13] leaving a huge number of women in the following generation to raise children on their own without the benefit of the child's biological father.

The second major exogenous change that drove cultural change was the evolution of a post-industrial workplace, in which mental labor increasing-

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[13] Janet L. Yellen and George A. Akerlof, 'An Analysis of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing in the United States', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 111(2), 1996: pp. 277-317.

ly displaced physical labor, and information substituted for material product. This change did not occur abruptly, as in the case of the introduction of the pill, but by the 1960s the service sector had come to constitute a sufficiently large proportion of American employment that Daniel Bell could take note of it in his 1968 work *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*.[14] The 1960s in the US marked the high point of a work force dominated by male heads of households, often protected by union contracts. Labor markets began to shift markedly after that, as female labor force participation began to rise. Male median incomes in real terms peaked in 1973, never to recover in the years after that point. The ratio of female to male real incomes began to rise steadily after that point, first in Scandinavia, the US, and Britain, followed by central Europe, then by Catholic Europe, with Japan lagging all industrialized democracies.[15]

These two developments – birth control and female labor force participation – had the dramatic impact on the family predicted by economic models of marriage and divorce.[16] Female access to resources gave women an alternative to dependence on a husband's income, while at the same time releasing men from the moral obligation to support their wives and the children that they bore. Culture was, of course, an independent variable here as well: the feminist movement represented the aspirations of millions of women who wanted their own careers and independence, and who were willing to accept divorce as the price for achieving these goals. Changes in the labor market did not create these aspirations, but made them much easier to realize.

The causal relationships between these phenomena and increasing crime and social distrust are very complex. It is very common for American conservatives to link the breakdown of the nuclear family to crime, as well as to other social pathologies like poor educational achievement, drug use, teenage pregnancy, and the like. It is certainly true that these phenomena

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[14] Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society; a Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[15] These differences were only partly cultural. Some countries retained formal barriers to female employment in certain occupations longer than others; and in some cases, welfare state protections aimed to preserve the incomes of male heads of households. In the US, by contrast, welfare protections had since the Civil War tended to target women's incomes. See Theda Skocpol.

[16] The standard economic theory is given by Gary Becker in *A Treatise on the Family* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

are highly intercorrelated for certain populations like inner-city African-Americans.[17] But multivariate analysis tends to show that family structure disappears as a causal factor for crime or educational achievement when one controls for socio-economic status. (This is a bit misleading insofar as family breakdown also correlates with lower SES, and thus can return as an explanatory variable). Moreover, if the breakdown of the family occuring after the mid-1960s was the cause of crime, one would expect the rise in crime rates to follow with a lag of 10-15 years as the children reared in broken homes came of age. One finds, instead, that crime rates began rising concurrently with changes in sexual relationships and family structure, suggesting that they had a common underlying cause.

Moreover, Europe differs markedly from the United States in the crime-family nexus. Certainly there are slums in Europe where family breakdown, crime, drug use, and poverty coexist. But there is also substantially less residential mobility in Europe than in the United States, and less labor market turnover. The stability of neighborhoods has an important impact on the socialization of children; the family is not the only institution available to provide 'eyes on the street' to control the behavior of young people.

There are other possible explanations for the rise of crime rates after the 1960s. One simply has to do with the postwar baby boom: since most crime is committed by young males between the ages of 15-25, one would expect crime rates to rise when the baby-boom cohort reached its teenage years, and then to taper off when this cohort arrived at middle age.

A second factor has to do with what is euphemistically called social heterogeneity: in many societies, crime is highly concentrated in certain racial or ethnic groups, like African-Americans in the US or the various mostly immigrant communities in Europe. In the United States, the 1960s saw the end of official segregation in the South and the coming of age of black children whose parents had taken part in the great postwar migration to the north after World War II. In Europe, this period also saw increases in immigration following decolonization in the 1950s, and the growth of large immigrant slums like the ones that surround many French cities. It is important to face the fact that crime and ethnicity or race are correlated (more on this below); on the other hand, it is also important to note that crime rates increased among all groups, native-born and foreign, black and white, during this period.

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[17] See William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

It is even more difficult to establish clear causal relationships between the trends in civil society noted above and the other dimensions of social change in change in the family. To repeat, the underlying trends themselves are ambiguous: while in the United States levels of trust are clearly down over the past 40 years, organizational memberships may have been simultaneously increasing. There is only a weak correlation between family breakdown and levels of trust, despite what might seem to be a commonsensical reason to expect the two phenomena to be related. On the other hand, there are statistically meaningful correlations between trust and income, education, immigrant status, race, and whether one has been the victim of a crime.[18]

It is thus impossible to draw any general conclusions about trends in civil society for developed countries broadly, and difficult to simply confirm Putnam's claim concerning trends in social capital and voluntary association in the United States. I have labeled my own interpretation of what has been happening to American society as one not of secular decline, but rather of moral miniaturization. That is, there are considerable data that indicate that Americans actually belong to more organizations and associations and thus take on more identities than their parents or grandparents, but that the *quality* of these relationships has become attenuated and the circles of people to whom one is related socially have grown smaller. In other words, an urban, middle-class generation X-er may belong to several professional groups, civic leagues, clubs, alumni associations, and multiple internet chat rooms, but his or her moral connectedness to any other person in any of these overlapping circles is weaker than the social connections made by his or her grandparents a couple of generations ago.

Whether this pattern is also evident in other developed countries, where patterns of geographical mobility and technological adoption are different, is not clear. But it stands to reason that similar social processes are unfolding in many societies. Communications channels, for example, have multiplied everywhere with the advance of technology. 100-channel cable TV would presumably produce much less by way of shared experience than a world in which everyone had only two or three channels to watch; while the Internet frees us from the tyranny of distance, it also frees us from the moral connectedness of geographically limited, face-to-face communities.

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[18] Tom W. Smith, 'Factors Relating to Misanthropy in Contemporary American Society', *Social Science Research* 26, 1997: pp. 170-196.

Social Change: Secular or Cyclical

I want at this point to transition from a discussion of what has happened over the past couple of generations to what might happen in the coming ones. One obvious place to start is whether these long, multi-generation length social trends are secular or cyclical. That is, are we witnessing long-term moral decline as a consequence of our passing into a secular humanist society that has lost the moral bearings provided by religious faith? Will family breakdown and crime rates continue their inexorable rise, until society itself ceases to exist? Or are we seeing instead a long cycle in which social norms are disrupted by social or political change, only to be reformed or reformulated on a different basis over time?

I believe that the social trends I have labeled the great disruption are cyclical, that there is a natural basis for morality, that morality can be guided by religion, but that religion is not a necessary condition for moral behavior, and that we can expect some reversal in the negative social trends in the coming generation.

On the other hand, what drives normative change by this account is technological change, and there is no reason to think that technological change will cease, or that there will not be future massive disruptions of social relationships that will pose severe challenges to society. I want to speculate on some of the important social trends, different from those that I have just described, that I expect to see emerge in the next generation.

My reasons for believing that the social trends I have just described are cyclical rather than secular in nature is simply that they have happened before, and that societies have succeeded in adjusting to a changed environment and have renormed themselves. This has happened not just once, but many times in the past, and I do not see any reason why it should not be expected to happen again in the future.

There was a clear precedent for the kinds of changes that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century, which was the massive disruption of social norms that accompanied industrialization in Britain and the United States. Beginning roughly in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, crime rates, rates of illegitimacy, and social pathologies like alcoholism all began to climb.[19] This was clearly linked to the demise of agricultural society and the rapid emergence of urban-industrial life. The

[19] James L. Collier, *The Rise of Selfishness in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

early mill towns of Manchester or Lowell separated young men from their families and housed them in dormitories, where the normative structure of village life no longer applied. Rates of alcoholism in the United States during the late 1820s was astonishing and comparable to the plague of drug addiction that emerged in the 1970s.[20]

Religion played a big role in the renorming process in Britain and the United States during the late nineteenth century, and some have argued that its absence today makes impossible anything like the Victorian revival. The importance of religion to the historical revival process in these two countries was certainly great, but the assertion that the social virtues cannot exist apart from a religious framework seems to me to be doubtful. There are a number of reasons for believing this. First, there are a number of societies around the world that are highly orderly and normative, without these norms having a strong religious foundation. Many of these societies are in East Asia, and include China and Japan.[21] Buddhism, Taoism, Shinto, and other religions of course exist, but they do not play anything like the role in these societies that Christianity, Islam, and Judaism play in lands where monotheistic religion has prevailed. Indeed, the central ethical code historically in China has not been a religion at all, but rather an ethical doctrine, Confucianism, that requires no belief in a transcendent God or gods.

Second, the empirical correlation between religion and social order is not a strong one. The societies of Western Europe have secularized dramatically over the past two generations, while religion remains much more vibrant in the United States. And yet while all of these societies have experienced increasing rates of social dysfunction, those of the more religious US have risen much faster. Within the United States, there is no strong correlation between either crime or family breakdown rates, and rates of religious belief. The rural South, for example, has always had significantly higher rates of violent crime than the rural north, despite the higher rates of secularism in the latter.

Cultural Diversity and Social Order

All of this suggests that religion is not the *sine qua non* of social order. All other things being equal, we might expect some degree of cyclical

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[20] See William J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[21] This argument has been made by James Q. Wilson.

rebound as norms, laws, and other institutions of order begin to catch up to the social changes that have been brought about by technological and economic change. There is some evidence that this began happening, in the United States at least, during the 1990s. There is a lot of evidence that norm-following behavior is genetically programmed into our species.[22] The specific content is of course not universal, which is why there is cultural variation across human societies. But normlessness or *anomie* is a highly atypical – indeed, pathological – situation in human societies. There is no particular reason to think that we are about to enter a period of prolonged anomie at the beginning of the twenty-first century, any more than there was when Durkheim wrote about anomie as a byproduct of the transition from agricultural to industrial society.

On the other hand, there are other reasons apart from the role of religion in society that may establish higher or lower long-term levels of social order or social dysfunction. Up to this point, I have been describing only one dimension of cultural change, that brought on by technological innovation and the latter's economic consequences. But there are clearly other dimensions to cultural change, the most important one being the degree of cultural diversity that exists within a given society. Religion, for example, plays a role in bonding communities only when there is consensus on religious first principles; religious diversity has historically tended to promote communal conflict rather than stability.

Multiculturalism – that is, the co-existence of multiple ethnic, linguistic, religious, and racial minorities within the same society – characterizes a great many parts of the world, including the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, central and Eastern Europe, southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. Western Europe and its north American offshoot, as well as China and northeast Asia, have historically been much more ethnically and religiously homogeneous, though Western Europe has experienced violent religious sectarianism in the past. One of the very consequential multi-generational changes that is taking place is increasing cultural diversity in these formerly homogeneous parts of the world.

[22] For an overview of some of the new literature from the life sciences on this issue, see Matt Ridley, *The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Viking, 1987).

Human beings existed in small, isolated groups for much of their history: in hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies, an individual often had contact only with other members of his or her kin group or village. These societies were usually segmentary, meaning that when these small communities bumped into one another, they were likely to encounter people similar to themselves. Cultural diversity came about historically primarily as a result of migration and conquest.

In modern times, technology has increased the de facto level of diversity in a number of ways. Improved means of transportation increase the speed with which people can migrate, and the distances over which they can move. Communications technology greatly increases the level of perceived diversity in a society: television and radio exposes a society to ways of life very different from its own.

Moreover, the economic world made possible by technology increases the incentives for diversity through economies of scale. As Adam Smith pointed out, the size of the market governs the division of labor; as commerce becomes possible between larger and larger geographical areas, they become newly interdependent and hence locked in some form of cultural contact. Larger political communities often confer economic advantages,[23] and almost always confer military ones;[24] hence there has been a tendency over time towards consolidation into larger and larger political units whose constituents are inevitably more diverse. Thus people today increasingly live in large, interdependent urban communities comprised of thousands or millions of individuals, which are subordinated to other political units numbering in the tens or hundreds of millions. Their fates are bound up with those of people very different from themselves: a worker in Detroit can lose his job because of a newly opened factory in Korea, something that would have been inconceivable a few hundred years earlier. And they must to an increasing extent cooperate politically with people culturally very different from themselves.

As a result of immigration from developing countries, many European societies now have significant religious and ethnic minorities. 8.9 percent

[23] They do not confer an advantage only if one assumes a world of free factor mobility, which has not been the typical situation throughout most of human history. Even so, the ability of larger units to set standards and gain advantage in economic negotiations remain important benefits of scale.

[24] The classic case for this was made in Charles Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1975).

of Germany's population, or 7.3 million people, are considered foreigners, the great bulk coming from Turkey and other non-EU countries; in Austria the percentage of foreigners has increased from 4.2 to 8.8 from 1989 to 2003; in Switzerland, the figure is 20 (up from 16 in 1970).[25] Since the end of the Cold War, cultural diversity has been fed by instability on Europe's periphery, not just in the Middle East but in the former communist world and the Balkans.

Of these foreign born populations, those from Muslim countries arguably present the greatest challenge in terms of cultural diversity, since religious identity for many Muslims remains strong and distinctive when compared to immigrants from, for example, Latin America, East Asia, or Africa.[26] It is difficult to come by accurate statistics on Muslim populations in Europe, since official census data often excludes questions of religious affiliation, and since there is a great deal of illegal immigration. Table 2 presents one rough estimate, which is probably on the low side.

Table 2: MUSLIM POPULATIONS IN EUROPE[27]

Country number	(millions)	% of pop.
France	4.5	7.5
Germany	3	3.6
Britain	2.5	2.5
Italy	1	1.7
Netherlands	1	6.2
Spain	0.5	1.2
EU total	13	3.2

[25] Numbers drawn from the *Economist Intelligence Unit Country Reports* and *CIA World Factbook*.

[26] In addition, there are cultural practices in Muslim countries like cousin marriage not related to Islam that lower the rate of outmarriage and hence the rate of cultural assimilation.

[27] Source: *Economist*, March 6, 2004.

The period since September 11 has provided troubling evidence that Muslims are being poorly integrated into European societies. Virtually all of the organizers of the September 11 attacks were radicalized in Western Europe, not in Afghanistan or the Middle East. Most came from middle class backgrounds; it was not poverty or lack of opportunity, but something about their social status in Europe, that produced this degree of alienation.

The United States has also undergone a similar transformation into a highly multicultural society. The country was born as a relatively homogeneous, biracial society: as Jay remarked in Federalist 2, 'Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people – a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs ...'. Americans rightly celebrate the centrality of their democratic political institutions to their national identity and success as a nation. They tend to underplay the cultural underpinnings that facilitated the working of those institutions, particularly in the Republic's early years. Similar formal institutions with different cultural preconditions prevailed in nineteenth century Latin America, and led to much less happy results. And indeed, the one source of racial diversity in early America – its African-American population – nearly wrecked the American democratic experiment.

The cultural homogeneity of the majority white society was diluted over time, first by immigrants from central Europe, Ireland, and Scandinavia, then from southern and Eastern Europe, and in the post-World War II period from Latin America and other parts of the developing world. The United States, like other Anglophone countries of new settlement, has been relatively successful in assimilating immigrants, a fact that makes Americans sometimes oblivious of the degree to which it has changed culturally over time. It was routine, for example, for presidents to describe the US as a 'Christian country' up through World War II; to do so now would mark a politician as a bigot and beyond the pale of acceptable political discourse.

There are a number of reasons for thinking that cultural diversity will continue to increase in developed countries over the next couple of generations. There are other specialists at this conference who will address demographic trends, and how these trends will affect social security, health care, and other aspects of future welfare. I would like to concentrate on how they are likely to impact culture, because in my view much of the developed world is heading for a crisis in the next generation precisely because of this intersection of demographics and culture.

Many observers have already remarked on how low rates of fertility among native-born populations will lead to dramatically falling populations in many countries during the twenty-first century.[28] The working-age population has already been shrinking in absolute numbers in Japan and will do so throughout Europe in the coming years. In economic history there are relatively few precedents for prolonged population decline, except as a result of traumatic disruptions brought on by war or disease. If increases in labor productivity fail to offset population losses, these societies will face continuing declines in absolute GDP. It is in theory possible to imagine that a society could foresee this change and accommodate it through higher savings, lower benefits, longer working lives, and the like. But such a theoretically possible society does not seem to exist anywhere in reality; there is huge resistance in Europe, North America, and Japan to changes in existing social security entitlements. This suggests that the path of least resistance to maintaining both current and long-term standards of living will continue to be the importation of workers from culturally different societies.

Political Consequences of Cultural Diversity

Liberal societies have become accustomed to celebrating cultural diversity over the past generation. They have important political reasons for doing so that go to the heart of their identities as liberal societies, and there are in fact real advantages that diverse societies have over homogeneous ones. On the other hand, certain forms of cultural diversity can be a liability, and if societies at the limit become too diverse, they cease being a single community, and can break apart or descend into violent conflict. We need thus to consider the balance sheet with regard to diversity, and consider how increasing diversity will impact Western societies in the coming years.

Liberal societies are, of course, committed to the principles of tolerance and pluralism, in which culturally different people agree to keep disagreements over final goods out of political contestation. Modern liberalism sprang from the violent religious conflicts that occurred after the Reformation, conflicts that convinced thinkers like Hobbes and Montesquieu of the need to shift politics to the 'low but solid ground'[29] of

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[28] Nick Eberstadt, 'World Population Implosion?', *Public Interest* no. 129, 1997: pp. 3-22.
[29] This phrase comes from Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

mutual survival. Thus was born the principle of secular government and the enshrining of tolerance as the central liberal virtue. Liberal societies have of course more often honored these principles in the breach, and it is the legacy of de facto intolerance that led to the positive promotion of diversity in recent years.

Cultural diversity can confer some real economic advantages. Homogeneous societies can be closed to outside influences, and unable to adapt to changing conditions. Cultural diversity, by contrast, can function like genetic diversity in a population, in which different cultural approaches compete and more adaptive ones survive. It is certainly the case that the United States' economy has benefited strongly from immigration; some 40 percent of the engineers, managers, and entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley were born outside of the United States, and the ethnic networks thus created have served as important conduits for ideas, capital, and innovation.[30]

On the other hand, there are certain critical gaps or contradictions in liberal political theory when confronting the problem of cultural diversity, contradictions that will come to the fore as the actual level of diversity increases.[31] The first has to do with the issue of whether rights are held by individuals or by communities. The Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition generally holds that rights-holders are individuals. But in the real world, individuals belong to communities of all sorts that assert communal rights against the individuals comprising them, on the one hand, and against the state on the other. The assertion of communal rights has always been controversial in liberal societies, but there is not a single case in which they are simply ignored in favor of the rights of individuals. Germany and Holland, for example, recognize the Protestant and Catholic Churches as corporate entities, and the German state collects religious taxes on their behalf. Canada has implemented a policy of bilingualism on a federal level, even though it does not recognize the linguistic rights of the Inuit or other indigenous groups. Even in the Lockean-liberal United States, the government has at times permitted small communities like the Amish to exempt themselves from public duties like military service or school attendance and has legal-

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[30] On the role of ethnic Chinese and Indians in Silicon Valley, see Annalee Saxenian, *Silicon Valley's New Immigrant Entrepreneurs* (San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California, 1999).

[31] On this question, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); and *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

ly recognized, for affirmative action purposes, various racial and ethnic groups as objects of government preferences.[32]

The second important gap in liberal theory concerns exactly what degree of cultural diversity a liberal society can tolerate and still remain fundamentally pluralistic. The problem is that many cultural beliefs and practices are not themselves liberal and tolerant. Clearly, liberal societies are not obliged to tolerate people opposed in principle to a liberal state: thus a Muslim fundamentalist who wanted to abolish a secular constitution and replace it with Sharia law could be legitimately excluded. But supposing one group's cultural identity in some way limits the cultural autonomy of another group, as in the choice of Sabbath days and public holidays? Many liberal states feel themselves to be the heirs of important cultural traditions that they do not want to lose or see diluted: thus Israel is not just another liberal democracy, but a Jewish state as well whose Arab Muslim citizens will never feel completely at home; Latvia and Estonia have sought to preserve their ethnic identities in the face of earlier forced Russification. Italians have faced this issue recently in arguments over the display of crucifixes in schools and other public places: is this an unwarranted intrusion of religion into public life, or simply an acknowledgment of Italy's Christian cultural heritage?

The truth of the matter is that there is hardly a liberal democracy that does not have a cultural identity separate from its formal existence as a liberal state. This is true no less for the United States, despite the relatively open and universal nature of its citizenship.[33] The country's Anglo-Saxon-Puritan cultural heritage[34] gives it certain functional advantages like the common use of the English language.[35] But there were other cultural habits passed on through this inheritance that made the development of American democracy quite different than political development in, say, Latin America. This cultural identity was diluted as a result of successive waves

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[32] Even here, American law has been reluctant to recognize the validity of group rights claims and tends to argue in favor of, for example, the educational value of diversity.

[33] On this issue, see Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We: Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

[34] This inheritance was, of course, quite complex and differed according to region. For an excellent analysis that looks at the British origins of American culture in a much more fine-grained way, see David H. Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[35] By and large, proponents of bilingualism in the United States do not insist on linguistic rights per se, but argue that bilingualism is a faster route to acquiring English.

of immigration, but was never tied to ethnicity or religion and therefore has survived and adapted over time.[36]

Diversity already played a role in the development of the great disruption of 1965-1995. In 1965, the United States was a largely segregated society with levels of immigration that had been at historically low levels. The following period saw not just the end of legal segregation but the integration of African-Americans across all walks of American life.[37] This coincided with changes, starting in 1965, in the restrictive 1924 immigration law that led to massive increases in legal and illegal immigration, coming this time not from Europe but from Latin America and other parts of the developing world. The clubbiness of pre-1965 America gave way to a society that was not just more diverse, but also much more fair and equal as a host of informal racial, ethnic, and gender barriers began to fall. But the breaking open of these older more stratified communities contributed to the social dysfunctions described above. This is the nature of social capital: communities that are tightly bonded often time achieve their collective action at the expense of openness and fairness.

In the United States, Europe, and Japan, there is a correlation between crime rates and ethnic or racial minorities. This empirical fact is often taken as a racial/ethnic slur, but should not be. One of the critical factors determining crime rates is the normative structure or social capital of the local community. People who are perfectly law-abiding and orderly in their own society often become less so when transplanted to another country with different norms and networks. Communities can enforce normative structures only if they are relatively homogeneous, stable, and bounded, conditions that seldom apply to racial or ethnic minorities in rapidly changing societies. It is not surprising, therefore, that there was a strong association between crime and race during the great disruption in the United States, or between immigration and crime in contemporary Europe.

The correlation between race/immigrant status/ethnicity and crime or other social dysfunctions is what then helps to propel political backlash

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[36] Seymour Martin Lipset argues, for example, that Protestant moralism survives in contemporary American feminist and anti-war movements, despite the fact that these have become largely secular. See Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

[37] For empirical documentation of these changes, see Abigail Thernstrom and Stephan Thernstrom, *America In Black And White: One Nation, Indivisible* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

movements. The Republican ascendancy after the 1970s in the United States was in large measure a reaction to the dramatic social changes that had been unleashed during that period, in which fear of crime and growing social disorder played a very large role. In Europe, backlash movements like Le Pen's Front National in France, the Vlams Blok in Belgium, the Volkspartei in Switzerland, the Lega Lombarda in Italy or the short-lived Republikaner party in Germany have backed intolerant agendas, with far more sinister implications given the continent's twentieth-century experience with fascism.

Policies to Promote Intergenerational Solidarity

It would seem obvious that cultural diversity, and the way that different societies respond to it, will be among the most important factors affecting long-term cultural change over the coming generations, and that any consideration of intergenerational solidarity must consider how to deal with the long-term problem of diversity. Liberal societies must devise ways of remaining tolerant and open, while at the same time retaining some degree of cultural cohesion. A variety of plausible demographic projections for countries like France and the Netherlands show them having majority non-Christian populations within two generations. It is hard to imagine this unfolding, however, without provoking a major political backlash from the now-dominant native-born cultural group.

There are a number of ways of dealing with this problem. The first is to strictly control immigration as Japan and Korea have done, or as in Australia to open the gates only to selected groups that are likely to assimilate easily and bring with them needed skills. Spain has tried to deal with population shortfalls by trying to shift the source of new immigrants from Muslim countries to Latin America. As noted above, restrictive strategies will become increasingly difficult to implement as the rate of native-born population decline accelerates. Enforcement of strict immigration rules is easier for countries surrounded by water than for nations like the US or those of the EU which have long land borders. Rules requiring freedom of movement among EU member states and the enlargement of the community from 15 to 25 members will increase flows of diverse peoples. For countries like France and the Netherlands that already have large immigrant populations, the closing of borders will not solve their problem because the higher birthrates of immigrant minorities will continue to increase their share of the total population.

For those countries which do not seek to close off immigration, there will be essentially two different policy models for dealing with cultural diversity. The first is what might be called the German corporatist approach, and the latter is the Franco-American policy of assimilation.

The corporatist approach assumes that cultural differences are abiding, and seeks to create rules for mutual coexistence through the recognition of the communal rights of the society's diverse cultural communities. Germans were fond of saying that theirs was not a 'country of immigration', and by and large did not pretend that one could be both a Turk and a German at the same time. Multiculturalism in this context meant not integration but the mutual coexistence of different ethno-religious communities on an equal footing. The German state, as noted above, recognizes the communal rights of the Catholic and Protestant churches, and in effect created reform Judaism in the late nineteenth century to provide Jews with an institutional basis for legal representation. For a society organized along these lines, the chief issue will be which communal groups to recognize, and how to select that group's official representative.

The assimilationist approach, by contrast, refuses to recognize communal rights and seeks to treat its citizens purely as individuals. Citizenship is universal, based on political criteria de-linked from ethnicity, race, or religion. Most successful assimilationist policies have gone further than this and actively used social policy to erase de facto cultural distinctions between groups by enforcing monolingualism or by subjecting all citizens to a common education through the public school system.

These poles are ideal types only. Postwar Germany based citizenship on ethnicity, but began to move towards the assimilationist model in 2000 when its citizenship law was changed to make it easier for non-ethnic Germans to receive citizenship. The French republican tradition was aggressively integrationist, refusing to recognize communal rights, enforcing secularism in the public square, and using the educational system to produce a uniform acceptance of a common French linguistic culture. But the French have at various times also pursued a corporatist strategy. Napoleon organized a *Consistoire des Juifs* to deal with the French Jewish community, and more recently the French government has sought to create an official body representing 'moderate' opinion among French Muslims. Finally, the United States has in the past generation moved away from an assimilationist model through the introduction of multiculturalism and bilingualism in its school system.

Both of these approaches have strengths and weaknesses. The corporatist model is almost inevitable for any country with historically and geographically rooted ethnolinguistic minorities (e.g., French-Canadians, the Hungarian minority in Romania, etc.). It is realistic in the sense of recognizing the permanence of cultural identities. But it also embeds these identities firmly into law, and moves cultural conflict squarely into the political arena. Politicized intercommunal disputes can exacerbate divisions rather than moderating them. Switzerland shows that different ethnolinguistic groups can coexist for a long time in a peaceful democracy. But there are plenty of examples of such coexistence breaking down (e.g., Lebanon, the Balkans), particularly in the face of different rates of demographic change.

The assimilationist model, where it can be applied, will in the end produce a more culturally coherent society and thus is a desirable approach. But it works only under certain specific circumstances,[38] and can be abused or improperly applied. Coercive assimilation often provokes a backlash. The Russian empire and the former Soviet Union pursued forced Russification over two centuries; in the end, with the collapse of the USSR, many of the ethnolinguistic groups believed to have been assimilated within the empire reemerged stronger than ever. When secularism turns into militant anti-clericalism, as it has in Kemalist Turkey, the result is often a religious backlash. The recent French ban on Muslim girls wearing headscarves in public schools may lead to a similarly counterproductive result, driving observant Muslims out of the public school system and into private religious schools.

It is hard to understate the importance of managing the problem of cultural diversity to the future health of Western societies. After September 11, some have suggested that we are facing a 'clash of civilizations' on an international level, pitting the West against the Muslim world. The international problem at least has a fairly clearcut solution in the form of a war on terrorism. It is the internal civilizational clash within each contemporary liberal democracy that will be much more difficult to deal with forthrightly because liberal theory does not give us a clear answer as to a normatively desirable outcome.

The issues of immigration and cultural diversity are very comparable to other issues addressed at this conference like environment and social security in the way that they affect intergenerational solidarity. Cultural change

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[38] Ultimately, the only long-term way of guaranteeing assimilation is through intermarriage, where the different cultural groups literally blend and disappear.

resulting from cultural diversity is something that will unfold slowly over a long period of time. It is a phenomenon that is only partly under the control of public policy. If that small degree of policy control is to produce meaningful results over the space of the next several decades, policy decisions need to be made and implemented in the short term.

The kinds of economic and technological changes that produced the great disruption of the last four decades of the twentieth century created enormous social and policy challenges for the societies affected by it. The adjustment process is still ongoing, as individuals, families, neighborhoods, and societies seek to reestablish social connectedness. The task of renorming post-industrial societies is enormously complicated by increasing cultural diversity, which makes cultural consensus and spontaneous order much harder to achieve. This suggests that the disruption will not so much heal as mutate into different forms in the coming years.

DIVORCE
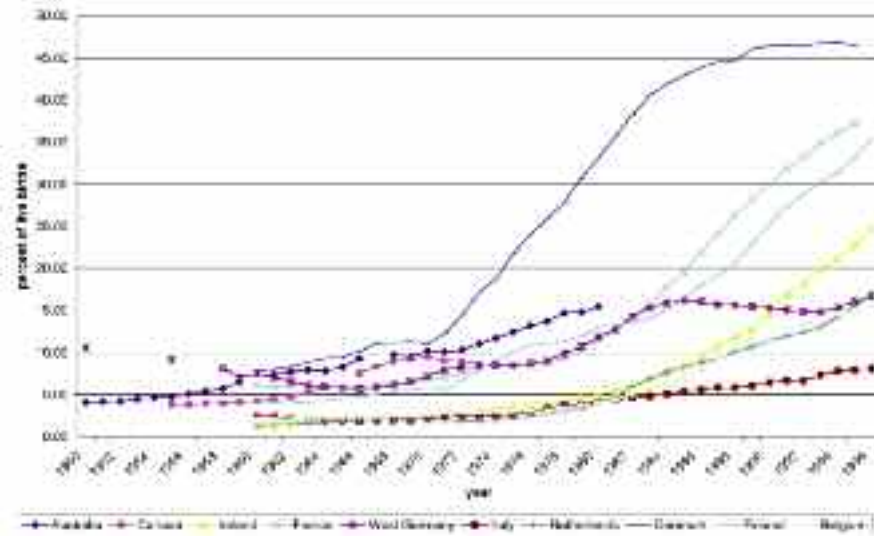

Figure I.

BIRTHS TO SINGLE MOTHERS
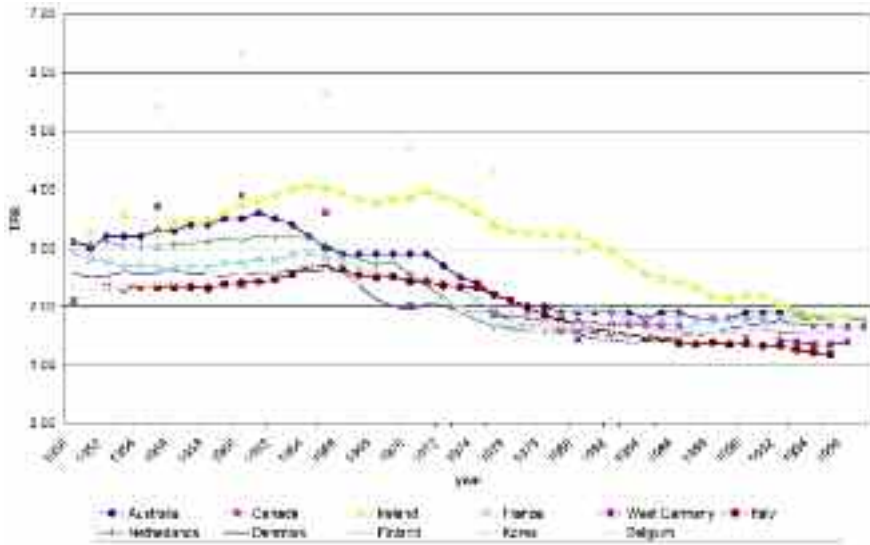

Figure II.

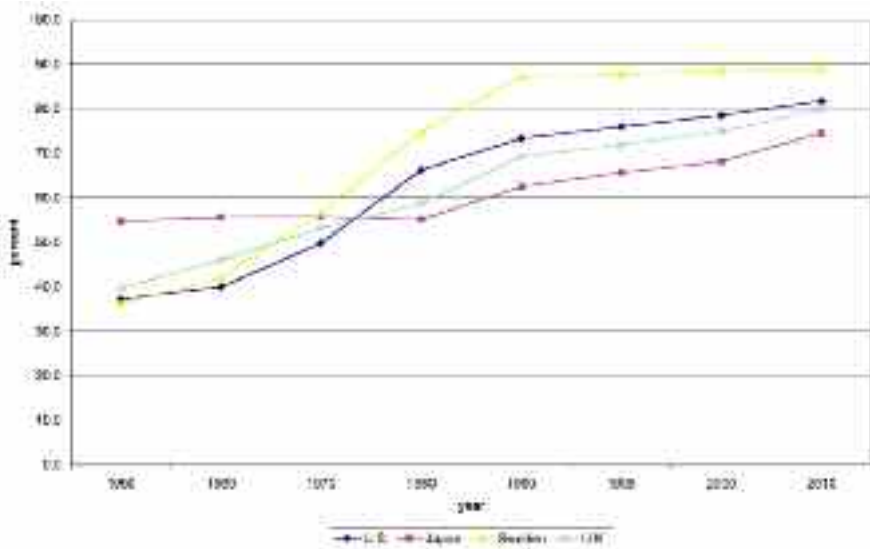## TOTAL FERTILITY

Figure III.

FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Figure IV.

VIOLENT CRIME

Figure V.

PROPERTY CRIME

Figure VI.